

# Renewal Inspection Report

BARNSTABLE HORACE MANN  
CHARTER SCHOOL  
BARNSTABLE, MA

October 20-22, 2008

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## Contents

Introduction	1
A. The Renewal Inspection Process and Site Visit Report	1
B. Overview of this Report	1
Renewal Inspection Team	2
Setting	4
Renewal Inspection Methodology	6
Findings	9
A. Faithfulness to Charter	9
Progress toward Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures	9
Other Performance Topics	9
B. Academic Program Success	14
Progress toward Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures	14
Other Performance Topics	17
C. Organizational Viability	24
Progress toward Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures	24
Other Performance Topics	29
Appendix: Renewal Inspection Site Visit Schedule	33

## **Introduction**

### **A. The Renewal Inspection Process and Site Visit Report**

The charter renewal application process begins with the charter school's submission to the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (ESE) of a completed Application for Renewal of a Public School Charter. After the Charter School Office (CSO) has reviewed the application and determined that it is clear and complete, the school is notified of the application's acceptance. The ESE contracts with an independent organization to conduct a detailed review of the school's performance. The renewal inspection organization assigns a team of specialists to conduct a renewal inspection site visit and prepare a renewal inspection report summarizing the team's findings regarding the school's performance relative to its Accountability Plan and the ESE's *Common School Performance Criteria*. The inspection is conducted in accordance with the ESE's *Massachusetts Charter School Renewal Inspection Protocol*, collecting and examining evidence relating to three areas of inquiry:

1. The school's faithfulness to the terms of its charter,
2. The success of the school's academic program, and
3. The viability of the school as an organization.

After the renewal inspection site visit, the team prepares a draft of the renewal inspection report and submits it to the CSO and the school for review. The renewal inspection report does not make any recommendations regarding renewal, nor does the report make any recommendations to the school regarding its operations. After incorporating any factual corrections, the team submits the final report to the CSO. This report is the result of one such inspection.

### **B. Overview of this Report**

This renewal inspection report contains the following information:

- Professional biographies of the renewal inspection team members;
- A report setting that provides contextual information regarding the school;
- The methodology employed by the renewal inspection team in conducting the renewal inspection; and
- The renewal inspection team's findings and supporting evidence concerning the school's performance relative to its Accountability Plan objectives and measures and other performance topics, as discussed in the *Protocol*.

The detailed schedule of the renewal inspection site visit is appended to this report.

## Renewal Inspection Team

**Spencer Blasdale, Team Leader.** Spencer is Chief Executive Officer of SchoolWorks. He provides leadership and decision-making for all operations and staffing at SchoolWorks and has the authority to develop and execute a strategic and operational vision for SchoolWorks that is in alignment with its mission and core values. Before joining SchoolWorks, he was Executive Director of the Academy of the Pacific Rim Charter Public School in Boston, Massachusetts. He has spent the past 18 years in the field of education, beginning with a teaching internship at The Park School in Brookline, Massachusetts. He spent another three years as an independent school teacher at Beaver Country Day School in Brookline and then moved to work with City Year and the Boston Public Schools. Spencer moved from Boston to Chicago to launch the City Year Chicago site and served as its Executive Director. He then returned to graduate school and began working with a team to found The Academy of the Pacific Rim. Over ten years, the school has grown from 100 sixth and seventh graders to 475 students in grades five through twelve. The school has been recognized as one of the top-performing charter schools in Massachusetts and has more than 100 alumni enrolled in four-year colleges and universities. Since 2004, he has served on the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association as Board Chair. Spencer holds a BA in history from Princeton University and a M.Ed. from Harvard University.

