

Mystic Valley Regional Charter School

Summary of Review

February 2013

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Mystic Valley Regional Charter School

770 Salem Street

Malden, MA 02148

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## I. Sources of Evidence for this Document

The charter school regulations state that “[t]he decision by the Board [of Elementary and Secondary Education] to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the success of the school’s academic program; the viability of the school as an organization; and the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter” 603 CMR 1.12(3). Consistent with the regulations, recommendations regarding renewal are based upon the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (Department) evaluation of the school’s performance in these areas. In its review, the Department has considered both the school’s absolute performance at the time of the application for renewal and the progress the school has made during the first four years of its charter. Performance is evaluated against both the [Massachusetts Charter School Common School Performance Criteria](http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/acct.html?section=criteria) and the school’s accountability plan. The evaluation of the school has included a review of the following sources of evidence, all of which are available from the Charter School Office:

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

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

## II. Executive Summary of Charter School Performance

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| ***Mystic Valley Regional Charter School (MVRCS)***  |
| **Type of Charter** | Commonwealth | **Location** | Malden |
| **Regional/Non-Regional** | Regional | **Districts in Region** | Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Stoneham, Wakefield |
| **Year Opened** | 1998 | **Year(s) Renewed** | 2002, 2008 |
| **Maximum Enrollment** | 1,500 | **Current Enrollment** | 1,497 |
| **Students on Waitlist** | 2,383 | **Chartered Grade Span** | K – 12  |

**Mission Statement**

The mission of the Mystic Valley Regional Charter School is to provide the opportunity of a world class education characterized by a well mannered, disciplined and structured academic climate. Central to Mystic Valley’s academic environment is the incorporation of selected core virtues and the fundamental ideals of our American Culture, which are embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution.

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| ESE Common School Performance Criteria | **Charter School Performance** |
| **1. FAITHFULness TO THE TERMS OF the CHARTER** |
| **Mission, Vision, and Educational Philosophy**:The school is faithful to the mission, vision and educational philosophy defined in the charter application and any subsequent approved amendment(s). | * MVRCS has operated in a manner consistent with its mission throughout the course of its charter.
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| **2. Academic Program Success** |
| **MCAS - performance:**Students at the school demonstrate proficiency, or progress toward meeting proficiency targets on state standards, as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exams in all subject areas and at all grade levels tested for accountability purposes. | * Student MCAS performance has been strong and stable over the term of the charter in ELA and mathematics. Science performance has been less strong.
 |
| **MCAS - growth:**The school achieves and maintains a median student growth percentile (SGP) of 50 or higher in the aggregate and for all statistically significant sub-groups in all subject areas tested for accountability purposes.  | * Over the course of the charter the school’s median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) has been above the state median of 50 for ELA and mathematics in all years except 2010.
 |
| **External assessments of student achievement:**If externally-developed assessments other than the MCAS are administered, student performance is strong and demonstrates improvement over time on those assessments. | * MVRCS administers the Iowa test of Basic Skills (ITBS) as its primary external measure of progress in grades K through 9. High school students participate in three to four different external assessments each year.
 |
| **Internal assessments of student achievement:**Student performance is strong and demonstrates improvement on internally-developed assessments of academic achievement.  | MVRCS uses internal assessments to track student progress and determine student placements by ability level primarily in elementary grades. |
| **Curriculum:**The school’s curriculum is documented, articulates the skills and concepts that all students must know and be able to do to meet state standards, is aligned horizontally and vertically, and supports opportunities for all students to master these skills and concepts. | * During the course of the charter, MVRCS has developed a rigorous, fully documented K through 12 curricula that is aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (MCF). The curriculum is commercially created, data driven, and continually refined throughout the school year.
 |
| **Instruction:**School-wide instructional practice is aligned with the school design, instructional expectations, and curriculum. Instruction is effectively delivered and conveys clear expectations to students.The use of classroom time maximizes meaningful student learning. Students are actively engaged in learning. | * Throughout the course of the charter, school wide delivery of instruction has been efficient and consistent. Classroom time is maximized for learning at all levels. Higher-order thinking skills occur more frequently in the upper grades.
 |
| **Classroom and school environment:**The classroom and school environment is orderly, supports the goal of student understanding and mastery of skills, and is consistent with the school’s mission.  | * The MVRCS classroom and school environment strongly supports student learning. Students know what is expected of them and follow routines. There are few distractions that interfere with student learning.
 |
| **Diverse learners:**The school provides services for all students, including English language learners and those with disabilities and/or special education needs, as required by law. The school implements and follows a Department approved recruitment and retention plan. | * The school has supports in place for all students, including students with diverse learning needs, to fully participate in the general education curriculum. The school implements a District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) that describes programmatic supports available to students and facilitates classroom accommodations for diverse learners.
* The school has systems and structures in place to service students who require special education services.
* Accommodations are made in the general education classroom for special education students pursuant to the specifications of their IEPs. Education is provided to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.
* A self-evaluation of the special education program has been performed. The self-evaluation analyzes the school’s success in promoting positive educational outcomes for students enrolled in special education as measured by multiple measures of student achievement.
* Supervisory relations are clear, and staff is supported in their work with students.
* Until 2012, subgroup achievement in mathematics for students with disabilities had been a consistent challenge.
* Procedures are in place to identify students who are potentially ELL.
* The majority of current staff has received Category I and Category 4 training needed to provide SEI instruction. Eight teachers are qualified MELA-O administrators.
* The school has increased its steps to make special education and ELL programs visible and accessible to all students and families. In response to the findings contained the in the renewal inspection report, some changes were made to improve the visibility of available services at the school in order to increase enrollment of diverse students.
 |
| **Professional climate:**Teachers are provided with feedback and guidance that leads to improved instructional practice and student achievement.The school implements a professional development plan that effectively addresses the needs of teachers. Teachers are provided with structures for collaboration.The school establishes a professional climate resulting in a purposeful learning environment and reasonable rates of retention for school administrators, teachers and staff. | * MVRCS has created a professional teaching climate that promotes a purposeful learning environment. Teachers participate in regular professional development, are formally evaluated, receive embedded coaching from staff and external consultants, and collaborate with one another on lesson design.
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| **3. viable organization** |
| **Solvency and stability:**The school develops an annual budget that can be sustained by enrollment and is in support of student academic achievement.The school demonstrates a history of positive net assets, adequate cash flow to sustain operations and support the academic program, and consistently operates within budget. The school’s annual independent audit is free of material or repeated findings. | * MVRCS has consistently demonstrated financial strength, with a history of positive net assets. The school received unqualified audit opinions during the current charter term though recent audit reports have included findings.
 |
| **Board accountability:**The board of trustee is responsible to the school community(ies) it serves. | * The MVRCS board of trustees has been stable and remains committed to the vision and mission originally conceived when the school was chartered. The board maintains close involvement in all aspects of the school and is functioning in a management, rather than governance, capacity. The board does not formally involve a broad sampling of stakeholders in some major decisions, such as the development of a strategic plan or the appointment of a director.
* The board of trustees appears to have convened executive sessions that may not comply with the requirements of the state’s open meeting law, and some board committees may not have prepared meeting minutes as required by the open meeting law.
 |
| **School leadership:**School leaders administer the school in a manner that ensures academic success, organizational viability, and faithfulness to the terms of its charter.  | The leadership team has been stable and is effective in its efforts to promote the academic success, ensure the organizational viability, and implement the mission of MVRCS. |
| Family engagement:The school involves parents/guardians as partners in the education of their children.Families and students are satisfied with the school’s program. | * MVRCS families are satisfied with the school’s academic program as well as the school’s culture, communications, and support.
 |
| **Coordinated Program Review:**The school receives minimal findings in the Coordinated Program Review (CPR) process and immediately addresses any areas of non-compliance. | * The last full Coordinated program Review (CPR) activity at MVRCS was conducted in October 2007 with the final report published in May, 2008. A mid-cycle review was conducted in April 2011. No findings of non-compliance were made as a result of the mid-cycle review.
* The school’s academic buildings are programmatically accessible for disabled persons.
 |
| **Safety:**The school establishes and maintains a physically safe environment for students and staff.The school establishes an environment free from harassment and discrimination for students and staff, and effectively addresses the social, emotional, and health needs of its students. | * MVRCS has established an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and staff.
 |
| **Facilities:**The school provides facilities that meet applicable state and federal requirements. The school’s facilities are suited to its program and are sufficient to serve diverse student needs. | * MVRCS has adequate facilities for delivering the school programs. The school has made significant improvements by adding space for classrooms and athletic facilities.
 |
| **Dissemination:**The school has collaborated with its sending district(s) on the sharing of innovative practices and has provided models for replication and best practices. | * MVRCS shares its best practices with some sending districts. The school has been designated by the Core Knowledge Foundation as an official Visitation School.
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| **4. Other areas**  |
| **ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES** |
| **Faithfulness to Charter:** | * MVRCS has met all three measures in its accountability plan related to faithfulness to charter.
 |
| **Academic Success:** | * MVRCS has met five of six measures in its accountability plan related to academic achievement.
 |
| **Organizational Viability:** | * MVRCS has met all three measures in its accountability plan related to organizational viability.
 |

