

October 28, 2010

Springfield, MA

**School Profile**

<i>New Leadership Charter School (NLCS)</i>			
<b>Type of Charter</b>	Horace Mann	<b>Location</b>	Springfield
<b>Regional/Non-Regional</b>	Non-Regional	<b>Districts in Region</b>	NA
<b>Year Opened</b>	1998	<b>Current Enrollment</b>	498
<b>Maximum Enrollment</b>	500	<b>Students on Waitlist</b>	90
<b>Chartered Grade Span</b>	6-12	<b>Current Grade Span</b>	6-12

**Mission**

“The mission of the New Leadership Charter School is to develop young people in the sixth through twelfth grades morally, mentally and physically; and to imbue them with the highest ideals of duty, honor, and loyalty. Graduates will be academically prepared to attend a college or university of their choice. They will embody three cardinal principles of leadership: vision, integrity, and compassion.”

**Demographics**

The school reports the following racial and ethnic composition and percentages of selected populations of the student body as of the date of the site visit:

**Racial and Ethnic Composition and Selected Populations**

	Number of Students	Percentage of Student Body
African American	297	59.6%
Asian	1	--
Hispanic	176	35.3%
Native American	--	--
White	23	4.6%
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	1	--
Multi-race, non-Hispanic	--	--
Special education	55	11%
Limited English proficient	--	--
Low income	377	76%

The following participants conducted the site visit on October 28, 2010:

- Alison Bagg, Charter School Office (CSO), Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE)
- Barry Barnett, CSO, ESE
- Spencer Blasdale, SchoolWorks
- Beth Friedman, Boston Collegiate Charter School
- Ben Klompus, Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public School

- Joanna Laghetto, CSO, ESE
- Judy Miller, CSO ESE
- Sonia Pope, Holyoke Community Charter School

Before the visit, the site visit team reviewed the school's 2009-10 annual report, the 2009-10 Year Twelve Site Visit Report, the Year Twelve Follow-Up Report, the school's accountability plan, board materials, and recent internal and external assessment data. On site, the team reviewed curricular documents and other information provided by the school. The team conducted approximately 27 classroom observations and interviewed 5 trustees, 6 administrators, 7 teachers, 6 parents or guardians, and 6 students.

The site visit had the following purposes:

1. to review the progress that the school has made in meeting the conditions imposed by the BESE,
2. to corroborate and augment the information contained in the school's annual report,
3. to investigate the school's progress relative to its accountability plan goals, and
4. to collect information that will help the Commissioner and BESE in decision-making regarding the school's future.

Site visits focus on the three central areas of charter school accountability: faithfulness to the terms of the school's charter, academic program success, and organizational viability. The team's findings in each of these areas are presented below.

#### **I. Review of Progress Made Towards Meeting the Conditions Imposed at Charter Renewal**

In 2008, at the time of the school's second renewal, the BESE imposed conditions on the school's charter. This section of this report lists the conditions and NLCS's progress towards meeting the conditions.

- 1. No later than March 31, 2008, New Leadership Charter School shall submit all of the following items to the Charter School Office at the Department:**
  - **A charter school Accountability Plan, including goals and annual benchmarks regarding academic success, organizational viability, and faithfulness to charter. The Accountability Plan must be aligned to the school's current District Plan for School Intervention and School Improvement Plan, and must include as goals that the school will annually achieve Adequate Yearly Progress in the aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups in English language arts and mathematics.**
  - **All relevant amendments to its charter, as determined through work with the Charter School Office, in accordance with 603 CMR 1.11.**
  - **The bylaws of the board of trustees.**

**The School shall work with the Charter School Office to receive approval of these items by the Department no later than June 30, 2008.**

*Finding: NLCS submitted the required documents, although not in a timely manner.*

As stated in the Year Twelve Site Visit Report, on January 13, 2009, NLCS submitted a minor amendment request to amend its original charter with respect to the length of the school year, the length of the school day, and the curriculum. The amendment shortened the length of the school year from 230 days, including 196 regular days and 34 Saturdays, to 195 days, including 185 regular school days and 10 Saturdays. The amendment also changed the length of the school day from eight hours to six hours (ending at 2:30 instead of 4:30). Finally, the amendment eliminated the Mid-Continental Regional Educational Laboratory as the school's curriculum, and instead adapted that used by the Springfield Public Schools. Documentation of the Springfield School Committee and teachers' union approval of this request, required by regulations for Horace Mann charter schools, was received by the CSO on July 3, 2009. The amendments were approved by the Department on August 26, 2009, fourteen months after the deadline stated in the condition.

In July 2008, a month following the required deadline for completion, NLCS submitted bylaws revised in compliance with the conditions imposed at the time of the charter renewal. Documentation of the Springfield School Committee and Teacher's Union approval of this request, required by regulation for Horace Mann charter schools, was received by the CSO on August 14, 2009. The revisions to the bylaws were approved by the Department on August 26, 2009.

**2. No later than June 30, 2008, New Leadership Charter School shall submit all required documentation and must provide evidence that it has taken corrective actions required by the Department's Program Quality Assurance Unit based upon the most recent Coordinated Program Review of the School.**

*Finding: The Coordinated Program Review cycle identified under the original conditions placed by the Board has been closed. A subsequent mid-cycle review and follow-up visits from the charter school office have identified ongoing issues with the implementation of special education, English language learner education and facility access for persons with disabilities. The special education section of the compliance review process which was in operation at the time of NLCS' renewal has been closed as of July, 2009, and the ELE element of the compliance review was closed by the Department on October 15, 2009.*

A mid-cycle follow-up review activity was conducted at the school by the Department's Program Quality Assurances unit on April 8 2010. Mid-cycle follow-up activities are ongoing. The first set of progress reports were received on September 21 2010 and a second set is due in December. Areas of non-compliance identified in the mid-cycle review included many of the same topics identified in the original report. The following topic areas were identified as problematic through the mid-cycle: transfer of parental rights to students at age 18; authority to commit resources at the Team meeting; failure to have records of all required progress reports; IEP meetings not being conducted within timeline limits; IEPs being incomplete; missing or inadequate documentation including notice letters to parents, failure to document multiple attempts to obtain parental consent for implementation of services; failure to document attempts by the school to contact the Bureau of Special Education Appeals; failure of the school to send communications in both English and the primary language of the home; not having a full continuum of available placements available within the school; special education teachers not being appropriately licensed; paraprofessionals working without direct supervision by an appropriately licensed staff, and a lack of permanent spaces for the delivery of related services. The mid-cycle review report also noted that the school was not programmatically accessible to persons with disabilities.

**3. By December 2009, New Leadership Charter School shall demonstrate that it is an academic success by:**

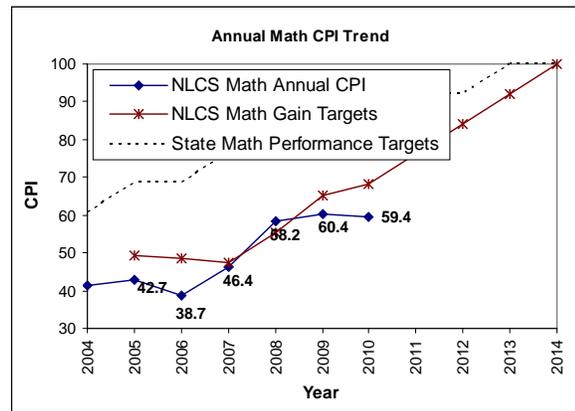
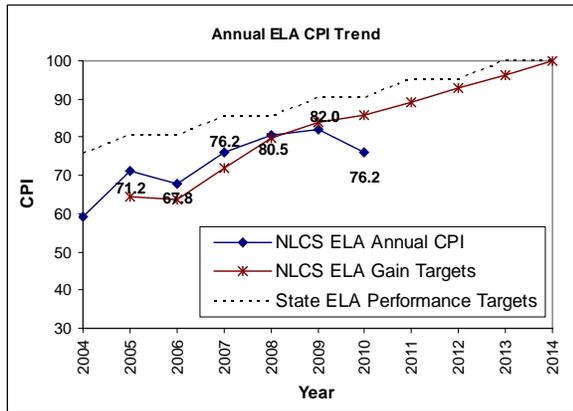
- **providing evidence to the Department of Education that the school has met or is making substantial progress toward meeting all benchmarks in its 2008-2013 Accountability Plan; and**
- **making Adequate Yearly Progress in the aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups in English language arts and mathematics in 2008 and 2009.**

*Finding: NLCS has not met the academic progress indicators outlined in Condition #3.*  
NCLCS has not demonstrated significant progress relative to the academic measures in its accountability plan. In 2009-10 the school met three of nine measures pertaining to academic success contained in the plan. Additional information concerning NLCS progress toward meeting its accountability plan measures begins on page 25 of this report.

In 2010 NLCS did not make AYP in the aggregate for either ELA or math. In 2010, student ELA performance declined and mathematics performance was stagnant. NLCS did not make AYP for any of its subgroups (low income, African-American/Black and Hispanic). 2010 AYP data is shown in the following tables:

English Language Arts																
Student Group	(A) Participation				(B) Performance			(C) Improvement				(D) Grad Rate				AYP 2010
	Enrolled	Assessed	%	Met Target (95%)	N	2010 CPI	Met Target (90.2)	2009 CPI Baseline	Gain Target	On Target Range	Met Target	2009 (4yr)	Change (4yr)	2008 (5yr)	Met Target	
Aggregate	298	287	96	Yes	287	76.2	No	82.0	3.6	83.1-88.1	No	59.6	-0.4	60.0	No	No
Lim. English Prof.	11	11	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special Education	28	28	-	-	28	42.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Low Income	234	227	97	Yes	227	77.0	No	87.8	2.4	87.8-92.7	No	63.3	13.3	50.0	Yes	No
Afr. Amer./Black	192	182	95	Yes	182	73.4	No	81.6	3.7	82.8-87.8	No	63.2	-13.0	76.2	Yes	No
Asian or Pacif. Isl.		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	96	95	99	Yes	95	80.5	No	82.0	3.6	82.0-90.1	No	50.0	22.7	27.3	Yes	No
Native American		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	10	10	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mathematics																
Student Group	(A) Participation				(B) Performance			(C) Improvement				(D) Grad Rate				AYP 2010
	Enrolled	Assessed	%	Met Target (95%)	N	2010 CPI	Met Target (84.3)	2009 CPI Baseline	Gain Target	On Target Range	Met Target	2009 (4yr)	Change (4yr)	2008 (5yr)	Met Target	
Aggregate	299	286	96	Yes	286	59.4	No	60.4	7.9	65.8-70.8	No	59.6	-0.4	60.0	No	No
Lim. English Prof.	11	11	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special Education	29	28	-	-	28	33.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Low Income	233	226	97	Yes	226	59.8	No	68.5	6.3	72.3-77.3	No	63.3	13.3	50.0	Yes	No
Afr. Amer./Black	194	182	94	No	182	56.5	No	58.0	8.4	63.9-68.9	No	63.2	-13.0	76.2	Yes	No
Asian or Pacif. Isl.		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	96	95	99	Yes	95	65.3	No	65.1	7.0	67.6-76.6	No	50.0	22.7	27.3	Yes	No
Native American		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Adequate Yearly Progress History										NCLB Accountability Status
		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	
ELA	Aggregate	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Restructuring Year 2 - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	
MATH	Aggregate	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Restructuring Year 2 - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	
			NCLB Accountability Status				Performance Rating		Improvement Rating	
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS			Restructuring Year 2 - Subgroups				Moderate		Declined	
MATHEMATICS			Restructuring Year 2 - Subgroups				Very Low		No Change	



- NLCS did not make AYP in any year since the school’s charter was renewed 2008.
  - In 2008, NLCS did not make AYP for subgroups in ELA.
  - In 2009, NLCS did not make AYP for subgroups in ELA and for the aggregate and subgroups for mathematics.
  - In 2010, NLCS did not make AYP for any category.
- In 2010 NLCS’ performance ratings are “Moderate” for ELA and “Very Low” for mathematics.
- In 2010 NLCS’ improvement ratings are “Declined” for ELA and “No Change” for mathematics.
- NCLCS currently has the status of Restructuring Year 2 for subgroups in both ELA and mathematics.