**Candice Danielle Carpenter, Team Writer.** Candice is a Project Associate with SchoolWorks. Prior to joining SchoolWorks, Candice worked in public affairs of higher education, organizing several strategic initiatives for campus recruitment and image enhancement, developing critical university publications and marshalling monthly reports that detailed student achievements at California State University, Los Angeles. With colleagues at the Harvard Developmental Studies Laboratory, Candice researched preschool children throughout Cambridge and the Greater Boston Area, collecting and analyzing psychometric data pertinent to student success. She facilitated the rigorous investigation of how autistic children think and acquire language at the Language and Cognition Laboratory at Yale. Examining creativity and multiple intelligences, Candice has worked intimately with pioneers in the fledging field of Educational Neuroscience. Candice holds a BA in Psychology from Yale University and an Ed.M. in Mind, Brain, and Education from Harvard University.

**Linda Moriarty, Team Member.** Linda is a consultant for SchoolWorks. She spent most of her career in the Boston School Department as a teacher for grades 4-6 and an Assistant Principal and a curriculum specialist for grades K-12. Linda became a Principal of a high-performing K-5 school in Marshfield, Massachusetts, from which she retired after twelve years. During her career, Linda gave workshops in reading/language arts and worked on several curriculum development teams. She recently taught a reading/language arts course at Simmons College, Boston. Linda has a CAGS degree from Lesley University in curriculum and instruction, a Masters of Education and is a certified reading specialist.

**Patricia O'Leary, Team Member.** Patricia is a consultant at SchoolWorks. She has more than 30 years of experience in education, with more than 10 years of experience as a school administrator. Patricia served as Reading Specialist for the Barnstable Elementary and Barnstable Middle Schools in Massachusetts, as well as a Reading Therapist at Riverview-

Hopefield School in Sandwich, Massachusetts. She is a former Principal of Sheffield School (Turners Falls, Massachusetts) and Mullen Hall Elementary School (Falmouth, Massachusetts). She holds certification from Massachusetts in both Consulting Teacher of Reading and Elementary Principal. Patricia holds a BA degree from Rivier College (Nashua, New Hampshire), an M.Ed. from Ball State University (Muncie, Indiana) and completed advanced graduate studies in School Administration from Bridgewater State College.

## Setting

Barnstable Horace Mann Charter School (BHMCS) is located in Barnstable, Massachusetts. In 1999, the school re-opened as a Horace Mann charter school after its conversion from a 5th grade Barnstable School District School. During the beginning of the 2003-04 school year, BHMCS relocated to another facility and expanded to include both fifth and sixth grades. Since its original approval, the school has not amended its charter.

The school's mission is stated as follows:

The mission at BHMCS is to inspire all students, faculty, parents, and community members to achieve excellence by creating a school environment that provides a high quality education. We utilize rigorous standards and assessments, provide innovative and creative instruction, and engage parents and the community to prepare students for lifelong learning.

The vision of BHMCS is to provide an educational program marked by creativity, rigor and high quality for all of its students. Through innovative instruction and advanced technology, the school expresses its deep commitment to excellence, high academic standards and the cultivation of moral character and civic responsibilities. The school operates with multi-purpose: to provide an educational, social, and human resource center for the entire Barnstable community; to develop students as critical thinkers and problem solvers; and, to encourage students to respect diversity. BHMCS works to sustain an active and evolving partnership with students, teachers, parents, and members of the Barnstable community.

BHMCS serves all children eligible for entrance into the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades within the seven villages of the Town of Barnstable: Barnstable, Centerville, Cotuit, Hyannis, Marstons Mills, Osterville and West Barnstable. Because all 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students are accepted into BHMCS, the school's enrollment is ever-changing and contingent on the total enrollment of students within the Town of Barnstable. The table below indicates the vacillating nature of the school's enrollment. At the school's inception in 1999, enrollment was 961 students. BHMCS has a current enrollment of 847 students, with 433 students in the fifth grade and 414 students in the sixth grade.

**Annual Enrollment at BHMCS since Inception**

Year	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
# of Students	961	889	927	903	847

The current student enrollment at BHMCS (as of October 22, 2008) by subgroups is detailed in the following table. Since the school is dedicated to serving all 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in the Barnstable area, the school does not maintain a waitlist. The school provided the following student enrollment data.