## III. School Amendments, History, and Demographics

Major Amendments

MVRCS requested the following major amendments during the charter term:

1. 2011: MVRCS submitted a request to the Commissioner to increase maximum enrollment from 1,500 students to 1,900 students. The request was not granted.
2. 2012: MVRCS has submitted a request to increase maximum enrollment from 1,500 students to 1,900 students. This request will be considered at the same time as the school’s Application for Renewal.

Demographics

The following table compares demographic data of the charter school to the Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Stoneham, and Wakefield districts from which it draws most of its students, and to the state. The comparison includes 42 schools in the district with grade levels that overlap with the charter school.

* Comparison Minimum refers to the school(s) among the 42 schools with the lowest percentage of students in a given category.
* Comparison Median refers to the school(s) among the 42 schools with the middle percentage of students in a given category.
* Comparison Maximum refers to the school(s) among the 42 schools with the highest percentage of students in a given category.
* The Percentage of Total represents the percentage of the total number of students in a given category in all 42 schools combined.

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| Org Code | **Race/Ethnicity (%)**  | African American | Asian | Hispanic | White | Native American | Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic |
|   | Mystic Valley Regional Charter School | 16.5% | 13.8% | 5.0% | 61.1% | 0.3% | 0.0% | 3.3% |
| (42 Schools) | Comparison Minimum | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.8% | 26.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
|   | Comparison Median | 12.0% | 4.7% | 7.3% | 71.6% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 2.6% |
|   | Comparison Maximum | 27.9% | 32.8% | 52.0% | 93.9% | 1.2% | 2.1% | 6.8% |
|   |  Comparison Total | 13.3% | 9.1% | 16.3% | 58.2% | 0.3% | 0.2% | 2.6% |
| State | State | 8.3% | 5.7% | 16.1% | 67.0% | 0.2% | 0.1% | 2.5% |
|   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Org Code | **Other Demographics (%)** | Males | Females | First Language Not English | Limited English Proficient | Special Education | Low-Income |  |
|   | Mystic Valley Regional Charter School | 46.9% | 53.1% | 16.1% | 0.0% | 11.2% | 22.0% |  |
| (42 Schools) | Comparison Minimum | 45.3% | 38.2% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 5.5% | 4.7% |  |
|   | Comparison Median | 51.4% | 48.6% | 12.8% | 3.5% | 15.0% | 31.9% |  |
|   | Comparison Maximum | 61.8% | 54.7% | 64.1% | 28.9% | 100.0% | 89.8% |  |
|   |  Comparison Total | 51.3% | 48.7% | 27.6% | 8.6% | 14.7% | 44.0% |  |
| State | State | 51.3% | 48.7% | 16.7% | 7.3% | 17.0% | 35.2% |  |

## IV. Areas of Accountability

### A. Faithfulness to Charter

School performance in relation to the ESE Massachusetts Charter School Common School Performance Criteria

**Consistency of school operations with the school’s charter and approved charter amendments**

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

*Finding: MVRCS has operated in a manner consistent with its mission throughout the course of its charter.*

During the year twelve site visit, site visitors found that the school provided a rigorous academic program, character development, and a structured learning environment. Consistent with its mission, MVRCS has continued to provide strong academics, an education that stresses morals and virtues, and preparation for college.

The school has continued to pursue the goal of moral development through the academic program design and through a schoolwide culture of consistent behavioral expectations. The school continues to offer a character education curriculum provided to students daily in grades K through 10, followed by civics instruction in grades 11 and 12. Lower and middle grades students reported that these classes help them become better people by discussing or journaling about weekly and monthly virtues. MVRCS also employs two versions of the same behavior management systems, one for grades K-6, the other for grades 7-12. The year twelve site visit team confirmed that students were well-mannered and respectful to each other and to teachers.

The year twelve site visit also confirmed MVRCS’s rigorous academic program. Since its inception, MVRCS has adopted four curricular programs that guide the academic program and inform the pedagogical approach. Founded as a Direct Instruction school, in the twelfth year school administrators described MVRCS as a hybrid of four models: the Direct Instruction, Core Knowledge, Saxon Math, and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. The curricular programs aim to prepare MVRCS students for college. At the high school, classes are designated as college prep, honors, high honors, IB Standard Level, and IB Higher Level. Students in grades nine through twelve participate in college preparatory courses or IB courses in grades eleven and twelve. High school students prepare for the college application process and develop citizenship through the school’s community service component which requires a minimum of 150 hours of service for graduation.

Similar to the year twelve site visit team, the renewal inspection team reported that MVRCS’s mission was consistently integrated into the school day. During the 2012 renewal inspection visit, the school’s mission and vision were consistently described for the team by all interviewed stakeholders. Members of the board of trustees, school leaders, teachers, students, and parents described MVRCS as a school where students had the opportunity to receive a “world class” education where students are expected to develop a strong appreciation and understanding of American citizenship and values through daily coursework and routines.

**Accountability plan objectives and measures**

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

*Finding: MVRCS has met all three measures in its accountability plan related to faithfulness to charter.*

A charter school creates an accountability plan to set objectives in each of the three areas of charter school accountability for the charter term and to show growth through time. MVRCS has reported against an accountability plan that was approved in March 2009. The accountability plan includes one objective and three measures related to faithfulness to charter. The objective states that the students at MVRCS will contribute to their community and develop a knowledge of the core virtues and fundamental ideals of American Culture. A summary of the school’s success in meeting the objectives and measures contained in its accountability plan can be found in Section V of this report.