Additional information concerning NLCS’s performance on MCAS assessments is on pages 15-19 of this report.

- 4. By January 2010, New Leadership Charter School shall demonstrate significant improvement in its financial condition in both FY08 and FY09 as evidenced by:**
- **unqualified audit opinions with no material weakness findings;**
  - **annual surpluses as determined by audited income statements;**
  - **current assets exceeding current liabilities as determined by audited balance sheets; and**
  - **positive unrestricted net assets balances.**

*Finding: A determination cannot be made as to whether NLCS met the financial requirements outlined in Condition #4 for the 2010 fiscal year.*

The school's financial audit was not due for completion until November 1, 2010. The most recent financial analysis from the June 17, 2010 site visit determined that this condition had been met. Based on a review of board meeting minutes for August and September, 2010, however, there is concern about the school's financial viability. See page 23 for further information.

**5. By December 2009, New Leadership Charter School shall provide evidence, written and as documented through the site visit process, of consistent implementation of the leadership component of its mission, integrated across the school and school community.**

*Finding: The school continues to implement certain aspects of the leadership program, but has not yet developed a comprehensive program.*

In the 2009-10 annual report, and other documentation, the school described its leadership training program as including the following components:

- twice annual leadership week
- prefect program
- student council
- a leadership course
- community service
- advisory

Interviews with school leaders, board members, students and teachers and observations at the school led the team to concur that the program is evolving but that the program, as described above, is not being implemented fully, and that there is no overall structure or method of evaluating the program. The school has created a new administrative position this year, the director of equity and leadership. Her role is to coordinate all leadership programs at the school. The school administration described how they are focusing on certain elements of the program such as leadership week and establishing a leadership curriculum through advisory as well as implementing a school-wide code of conduct before fully implementing other components of the program. The elements of the leadership program are discussed below.

**Leadership Week:** Both faculty members and students reported that the first leadership week this year was better organized and structured than last year's. Teachers commented that there were effective team building activities added to this year's program, such as climbing a mountain as a grade level team. In addition, teachers reported that there was a clear schedule in advance and that activities were facilitated by outside experts (Tae Kwan Do instructors, for example) and did not rely on staff members to create most activities as in previous years. The school has collected student surveys for the leadership week completed this year and six staff surveys about the effectiveness of leadership week.

While Camp Atwater was not listed as part of the school's leadership offerings, NLCS continues to provide scholarships for students to attend the summer program. Fifty students attending the summer program in 2010. School administrators reported that the Camp Atwater program reinforces leadership and team building skills, while providing students with an experiential opportunity. Additionally, three days of the leadership week were held at Camp Atwater.

**Prefect Program:** Although the school reported in its annual report that the prefect program was in place, site visitors learned that it is not in place this year. School leaders stated that establishing a prefect program continues to be a goal.

**Student Council:** The school is continuing to implement a student council this year. There is a president and vice president at each grade level for a total of twelve members. Student and teachers reported that the student council helps with lunches, engages in fundraising activities and plans for afterschool events. The council is currently working on plans to develop an afterschool enrichment program, and grade level groups are working on specific events such as the high school prom. The council meets two times per month and is facilitated by the president and a faculty advisor.

**Leadership Course:** School administration reported that the ninth graders take a leadership course for one period per day during one semester. Included in this course are lessons on conflict resolution, goal setting, resume writing and “real world issues.” The course also teaches students about topics such as honesty and manners.

**Community Service:** The school’s community service program was not fully implemented last year. Each senior did provide service within the school community and the visiting team reviewed a tracking sheet of placements and hours for each student. However, school administration reported that there were fewer opportunities for students to volunteer in the new school location. Previously students had volunteered to read to elementary students in a nearby school.

**Advisory:** The director of equity and leadership has assembled a series of tools for advisors to use in the daily morning advisory periods from 7:40 to 8:00 a.m. Site visitors observed eight advisories in the middle school and found that four of them were using tools suggested for student activity. In these advisories, students were engaged in writing about or discussing topics such as “friendship” or “fairness.” In the other four advisories observed students were chatting with each other while the teacher was sitting at a desk. School administrators reported that this may have been due to substitute teachers in the classroom. Students reported that advisory is graded this year and the team reviewed the grading criteria which is based upon participation (33 percent), attendance (33 percent) and quizzes/projects (33 percent). The school’s coordinator of equity and leadership has worked to compile materials to be used as the advisory program’s curriculum. School administrators characterized the current advisory program as a pilot that will eventually become an inextricable part of the leadership program.

There are no measurable outcomes or means of evaluating the success of the programmatic elements of leadership education at the school. The Board and school administrators both reported that they would like to be able to measure how effective the leadership component of the school is but they have not developed a tool that serves this purpose. While the school has an accountability plan measure which states that “80 percent of seniors will obtain a score of at least 85 percent on a Service and Leadership Evaluation Report to be completed by the sponsoring organization supervisor” no such evaluation has been developed.

- 6. By September 30, 2008, the New Leadership Charter School Board of Trustees shall have received approval from the Commissioner for the minimum number of members required in the approved bylaws of the school through the identification and recruitment of**

**additional members who bring appropriate educational and financial expertise to the school. Requests for approval must be submitted to the Department no later than September 1, 2008.**

*Finding: This condition has been met.*

At the time of the Year Twelve Site visit, in November 2009, the school had met this condition. Seven is the minimum number of board members allowed by the bylaws. Presently, the board consists of ten members, four of whom are founding members. Based on reports from board members, and their professional experience, board members have expertise in law, business, education, and human resources.

**7. By January 2010, New Leadership Charter School and the Springfield Public Schools shall complete all activities necessary to permit a relocation of the school to an adequate, programmatically accessible facility no later than September 2010. These activities include, but are not limited to, the School conducting all necessary property acquisition, fundraising, and negotiations.**

*Finding: This condition has not been met.*

The school moved into its new campus at the outset of the 2009-10 school year. The campus includes three buildings: a high school, a middle school and a building called the social center which houses the cafeteria, gymnasium, a library and a few classrooms. The main floor of the social center building is handicapped accessible by use of an entry ramp that provides access to the building's first floor which contains the gymnasium and one large room which is presently used as a classroom. The social center basement, which contains the cafeteria, two handicapped accessible bathrooms and two additional classrooms, is not accessible. Some structural modifications have been made to the building so that a chairlift device can be installed, but no chairlift is in place. Bathrooms located on the only accessible floor of the building are not handicapped accessible.

The school presently has one wheelchair bound student enrolled, who is assigned to the social center for the entire school day. Since there are no accessible bathrooms on the social center's accessible floor, that student must have other students assist / carry him into and out of the bathroom stall. Since the handicapped student cannot access the cafeteria, he eats lunch on the school's accessible floor, separate from his non-disabled peers. Both of these situations are prohibited, and violate the student's right to equal educational access. The social center building remains inaccessible despite assurances from NLCS that the school would be fully programmatically accessible prior to opening in the present location (in September 2009), and further assurances that accessibility would be achieved over the summer of 2010.

The middle school building has no accessible entrance for a disabled person, but the high school building has a newly installed wheelchair lift device which is independently operable by the disabled user, and provides access to the building's first floor, which also contains a handicapped accessible bathroom. But despite the fact that another accessible building containing classroom spaces and an accessible bathroom exists on campus, the disabled student is not assigned to attend class in that building. Irrespective of where the student attends classes, however, when viewed in its entirety NLCS remains programmatically inaccessible.

The school board and school administration both reported that this campus is not a long-term solution for the school. They reported, and the visitors observed, that many of the classrooms are small and feel cramped for 12-15 students. Transitions between the buildings are also a challenge, and the visitors observed students engaging in unsafe behavior, especially during dismissal. With only four adults visible, all students were released from the buildings at once, and visitors observed pushing, play fighting, name calling and other unsafe behaviors.

The school's administration did note that communication has been better this year because they now have a working phone system – in the last school year there was no internet until February and no telephone service until March. The interim CEO reported during last year's June site visit that there would be a key card access system, video recording and an intercom system for all buildings this year. At the time of the visit the intercom and video recording systems were working, but key card access for students and staff will not be operational until January, 2011. During the time of the visit doors were often propped open with book bags and students let other students into and out of the different buildings.

## **II. Corroboration and Augmentation of the Information Contained in the School's Annual Report**

### **A. Faithfulness to the Terms of the Charter**

*Finding: Administrators and board members identified many challenges in working with the district that have impeded them from fully implementing the school's mission, vision, and educational philosophy.*

Interviews with school administrators and board members revealed tensions with the Springfield Public School District (SPS) which have had a significant, negative impact on school's ability to focus on its mission. Board members discussed how the majority of their time has been focused on negotiating budgetary and facilities issues with the district over the past year. Board members assumed this role in order to allow school administrators to focus on the daily operations of the school. At the time of the site visit on October 28, 2010, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the district for the current school year had yet to be agreed upon. Negotiations about the MOU are ongoing. The school's prior MOU with SPS was instituted in 2006 and was extended, via amendment, until June 30, 2010.

School finance has also been an ongoing issue between NLCS and SPS. Negotiations around finances began last year because the district recalculated the per pupil allotment for the school during the school year, creating a substantial discrepancy in the FY10 budget. In addition, the board reported that it has questioned Schedule 19 charges for technology, human resources, administration and facilities, which are deducted from the school's budget. The board's position is that it is being overcharged and/or charged for services not delivered (especially in regards to facilities). The board described how the SPS Superintendent was generally supportive but that the district infrastructure did not support NLCS's needs for facilities, busing or other administrative operations.

Facilities negotiations have reportedly also consumed much of the board's time and are still not resolved. As discussed earlier, issues of handicapped accessibility have not been addressed in a timely manner or in a manner that matched school expectations by the district in spite of reported

meetings last spring with the Mayor, Superintendent and Head of the Building Department of Springfield. These ongoing negotiations have led the board to explore whether becoming a Commonwealth charter would better allow them to serve students.

*Finding: Similar to previous years, the school lacks a fully staffed administrative structure and consistent leadership. In May 2010, the board approved a new organizational structure with three division heads reporting to the CEO. This structure is not yet in place.*

The school administration drafted a new leadership structure last year which includes a CEO with overall responsibility for the school with three leaders reporting to the CEO – a principal in charge of academics, an operations director to oversee finance, facilities and other operations, and a recruitment and retention director to manage student recruitment and retention efforts. The board approved this structure in its May 18 meeting. At this meeting the status of the interim director and interim principal was discussed and both were encouraged to apply for the positions of CEO and principal. In the June board meeting the interim director's title was changed to interim CEO. She is still not a permanent hire and the board reported that the search is ongoing. The interim CEO is working towards earning her school administrator licensure, which should be completed by May 2011. In addition, the former interim principal left the school over the summer and a teacher was promoted to interim principal in August. The board reported that he was then promoted to permanent principal in September, and that he has licensure as a principal in Massachusetts.

The school's board and administration reported that they are unable to fill the leadership positions because of budgetary uncertainty. While the district held the school harmless for the change in per pupil calculation last year, the school's current budget is uncertain. Board meeting minutes from June through August, 2010 reflect a careful monitoring of cash available as well as an outstanding balance of \$50,000 that the district apparently still owed the school. The school faced cash flow issues and the interim CEO reported that the school took out a \$230,000 working capital line of credit to mitigate the mismatch in timing with respect to receipt of payments from the district and operational expenses due and payable by the school. The MOU with the district for the current year has not been finalized, and thus the school has been unable to fill the planned leadership positions.