**Enrollment by Subgroups**

	<b>5<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
Limited English Proficient	14	11	25	2.9%
Low Income	126	105	231	27.0%
Special Education	64	57	121	14.3%
African American	17	18	35	4.1%
Hispanic	19	26	45	5.3%
Asian	7	4	11	1.3%
Native American	10	8	18	2.1%
Pacific Islander	355	338	693	81.8%
Multi-race	3	1	4	0.47%
Non-Hispanic	0	0	0	0.0%

The Board of Trustees at BHMCS is a not-for-profit group composed of parents, governing school staff and community members. In June 2008, the Board elected two new trustees to fill the positions left vacant by members whose terms had expired. Currently, the Board is comprised of 13 members who are elected to staggered terms of one, two or three years. At the time of the site visit, Board members had tenure that ranged from one year to six years. The Board is partitioned into subcommittees that include the executive, governance, academic affairs, finance, development and community relations committees.

The school is facing challenges with respect to adequate yearly progress (AYP). BHMCS has not attained AYP in mathematics for all subgroups for the second consecutive year. Currently, the school is classified under Improvement Year 2 for subgroup performance. The school has implemented some initiatives to address these challenges, which are described in this report.

## Renewal Inspection Methodology

The renewal inspection team spent three days – October 20-22, 2008 – on site. The process included interviews and focus groups with school leaders, board of trustees, teachers, students and parents. In addition, the team toured the school premises, observed classes, reviewed documents and deliberated extensively to formulate findings that present a picture of BHMCS at the current time.

- The team conducted interviews with the principal, assistant principal of academic affairs, assistant principal of student affairs, guidance counselor, curriculum coordinator, director of technology and staff accountant.
- Focus groups were conducted with the following school constituents:
  - Board of Trustees: Ten of thirteen trustees were in attendance, including the chair, vice chair and treasurer. Their tenure ranges from one to six years.
  - Administrative Team: The inspection team met with all members of the administrative team, which includes the principal, assistant principal of student affairs and the assistant principal of academic affairs. The administrative team's leadership experience at BHMCS spans from two to five years.
  - Teachers: The inspection team met with three teacher focus groups on three separate days. A total of 44 teachers were interviewed. Their subjects include English, mathematics, science, social studies, Gateway (gifted and talented), music, physical education and special education.
- The following focus group interviews were conducted with parents and students:
  - Parents: The inspection team met with three parents whose children were all in the Gateway gifted and talented program at BHMCS.
  - Students: The inspection team conducted a focus group with 12 students. Seven students were in the sixth grade and five students were in the fifth grade.
- Thirty-nine classroom observations were conducted for both 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades in all subject areas taught at the school. Beyond the traditional content classes, team members observed classes such as Gateway (gifted and talented), music, Title I reading, Title I mathematics, art, physical education and special education. The team utilized the Classroom Observation Evidence Worksheet that was provided by the MA DESE. On the evidence worksheet, each observer notes the classroom configuration, classroom lesson objectives and a running, time-sensitive record of teacher and student activities. Each team observer completed the observation rubric which entails 18 factors in the classroom environment and the teacher's instructional practice. Classroom observations were conducted for 20 to 35 minutes. All evidence sheets were consolidated into a finalized version and percentages in the 18 categories were calculated. The team also observed several of the school's task force meetings in the areas of curriculum, standards and assessment, organization and finance, and professional development.