### B. Academic Program

School performance in terms of ESE Massachusetts Charter School Common School Performance Criteria

**MCAS performance and growth**

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

*Finding: Student MCAS performance has been strong and stable over the term of the charter in ELA and mathematics. Science performance has been less strong. Over the course of the charter the school’s median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) has been above the state median of 50 for ELA and mathematics in all years except 2010.*

During this charter term, MVRCS students annually completed the MCAS grade three reading assessment, the grades four through eight English language arts (ELA) assessments, the grades three through eight mathematics assessments, and the grades five, eight, and high school science and technology assessments. The following analyses present MCAS performance data on the tests in reading, ELA, mathematics, and science. Median SGPs are provided in the aggregate for ELA and mathematics. Additionally, grade level data is available on the ESE website: <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>

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| ***MVRCS Median Student Growth Percentile*** |
| **Year** | **2009** | **2010** | **2011** | **2012** |
| **English Language Arts** | **52.0** | **45.0** | **56.0** | **52.0** |
| **Mathematics** | **53.5** | **48.0** | **53.0** | **54.0** |

**ELA MCAS for MVRCS**

**All grades**

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**Math MCAS for MVRCS**

**All grades**

****

**Science MCAS for MVRCS**

**All grades**

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**Meeting State Targets**

Beginning with the 2012-13 school year, accountability reports have changed significantly as a result of Massachusetts’ waiver of certain No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements: the NCLB goal of 100 percent proficiency is replaced with a new goal of reducing proficiency gaps by half by 2017; the NCLB accountability status labels of improvement, corrective action, and restructuring are eliminated; only state accountability and assistance levels are used for districts and schools, including charter schools; Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is replaced with a new performance measure (the Progress and Performance Index, or PPI) that incorporates student growth and other indicators, including science and dropout rates; and reports show a new "high needs" subgroup, an unduplicated count of all students in a school or district belonging to at least one of the following individual subgroups: students with disabilities, English language learners (ELL) and former ELL students, or low income students. Under the new Massachusetts accountability system, the school’s 2011 MCAS performance serves as the baseline for future school performance targets.

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MVRCS’s four year graduation rate for the 2009, 2010, and 2011 cohorts are as follows: 100 percent, 95.7 percent, and 95.9 percent respectively. Full graduation rate details can be found here: [provide web link to the school’s profile page – the student/grade rate. Example: <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/grad/grad_report.aspx?orgcode=04790505&orgtypecode=6&&fycode=2011> ]

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**External measures of student achievement**

**If externally-developed assessments other than the MCAS are administered, student performance is strong and demonstrates improvement over time.**

*Finding: MVRCS administers the Iowa test of Basic Skills (ITBS) as its primary external measure of progress in grades K through 9. High school students participate in three to four different external assessments each year.*

In addition to the MCAS tests, MVRCS administers the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) as its primary external measure of progress in grades K through 9. The Application for Renewal and school documents provided to the renewal inspection team showed that for grades K-8 between spring 2011 and 2012, the ITBS scores showed 1.54 year’s growth in reading, 1.39 year’s growth in language, 1.18 year’s growth in math, with an average “core” growth of 1.27. The school also administers the PSAT (Grades 10-11), all seniors take the SAT, national Spanish and Latin exams (taken by all students in those respective classes), and the IB exams, which consist of six assessments over the two-year program in grades 11 and 12. The school’s 2011-2012 annual report showed that 7 of 10 seniors enrolled in the IB Diplomas Programme earned IB diplomas.

**Internal measures of student achievement**

**Student performance is strong and demonstrates improvement over time on internally-developed assessments of academic achievement.**

*Finding: MVRCS uses internal assessments to track student progress and determine student placements by ability level primarily in elementary grades.*

MVRCS uses internal assessments in grades K through 3 to track student progress and determine student placement in ability groups; students must demonstrate 80 percent mastery to progress to the next group. McGraw Hill’s SRA benchmark tests are used to assess students’ reading levels; the professional development coordinators use writing tests as well as unit tests for history and science. Department chairs reported using unit tests and projects as internal assessments. According to the professional development coordinators and department chairs, all assessments are consistent across the grade levels and subjects and must be approved by them.

**Curriculum**

**The school’s curriculum is documented, articulates the skills and concepts that all students must know and be able to do to meet state standards, is aligned horizontally and vertically, and supports opportunities for all students to master these skills and concepts.**

*Finding: During the course of the charter, MVRCS has developed a rigorous, fully documented K through 12 curricula that is aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (MCF). The curriculum is commercially created, data driven, and continually refined throughout the school year.*

The year twelve site visit found that MVRCS had created curriculum maps for each grade level that aligned to the MCF. The curriculum maps aligned the topics taught each month in each subject area with the MCF. Some of the maps also listed the specific Core Knowledge, Direct Instruction, or Saxon Math lessons. Maps also included assessments given. During year twelve, teachers documented and stored weekly lesson plans in physical binders or electronically via a website known as TeacherWeb. High school teachers created a syllabus for each course taught. Course syllabi varied in their content and format, but all communicated basic expectations and objectives of each class. Teachers also created weekly lesson plans which were reviewed by the school’s two professional development coordinators (PDCs) for grades kindergarten through six, or by the department chairs for grades seven through twelve.

The renewal inspection visit found that MVRCS has developed their detailed curriculum maps into a fully documented, rigorous curriculum. MVRCS students progress through the school’s core academic curriculum models: Direct Instruction in grades K through 5; Core Knowledge in grades K-8; Saxon Math in grades K through high school Algebra II; and college preparatory courses in grades 9 through 12, or IB programs in grades 11 and 12. The school also has a character education curriculum provided to students daily in grades K through 10, followed by civics instruction in grades 11 and 12. The Direct Instruction curriculum is fully scripted and includes teachers’ oral instructions to anticipated responses and corrective procedures.

Since the school uses commercial curricula, little needs to be done to assure horizontal and vertical alignment. Most lessons are fully developed and ready for teachers to use. Teachers develop their own lessons for teaching novels; these lessons must be approved by the professional development coordinators. Teachers are required to submit their lesson plans to the professional development coordinators one week in advance. In grades 7 through 12, the assistant director and the department heads submit proposed curricular changes to the director and board of trustees for approval.

**Instruction**

**School-wide instructional practice is aligned with the school design, instructional expectations, and the curriculum. Instruction is effectively delivered and conveys clear expectations to students. The use of classroom time maximized meaningful student learning. Students are actively engaged in learning.**

*Finding: Throughout the course of the charter, school wide delivery of instruction has been efficient and consistent. Classroom time is maximized for learning at all levels. Higher-order thinking skills occur more frequently in the upper grades.*

During the year twelve site visit, school administrators informed visitors that they would see the use of the school’s four commercial curricula, teacher-led instruction, and the teacher serving as the intellectual authority in the classroom during instruction. Administrators also noted that visitors should find instructional consistency throughout the school. True to these expectations, instruction was overwhelmingly consistent from class to class, particularly in the lower school. Use of the Core Knowledge and Direct Instruction curriculum was evident in all lower school classrooms. Lower school teachers presented lesson plans from the scripted curriculum, directed all classroom activity, and students answered teacher prompts with choral responses. In the middle and high school classes, instruction was also teacher-led, with the majority of instructional time devoted to lecture, note-taking, or teacher directed questioning. In these classes, student participation was guided by teacher prompts – usually asking students to recall factual information.