At the time of the site visit there was a principal who had been acting in this leadership capacity for three months and an interim CEO who has been acting in that capacity for two years. The positions of director of operations and recruitment and retention director have not been filled due to the school's inability to fund such positions.

*Finding: NLCS met neither of the two measures related to faithfulness to charter contained in its accountability plan.*

NLCS had operated without an approved accountability plan throughout its second charter term. Following charter renewal in February 2008, the school worked with the CSO to develop an approved plan by the June 30, 2008 deadline stipulated in the conditions of renewal. The accountability plan contains three objectives and two measures related to faithfulness to charter. The school has met neither of two measures.

The school did not meet the objective of having 100 percent of seniors volunteer at least 40 hours of their personal time in support of a public service organization or initiative. While

seniors did provide service within the school community, they did not all provide service to outside organizations, nor did the school track outside service. The second measure describes 80 percent of seniors earning an 85 percent or greater on a Service and Leadership Evaluation Report, but the school has yet to develop such a measure. More information about the school's success in meeting the objectives and measures contained in its accountability plan can be found in Section IV, Accountability Plan Performance, of this report.

## **B. Academic Program Success**

### **1. Curriculum**

*Finding: Curriculum maps have been created for most, but not all courses. The content and format varies for some maps, but overall they contain state standards and a course overview. The school is currently working to align its curriculum vertically and horizontally.*

The principal stated that NLCS uses the SPS curriculum as a base, but that the school also creates own curriculum. A review of documented curriculum determined that, even though NCLS has a standard format for curriculum maps, these maps vary both across and within departments. While each curriculum document contains standards to be covered for the year, these documents differ in the scope of materials, activities and assessments that are listed. Teachers reported that they had spent time this year to create mission statements for each department. The English department also reorganized the curriculum thematically for this year and teachers in the focus group reported that this has added coherence to this particular curriculum. Last year, the English department aligned its curriculum vertically and horizontally. During the summer of 2010, and during the current school year, this work is being done within other academic departments.

### **2. Instruction and Learning**

*Finding: Site visitors observed a range of instructional effectiveness. The use of the specific elements of the school's instructional model was not seen during the visit.*

Site visitors conducted 27 classroom visits for approximately 20-30 minutes each. These visits included all subject areas and all grade levels. The school's leadership described instruction as student centered, beginning with a motivational hook and then teacher modeling followed by small group or independent work. Leaders also described a regrouping strategy in which teachers are expected to summarize portions of the lesson material throughout or at the end of a lesson. While the team observed the school's Black Board Configuration (BBC) structure posted in most classrooms, it did not observe consistently effective objectives, motivational hooks, student centered classrooms, modeling or regrouping in each classroom.

The team found that available class time was maximized for learning in approximately one fifth of the classrooms observed. Many lessons observed had vague objectives, and no regrouping or summarizing. Effective lessons were focused on a specific objective such as "to identify a proportion in a word problem" or "to explain how Americans resisted British policies before 1775 and the reasons this helped lead to the American Revolution." However, the majority of lessons observed were guided by objectives that were not specific. For example, five lessons had objectives that called for the class to review for an assessment and another three had objectives that called for students to learn about or be introduced to a concept. These vague objectives did not allow the teacher to check for student understanding in a way that would demonstrate

whether the lesson was successful. The team observed teachers checking for understanding in one third of the classes, mainly in the form of working with individual students as they completed independent work.

Students were asked to complete a Do Now activity in the majority of classrooms visited, and this activity was usually a quiet, focused segment of the lesson. However, these were often procedural in nature and did not serve as a motivational hook. An example of an effective motivational hook asked students to respond to a provocative question or to preview an interesting topic. In the majority of classrooms, however, the teacher created a Do Now activity which asked students to complete procedural activities such as “organize your notes” or “complete your homework.”

The team observed little evidence of teacher modeling or student-centered activities. The team observed whole group instruction in 70 percent of the lessons, but this instruction was generally procedural in nature and did not include the teacher or students modeling their thinking or strategy for solving a problem or investigating a text. In a minority of classrooms the team observed a teacher modeling how s/he approached a problem or asking students to explain why they chose a certain piece of evidence or why they chose a specific geometric definition. In the majority of classrooms, however, the teacher described a task and then asked students to complete the task in a given time period.

*Finding: An orderly environment was observed in half of the classroom visits completed by visitors.*

As described previously, the school encourages a common classroom instructional format, beginning with a Do Now and then leading into teacher modeling and student practice. The school also encourages the use of the Boys Town model of classroom management which directs teachers to highlight students’ positive behaviors. Additionally, NLCS has a list of ten non-negotiables which enumerate expected student behaviors. While aspects of the instructional and behavior management models was observed, the effectiveness of each model ranged widely from classroom to classroom, and the majority of the school’s posted non-negotiables were violated by students.

The team noted effective classroom climate, when clear routines and respectful tone/behaviors predominated, in approximately half of the lessons observed. In these classrooms teachers were generally successful in leading students through the Do Now activity and then transitioning quickly into a small group or independent activity. Students were observed to be working with the appropriate materials quietly or with minimal chatter and the teacher would occasionally redirect a student or group of students who was off task. Teachers reported that there is more clarity about whom to go to for assistance this year and contrasted this with the multiple deans that had different perspectives on discipline and having a part-time principal last year.

Evidence of the Boys Town model for classroom management was also present in these effective classrooms and visitors observed teachers praising students, noting specific areas of strength and providing specific instructions for behavioral changes. Teachers noted in the focus group that the Boys Town model was implemented last year but that there were too many distractions and that this year the model was more consistently used and emphasized by administrators. The team saw evidence of this model in approximately half of the classrooms observed.

In a significant number of classrooms, however, visitors observed students off-task and not engaged in the materials at hand. There were several cases of students completing the required activity and then sitting and chatting socially with peers. In addition, the visitors observed behavior that included students calling out, swearing, texting, horseplay, or occasionally mocking a teacher. In these cases classroom management interfered significantly with classroom instruction and the Boys Town model was not used, or not used effectively. When certain teachers attempted to address some of students' behaviors the students often responded sarcastically or ignored the teacher's redirection.

Many of the school's ten posted non-negotiables were seen to be violated by students. In half of the lessons observed students were seen entering the classroom after the class had begun. While most of these students had an appropriate pass to arrive late, several who did not have a pass and were refused entry came back again to interrupt the class a second time. Many students had untucked shirts and in many classrooms a small number of students were unprepared to work with supplies. Students were observed chewing gum and also using cell phones to text during class time.

*Finding: Students were regularly engaged in lower level activities like copying notes, answering recall questions, and defining key terms. Site visitors observed few examples of higher level cognitive tasks.*

In over half of the lessons observed, students were engaged in independent work, often completing exercises that required lower-level thinking. During this independent work the teacher would often circulate to address individual concerns, but the pace was slow and while students were generally compliant, they were often off task. In only two classrooms did the team see evidence of higher order thinking skills being consistently requested by the teacher or used by the students. In these cases the students were engaged in creating a product or comparing two points of view. In the majority of classrooms, however, students were asked to find information, define key terms, answer recall questions or complete a procedure. Lessons often ended when the bell rang, without any closure or summary.

*Finding: This year, teachers reported satisfaction with new principal and the improved professional climate.*

Teachers report satisfaction and enthusiasm that the school has a principal in place at the beginning of the school year who can oversee the academic program. They commented that they now know that there is someone in charge and that his leadership is visible. Teachers reported that they felt both supported and heard on issues and that the principal is frequently in classroom and has completed observations of several teachers already in the school year. They also reported that communication has been streamlined and has become much more effective; specifically, announcements are not broadcast over the public address system and email is being used more effectively.

New this year, the school has begun to provide both informal and formal feedback to teachers. Last year, the school lacked a certified administrator to evaluate teachers and there was no instructional leader until January. He, however, was precluded by union rules from conducting formal teacher evaluations because he was hired after November. No teachers were formerly evaluated during the 2009-10 school year. The school's interim director (now interim CEO)

began the process of becoming certified as an administrator during the last school year, but had no experience in providing supervision to teachers. NLCS's current principal is licensed. He reported that, at the time of the visit, he has completed full evaluations, according to the union contract, for approximately a third of the teachers. Teachers in a focus group explained how the principal and assistant principal were frequently walking through rooms and providing informal feedback and that they were very pleased to have a dialog with an instructional leader.

Teachers reported that they feel a greater sense of ownership of and involvement in professional development sessions. Teachers reported that professional development sessions were more valuable this year because they were notified of upcoming sessions and their input was solicited by the principal for the sessions. Teachers described how a committee has been formed this year to advise the principal on staff professional development needs. They also reported that they talk with administrators and teachers during faculty meeting in the week ahead of any session about how to best shape the session and what they can take away from it. Teachers also noted that they are required to turn in notes after professional development sessions and they felt that this was a good accountability measure and feedback loop.

*Finding: The school has changed the structure of Saturday classes and has added two transitional programs with mixed success - a sixth grade transition program and a discontinued ninth grade transition program.*

Teachers and administrators report that historically, Saturday classes were poorly attended and challenging for a teacher to use effectively. Teachers worked with the principal to create proposals for change and then voted on several different Saturday schedules. The chosen schedule rotates for each of the 11 Saturday sessions, similar to a block schedule. Thus, instead of every teacher teaching a condensed (20-30 min.) class during each half day Saturday session, there are extended classes of an hour long on a rotating basis. Teachers reported that this allows for a science teacher to plan for a lab or an English teacher to plan for a longer writing workshop. Administration reported that attendance on the first two Saturday sessions ranged between 80-90 percent.

The school also created a two week academic program for incoming sixth graders this summer to both prepare them for the school and to assess their academic skills. The administration reported that 90 new students attended the two-week session from 9am – noon each day. The day was structured with an ELA class, a math class and a leadership class. The school assessed each student in math using the Assessment Technology Incorporated (ATI) and in reading using the Scholastic Reading Inventory. The school administration reported that this data informed beginning tutoring placements as well as teacher planning for the sixth grade. The school had planned a summer transition program for rising ninth graders for this past summer. Due to low attendance, however, the program was cancelled. Only ten students showed up for the program on the first day.

### **3. Student Achievement**

*Finding: English language arts (ELA) and mathematics MCAS scores for NLCS students changed little between 2008 and 2009 and then declined in 2010.*

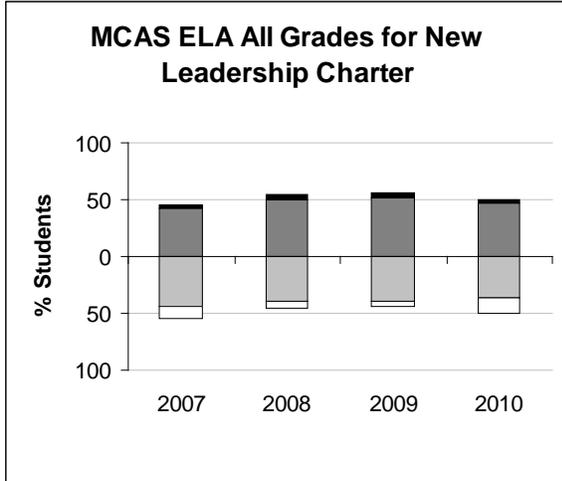
All aggregate MCAS results for ELA and mathematics that are available from the last four years are presented below. This data includes the Composite Performance Index (CPI), a 100-point

index that measures the extent to which students are progressing towards proficiency and which reflects the distribution of student scores over the four MCAS performance categories. MCAS performance by grade level is presented below as well, for the past five years. This data also includes the Student Growth Percentile (SGP) which measures how much a student's MCAS performance has improved from one year to the next relative to his or her academic peers: other students statewide with a similar MCAS test score history.