- The renewal inspection team reviewed the data and documents listed below:
  - Original charter application
  - Renewal application
  - New Accountability Plan and goals
  - Charter amendments
  - Annual reports, including progress toward meeting accountability goals
  - Site visit reports
  - MCAS scores, including AYP and subgroup analysis
  - Annual financial audits
  - Budgets, including assets, revenue, expenses and cash flow
  - Board agendas and minutes for the full board and committee meetings
  - Board by-laws
  - Staff data, including qualifications
  - Staff, parent and student satisfaction surveys
  - Staff/governance organization chart
  - Enrollment numbers and student demographic profile
  - Summative educator evaluation form
  - Sample of IPDP teacher portfolio
  - Student/parent handbook
  - Actions taken for data collected in the classroom (worksheet)
  - Parent/guardian surveys
  - Examples of curriculum in history, social science, mathematics and English language arts
  - ELA assessments (SRA, oral reading fluency, comprehension assessments, writing prompts)
  - Mathematics assessments – brainchild, study island, unit assessments
  - 2008-09 staff meeting schedule
  - Letter for formal/summative educator evaluation forms
  - Principal evaluation forms
  - Educator observation form
  - Summative educator evaluation form
  - Annual evaluation form for principal
  - Barnstable public school professional evaluation policy
  - Literacy committee binder
  - Curriculum task force meetings – grade 6 English language arts and social studies
  - Summaries of Board self-evaluation survey for years 2006-08
  - Binders 6<sup>th</sup> grade science and technology

- Staff handbook
- Board of Trustees handbook
- Summer institute handbook
- Professional development binder 2007-2008

The Appendix to this report contains a detailed schedule for the renewal inspection site visit. This renewal inspection has been conducted pursuant to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *Charter School Renewal Inspection Protocol*.

## Findings

### A. Faithfulness to Charter

#### Progress toward Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures

##### **1. BHMCS demonstrates school-wide, standards-based, thematic instruction and assessment.**

- *Annual charter school site visit reports by the Charter II School Office from the Massachusetts Department of Education will demonstrate school-wide, standards-based, thematic instruction and assessment.*

As stated in the Annual Report 2007-08 and corroborated by school leadership and teachers, the school incorporates school-wide, standards-based, thematic instruction and assessment into its current program. The inspection team found evidence of standards-based and theme-based instruction and assessment in science, mathematics, social studies and ELA curriculum binders. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade guidance counselor presented the inspection team with counseling documents that revealed that the health and wellness classes are standards-based and aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks (MCF). (Refer to Finding #15 for more information on standards and core curriculum. Refer to Finding #14 and Finding #24 for more details on the guidance curriculum.)

#### Other Performance Topics

##### **2. The school actively works to engage and inform parents.**

- *80% of respondents to the parent survey indicated that they find one or more of the following modes of communication to be useful: portfolio system, Edline, report cards, student Redbook, ILC's.*

Review of the Annual Report 2007-08, focus groups with leadership and parents, and documentation all confirm that the school has surpassed this measure. The parent survey summary of results for 2007-08 indicated that 98% of parents utilize the following modes of communication that the school provides: the portfolio, EdLine, report cards, student Redbook and ILCS. An interview with the director of technology indicated that Edline is a popular portal for teachers to report and discuss student academic grades to parents. Edline is publicly available on the school's website.

- *At least 60% of students' families will attend curriculum night each year.*

The inspection team did not find written evidence for the attainment of this measure. However, the Annual Report 2007-08 and focus groups with teachers and school leadership indicated that approximately 60% of families attend annual curriculum nights. As represented in the BHMCS 2008-09 meeting schedule, the school has designated its annual curriculum night/open house for 2½ hours in September.

- *A minimum of 25% of parents will volunteer in some capacity at the school (i.e., field trips, classroom assistance, special events, fundraisers, guest speakers).*

BHMCS has not met this measure. In 2008, 21% of parents volunteered at the school in a variety of ways, including classroom activities, chaperoning field trips and participation in fundraisers. During the parent focus group, one parent described her personal volunteer experience of tutoring several students in mathematics at least three times a week.

As reported by school leadership, parents are afforded opportunities to participate in educationally-based fieldtrips that are interconnected to the school's academic program. The curriculum coordinator reported that parents have coordinated several fieldtrips that the school designed around a particular academic unit. For instance, students visited the Osterville Historical Society and the Heritage Museum and Garden during the unit on 13 colonies. While studying a unit on the forms of energy, students experimented with electricity-discharging machines after a lecture by a scientist from the MIT Plasma and Fusion Center.