During the renewal inspection site visit, the following instructional characteristics were expected to be observed in classrooms: evidence of the school’s mission statement; evidence of items that represent the fundamental ideals of American culture; a structured environment; a well-disciplined environment; an intellectually challenging environment; full class participation in the lesson; positive rapport between teachers and students; objective posted on board in grades 9 through 12; and group work, particularly in the lower school. The instructional practices described by school leaders were implemented throughout the school in most categories. Of the identified instructional practices, the results around the use of higher-order thinking skills were the least strong. The renewal inspection team observed few instances of higher-order thinking in grades 1 through 6, more frequent instances in grades 7 and 8, and greater frequency in grades 9 through 12. In the lower school, for example, the instruction was skills-based and that the discussion revolved around the recall of factual detail in a reading text or the practice of procedural steps in mathematics. By contrast, in a high honors biology lab, students were in groups collecting and analyzing data to describe the effect of changes in enzyme concentration.

**Classroom and school environment**

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

*Finding: The MVRCS classroom and school environment strongly supports student learning. Students know what is expected of them and follow routines. There are few distractions that interfere with student learning.*

MVRCS employs two behavior management systems, one for the lower and one for the middle and high schools. In the lower school, teachers use a color card system. As students receive warnings for misbehavior, the teacher will change the color of their card from green to yellow to red. In grades seven through twelve, students carry a weekly planner (an “A-Plan”). Teachers will note infractions in this A-Plan such as uniform violations, tardiness, or talking during instruction. During the year twelve site visit, students understood the consequences for misbehavior and confirmed that the system was consistently applied.

In addition to consistent behavioral expectations and procedures, MVCRS provides students with a highly structured and orderly learning environment. The use of commercial curriculum in the lower school dictates both student and teacher actions during instructional activities. Nearly all of lower school students participate in the lesson activities in accordance to teacher directives. A majority of students answered when prompted, responded to teacher cues in a uniform manner, and knew routines related to the Direct Instruction model. In middle and high school classes, teachers do not use the same call and response teaching methods used in the lower school, but in these classes as well, most students complied with teacher directions.

Similar to the year twelve site visit, the renewal inspection visit found an effective and efficient classrooms and school environment. The school’s focus on learning, consistent expectations for student work, use of ability-based grouping in the lower grades, and high expectations for positive student behavior in all grades create an environment that supports student learning. High school students and parents described the school climate as close, caring, inclusive, and supportive, particularly since many of the students have been together since elementary grades. The school’s disciplinary system of expectations and consequences is clear. Students noted that the character education program enhances their understanding of values that support academic success.

**Diverse learners**

**The school provides services for all students, including English language learners and those with disabilities and/or special education needs, as required by law. The school establishes and implements an accommodation plan that addresses the needs of diverse learners.**

MVRCS received one federal programs visit during the charter term, a federal programs renewal inspection visit in March 2012. The purpose of the renewal inspection is to examine the school’s implementation of curriculum accommodations and modifications, how programs of special education and English language learner (ELL) education meet the needs of students, and the process by which program effectiveness is evaluated by the school. The findings from the Federal Programs Renewal Inspection Report are summarized below:

*Finding: The school has supports in place for all students, including students with diverse learning needs, to fully participate in the general education curriculum. The school implements a District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) that describes programmatic supports available to students and facilitates classroom accommodations for diverse learners.*

The school’s DCAP describes a number of programmatic supports available to students including routinely available after school support, use of high school students as tutors for students in grades 1 and 2, MCAS remediation classes held on two afternoons weekly, as well as on Saturdays, and use of Academic Concern plans for targeted students. Additional academic support is available through the Student Action Service (SAC), a component of the school’s community service requirements. Students who are experiencing academic difficulty are discussed first with the grade level team leader, then in grade level team meetings, and initial interventions are implemented to support the student in the classroom. If the student continues to struggle a Child Study Team (CST) convenes and formal documentation begins regarding the student’s case. Additional interventions are implemented, and the CST meets weekly to track the student’s progress. A special education referral is made when needed.

*Finding: The school has systems and structures in place to service students who require special education services.*

The special education program is overseen by a qualified and licensed special education administrator. Ten qualified special education teachers provide services to students enrolled in special education. One paraprofessional does inclusion support in the general education classroom.

Finding: Accommodations are made in the general education classroom for special education students pursuant to the specifications of their IEPs. Education is provided to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

The large majority of students in need of special education are served in fully inclusive settings. The school’s use of Direct Instruction as a curriculum and teaching methodology routinely includes many accommodations such as reading instructions back to the teacher, and breaking down instructions, as well as support for regular use of student’s organizational binders. The school’s model of instruction calls for leveled groupings providing the school with an additional dimension in which to respond to student needs. Extensive accommodation and specialized instruction was observed to be delivered in the general education classrooms both with direct support from inclusion teachers, and by general education teachers, with consultation from qualified special educators.

Staff and administrators interviewed or in focus groups reported that students receive all services in the amount and manner specified in their IEPs. Both general educators and special educators in focus groups confirmed that accommodations specified in student’s IEPs are routinely and consistently implemented in the general education classrooms. Classroom observations confirmed the delivery of accommodations as described in the IEPs including the use of graphic organizers, preferential seating, frequent check-ins with the teacher, and modified materials including tests and handouts.

When graphic organizers are needed by one or more students in a classroom the organizers are provided to all students in the class, in order to minimize the extent to which students receiving accommodations are identifiable amongst their peers. Related services are provided by contracted staff, including occupational therapy and speech and language therapy.

*Finding: A self-evaluation of the special education program has been performed. The self-evaluation analyzes the school’s success in promoting positive educational outcomes for students enrolled in special education as measured by multiple measures of student achievement.*

A variety of data sources are utilized in developing the self-evaluation including input from the special education parent advisory council, a review of special education student records for compliance with documentation requirements, and student assessment results, including the fall and spring ITBS administration. As a result of the most recent self-evaluation, including a review of the MCAS long composition and open response section, changes were made to the graphic organizers used so they mirrored the response structure required for the examination.

*Finding: Supervisory relations are clear, and staff is supported in their work with students.*

Special educators and related services providers report that formal supervision and formal evaluation of teachers, as well as instructional leadership and guidance is provided by the special education administrator. Teachers stated that supervisory relationships are clearly defined and that they felt supported in their work. Special education teachers are regularly observed and feedback is provided. Additional special education staff observations and oversight is conducted by the professional development coordinator, who is the school’s assistant charter school leader, as well as by department heads in grades 7-12.

*Finding: Until 2012, subgroup achievement in mathematics for students with disabilities had been a consistent challenge.*

MCAS performance of the students with disabilities subgroup in ELA showed improvement in 2011, but was below targets between 2009 and 2010, and again in 2012. Overall, the school is now a Level 1 school for accountability, given their success in meeting gap narrowing goals, including those for the students with disabilities subgroup.

The school’s implementation of targeted supports, including the MCAS remediation program and increased after school support, has resulted in improved MCAS scores: the school met accountability improvement targets in 2012 for students with disabilities. The students with disabilities subgroup’s mathematics performance on the MCAS in 2012 showed improvement that was above target. In contrast, this subgroup’s performance on the ELA MCAS was below target in 2012 again, as it had been for five of the six previous years. The school attributes improvements to increased participation of students in the six hour per week program of MCAS remediation, as well as increased use of plans for students on Academic Concern, increased numbers of special education staff, and the introduction of looping procedures in special education staffing for K-8 students on IEPs.

Finding: Procedures are in place to identify students who are potentially ELL.