**English Language Arts MCAS Scores**

**Key:** N = # of students tested; CPI = Composite Performance Index

Warning/Failing %  
  Needs Improvement %  
  Proficient %  
  Advanced/Above Prof. %



ELA Performance for All Grades

The school did not make AYP in the aggregate for ELA in 2010, and its CPI declined from 82.0 in 2009 to 76.2 in 2010. The school did not make the graduation requirement with only 62 percent of seniors graduating in 2010. In addition, the overall percentage of students reaching proficiency declined from 56% in 2009 to 50% in 2010. The school’s student growth percentile for ELA decreased from 53.0 in 2009 to 34.0 in 2010, showing that when compared with student with similar test score histories, NLCS students scored better than only 34% of their peers.

ELA All Grades	2007	2008	2009	2010
% Advanced	3	4	4	3
% Proficient	42	50	52	47
% Needs Improvement	44	39	39	37
% Warning/Failing	11	7	5	13
N	289	291	302	287
CPI		80.5	82.0	76.2
SGP		46.0	53.0	34.0
N for SGP		200	262	227

**ELA Performance by Grade Level**

ELA Grade 6	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	ELA Grade 7	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
% Advanced	0	3	4	4	1	% Advanced	0	1	1	0	1
% Proficient	29	34	48	37	38	% Proficient	21	45	45	43	41
% Needs Improvement	54	56	35	54	40	% Needs Improvement	42	37	48	45	44
% Warning/Failing	17	6	13	5	21	% Warning/Failing	37	17	5	12	14
N	69	64	79	83	82	N	81	87	75	77	86
CPI	68.8	76.2	77.2	76.8	68.3	CPI	54.0	74.1	77.0	74.0	73.3
SGP			44.5	33.5	20.0	SGP			46.0	29.0	22.0
N for SGP			62	72	65	N for SGP			66	59	69

<b>ELA Grade 8</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>ELA Grade 10</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
% Advanced	0	2	4	1	3	% Advanced	3	6	9	13	12
% Proficient	45	44	52	64	55	% Proficient	42	44	57	66	63
% Needs Improvement	40	42	37	32	31	% Needs Improvement	45	46	34	22	24
% Warning/Failing	14	12	7	3	12	% Warning/Failing	9	4	0	0	0
N	99	84	84	78	78	N	33	54	53	64	41
CPI	75.3	75.6	81.3	86.5	80.1	CPI	77.3	80.6	89.2	92.6	90.9
SGP			49.0	56.0	40.0	SGP				78.0	69.0
N for SGP			72	74	64	N for SGP				57	29

ELA Performance by Grade Level:

In the past five years, student performance on the MCAS ELA assessment generally increased between 2006 and 2008 and then remained steady before declining in 2010. In grades six, seven and eight performance has steadily decreased over the past three years while in grade ten performance has remained relatively strong. Student growth percentiles are generally below the 50th percentile, with the exception of the tenth grade.

- In grade six the CPI decreased from 77.2 in 2008 to 76.8 in 2009 to 68.3 in 2010.
- In grade seven the CPI decreased from 77 in 2008 to 74 in 2009 to 73.3 in 2010.
- In grade eight the CPI increased from 81.3 in 2008 to 86.5 in 2009 and then decreased to 80.1 in 2010.
- In grade ten the CPI increased from 89.2 in 2008 to 92.6 in 2009 and then decreased to 90.9 in 2010.

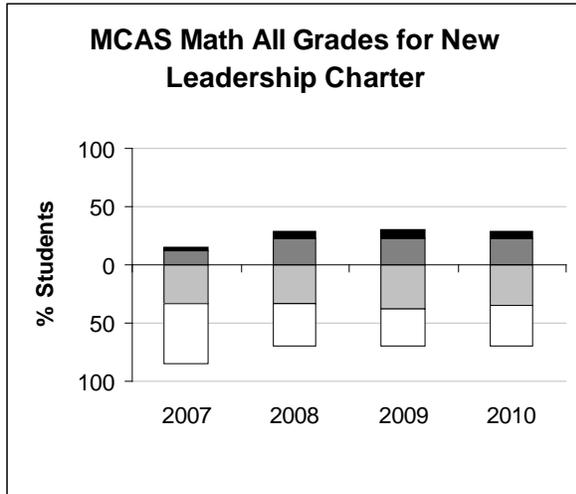
These trends are also noted in the student growth percentiles for each grade level.

- In grade six the SGP decreased from 44.5 in 2008 to 33.5 in 2009 to 20.0 in 2010. In 2010 sixth grade ELA students outperformed only 20 percent of their peers.
- In grade seven the SGP decreased from 46.0 in 2008 to 29.0 in 2009 to 22.0 in 2010. In 2010 seventh grade ELA students outperformed only 22 percent of their peers.
- In grade eight the SGP increased from 49.0 in 2008 to 56.0 in 2009 and then decreased to 40.0 in 2010. In 2010 eighth grade students outperformed only 40 percent of their peers.
- In grade ten the SGP decreased from 78.0 in 2009 to 69.0 in 2010. In 2010 tenth grade students outperformed 69 percent of their peers.

**Mathematics MCAS Scores**

**Key:** N = # of students tested; CPI = Composite Performance Index

Warning/Failing %
  Needs Improvement %
  Proficient %
  Advanced/Above Prof. %



Math Performance for All Grades

The school did not make AYP in the aggregate for math in 2010, although its CPI remained steady, although low between 2008 and 2010. In addition, the overall percentage of students reaching proficiency remained steady but low at 30% in 2009, 29% in 2010. The overall math performance rating is “Very Low.” The school’s student growth percentile for math, however decreased from 54.5 in 2009 to 42.0 in 2010, showing that when compared with student with similar test score histories, NLCS students scored better than only 42% of their peers.

Math All Grades	2007	2008	2009	2010
% Advanced	3	6	8	6
% Proficient	12	23	22	23
% Needs Improvement	34	33	38	35
% Warning/Failing	51	37	32	35
N	287	294	301	286
CPI		58.2	60.4	59.4
SGP		50.0	54.5	42.0
N for SGP		205	264	225

**Mathematics Performance by Grade Level**

Math Grade 6	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Math Grade 7	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
% Advanced	0	3	1	1	4	% Advanced	0	0	1	1	0
% Proficient	12	16	29	24	17	% Proficient	1	13	12	18	24
% Needs Improvement	30	33	34	43	44	% Needs Improvement	28	29	34	32	42
% Warning/Failing	58	48	35	32	35	% Warning/Failing	71	58	53	48	34
N	69	64	82	82	81	N	78	86	77	77	85
CPI	42.0	48.8	59.8	57.0	56.2	CPI	31.4	43.3	46.4	50.6	57.4
SGP			45.0	30.0	27.5	SGP			45.0	32.5	47.0
N for SGP			65	71	64	N for SGP			69	62	68

Math Grade 8	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Math Grade 10	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
% Advanced	0	0	4	4	3	% Advanced	9	12	23	30	30
% Proficient	3	1	22	16	26	% Proficient	21	25	35	29	28
% Needs Improvement	24	32	30	39	18	% Needs Improvement	33	48	37	36	35
% Warning/Failing	72	67	45	41	53	% Warning/Failing	36	15	6	5	7
N	98	85	83	76	77	N	33	52	52	66	43
CPI	34.4	35.0	54.2	53.9	52.3	CPI	61.4	67.3	79.3	83.3	82.0
SGP			54.0	72.0	36.0	SGP				77.0	63.5
N for SGP			71	72	63	N for SGP				59	30

Math Performance by Grade Level:

In the past five years, student performance on the MCAS math assessment generally increased between 2006 and 2008 and then remained steady from 2008 through 2010. Grades six and eight showed moderate declines in this three year period while grade seven showed an increase and grade ten remained steady.

- In grade six the CPI decreased from 59.8 in 2008 to 57.0 in 2009 to 56.2 in 2010.
- In grade seven the CPI increased from 46.4 in 2008 to 50.6 in 2009 to 57.4 in 2010
- In grade eight the CPI decreased from 54.2 in 2008 to 53.9 in 2009 to 52.3 in 2010.
- In grade ten the CPI increased from 79.3 in 2008 to 83.3 in 2009 and then decreased to 82.0 in 2010.

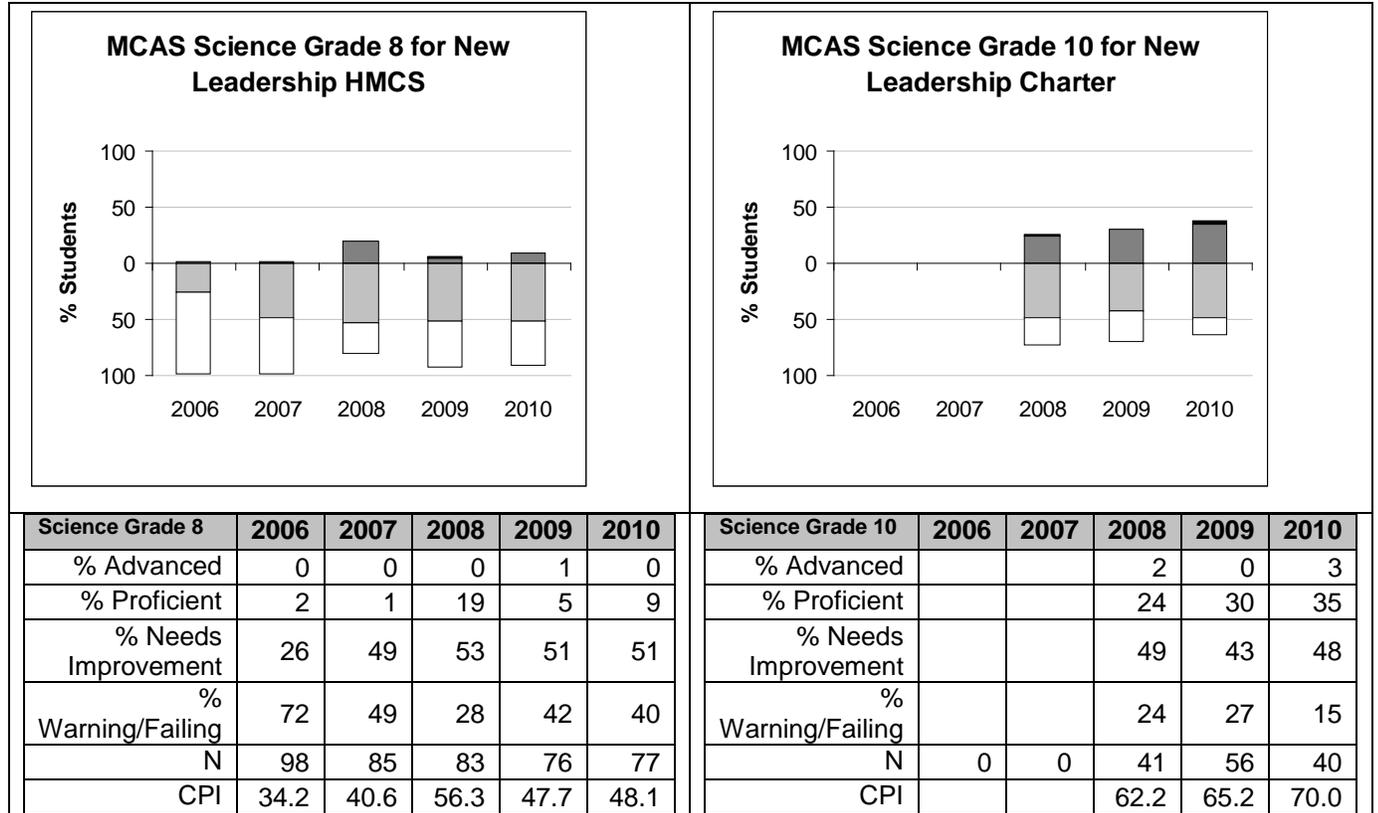
These trends are also noted in the student growth percentiles for each grade level.