- *Parent surveys will be conducted annually and the results will be used by the Board and management team for future planning.*

The inspection team was able to confirm that the school has annually conducted and analyzed parent surveys for prospective planning. The summary of results from the 2007-08 parent survey illustrated a high level of parental satisfaction with the school. Some indicators denoted the following: 99% of parents strongly agree that their child is making academic progress at BHMCS; 96% of parents are satisfied with the responsiveness of the school; and, 96% of parents concur that the professionalism of the school's administration is apparent and contributes to the success of the school. In the comment section of the parent survey, many parents expressed positive feelings about the school's genuinely supportive and energetic atmosphere.

In focus groups, parents reported that the school leadership is continually soliciting parental input – formally and informally. School leadership encourages an open-door policy in which parents can acquire immediate feedback via emails, phone calls, monthly parent conference meetings and monthly coffee hours with the principal. One parent remembered how an administrator approached her and inquired about the success of her child's academic and socio-emotional transition since the beginning of the current school year. Another parent noted that teachers and administrators are "phenomenal" and questioned, "How do you duplicate this phenomenal school?" In monthly newsletters and regularly-distributed parent needs assessment surveys, school leadership gauges concerns and opinions on diverse issues, such as the need for more Title I reading and mathematics services and the potential benefits of trimester and semester school calendars. Upon parental request, school leadership created breakfast specials, math nights and an end-of-year send-off of books to read for the summer.

The inspection team confirmed that the Board of Trustees works collaboratively and strategically with the principal and management team to address parental and school-wide concerns. The Board expressed consensual agreement that they are "fortunate enough to have confident leaders who let us stay knowledgeable about the school's activities." One Board member explained the joint decision making between the two groups: "Ultimately, we trust the management team to

come to us and present various options, alternative scenarios and help us make intimate and informed decisions – collective decisions.” Additionally, the vice chair of the Board informed the inspection team that she actively participates on the management team.

- *The school will host at least two events annually in partnership with the local community.*

BHMCS has successfully coordinated two annual events with community partners. These partnerships have involved many recurring, academics-related and project-based activities such as Globing the Water, the Moon Party and the Student Ambassador Program. School leadership depicted the Moon Party as a cooperative effort between BHMCS and the astrological club of the local high school. Every year, students at BHMCS look through telescopes and study various phases of the moon. Within the Student Ambassador Program, a diverse group of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders are chosen to represent BHMCS and act as the conduits of communication and “go-to students” for other BHMCS students. Student ambassadors frequently communicate with the Mainstreet Learning Philanthropic Society and recycling team; conduct tours and present informational sessions for incoming 4<sup>th</sup> graders; and, guide parents through BHMCS’ annual open house.

The Board of Trustees underscored how receptive the school is to community relation initiatives. One Board member stressed that the school strives to be very integrated with the educational process of the Barnstable community. Another Board member emphasized that the school makes significant effort in communicating with the town’s elementary and middle schools.

- *An active parent advisory council will provide three informational meetings each year related to academics.*

The school has achieved this measure. As stated in the Annual Report 2007-08 and substantiated by school leadership, the parent advisory council (PAC) arranges three informational events: curriculum night, welcome back cookout and spring transition night.

In accordance with its mission plan – to enhance the quality of young people’s education and to foster positive interaction among teachers, administration, parents and other interested people of the community – the PAC conducts informational sessions to fulfill the various objectives for the school. These objectives include: opening and maintaining lines of communication; acquainting all parents with school objectives, programs, methods, achievements, plans, and problems of the school system; bringing educational expectations, questions and concerns of the community to the attention of the school; proposing and presenting prospective programs; and, implementing agreed-upon changes.