The school administers a Home Language Survey to all newly enrolled students. About 235 students presently enrolled at MVRCS, or 16 percent of the school’s SY 2011-2012 total student enrollment, have reported a home language other than English, but none have been identified as ELL. The primary language groups identified include Chinese (62 students), Vietnamese (48), Creole (35) and Arabic (28). When a student is identified as potentially limited English proficient through the initial identification process, a qualified assessor is contacted to administer initial assessments of language proficiency to the student. The school’s previous practice of assessing incoming students for ELL needs beginning in only in grade 1 has been amended so that incoming Kindergarten students who are potentially ELLs are now assessed when they begin attending the school. There is presently no ELL teacher employed by the school, and as no ELL students have been identified, none is required. In the event that one or more ELL students were to be enrolled, an appropriately licensed teacher would need to be hired.

Finding: The majority of current staff has received Category I and Category 4 training needed to provide SEI instruction. Eight teachers are qualified MELA-O administrators.

Although no ELL students are presently enrolled in the school, additional trainings in the RETELL initiative, for teachers to receive the new SEI endorsement, and to be ready to administer ACCESS for ELLs, will need to be implemented for the school be fully prepared to serve and ELL s who may enroll in the future. The state training system is presently in transition and the required training modules will be made available by the state beginning in the spring of 2013.

*Finding: The school has increased its steps to make special education and ELL programs visible and accessible to all students and families. In response to the findings contained the in the renewal inspection report, some changes were made to improve the visibility of available services at the school in order to increase enrollment of diverse students.*

The school has begun actively recruiting students with diverse learning needs using advertisements in local foreign language newspapers and targeted recruitment in Malden and Everett. MVRCS enrolls a smaller percentage of ELL students than its primary sending districts (Malden and Everett). The school’s website and enrollment policy state that the school does not discriminate on the basis of disability or proficiency in English. However, the school provides limited information regarding programming for ELLs. Additionally, it is difficult to access important enrollment forms on the school’s website and some documents could not be located by the renewal inspection team. There are no references to ELL program availability in the Parent-Student Handbook. The school lists minimal information regarding special education programming on its website. The one reference to whether MVRCS provides special education services in the FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) could be misunderstood by parents of students with disabilities, given the disclaimer that MVRCS meets student needs “except in extreme circumstances.”

**Professional Climate**

**Teachers are provided with feedback, guidance, professional development, and opportunities for collaboration that lead to improved instructional practice and student achievement. The school establishes a professional climate resulting in a purposeful learning environment and reasonable rates of retention for school administrators, teachers, and staff.**

*Finding: MVRCS has created a professional teaching climate that promotes a purposeful learning environment. Teachers participate in regular professional development, are formally evaluated, receive embedded coaching from staff and external consultants, and collaborate with one another on lesson design.*

During year twelve and the renewal inspection, the site visit teams found that MVRCS had a consistent and well understood process for evaluation, supervision, and guidance of teachers. The school’s expectations for excellent instruction were clearly communicated through the teacher evaluation tools. Teachers were formally evaluated twice a year – mid-year and at the end of the year. Additionally, teachers received frequent informal observations. The Professional Development Coordinators (PDC) and assistant director of the lower school are responsible for both formal and informal observations; the department chairs and the assistant director of the high school complete these duties for the seventh through twelfth grade teachers. MVRCS teachers receive merit pay which is tied to their performance (based on observations and evaluations), how long they have stayed at the school, and their grade level performance on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) tests.

Once a month, MVRCS devotes half a day to professional development. During the summer the school requires teachers to attend in-house trainings related to the school’s instructional models. The school supports individual teachers who might request to attend a Core Knowledge, IB, Direct Instruction, or Saxon Math conference. New teachers participate in a mentoring program which was established during the previous charter term. Participating teachers are required to shadow an experienced teacher throughout the year. MVRCS has a practice of hiring approximately eight “floating” teachers each year. These teachers serve as in-house substitutes, and allow the school to thoroughly train “floating” teachers in the school’s instructional models. The school has created a collegial atmosphere in which teachers are encouraged to observe their peers, seek instructional support from one another, and request specific professional development topics be provided.

MVRCS continues to foster a strong professional climate. The renewal inspection team found that MVRCS continues to devote two weeks before school opens to provide extensive professional development for teachers. At the lower school, professional development coordinators and the assistant director visit classes informally and provide feedback to teachers. The professional development coordinators model lessons and coach teachers, providing on the spot guidance to improve instruction. They also observe best practices and arrange for teachers who need help to shadow and observe stronger teachers. The assistant director and department chairs perform the same function at the high school. In addition, the school’s assessment system provides administrators with bi-weekly information on student progress that they then discuss with each teacher. Teachers receive a formal evaluation of their practice twice a year from either the assistant director or a professional development coordinator.

**Accountability plan objectives and measures**

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

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

MVRCS’s accountability plan includes one objective and six measures related to academic achievement. MVRCS did not meet the measure related to Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2011, the most recent year for which AYP information was reported by the ESE. In 2011, MVRCS did not make AYP in mathematics in the aggregate or in all subgroups. A summary of the school’s success in meeting the objectives and measures contained in its accountability plan can be found in Section V of this report.

### C. Organizational Viability

School performance in terms of ESE Massachusetts Charter School Common School Performance Criteria

**Financial management, solvency, and stability**

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

*Finding: MVRCS has consistently demonstrated financial strength, with a history of positive net assets. The school received unqualified audit opinions during the current charter term though recent audit reports have included findings.*

The school’s budget has been supported by tuition reimbursement or a combination of tuition and fundraising, as evidenced by annual surpluses. MVRCS has recorded a positive change in net assets in each year of the charter term and had a net asset balance of $19,881,659 on June 30, 2012 of which $6,219,015 is unrestricted, 42 percent of its annual operating budget.

From fiscal year 2009 (FY09) through FY12 the school has received unqualified audit opinions. Audits have been free of findings of material weaknesses though audits for FY11 and FY12 contained findings of significant deficiency. The FY11 audit contained three findings and questioned costs for federal awards relating to procurement policies and debarment procedures for disbursement of federal funds; accounting for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) expenditures; and recording of time and semi-annual certification of employees time charged to special education and ARRA grants. The first finding noted the procurement policy did not ensure no payments were provided to any vendors disbarred from receiving federal funds. The second noted that expenses charged to the ARRA grant were not discreetly accounted for, separate from non ARRA expenses. The third noted required procedures for charging of employee salary to two federal grants were not followed. The FY12 audit reported that MVRCS had put practices in place to remedy the first and third finding and noted those findings resolved. The second finding, regarding lack of discrete accounting for ARRA federal grant funds, recurred in FY12 and the finding of noncompliance with ARRA regulations was continued.

Administrators reported that they have implemented a new accounting software in the 2012-13 school year which allows for discrete grant accounting.

MVRCS currently occupies four academic facilities, owning three school buildings and leasing one from the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston with a lease through August 2013. Long term debt of the real estate holdings was financed through a Massachusetts Development Finance Agency revenue bond with a fixed interest rate of 3.4 percent. The revenue bond interest rate resets in 2022 and again in 2032 indexed to the ten year classic FHLB rate. The bond debt as of June 30, 2012 was $7,773,049; capital assets, net of depreciation, were $21,251,713. The FY12 audit and renewal inspection report the school is currently negotiating with the City of Malden to purchase an additional facility for use by the high school program and the board of trustee’s capital plan for FY13 includes $1,350,000 for this purpose.