- In grade six the SGP decreased from 45.0 in 2008 to 35.0 in 2009 to 27.5 in 2010. In 2010 sixth grade math students outperformed only 27.5 percent of their peers.
- In grade seven the SGP decreased from 45.0 in 2008 to 32.5 in 2009 and then increased to 47.0 in 2010. In 2010 seventh grade math students outperformed 47 percent of their peers.
- In grade eight the SGP increased from 54.0 in 2008 to 72.0 in 2009 and then decreased to 36.0 in 2010. In 2010 eighth grade students outperformed only 36 percent of their peers.
- In grade ten the SGP decreased from 77.0 in 2009 to 63.5 in 2010. In 2010 tenth grade students outperformed 63.5 percent of their peers.

**Science MCAS Scores**

*Finding: Performance on the science MCAS in grades eight and ten has increased slightly from 2009 to 2010.*

In the eighth grade the CPI rose from 47.7 to 48.1 and in grade 10 the CPR rose from 65.2 to 70.0 in this period.



A summary of the school’s 2010 AYP performance is below as well as the school’s AYP history. Detailed data can also be found in section IV of this report.

### Adequate Yearly Progress Summary

	NCLB Accountability Status	Performance Rating	Improvement Rating
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>	Restructuring Year 2 - Subgroups	Moderate	Declined
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>	Restructuring Year 2 - Subgroups	Very Low	No Change

### Adequate Yearly Progress History

Adequate Yearly Progress History										NCLB Accountability Status
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010		
<b>ELA</b>	Aggregate	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Restructuring Year 2 - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	
<b>MATH</b>	Aggregate	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Restructuring Year 2 - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	

*Finding: NLCS met only three of the nine measures related to academic success contained in its accountability plan.*

NLCS’ approved accountability plan includes four objectives and nine related measures concerning academic success. The school met three out of nine measures. The school met none of its absolute or comparative MCAS measures or its SAT benchmark. It did meet the measure of giving the ATI assessment in the fall. It met the measures of having 84 percent of graduating seniors accepted to at least one college and the measure of having eight percent of graduating seniors accepted to “tier two” colleges.

The visiting team noted 37 seniors present on October 1 of the 2009-10 school year. Out of this group 23 graduated in June, and all of the 23 who graduated were accepted to at least one college, thus meeting the school's measure. Fourteen seniors did not graduate and thus overall 62 percent of seniors who were enrolled during the school year were accepted to an institution of higher learning. Administrators reported that ten of these 14 students transferred back to the SPS district. The school reported that two students were accepted to a "tier two" institution of higher learning (as defined by the U.S. News and World Report Rankings) and this represents 8.7 percent of the graduating seniors in 2009-10. The school met this measure for those who graduated. More information about the school's success in meeting the objectives and measures contained in its accountability plan can be found in Section IV, Accountability Plan Performance, of this report.

### **C. Organizational Viability**

*Finding: The school uses MCAS and ATI data analysis to identify some students who are in need of extra help in order to provide targeted instruction through a tutoring program.*

The Title I Director reported that the school's tutoring center reaches 150-200 students each year. Data from the previous spring's MCAS is analyzed to find students who score in the needs improvement category and who need particular supports, and these students are the first to enter the fall's tutoring program. There are two full-time tutors as well as volunteers from Springfield Volunteers as well as Westfield State College. The volunteers are provided with specific curriculum materials by the tutoring coordinator for each session, and they are trained as paraprofessionals and with Boys Town training for classroom management techniques.

Students identified for extra help are typically in tutoring two to three times per week for 30 minute sessions during specials (non-academic periods). ATI assessments are given quarterly to all students and this data is used to identify students in need of tutoring throughout the year. Once the student masters the standards necessary he or she is flexed out of the program, allowing for new students to enter. The interim CEO provided tutoring reports to the board during the 2009-10 school year, and teachers and leaders both described this intervention as effective. While the program is viewed as successful by school stakeholders, there is no means of evaluating its overall success at the current time.

*Finding: Staff did not articulate a clearly defined protocol or system to use data to inform instruction on a regular basis, beyond the tutoring program.*

Administrators and teachers report that the staff is presented with MCAS data in the fall and ATI data on a quarterly basis. Teachers also reported that they look at student data in department meetings. There is no common approach to using the data to inform instruction or make programmatic changes beyond the remedial instruction provided by the tutoring program. In addition, the school has not done an analysis to determine whether the ATI results are aligned with the MCAS results. The school has not completed an analysis of the 2010 MCAS results at the time of the visit.

*Finding: The board's oversight has focused on helping the administration negotiate with SPS and the archdiocese about facility and budgetary issues.*

The board reported that it has focused the majority of its energy on negotiating with the district and the owner of the property where the school is housed. As stated previously, the board reported that this has been a distraction and that they don't feel that they have fully lifted this

burden from the interim CEO as there remain many uncertainties in regard to finance and facilities.

When asked about the most recent MCAS performance the board reported satisfaction with the performance of tenth grade students while recognizing that middle school scores did not demonstrate proficiency. While board members report that they receive regular updates on school performance, board meeting minutes do not display the use of data to inform the board about academic performance. In the interim CEO's reports during the 2009-10 school year there were examples of student achievement data from the tutoring center, but this positive news contrasted the overall weak MCAS results in the middle school for 2010. To date there has been no analysis comparing ATI results to MCAS performance.

During the focus group, board members stated that committees of the board meet to address such issues. However, board members noted that these committees do not keep notes of their meetings, nor do they keep executive session minutes. As a result of these practices, the board is not in compliance with the OML.

*Finding: The board has recently reviewed the performance of the CEO for the first time in three years using a formal evaluation instrument.*

The site visit team was provided a copy of the evaluation instrument used and it includes 12 overall factors to evaluate including: knowledge, quality, quantity, communication skills, interpersonal skills, training and directional ability, adaptability, initiative, judgment, safety practices, problem-solving and attendance; seven supervisory factors including supervision of others, leadership, organization, drive for results, training and development, compliance with company policy and fiscal responsibility; a profession development plan; a list of future organizational objectives; a list of professional objectives. The team did not review a copy of the completed review, and thus it is unclear whether this review is helpful in either evaluating the performance of the interim CEO or focusing her work on specific objectives needed for school improvement.

*Finding: Students reported to feel safe. Classes were observed to be generally safe, with some exceptions. Outside transitions were prone to unsafe behavior.*

In the focus group students reported that they felt physically safe and although some students sometimes make comments that could be hurtful, that “[we] know how to joke and not feel offended.” As noted previously, the site visitors found approximately half of classrooms were effectively managed with a positive climate. At the same time, visitors heard harmful statements made from student to student, including students observed mocking one another in class with no redirection from teacher; horseplay and name calling observed; students swearing and saying “shut up” in a few classes.

When all students were dismissed at the end of the day four adults were visible outside of building monitoring dismissal. As evidenced previously, site visitors witnessed unsafe behavior such as running and pushing in crowded exit areas, crowding and pushing to get onto busses, name calling and play fighting.

*Finding: All stakeholders agreed that the facility is not ideal for delivering the academic program and are looking forward to locating the school in a permanent home.*

As discussed in previous sections of this report, there are significant handicapped accessibility issues yet to be addressed. In addition, several classrooms were small, oddly shaped and often felt cramped for as few as 12 students in the room. In addition there were no lab facilities observed for science class, and the student library is minimally provisioned. Students and parents both reported that technology is lacking.

*Finding: Some special education program issues have been resolved, while others remain problematic.*

Special education teachers and paraprofessional staffing has been increased, in support of the school's efforts to offer more inclusive special education service delivery. The school's special education team chairperson is appropriately qualified, and the practice of administrative veto power over IEP service allocations for budget reasons is reported by administrators to have been discontinued. Individual Education Plans are better written in that they no longer contain multiple administrative, typographical and clerical errors. A resource room placement is now available at the school should such a setting be determined to be necessary by the student's IEP team. Completed IEPs are now provided to parents in a timely manner after the team meeting is held. All special education teachers are now appropriately licensed.

The school's special education evaluation consists of an opinion survey. It is not a data based analysis of special education program outcomes for students with disabilities which leads to an analysis of program strengths and weaknesses. There is no child study team pre-referral system presently functioning. Progress reports were not consistently found in the student records, and IEP timelines continue to be problematic.

*Finding: English language learner education is not implemented as required. The English language learner program at the school does not provide sheltered English immersion instruction delivered by appropriately trained staff, nor does it provide English language development instruction from a licensed staff.*

English language learner education is not implemented as required. Students are screened using a home language survey, and assessed as necessary for English language proficiency using appropriate assessments, however there is no licensed ELL teacher at the school to provide English language development instruction. The middle school staff is reported to have been trained in at least some areas of sheltered immersion instructional techniques, but the upper school staff has not received training, so at least two of the four students presently enrolled who are limited English proficient and not receiving sheltered English immersion. An interim ELL coordinator is overseeing the program while a full time coordinator is sought.

*Finding: One third of the teaching staff is in either their first or second year of teaching at the school. Twenty one percent (9) of the teaching staff is in their first or second year of teaching.* There were 43 full time teachers with licenses as of September 1, 2010. Two teachers left in September and school administration reported that this was because of the commute to the school. At the time of the site visit there were three long-term substitute teachers – for art, math and Spanish. The math and Spanish substitute teachers are reported to be currently working on their MTEL requirements. During the previous school year (2009-10), only 85 percent of

teachers were licensed in their teaching assignment and only 77 percent of teachers were highly qualified.

**Years of Teaching Experience for Lead/Core Subject Teachers 2010-2011**

	1-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-20 Years	20+ Years
Teachers with this number of years teaching	9 (21%)	15 (35%)	11 (26%)	6 (14%)	2 (5%)
Teachers with this number of years teaching at NLCS	14 (33%)	22 (51%)	7 (16%)	0	0

*Finding: During the family focus group, those parents who were newer to the school expressed a higher degree of satisfaction with the school’s performance than other families whose children have attended for a number of years.*

Parents in a focus group reported that they liked the small class size and the small size of the school. New parents to the school spoke about the fact that their students’ particular needs were being met through tutoring. They also felt that their children were being challenged although parents of older children questioned whether they would really be prepared for college. They gave the example of not starting a foreign language until high school as a sign that the school was not fully preparing students for college.

Parents who had been with the school for more than one year voiced concerns about school. They noted that parents are no longer encouraged to become involved and that there has been tremendous turnover of teachers and leaders. They talked about not knowing who the principal was and expressed dismay at the lack of extracurricular activities due to the inability to pay teachers’ to provide additional programming. They pointed out that the school is lacking in many resources such as technology for students as well as a library; while recognizing that a library has been created they also pointed out that there are only a few donated books in the library.

*Finding: The school’s financial health is uncertain and board and administration recently received a line of credit. Negotiations with the district are ongoing.*

While the site visit team was not able to review financial information from the 2010 audit because it was not due to be completed until after November 1, review of board meeting minutes and interviews with administrators and board members raised concerns about the fiscal health of the school and the oversight of administration and board.

During the site visit focus group, the board reported that they had recently put in place a line of credit for \$230,000. In August, 2010 the interim CEO’s report to the board noted that United Bank was owed \$184,000, of which \$100,000 was a term loan that the school entered into to cover summer expenses. During this meeting the interim CEO told the board that she was going to approach the bank for a line of credit because the current cash position of the school was approximately \$25,000.

While the school had invoiced the district for \$363,890 (based on 475 students and a per pupil rate of \$8,419) in August, September board meeting notes reflect that the district was currently

calculating a payment of \$305,000. The board reported in the focus group that it needs approximately \$450,000 to cover expenses.