### **3. Technology is infused within the school’s curriculum.**

Accountability measures related to technology-infused curriculum are:

- *The school will track internal and external student performance data to produce quarterly reports aligned to student academic performance goals. These reports will be the basis for informed decision making.*
- *The school will electronically maintain a web-based system to access the scope and sequence of the curriculum, as well as the units of study and assessments.*

- *A minimum of 30% of respondents to the parent survey will indicate that access to curricula, remedial and tutorial programs, and general school information via a web-based program is helpful.*

While BHMCS has many elements that help it interweave technology into its curriculum, the school relies chiefly on non-technological methods to plan, document and assess its curriculum. Overall, BHMCS is progressing toward a complete integration of technology into the curriculum.

All stakeholders reported that the director of technology is essential to this technology-curriculum integration. In a focus group, the Board expressed enthusiasm for having “a strong technology department that provides the school with excellent data” and a director of technology who is very involved in disseminating technological resources to teachers all over the state. During an interview, the director of technology described her major responsibilities to the team as: maintaining technological infrastructure; piloting and implementing new educational technologies; and, providing technological training and support to all school staff.

Teachers and school leadership verified the information in the Annual Report 2007-08. The school is maintaining a web-based system known as CAPS (Curriculum Assessment Portal System). In an interview with the director of technology, the inspection team found that teachers can use the resources in CAPS as they develop their unit plans. Currently, the subjects are not equally organized and resourced in this electronic format. The mathematics curriculum is the most developed, while the ELA curriculum is progressing toward a greater organization. The science and social studies curricula need additional resources. The director of technology approximated that 20% of BHMCS teachers regularly use CAPS. School leadership posited that the other 80% of teachers are keeping print-based binders in their classroom and are becoming aware of the online binder option. Some teachers may have chosen to opt out of maintaining an electronic curriculum binder because the CAPS site is still under construction. School leadership said, “It is a very slow movement to progress beyond the archaic binder.”

As detailed by school leadership and the Annual Report 2007-08, the school tracks internal and external student performance data and creates student report cards. The report cards, however, are no longer produced on a quarterly basis. The school now utilizes a trimester system. It tracks and reports student progress every trimester.

As reported in the Annual Report 2007-08 and the parent survey 2008, 95% of parents said that the school provides a helpful web-based program for access to curricula, remedial and tutorial programs, as well as general school information. Additionally, the parent survey 2008 illustrated that 95% of parents believe that BHMCS has improved their child’s ability to integrate technology into their studies and that 95% of parents agreed that technology is utilized at the school on a regular basis. The inspection team confirmed these indications through various classroom observations. The team noted that the majority of classrooms utilized a wealth of technological resources (e.g., library computer labs). Many teachers and students engaged with Promethean boards (observed in 20 out of 39 classrooms), AlphaSmart 2000, BrainPOP, BrainPOP and StudyIsland in completing classroom exercises. These technological resources are described below.

BrainPOP and StudyIsland: BrainPOP, a newly-purchased program that the school is currently piloting, gives students mathematics pre- and post-tests. The curriculum coordinator informed the inspection team that BrainPOP was purchased with under-motivated students in mind. BHMCS teachers utilize StudyIsland as an online preparation tool for MCAS.

**4. The school has made effort to disseminate best practices within and outside of the district.**

- *The school will host informational sessions on the school's curriculum, governance and structure for incoming students and parents and will maintain a student ambassador program.*

The school has met this measure. According to school leadership and the Annual Report 2007-08, BHMCS provides incoming students and parents with informational sessions on the school's curriculum, governance and structure via curriculum night and its annual open house.

Additionally, the school maintains a dynamic student ambassador program. While examining the meeting minutes for the management team, the inspection team noted that the school is actively distributing flyers and setting up orientation meetings for the student ambassador program.

- *Faculty and staff of BHMCS will attend regional conferences in order to disseminate best practices.*

According to the Annual Report 2007-08 and school leadership, BHMCS has accomplished this measure. Over the past year, the director of technology received a grant to train all teachers in the Barnstable School District in using COGNOS (a data warehouse). The grant entails infusing COGNOS into the programming of five participating school districts.