The year twelve site visit and renewal inspection reports note that the board of trustees is actively engaged in the financial oversight of MVRCS. The board has a finance subcommittee which meets monthly, in contrast to other committees which meet as needed. The board also receives monthly updates from the school business manager. Additionally the board oversees the real estate, including the acquisition of property, capital plan allocations, and renovations.

The school does not have a related foundation or public charity.

**Board governance, accountability, and oversight**

**The members of the board understand their responsibilities and are engaged in oversight of the school’s academic progress and financial condition. The board of trustees regularly and systematically assesses the performance of (the) school leader(s) against clearly defined goals and makes effective and timely use of the evaluations.**

*Finding: The MVRCS board of trustees has been stable and remains committed to the vision and mission originally conceived when the school was chartered. The board maintains close involvement in all aspects of the school and is functioning in a management, rather than governance, capacity. The board does not formally involve a broad sampling of stakeholders in some major decisions, such as the development of a strategic plan or the appointment of a director.*

Over the course of the charter, board members have provided a clear description of the school’s mission and educational philosophy: a world class education and a well-mannered, disciplined, and structured environment. They also stressed the commitment of the school to American values, especially the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The MVRCS board consists of five members, all of whom have served on the board for 12 years or more. During the previous charter term, in 2007, the ESE informed MVRCS that they should add term limits to their bylaws to comply with the guidance on best practices as outlined in the ESE *Charter School Administrative and Governance Guide*; the school refused to comply with this request.

The board’s by-laws and the Application for Renewal state that the role of the board is to establish policy, to hire and evaluate the director, to promote awareness in the community of the opportunities provided by the school, and to oversee the school’s finances and contracts. The ESE *Charter School Administrative and Governance Guide* states that by-laws should “[p]rohibit the board of trustees from exercising managerial powers over the day-to-day operations of the school . . . [and s]tate the ability of the board of trustees to select, appoint, evaluate, and/or remove only the school director(s)." While board members characterized their role at the school as one of oversight, the year twelve site visit showed that the board makes many decisions that are typically the purview of charter school administrators. Teachers reported that revisions to the curriculum were often slowed because the board must approve of changes. A review of board minutes from the 2010 school year revealed that the board discussed, voted on, and approved matters regarding the details of instructional practices, afterschool activity options, and a multitude of other curricular issues that are typically managed by the school leadership team. When asked about these decisions, administrators noted that some, but not all, of the issues discussed and decided by the board were tied to budgetary concerns and therefore an area of oversight. The renewal inspection site visit team found that these practices were still occurring and do not generally fall in the role of the board described in the by-laws and the Application for Renewal.

The involvement of stakeholders in board decisions has evolved during the charter term. During the year twelve site visit board members stated that they thought of themselves as a bottom up” organization, however, teachers and parents characterized the school as a “top down” organization, with the board dictating the direction of the school. Furthermore, parents noted that it was difficult to communicate with the board. The board held open session toward the end of their meetings, which typically occurred later in the evening at 9 p.m. The renewal inspection team found that parents and staff do make use of public comment sessions and were able to express a number of concerns to the board.

The renewal inspection team found that the board has procedures for collecting input from school stakeholders, but the board does not formally involve stakeholders in some major decisions, such as the development of its strategic plan or the appointment of a director. The school sends a survey to parents annually; however, the surveys included no questions about the board. Administrators also reported that department heads and assistant directors have an opportunity to submit proposals during the development of the budget, which is then reviewed by the director and the treasurer before submission to the board. The school’s current strategic plan was developed primarily by the board chairman, who provided a draft to other board members and the new director for input before submitting it to the full board for approval. Other stakeholders, such as the director, two staff members, and four parents did participate in the development or review of the strategic plan. Likewise, when hiring a new executive director the board did not appoint a committee of teachers and/or parents to participate in the process, although stakeholders had opportunities to make their feelings known during open session at board meetings.

*Finding: The board of trustees appears to have convened executive sessions that may not comply with the requirements of the state’s open meeting law, and some board committees may not have prepared meeting minutes as required by the open meeting law.*

The ESE’s September 2007 Summary of Review noted that there had been a long-standing issue concerning the board’s compliance with the requirements of the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. The year twelve site visit reconfirmed that the MVRCS board of trustees still enters into executive session at nearly every meeting. At this time, however, the board minutes showed evidence that the board voted upon convening executive session, listed general reasons why the board had chosen to enter executive session, and stated that the board will have no further business after the executive session. According to minutes, the board usually entered into executive session at the end of board meetings. During the focus group interview, board members stated that they do not make the executive session notes public, even after the matter contained in the notes has been resolved, in violation of the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

Although the board has taken steps to ensure compliance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, it is still not meeting all of the law’s requirements. The team’s review of board meeting minutes during the renewal inspection visit, including minutes of executive sessions, indicated that some topics discussed in executive session did not appear consistent with the ten specific purposes for which an executive session may be convened under the open meeting law, M.G.L. c. 30A, §§18-25. For example, the board minutes for the meeting held on June 25, 2012 stated: “It was then MOVED, SECONDED and unanimously VOTED to go into executive session to discuss pending litigation, personnel matters, contracts, strategies.” However, the minutes of the executive session consisted of only one sentence: “Reviewed recommended merit based increases and Leadership team bonuses for the 2011/2102 (sic) school year for the Leadership team.” The executive session minutes did not reference litigation, contracts, or strategies. Moreover, the discussion of merit-based increases and bonuses for the leadership team did not appear to fall within one of the ten specific purposes identified in the open meeting law, which allows an executive session to be held to discuss “the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual.” The executive session minutes indicate that the board has also reviewed mathematics class issues and tests and a music trip, which do not appear to fall within the ten purposes specified in the open meeting law.

The board meeting minutes reviewed during the renewal inspection site visit indicated that the board had appointed various committees for certain purposes, including the oversight of building projects and finances, and board members stated that other committees were created from time to time, such as education and nutrition committees. Most of these committees consist of one board member and one or two administrators. Administrators and board members reported that the building committee had kept detailed minutes, but that other committees had been much more informal and reportedly had not kept minutes, as required by the open meeting law.

**Enrollment**

**The school implements the student recruitment, retention, and enrollment process intended in the charter, in the school’s recruitment and retention plan, and as defined by statute and regulations.**

*Finding: MVRCS has a student recruitment and retention plan that has been successful in enabling the school to attract and retain students. Select student subgroup enrollment continues to lag behind the primary sending districts and the state.*