*Finding: NLCS met two measures related to organizational viability contained in its accountability plan. The other two measures could not be assessed because the audit was not complete at the time of the visit.*

NLCS' approved accountability plan includes four objectives and four related measures concerning organizational viability. Because the 2010 audit was not complete at the time of the visit the team was only able to assess two of these measures. NLCS met both of them. The board raised at least \$10,000 for the school in FY10 and 85 percent of 150 parents who responded to a survey acknowledged satisfaction with the school. More information about the school's success in meeting the objectives and measures contained in its accountability plan can be found in Section IV, Accountability Plan Performance, of this report.

### **III. Conclusion**

The school's leadership structure is still in transition, as it has been for the past three years. In addition, recent budgetary and facilities related strains with the district have added to the challenge of establishing a secure leadership team which can focus on instruction and school culture. The school's financial health is weak. The board has been unable to successfully negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding with the district for the current year and the facility is still not fully handicapped accessible. The board of trustees has yet to demonstrate the capacity to create a school that is academically successful, organizationally viable, and faithful to the terms of the charter. The site visit team found that the school has identified a principal who is beginning to lay the groundwork for effective school-wide instructional practice and classroom management. The team observed effective instructional practices in approximately half of the classrooms visited. The school has not yet established a comprehensive, school-wide leadership program. Although the school has met some of the conditions imposed at the time of renewal, it has not yet realized the vision of being a successful school that promotes leadership and academic excellence for its students.

**IV. Investigation of the School’s Progress Relative to its Accountability Plan Goals**

<b><u>A. Faithfulness to Charter</u></b>	<b>2009-10 Performance</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<p><b>Objective:</b> New Leadership will ensure faithfulness to the terms of the charter by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Graduating students that exemplify leadership and self-sacrifice.</li> <li>(2) Graduating students who understand the need for public service to causes greater than themselves.</li> <li>(3) Producing responsible young adults who are aware of the consequences of poor judgment and avoid it.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Measure:</b> All seniors at New Leadership will volunteer their personal time of at least 40 hours in support of a public service organization or initiative.</p>	<p>NOT MET</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seniors provided service within the school but not to outside organizations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Measure:</b> 80% of the seniors will obtain a score of at least 85% on a Service and Leadership Evaluation Report to be completed by the sponsoring organization supervisor.</p>	<p>NOT MET</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The school reported that there is no measure for Service and Leadership Evaluation.</li> </ul>
<b><u>B. Academic Program</u></b>	<b>2009-10 Performance</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<p><b>Objective:</b> All students at New Leadership will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Demonstrate mastery of content and skills in the English.</li> <li>(2) Demonstrate mastery of content and skills in mathematics.</li> <li>(3) Demonstrate high aptitude on national scholastic board exams and be admitted to competitive post secondary schools.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Measure:</b> New Leadership will meet AYP annually in aggregate and subgroups.</p>	<p>NOT MET</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The school did not make AYP in the aggregate or for any subgroup in either ELA or math.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Measure:</b> The CPI in ELA and math for the group of students who have attended NL for 2 years will be higher than that of 70% of Springfield public schools for the same grade level.</p>	<p>NOT MET</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The school did not provide cohort data, nor did it use cohort data in the 2010 annual report. An analysis of the school’s overall performance by grade compared to the 14 Springfield Public Schools that the school provided determined that the school only met this measure in one test at one grade level (out of 10 possible tests between grade 6 and 10). NLCS’s CPI for grade 10 ELA was higher than 70% of SPS.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Measure:</b> The CPI in ELA and math for the group of students who have attended NL for 3 years will be higher than that of 75% of Springfield public schools CPI for the same grade levels.</p>	<p>NOT MET</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Same as above.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Measure:</b> The CPI in ELA and math for the group of students who have attended NL for 4 or more years will be higher than that of 70% of public schools in western MA for the same grade levels.</p>	<p>NOT MET</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The school did not provide cohort data for this measure, nor did it use a cohort in calculating the results of this measure in the 2010 Annual Report. The team used the same methodology as the school, however, comparing all students to 28 other districts in western MA for grade 10 only. The school outperformed other districts 24% of the time.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Measure:</b> 21% to 40% of seniors who have attended NLCS for four years will score at or above the SAT national norm (for that year.)</p>	<p>NOT MET</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ According to the Annual Report provided by the school, 3 of 28 students earned a score above the SAT national norm in 2010. This represents 10.7% of the senior class.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Measure:</b> All grades will take the ATI assessments in the fall as a benchmark.</p>	<p>MET</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The school reported that it was prepared to have all students take ATI assessments in November, 2010.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Measure:</b> Spring scores will show an increased mastery or improvement from the previous fall of at least 10% in the subjects of English and math, as measured by NCE scores.</p>	<p>NOT MET</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The school provided data that showed that scores in English decreased over the course of the year and that math scores increased by 5%. However, the school did not use NCE measures to determine this. In addition, the students were assessed on seemingly different standards from fall to spring.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Measure:</b> 80% to 100% of graduating seniors will be accepted by at least one college or university.</p>	<p>MET</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Data provided by the school shows that all of the 23 seniors who graduated were accepted to a college or university. Note that 14 seniors did not graduate.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Measure:</b> 5% of graduating seniors will gain admissions to tier II or above college(s) or university(ies).</p>	<p>MET</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The school provided a list of student acceptances to show that 8.7 % of seniors were accepted to a Tier 2 college as defined by U.S. News and</li> </ul>

		World Report. Note that 14 seniors did not graduate.
<b><u>C. Organizational Viability</u></b>	<b>2009-10 Performance</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<p><b>Objective:</b> New Leadership will ensure its organizational viability by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Achieving financial stability.</li> <li>(2) Good board governance and fundraising.</li> <li>(3) Demonstrating high levels of market demand.</li> <li>(4) Parents/Guardians will show a high level of satisfaction with the school and their children’s education.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Measure:</b> New Leadership will show good financial stability via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Unqualified audit opinion with no material weakness findings.</li> <li>o Annual surpluses as determined by audited income statements.</li> <li>o Current asset exceeding current liabilities as determined by audited balance sheets.</li> <li>o Positive unrestricted net asset balances.</li> </ul>	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Audit not complete for 2010 at the time of the site visit.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Measure:</b> Surplus Range:\$65,000 to \$90,000</p>	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Audit not complete for 2010 at the time of the site visit.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Measure:</b> The BOT will raise at least \$10K in funds to support new and/or significant initiatives designed to further support the goals and efforts of the BOT and New Leadership.</p>	MET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The board reported that it raised over \$30,000 for a school library this year.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Measure:</b> 75% of New Leadership Charter school parents/guardians will acknowledge their satisfaction with the school via the annual survey.</p>	MET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The school reported that 85% of parents surveyed acknowledged satisfaction with the school.</li> </ul>

**I. Review of Progress Made Towards Meeting the Conditions Imposed at Charter Renewal**

*Finding 1: NLCS submitted the required documents, although not in a timely manner.*

The amendments to the charter were received by DESE on July 3, 2009 and approved by DESE on August 26, 2009; revised by-laws and documentation of school committee and teachers union approval were received by DESE August 14, 2009 and approved by the Department August 26, 2009.

*Finding 2: The following topic areas were identified as problematic through the mid-cycle:*

a. *Transfer of parental rights to students at age 18.*

**NLCS met this requirement.** Staff training occurred on 8/18/10 (Transfer of Parental Rights at Age of Majority) —see Mid-Cycle Progress report dated September 20, 2010, pg. 1.

b. *Authority to commit resources at the Team meeting*

**NLCS met this requirement.** —see Mid-Cycle Progress report dated September 20, 2010, pg.1.

c. *Failure to have records of all required progress reports*

**NLCS met this requirement.** Staff trained on August 18, 2010 (Progress Reports and Content). A tracking system was developed. —see Mid-Cycle Progress report dated September 20, 2010, pg. 2.

d. *IEP meetings not being conducted within timeline limits*

**NLCS met this requirement.** Staff trained on August 18, 2010 (Review and Revision of IEPs). This requirement was partially met as of the Mid-Cycle Progress report dated September 20, 2010, pg.2, but was completed in December 2010. See December 20, 2010 progress report.

e. *IEPs being incomplete*

**NLCS met this requirement.** Staff trained on August 18, 2010 (IEP Development and Content). —see Mid-Cycle Progress report dated September 20, 2010, pg. 3.

f. *Missing or inadequate documentation including notice letters to parents, failure to document multiple attempts to obtain parental consent for implementation of services*

**NLCS met this requirement.** Staff trained on September 13, 2010 (Notice to Parent Regarding Proposal Refusal to Initiate or Change the Evaluation or Educational Placement of the Student or the Provision of FRAPE; Parental Consent; Content of Team Meeting Notice to Parent). See September 20, 2010 mid-cycle progress report.

i. *Failure to document attempts by the school to contact the Bureau of Special Education Appeals*

**This requirement was met.** Partially met as of the Mid-Cycle Progress report dated September 20, 2010, pg.3 and completed as of the Mid-Cycle Progress report dated December 20, 2010.

g. *Failure of the school to send communications in both English and the primary language of the home*

**This requirement has been met.** —see Mid-Cycle Progress report dated September 20, 2010, pg. 3.

h. *Not having a full continuum of available placements available within the school*

**This requirement has not been met.** We are in the process of developing a policy for the full continuum of services.

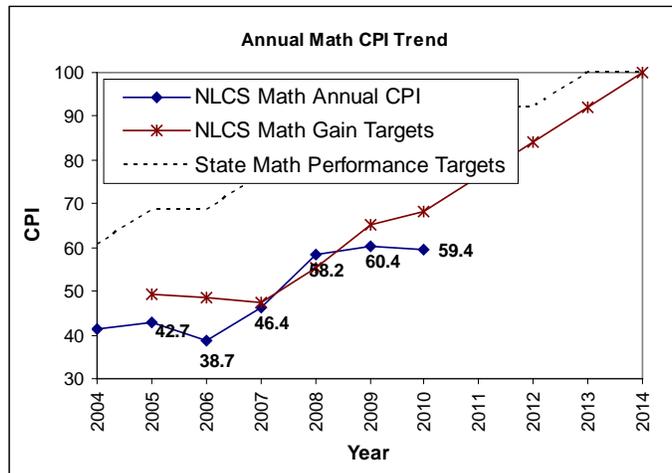
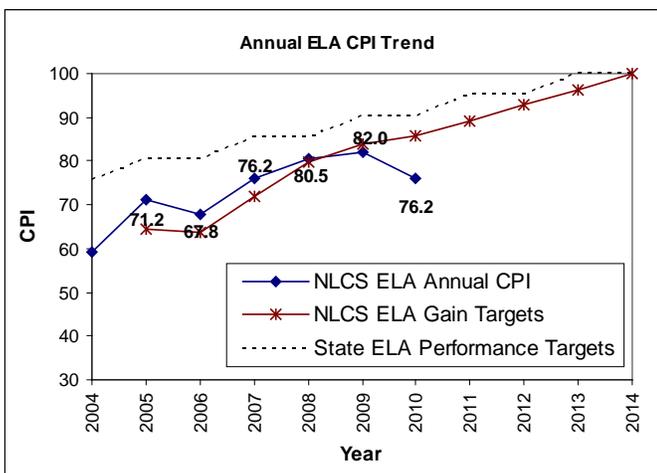
i. *Teachers are not appropriately licensed*

**This requirement has been met.** As of the September 20, 2010 mid cycle progress report, this requirement was partially met., completed by the December 20, 2010 mid-cycle progress report.

- j. *Paraprofessionals working without direct supervision by an appropriately licensed staff*  
**This requirement has been met.** —see Mid-Cycle Progress report dated September 20, 2010, pg. 1.
- k. *A lack of permanent spaces for the delivery of related services.*  
 Permanent space has been assigned. PQA have scheduled on site visit for January 19, 2011 to validate that this requirement was met.
- l. *The school is not programmatically accessible to persons with disabilities.*  
 Lift completed and operational in the Social Center, which allows accessibility for persons with disabilities to the cafeteria. PQA have a scheduled on site visit for January 19, 2011 to validate.