Recently, the director of technology attended an annual conference in Sturbridge and conducted a presentation on "How to use new technologies to support and improve student reading."

Additionally, the school hosts annual summer institutes, which are offered to BHMCS teachers, teachers in the school district and Cape-wide educators. The summer institute focuses on improving instruction and heightening student achievement.

- *The school will maintain a website to disseminate information, including announcements, school events, curriculum overviews, board activities and annual reports.*

The school has realized this measure. The renewal team examined the website <http://www.bhmcs.org/> and ascertained that it is regularly updated. The website, which is maintained by the director of technology and contains information such as: important notices about upcoming events, annual reports, newsletters, school calendars, school curricula and technology programs. In focus groups, parents reported that they have consistently used the website as an informative resource.

- *At least once a year, the leadership team will present Barnstable Horace Mann best practices to schools within the district and, once a year, outside the district.*

As reported in the renewal application and Annual Report 2007-08, and corroborated by school leadership, BHMCS has attained this measure. Most recently, the school has shared curriculum and internal assessment strategies with the Barnstable District at the BHMCS annual report to the

school committee in the fall of 2007. The school has also accomplished the following dissemination efforts within the district: the curriculum coordinator, director of technology and data specialist have shared the BHMCS model of improving education with the Barnstable Public Schools; the principal has provided a successful organizational flow chart to the central office; and, the school linked with the town of Barnstable's "No Place for Hate" initiative and shared goals of increasing tolerance and appreciation of diversity.

The school's various administrators also help promote dissemination outside of the district. As mentioned above, the director of technology provides technology trainings to teachers throughout the state. Similarly, the assistant principal of academic affairs serves on the Cape Light Compact advisory board and assists in the planning for Cape-wide energy education conferences.

## **B. Academic Program Success**

### **Progress toward Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures**

#### **1. BHMCS students have exceeded the state average on the ELA portion of the MCAS. However, the school has not met most of its internal benchmarks regarding ELA.**

- *The mean Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) total reading score on the full battery Stanford-9 (SAT-9) for students in grades five and six will demonstrate an increase of at least 2 NCE points from one administration to the next in each grade level (parents will continue to receive percentile reports).*

As reported in the renewal application and corroborated by leadership, the school has discontinued the regular administration of the norm-referenced Stanford-9 (SAT-9) test. The school's rationale for discontinuation is two-fold: (a) the test has been ineffective in appreciably informing teacher instruction, and (b) there is a lack of a broad, peer-reviewed, research-substantiated evidence base that correlates student achievement on SAT-9 to student achievement on MCAS.

- *The combined percent of students scoring in the advanced and proficient categories on the English language arts MCAS will exceed the state average by 5%.*

Over the past four years, the school has generally attained this measure. The inspection team's inspection of the school's MCAS 2008 performance revealed that 72% of 5<sup>th</sup> graders at BHMCS, compared to 61% of 5<sup>th</sup> graders in the state, scored in the advanced and proficient categories on the ELA MCAS; 77% of BHMCS 6<sup>th</sup> graders, compared to 67% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders in the state, scored in the advanced and proficient categories on the ELA MCAS.

- *The average score for students in grades five and six will increase by 10% in both topic and conventions on the school-wide writing prompt from fall to spring, using rubrics based on MCAS long composition.*

The school is making progress toward this measure. According the Annual Report 2007-08, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders increased their average scores on the topic section of the writing prompts by 28% and 12%, respectively. On the convention portion of the writing prompts, both 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders increased their average scores by 2% and 4%, respectively.

Twice a year the school administers writing prompts that are modeled after the ELA MCAS long composition. The prompts evaluate how well a student develops a writing idea or topic and determine how students use writing conventions, such as basic writing skills, sentence structure, grammar and spelling. One example of a writing prompt is: “Think about someone you know, respect and admire. In a well-developed composition, identify the person you have selected and give 3 detailed reasons why you expect and admire this person. Remember to elaborate your writing with specific examples and powerful language.”