MVRCS has created a recruitment and retention plan as defined by statue and regulations; the school implements its plan. School data shows that MVRCS’s waitlist has increased every year during the charter period. MVRCS provides information about the school throughout the school year starting with informational sessions at open houses. Enrollment forms are mailed out to any families requesting them. The school’s regional outreach includes advertisement in local newspapers, foreign language newspapers (such as *El Planeta*  and *Tieng Chuong*), open houses at the school, and parent meetings at pre-school centers, as well as through the MVRCS website.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | **Enrollment** | **2008** | **2009** | **2010** | **2011** | **2012** |
| **MVRCS** | All Students | 1,270 | 1,311 | 1,352 | 1,390 | 1,469 |
| **MVRCS** | Students with Disabilities % | 9% | 8% | 7% | 8% | 11% |
| **Malden (38%)\*** | Students with Disabilities % | 15% | 15% | 15% | 14% | 14% |
| **Melrose (17%)** | Students with Disabilities % | 17% | 16% | 13% | 15% | 14% |
| **Everett (13%)** | Students with Disabilities % | 15% | 16% | 16% | 16% | 16% |
| **State** | Students with Disabilities % | 17% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 17% |
|  | **Enrollment** | **2008** | **2009** | **2010** | **2011** | **2012** |
| **MVRCS** | ELL % | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Malden (38%)** | ELL % | 10% | 10% | 11% | 14% | 16% |
| **Melrose (17%)** | ELL % | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| **Everett (13%)** | ELL % | 10% | 9% | 10% | 12% | 12% |
| **State** | ELL % | 6% | 6% | 6% | 7% | 7% |
|  | **Enrollment** | **2008** | **2009** | **2010** | **2011** | **2012** |
| **MVRCS** | Low Income % | 17% | 18% | 20% | 24% | 22% |
| **Malden (38%)** | Low Income % | 53% | 54% | 59% | 59% | 63% |
| **Melrose (17%)** | Low Income % | 12% | 12% | 13% | 15% | 14% |
| **Everett (13%)** | Low Income % | 64% | 65% | 69% | 69% | 76% |
| **State** | Low Income % | 29% | 31% | 33% | 34% | 35% |

\*denotes the percent of students attending school from this district

**School leadership and organizational planning**

**School leaders administer the school in a manner that ensures academic success, organizational viability, and faithfulness to charter. The school has clear and well-understood systems for decision-making and communication. These systems result in a common sense of purpose for all school constituents. The school has realistic plans for program improvement based on evaluation and analysis of data.**

*Finding: The leadership team has been stable and is effective in its efforts to promote the academic success, ensure the organizational viability, and implement the mission of MVRCS.*

Throughout the course of the charter, the secondary tier of the leadership team has been stable: the K-8 team has been with the school since its inception 14 years ago, and other administrators, other than the director, have served for five years or more. The current director was hired in July 2012. School leaders have defined roles that effectively promote the school’s academic success and organizational viability as well as the school’s mission. For example, the professional development coordinators and department heads observe classes and evaluate the teachers twice yearly, and they meet with teachers weekly to discuss lesson plans, to share ideas, and to ensure consistent delivery of the curriculum. Their meetings entail the use of data to evaluate individual student achievement and the success of academic programs.

The board meeting minutes show that the director, the assistant directors, and the business manager provide detailed reports to the board on a regular basis. Reports have covered topics that have included professional development activities, details of changes in the academic program such as book lists and homework practices, and school activities and trips. Assistant directors also communicate regularly with parents via newsletters, parent surveys, PTO and parent council meetings, and discussions regarding students whose achievement is below the school’s expectations.

**Family satisfaction and engagement**

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

*Finding: MVRCS families are satisfied with the school’s academic program as well as the school’s culture, communications, and support.*

During the year twelve site visit, all stakeholders spoke with gratitude for the safe, structured, and supportive environment created by MVRCS. The school was described as a nurturing place in which students felt well known by teachers. Students also expressed gratitude for the quality of education they received at MVRCS. Lower school students spoke about teachers breaking down concepts to make them comprehensible. High school students felt that they were held to high expectations and pushed to do their best. The administration and board members highlighted the school’s ability to provide a strong academic program within a safe and orderly school. Parents expressed satisfaction with the school’s curriculum, the safe environment, and with the ample communication provided by the school about their children. Parents were happy with the rigor of the school, particularly noting that the IB provided their children a challenging course of study to prepare them for college.

Similar to the year twelve site visit, the school’s 2012 parent survey showed that MVRCS parents were satisfied with the school. Parents answered 32 questions about the school’s curriculum, leadership, staff, and programs and were asked to provide ratings from 1 to 10. Of 345 respondents, 309 (89.5 percent) indicated that they were satisfied with their decision to send their children to MVRCS: they provided ratings of 10 (202), 9 (68), or 8 (39). Parents emphasized the school’s high expectations for academics and behavior and the availability of teachers to provide extra help if needed. Parents also told the renewal inspection team that they were involved in the life of the school through various activities such as the PTO, the parent advisory council, and volunteer opportunities.

**School safety**

**The school establishes and maintains a physically safe environment for students and staff. The school establishes an environment that is free from harassment and discrimination, and effectively addresses the social, emotional, and health needs of its students.**

*Finding: MVRCS has established an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and staff.*

In year twelve, students reported that the school was very safe. Parents of lower school students were required to come into the school when picking students up at the end of the day. While some bullying did take place in the lower school, teachers addressed these issues promptly. High school students noted that fights did not occur at the school. Since many of the high school students had attended MVRCS since kindergarten, they said that they knew each other well and felt emotionally safe at school.

The renewal inspection site visit uncovered a continued sentiment of safety at MVCRS. MVRCS is comprised of three separate campuses in Malden. The kindergarten/athletic center is equipped with cameras and doors with electromagnetic locking systems to ensure student safety. The grade 1-8 campus is comprised of two adjacent buildings that have cameras and electromagnetic locking systems on entry doors. The high school is comprised of two buildings that have a connecting hallway. All entrances are secured by electromagnetic locking systems. The staff remains present at entrances and exits at the start of school and dismissal. All personnel and volunteers undergo CORI background checks. The renewal inspection team observed polite and respectful behavior in the classrooms and in the hallways on all campuses.

**School facilities**

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

*Finding: MVRCS has adequate facilities for delivering the school programs. The school has made significant improvements by adding space for classrooms and athletic facilities.*

During the year twelve site visit, MVRCS administrators, teachers, and parents identified a need for additional space for classrooms and athletic facilities. The school has since purchased land and built a new facility. In November 2011, the MVRCS opened its new kindergarten/athletic center. This allowed the school to move 150 students from the lower school campus, which resulted in an improvement of crowded conditions in that facility. The new facility houses six kindergarten classes, a locker room, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, a weight room, office space and conference space. Next to the facility, the team observed that work was well underway for an athletic field. The field will be made of synthetic turf and will be used for a wide variety of school activities such as Kindergarten recess, softball, soccer, and lacrosse; it will also provide a practice space for the school’s football team and allow the school to host athletic contests and field days. School administrators told the team that the athletic center has served to prevent students from leaving MVRCS after grade 8 and that MVRCS held its first home-based commencement ceremony at this facility.

School buildings are very clean and well lit, with ample office space, and classrooms to carry out the school’s academic programs. The classrooms are colorful with many educational displays; they are also equipped with reading libraries, math manipulatives and supplies for multiple activities.

Although the grade 1-8 school has adequate space to carry out its programs, the school lacks a cafeteria: students eat lunches brought in from a vendor in their classrooms. The high school has two technology laboratories, a science laboratory, a library, an art room, and a cafeteria. Juniors and seniors who have demonstrated good conduct can leave the campus to lunch at local eateries. The high school classroom walls had few displays of student work. The assistant director stated that the former director preferred that the students be free from distractions; however, the current director has a different philosophy, and now displays of student work are permitted. The outside of the high school is clean and free from debris. The high school’s garden club has planted flowers and painted the light box at the corner of the street.

**Compliance**

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

*Finding: The last full Coordinated program Review (CPR) activity at MVRCS was conducted in October 2007 with the final report published in May, 2008. A mid-cycle review was conducted in April 2011. No findings of non-compliance were made as a result of the mid-cycle review.*

The last mid-cycle Coordinated Program Review (CPR) activity at MVRCS was conducted April 15, 2011, which included reviews of the school’s special education, English language education (ELL), and civil rights programs. The school was found in compliance with all criteria in all three areas. As no further action was required on the part of the school, the CPR cycle was closed by the ESE.