**Finding 3:** *NLCS has not met the academic progress indicators outlined in Condition #3.*

This site report indicates that NLCS did not make AYP in any year since the school’s charter was renewed in 2008; however, this is misleading as NLCS did make AYP for the aggregate in 2008 and 2009 for ELA and made AYP for the aggregate and all subgroups for math in 2008. This demonstrated a trend of significant progress carried over from 2007 performance on MCAS. In 2009 NLCS made AYP in ELA for the aggregate but did not meet the AYP for all subgroups nor did it meet the AYP for aggregate and subgroups for Math. It was stated in the Site Visit Year 12 Report that NLCS’s performance ratings are high for ELA and low for mathematics and that its improvement ratings are “On Target” for ELA and “No Change” for mathematics. In 2010 NLCS did not make AYP in aggregate or subgroups for either ELA or Math. The Site Visit Year 13 Report states that NLCS’s improvement ratings have declined for ELA but is listed as “Moderate.” Improvement ratings for mathematics are listed as “No Change”. The report suggest there has been no progress. However, when comparing CPI from 2004 to 2010 for both ELA and Math, the trend suggests there has been steady, and in some cases, dramatic improvement across all grades with a slight decline in 2010. The graphs below illustrates there has been steady improvement and progress towards meeting targets from 2004 to 2009, with a slight decline for ELA in 2010 and a flattening of progress (plateau) for math in 2009 and 2010:



It should be noted, however, that the following three major factors impacted NLCS’s ability to maintain steady progress towards meeting academic targets during the 2009-2010 school year.

- 1) NLCS continues to receive an inadequate budget from the district to support its academic and leadership mission.
- 2) NLCS's transition from its Ashland site to its current Holy Name site was significantly disruptive to the academic process. Below are some of the challenges that the move presented:
  - ✓ The short timeline of 6 weeks between the City's signing of the lease for the Holy Name facility and the start of the school year was inadequate for the extended renovations needed for the facility to be fully operational as a school. The technology infrastructure was not in place: the school's network was not completely setup until February 2010 and as a result, the communication system which depended on the network was not available until March 2010. For the first 5 to 6 months of operations in this new location, the entire school relied on 2 phone lines for external communications greatly compromising effective communication with the district, state, parents and community members. Walkie-talkies were the major means of internal communications and were very disruptive to the classroom.
  - ✓ The new site consists of three multi-level buildings, which is a sharp departure from the single, one level building NLCS used to occupy. This change in the facility presented challenges. In our new site, one building was designated for the middle school; another building was designated for the high school; and the third building, called the Social Center (which contains the gym, library, and cafeteria), is shared with Holy Name Church. As a result, facilities management required a different approach to maintenance, trafficking students between the buildings, supervision, and contending with the added layer of stress and negotiation connected to the sharing of space with a landlord.
- 3) NLCS experienced a 1-year transition and vacancy period in hiring a new Principal (Academic Director).

Much of the energies expended by the staff and the Executive Director during the 2009-2010 school year focused on issues related to the relocation and transition process. The distractions created by the relocation and transition inhibited the school's ability to maintain a steady focus on the instructional practices and professional development activities. In addition, the absence of a Principal (Academic Director) for a significant portion of the school year impacted teaching and learning. Given these circumstances, we weren't surprised that the recent upswing in MCAS performance would decline or plateau to some extent. What surprised us is that overall, our students, performed fairly consistently when compared to performances over the last three years despite the level of uncertainty and disruption of the previous months. Despite the slight decline in ELA and no change in Math performance, by 10<sup>th</sup> grade, the critical year upon which high school graduation is based, 0% of our students received a grade of warning/failing in ELA and 7% scored in the warning/failing category for Math.

NLCS started this school year (2010-2011) with a Principal. The new Principal is working with the faculty on refocusing the school's attention to the three components of its mission: academics, leadership, and personal-social development. It is recognized that positive change will come slowly in some areas (e.g., building a culture of support and trust, refocusing on academic rigor, building a climate of self-reflective practice, etc.) while other areas will progress more quickly (e.g., improving communication among all staff members, utilizing staff meeting time more efficiently, evaluating staff performance and building professional capacity, etc.).

- Academics:
  - ✓ Summer PD on unpacking standards and developing essential questions for eliciting higher order thinking and learning conducted by WestEd
  - ✓ Summer PD in use of ATI (Advanced Technologies, Inc.) as an assessment tool for measuring student progress and developing effective targeted instruction
  - ✓ Completing MMSI grant to further develop and expand Advanced Placement course offerings

- ✓ Monthly departmental meetings facilitated by department chairs to discuss teaching, learning, use of data, curriculum mapping and lesson planning
- ✓ Commencement of formal evaluation cycle for teachers and other staff members
- ✓ Frequent classroom walk-throughs and conversations which provide immediate verbal feedback to improve instructional practices
- ✓ Establishing relationship with UMass through a Project Ready-STEM grant with the Urban League of Springfield. Students are afforded the opportunity to meet with faculty from the various UMass campuses while exploring STEM related careers including the health professions
- Leadership:
  - ✓ Creation of the Coordinator of Leadership and Equity Position to provide leadership and oversight of the development of a comprehensive leadership program and Advisory program
  - ✓ More effective planning with school members and outside agencies for Leadership Weeks (September & May)
  - ✓ Broadening community service opportunities for students with local agencies (e.g., Springfield Early Childhood Center, Urban League, and Habitat for Humanity)
- Personal-Social:
  - ✓ Creation of a comprehensive school counseling program emulating key components of the Mass Model.
  - ✓ Piloting an Advisory program which includes lessons on leadership skills, time management, forming and maintaining healthy relationships, conflict resolution, values clarification, and bullying prevention, among others
  - ✓ Establishment of weekly grade level community meetings in which students of each grade discuss issues, plan for fundraisers, and plan for trips or other community related activities, such as Spirit Week.

***Finding 4:*** A determination cannot be made as to whether NLCS met the financial requirements outlined in Condition #4 for the 2010 fiscal year.

**NLCS met two** of the four stated conditions:

- a. Unqualified audit opinions with no material weakness findings. **NLCS met this condition;**
- b. Annual surpluses as determined by audited income statements. **NLCS did not meet this condition**
- c. Current assets exceeding current liabilities as determined by audited balance sheets. **NLCS did not meet this condition;**
- d. Positive unrestricted net assets balances. **NLCS met this condition.**

By the ended of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of FY2010, NLCS was on track to meeting all the financial conditions imposed on its charter by the DESE, despite the increase cost incurred due to the relocation and transition to its new site. Unfortunately, at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of FY2010 the Springfield School District (SPS) informed NLCS that it had made an error in its calculation of the NLCS' Per Pupil Tuition Rate (the formula used to fund NLCS). The Per Pupil Tuition Rate was not \$9,238/pupil as confirmed to NLCS in January 2010 but \$8045/Pupil. Therefore, the FY2010 4<sup>th</sup> quarter disbursement due NLCS from SPS was \$77,000 not the \$350,000 as NLCS expected. NLCS' FY2010 budget was predicated on a Per Pupil Tuition rate of \$9,234 and much of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter spending was already committed. After much negotiation, SPS agreed to honor NLCS' request of \$300,000 for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter disbursement and 'hold the NLCS harmless for SPS error.' Due to the protracted negotiations, NLCS 4<sup>th</sup> quarter receipts were delayed by 2 months,

negatively impacting the school's cash position and increasing operating cost. For the first time since 2008, the school was forced to acquire a \$100,000 short term loan to meet its cash needs.

The SPS' recalculation of the Per Pupil Tuition rate, the negative impact on cash as a result of SPS not releasing our final 4<sup>th</sup> quarter distribution in a timely manner; and the new operational rent expense of \$160,000 imposed by the City of Springfield in FY2010, were contributing factors in NLCS not meeting two of the financial requirements of Condition 4.

**Finding 5:** *The school continues to implement certain aspects of the leadership program, but has not yet developed a comprehensive program.*

Although a comprehensive leadership program has not been fully implemented to date, NLCS is working towards meeting the obligations of its charter by establishing a leadership committee in the spring of 2011. This committee will be staff by the Principal, Coordinator of Leadership and Equity, leadership class teacher, and a member of our CBO—The Urban League of Springfield. It will address the design of a comprehensive leadership program that would establish structure, processes, activities, and evaluations. This committee will evaluate our current leadership activities in order to create a more unified and systematic approach to leadership development.

**Finding 6:** *This condition has been met.*

New Leadership Charter School Board of Trustees shall have received approval from the Commissioner for the minimum number of members required in the approved bylaws. **This condition has been met.** Presently, the board consists of ten members, four of whom are founding members. These board members have expertise in law, business, education, and human resources

**Finding 7:** *This condition has not been met.*

Complete all activities necessary for the acquisition of a new property for the school - fundraising and negotiations - for the relocation process within a two year period. **This condition was not met.**

Within the relatively short time afforded the school to make this difficult transition, NLCS secured a space at its current location on the Holy Name Church site. The facilities were not fully operational at the time of our move. However, since the site visit on October 28, 2010, the chairlift to the cafeteria has become operational. This addresses the program inaccessibility finding in the report. The PQA department of the DESE have scheduled an on site visit for January 19, 2011 to validate that this requirement was met.

## **II. Corroboration and Augmentation of the Information Contained in the School's Annual Report**

### **A. Faithfulness to the Terms of the Charter**

**Finding 8:** *Administrators and board members identified many challenges in working with the district that have impeded them from fully implementing the school's mission, vision, and educational philosophy.*

As indicated in the Site Visit Year 13 Report, there are tensions with the Springfield Public School District (SPS) round what is an adequate funding level for our school. In addition, SPS history of untimely recalculation of the school's funding rate and its continuing tardy disbursement of quarterly receipts to NLCS has had a significant, negative impact on the school's ability to focus on its mission. To mitigate against the financial uncertainty created by SPS' relationship with the school, NLCS negotiated a \$235,000 working capital credit line with its bank (United Bank) last summer.

SPS has historically funded NLCS as if it were a district school – assessing NLCS for the cost of services the City and the district provides to the district schools (schedule 19 deductions) – without providing comparable support to NLCS as to its district schools. In effect, SPS treats NLCS as if it was a Commonwealth Charter School but does not provide it with comparable funding levels. The school is still

negotiating the MOU with SPS that expired June 30, 2010, and SPS appears to be using the school's need for cash to leverage NLCS into an agreement that ensures NLCS's continued under funding. SPS has threatened to withhold disbursement until the MOU is signed. Most recently, despite having resolved most of the hard issues in the negotiation, we were informed that the School Committee has voted to fund the school at the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter FY2010 recalculated rate of \$8,045 until the MOU is signed. Based on a \$8,045 rate, the SPS has under paid NLCS for the first 2 quarters of FY2011 by \$145,000. The SPS is refusing to resolve this underpayment with the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter disbursement and will disburse NLCS 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter payment as if the under payment does not exist.

Given the financial uncertainty of protracted negotiations with SPS, NLCS will be asking for the assistance of the Charter School Office to reach an equitable MOU agreement. The NLCS Board of Trustees is also exploring whether becoming a Commonwealth Charter would better allow them to serve students.

**Finding 9:** *Similar to previous years, the school lacks a fully staffed administrative structure and consistent leadership. In May 2010, the board approved a new organizational structure with three division heads reporting to the CEO. This structure is not yet in place.*

The school administration drafted a new leadership structure last year which includes a CEO with overall responsibility for the school with three leaders reporting to the CEO – a principal in charge of academics, an operations director to oversee finance, facilities and other operations, and a recruitment and retention director to manage student recruitment and retention efforts. The board approved this structure in its May 18 meeting. The principal position was filled in October 2010 and the CEO position is expected to be officially filled by the end of January 2011. The latter two positions, however, are still vacant due to the continued financial insecurity created by the lack of agreement on an MOU with SPS.

In the meantime, the Interim CEO manages the operations with the assistance of a business manager and a facilities manager; and the student recruitment and retention efforts with the assistance of a recruiting coordinator.

**Finding 10:** *NLCS met neither of the two measures related to faithfulness to the charter contained in its accountability plan.*

1. 100 percent of seniors will volunteer at least 40 hours of their personal time in support of a public service organization or initiative.

**NLCS met this measure.** This objective did not assume that 100 percent of these activities would occur outside of the school as the school, itself, is a public service organization. 100 percent of the seniors did volunteer at least 40 hours of their personal time in support of some form of public service activity. The majority of the seniors worked within the school in a variety of capacities from teaching assistants in the middle school grades, to working with administrators on planning for leadership week, performing clerical tasks, assisting with mailings, and tutoring students. A number of students participated in activities with outside agencies including the Read Aloud program at the White Street Elementary School, Toys for Tots and Parent Engagement Program through the Urban League of Springfield. Additionally, a small group of students served as counselors in training at Camp Atwater during the summer.

2. 80 percent of seniors will earn a grade of 85 or better on a Service and Leadership Evaluation Report.

**NLCS did not meet this measure.** This report was not designed for the 2009-2010 school year. However, this year, the Coordinator of Leadership and Equity is piloting a few models for evaluating student performance in their community service and leadership activities.

## **B. Academic Program Success**

### **1. Curriculum**

***Finding 11:** Curriculum maps have been created for most, but not all courses. The content and format varies for some maps, but overall they contain state standards and a course overview.*

Although all maps had been created by the time of the site visit, a few curriculum maps were not released because they were undergoing substantial revision. These included 6<sup>th</sup> grade math, 8<sup>th</sup> grade social studies, and 9<sup>th</sup> grade physics. The vast majority of curriculum maps were completed during the summer PD week and revised throughout September. This was an important step in helping teachers think more critically and comprehensively about their instructional goals and objectives. This also allowed departments to begin to establish unified visions for their departments. The development of curriculum maps over the summer was a continuation of what started the previous year where departments were asked to unpack standards and develop instruction around teaching those standards. At this time, revisions have been completed. Our next steps, for the 2011-2012 school year, are to revisit the content of our courses and begin to develop a unified approach across departments in the sequencing and evaluation of content and performance.

### **2. Instruction and Learning**

***Finding 12:** Site visitors observed a range of instructional effectiveness. The use of the specific elements of the school's instructional model was not seen during the visit.*

The above finding is somewhat misleading as the report **did** indicate that site visitors observe some effective lessons in some of the 27 classrooms that they visited. However, a consistent level of instructional effectiveness was not witnessed across the board. Some of our teachers do excel in meeting such instructional expectations as creating an engaging environment and asking students to think more critically of course content and concepts. Other teachers are struggling to make the necessary paradigm shift from teacher centered to student centered learning, and from lower level expectations to more robust, higher level critical thinking. NLCS recognizes that this is an area that requires consistent attention. Our principal has conducted 18 official teacher evaluations so far this year and helped teachers develop individual improvement plans. In addition, the principal, vice-principle and department heads conduct frequent 'walk-throughs' and provide individual teachers with feedback on the lessons observed. The principal meets with department heads to discuss ways in which they can assist their departmental colleagues on improving instruction. Our monthly faculty departmental meetings focus on instructional practices and using data to evaluate student learning and teacher effectiveness. Future staff meetings will include sharing of best practices, text-based discussions, and modeling effective teaching. On a broader level, we are working with the Collaborative and Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Cooperative to assist middle school ELA teachers on improving teaching practices as they relate to literacy, reading and writing. Additionally, we are working with FYI Networks in modeling a computer-based middle school math teaching and assessment program. Currently 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math teachers are participating.

***Finding 13:** An orderly environment was observed in half of the classroom visits completed by visitors.*

There has been improvement in the application of the Boys Town model in promoting more appropriate behavior among the students. It is also noted that at least half of the classes observed has shown a consistency of approach in terms of established routines and classroom management. This is a significant improvement from last year's site report, where it was indicated that the application of the Boys Town model on overall classroom management was not observed. Thus, progress has been made in increasing the number of effectively managed classrooms. NLCS expects this improvement to continue as our five Boys Town trained consultants continue to focus on the teachers weakest in classroom management.

**Finding 14:** *Students were regularly engaged in lower level activities like copying notes, answering recall questions, and defining key terms. Site visitors observed few examples of higher-level cognitive tasks.*

NLCS is improving instruction across all grade levels and departments. See response to finding 12.

**Finding 15:** *This year, teachers reported satisfaction with the new principal and the improved professional climate.*

Having a principal from the beginning of the school year has positively impacted the school environment. The principal is actively addressing the deficiencies within his scope of responsibility.

**Finding 16:** *The school has changed the structure of Saturday sessions and added two transitional programs with mixed success, a sixth grade transition program and a discontinued ninth grade transition program.*

The majority of our students enter 6<sup>th</sup> grade with math and literacy skills that are 2 to 4 grades below expected levels of performance. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade summer academy was instituted in order to provide students with academic intervention as they transition to middle school. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade academy provides an opportunity for early assessment of students' current levels of abilities while introducing them to NLCS's expectations with regards to leadership, behavior, and academics. 96% of the incoming 6 grade class participated in the program. This initial program was deemed a success by the 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers who have indicated that they were better prepared to work with the incoming students. Unlike the entering 6<sup>th</sup> graders, we did not "require" incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade students to attend the summer academy. As a result, the 9<sup>th</sup> grade program did not generate enough participation and was cancelled.

Although the revised model for Saturday school has generated more interest by the teaching staff, attendance on Saturdays lags weekly attendance. We are continually strategizing ways to improve Saturday attendance and are exploring different models to improve student interest in Saturday school.

### **3. Student Achievement**

**Finding 17:** *English language arts and mathematics MCAS scores for NLCS students changed little between 2008 and 2009 and then declined in 2010.*

*Please refer to earlier discussion on this topic in finding 3.*

**Finding 18:** *Performance on the science MCAS in grades 8 and 10 has increased slightly from 2009 to 2010.*

*Please refer to earlier discussion on this topic in finding 3.*

**Finding 19:** *NLCS met only three of the nine measures related to academic success contained in its accountability plan.*

Please refer to earlier discussions in this report related to this measure in finding 3.

The administration is in the process of revisiting both the School Improvement Plan and its Accountability Plan to more clearly define its standards, goals, processes and evaluations of its progress towards improvement in student achievement.

### **C. Organizational Viability**

**Finding 20:** *The school uses MCAS and ATI data analysis to identify students who are in need of extra help in order to provide targeted instruction through a tutoring program.*

NLCS uses MCAS data to determine student strengths and deficits. This information provides teachers with an overall assessment of what instructional content to emphasize for their incoming students. ATI is used to measure students' skills per quarter. Information derived from these benchmark tests provides teachers with the necessary data for targeted instruction. Students requiring additional concentrated support are referred to the Tutorial Center. The coordinator of the tutorial center analyzes students' skills upon entering the

program and then retests their skill levels after the intervention has been implemented. Depending on student growth, students are flexed out of the program while others are flexed in. The coordinator also compares students' final ATI scores to their MCAS scores to determine the effectiveness of the program. To date, there is a positive 67% correlation between the students' performance on ATI benchmarks after tutoring and their successful performance on the MCAS.

**Finding 21:** Staff did not articulate a clearly defined protocol or system to use data to inform instruction on a regular basis, beyond the tutoring program.

Staff was provided with MCAS results at the beginning of the school year. The data was organized by grade, subject area, and standards. Each department chair met with his/her colleagues to review the data and discuss instructional thrusts for the year. More timely data is provided by the four ATI benchmark exams given throughout the year per grade for ELA, Math, and Science. Staff was trained during the summer of 2009 as well as during the summer of 2010 in the analysis of and the use of ATI data for targeted instruction. Departments meet once a month to discuss content specific issues, strategies and practices. Additionally, staff members are given attendance data periodically for their grade and meet to discuss ways of improving attendance across the board. Each month grade level teams meet to discuss student progress and they use data such as attendance, behavior, teacher generated reports, and course grades to inform their discussions.

**Finding 22:** *The board's oversight has focused on helping the administration negotiate with SPS and the archdiocese about facility and budgetary issues.*

*These discussions are ongoing and challenges have already been stipulated earlier in this report.*

**Finding 23:** *The board has recently reviewed the performance of the CEO for the first time in three years using a formal evaluation instrument.*

*The 2010 school year was the first year of the CEO's position. Thus, this is the first time that such an evaluative tool has been utilized.*

**Finding 24:** *Students reported to feel safe. Classes were observed to be generally safe, with some exceptions. Outside transitions were prone to unsafe behavior.*

*This is one of the challenges of the school's new campus environment. The school is working towards making transitions to and from buildings safer by requiring middle school teachers to escort students to and from the cafeteria and gym. We are currently developing a schedule that would allow for greater staff presence during dismissal time.*

*The application of the Boys Town behavioral management program is being monitored by the trained staff consultants who have begun to visit classes to assist teachers in using this model more effectively. Additionally, we have had several assemblies focusing on bullying prevention and positive behavior, which are supplemented by ongoing discussions during Advisory time.*

**Finding 25:** *All stakeholders agreed that the facility is not ideal for delivering the academic program and are looking forward to locating the school in a permanent home.*

*The Board of Trustees has requested that SPS include a clause in the MOU that states that SPS will advocate for a new and permanent site for NLCS.*

**Finding 26:** *Some special education program issues have been resolved, while others remain problematic.*

We are still in the process of finding a full time coordinator of student services to address all SpEd related issues. We have hired a licensed consultant to assist the school in the interim. Currently the school psychologist and two teachers serve as our STAT team members. We are in the process of finalizing a schedule that would allow for regular meeting time for this team.

**Finding 27:** *English language learner education is not implemented as required. The English language learner program at the school does not provide sheltered English immersion instruction delivered by appropriately trained staff, nor does it provide English language development instruction from a licensed staff.*

*The vast majority of middle school teachers completed category 1 through 4 SEI trainings during the 2009-2010 school year. Several high school teachers are completing category 1 through 4 trainings this year. We still have not been able to secure a licensed ELL teacher to provide direct services to our very small ELL population. We hired an ELL consultant to assist us in utilizing current resources to provide support for our ELL population as we continue our search for a licensed teacher.*

**Finding 28:** *One third of the teaching staff is in either their first or second year of teaching at the school. Twenty one percent (9) of the teaching staff is in their first or second year of teaching.*

*Teacher retention continues to be an issue for the school. This is partly a result of the fact that the charter school tends to attract a younger staff who are inherently more mobile than their more mature counterparts. We have implemented a mentoring program and are providing more opportunities for teachers to take ownership of their development.*

**Finding 29:** *During the family focus group, those parents who were newer to the school expressed a higher degree of satisfaction with the school's performance than other families whose children have attended for a number of years.*

*Recent families did not witness the relocation of 2009-2010. Last year we also placed a lot of emphasis on educating families about the school during the recruiting process. Communications with families continues to improve over previous years. This might account for the greater satisfaction among recent families.*

**Finding 30:** *The school's financial health is uncertain and board and administration recently received a line of credit. Negotiations with the district are ongoing.*

*See discussion in **finding 4** of this report*

**Finding 31:** *NLCS met two measures related to organizational viability contained in its accountability plan. The other two measures could not be assessed because the audit was not complete at the time of the visit.*

*See discussion in finding 4 of this report*