*Finding: The school*’s *academic buildings are programmatically accessible for disabled persons.*

Of the school’s four buildings, two are fully accessible: the main building of the lower school and the kindergarten/athletic facility. These two buildings are accessible through use of elevators, handicapped accessible bathrooms, and other architectural features. In the high school building a chair lift provides access to the first floor and basement levels. All elements of the educational program at the high school could be made available by assigning the student with disabilities to classes in the accessible portion of the building. The annex building on the main campus is accessible on the first floor only, so that classes required by a student with disabilities needing access would have to be reassigned to that floor if needed. No unique or specialized spaces exist in inaccessible portions of the building, so that educational program is fully accessible to students with disabilities.

**Dissemination**

**The school has collaborated with its sending district(s) on the sharing of innovative practices, or provided models for replication and best practices.**

*Finding: MVRCS shares its best practices with some sending districts. The school has been designated by the Core Knowledge Foundation as an official Visitation School.*

MVRCS invites local sending districts to visit the school for observation of classes, collaborative engagement, and sharing best practices. The MVRCS staff has visited local schools to exchange best practices. For example, an assistant director told the team that there was an exchange of best practices in science between MVRCS and the Linden School (K-8) in Malden. In addition, MVRCS collaborates with Malden, Medford, and Everett under a Teaching American History grant. The grant enables MVRCS teachers to collaborate and exchange best practices for teaching history with local district teachers in a series of classes and seminars.

In the 2011-2012 school year, MVRCS continued to participate in the Tri-Cities Technology Education Collaborative. The director works with area superintendents to conference about best practices and to provide collaborative opportunities for teachers. This collaboration will continue and will include planned meetings with the superintendent of the Malden schools.

According to the Application for Renewal and school leaders, MVRCS has been designated an official Visitation School by the Core Knowledge Foundation. Teachers attend the National Core Foundation conferences and workshops and collaborate with teachers from around the country. Additionally, MVRCS is a member of the Guild of International Baccalaureate Schools of the Northeast and annually host multiple roundtables attracting over 30 educators from 7 states.

**Accountability plan objectives and measures**

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

*Finding: MVRCS has met all three measures in its accountability plan related to organizational viability.*

MVRCS’s accountability plan includes one objective and three measures related to organizational viability. The school has met all three measures. A summary of the school’s success in meeting the objectives and measures contained in its accountability plan can be found in Section V of this report

## V. Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  **A. Faithfulness to Charter** | **2011-2012** **Performance**  | **Notes** |
| **Objective 1:** Students at Mystic Valley will contribute to their community and develop knowledge of the core virtues and fundamental ideals of our American Culture. |
| Measure: All graduating seniors will have contributed 150 hours of community service over the course of their high school years. | Met | * The Application for Renewal states that this measure has been met in each year of the current charter period. The director of student youth services reported that she monitors the hours of community service earned by students for each school year.
 |
| Measure: All Mystic Valley students will earn a passing grade in a daily class in character education each year. | Met | * The Application for Renewal states that all students have earned a passing grade in character education in each year of the current charter period.
 |
| Measure: All Mystic Valley students will be educated regarding the important ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution through daily exposure to these documents in printed form as well as field trips, projects, recitation, speakers and school-wide observance of pertinent national holidays. | Met | * The team observed examples of the various ways that the school has met this measure: for example, the team observed copies of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution in classrooms. The assistant director reported that students in grades 5 through 7 walk the Freedom Trail and visit historical sites each spring, and numerous pictures are located in the hallways of all buildings showing American historical figures and scenes of historical significance. Teachers, students, and parents indicated that the school meets this measure through events and through course content.
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| **B. Academic Program** | **Performance** | **Notes** |
| **Objective 2:**Students at Mystic Valley will demonstrate competency in English and mathematics and be prepared to continue their education. |
| **Measure:** Students scoring at or above proficient on the ELA MCAS will equal or exceed the proficiency level of the weighted composite average of the sending districts on at least 80% of the tests taken by students in grades three through ten. | Met | * The school provided the team with the 2012 analysis of MCAS ELA test performance in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10. In 2012, MVRCS students exceeded the weighted composite average for proficiency for all seven of the sending districts.
 |
| **Measure:** Students scoring at or above proficient on the Math MCAS will equal or exceed the proficiency level of the weighted composite average of the sending districts on at least 80% of the tests taken by students in grades three through ten. | Met | * The school provided the team with the 2012 analysis of MCAS Mathematics test performance in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10. In 2012, MVRCS students exceeded the weighted composite average for proficiency for the sending districts for all seven sending districts. According to the Application for Renewal the school has met this measure in each year of the current charter period.
 |
| **Measure:** Core scores for the IOWA Tests of Basic Skills will show an average of one year of growth for grades K-8. (A core score is an average of math, language, and reading scores.) | Met | * The Application for Renewal and school documents provided to the team showed that for grades K-8 between spring 2011 and 2012, the ITBS scores showed 1.54 year’s growth in reading, 1.39 year’s growth in Language, 1.18 year’s growth in Math, with an average “core” growth of 1.27.
 |
| **Measure:** At least 80% of high school students will pass the MCAS tests required for graduation on the first attempt. | Met | * The Application for Renewal states that 100 percent of students passed the spring 2012 MCAS ELA test and 99 percent of students passed the spring 2012 MCAS mathematics and biology tests. According to the Application for Renewal the school has met this measure in each year of the current charter period.
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| **Measure:** 100% of high school students will apply to a college or university, or military service. | Met | * The Application for Renewal states that the 100 percent of students applied to college in the 2011-2012 school year and that this measure has been met in each year of the current charter period.
 |
| **Measure:** Mystic Valley Regional Charter School will make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) every year in the aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups in math and language arts. | Not Met | * In 2011, MVRCS did not make AYP in mathematics in the aggregate or in all subgroups. AYP status was not reported by the ESE in 2012.
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| **C. Organizational Viability** | **Performance** | **Notes** |
| **Objective 3:** Mystic Valley will demonstrate a viable and sustainable organization in its finances, enrollment and attrition. |
| **Measure:** Mystic Valley will demonstrate sustainability by maintaining an admission waitlist of 30% of the school’s total enrollment each year. | Met | * The school provided the team with October 2012 wait list data showing that 2,383 students, representing 159 percent of the school’s total enrollment, were on the wait list. The school has met this measure in each year of the current charter period, according to the Application for Renewal.
 |
| **Measure:** An annual audit by an independent agency will show no material findings and validate the school’s sound financial status. | Met | * The independent auditor’s reports on the school’s financial statements covering the fiscal years ending June 30, 2011, and June 30, 2010, contained unqualified opinions and the reports on internal control and compliance stated that the auditors did not identify internal control deficiencies that the auditors consider to be material weaknesses.
* The auditors’ reports for both fiscal years confirmed the sound financial status of the school. The school had a net asset balance of $19,004,935 on June 30, 2011, of which $5,202,387 was unrestricted, and its net assets increased in 2010 and 2011.
 |
| **Measure:** Each year, student withdrawals, for reasons other than geographic relocation, transportation or illness will not exceed 15% of the student body. | Met | * The Application for Renewal states that the school has met this measure in each year of the current charter period and that student withdrawals for the reasons noted in the measure ranged from 1.7 percent to 3.6 percent of the student body.
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