- *At least 75% of all students in each grade will score 80% or better on the school’s language arts standards-based internal assessments.*

As revealed by the Annual Report 2007-08, the school fell short of attaining this measure. The school reported that only 66% of fifth graders and 63% of sixth graders scored 80% or above on the school’s language arts standards-based internal assessments. These assessments are modeled after the MCAS ELA reading tests and created by task forces and reading specialists. The format includes multiple choice and open response.

According to the renewal application, the school has concerns about the ambitious achievement standards for its unit tests and culminating activities. The school is strongly considering the development of new internal assessment measures, once it has finalized its curriculum.

## **2. The school is demonstrating mathematical proficiency on most of its internal and external measures.**

- *The mean Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) total mathematics score on the full battery Stanford-9 (SAT-9) for students in grades five and six will demonstrate an increase of at least 2 NCE points from one administration to the next in each grade level. (Parents will continue to receive percentile reports.)*

As reported in the renewal application and corroborated by leadership, the school has discontinued the regular administration of the norm-referenced Stanford-9 (SAT-9) test. The school’s rationale for discontinuation is two-fold: (a) the test has been ineffective in appreciably informing teacher instruction, and (b) the school believes that there is a lack of a broad, peer-reviewed, research-substantiated evidence base that correlates student achievement on SAT-9 to student achievement on MCAS.

- *The combined percent of students scoring in the advanced and proficient categories on the mathematics MCAS will exceed the state average by 5%.*

Examination of the school’s MCAS 2008 performance indicated that the school has achieved this measure. Compared to 52% of 5<sup>th</sup> graders in the district, 59% of BHMCS 5<sup>th</sup> graders scored in the advanced and proficient categories on the mathematics MCAS. The 6<sup>th</sup> graders at the school respectively outpaced the district 6<sup>th</sup> graders, 63% to 56%, in the advanced and proficient categories on the mathematics MCAS.

- *At least 75% of all students in each grade will score 80% or better on the school's mathematics standards-based internal assessments.*

In their Annual Report 2007-08, the school reported that it had not realized this measure. The inspection team found that only 28% of 5<sup>th</sup> graders and 30% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders scored 80% or greater on the school's mathematics standards-based internal assessments. According to the renewal application, the school has concerns about the ambitious achievement standards for its unit tests and culminating activities. The school is strongly considering the development of new internal assessment measures, once it has finalized its curriculum.

- *At least 75% of all students in each grade will score a 3 or better on the school's mathematics culminating activities scored on a 1 – 4 rubric.*

As conveyed in the Annual Report 2007-08 and authenticated by leadership, the school has typically attained this measure. Although the school did not realize this measure in 2007, it attained this measure in 2008. In the school's mathematics culminating activities, 88% of 5<sup>th</sup> graders scored 3 or better (20% increase from the 2006-07 school year) and 92% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders scored 3 or better (26% increase from the 2006-07 school year). The school designed these internal assessments to measure how students are applying content knowledge and other higher-order thinking skills to mathematics, social studies and science. These assessments help determine to what degree students have mastered the content, skills and strategies taught. Examples of mathematics unit assessments include problems on data analysis and statistics, number sense and operations, and integers.

From interviews with school leaders and the curriculum coordinator, the inspection team learned that the school attributes its success on this measure to its investments in BrainPOP and StudyIsland – two computer-based programs that help differentiate instruction and sufficiently prepare students for the MCAS.

**3. The percentage of the school's 5<sup>th</sup> graders scoring in advanced/proficient exceeded the state by 5%. The school exceeded its internal measures on science culminating activities.**

- *The combined percent of students in grade five scoring in the advanced and proficient categories on the science and technology/engineering MCAS will exceed the state average by 5%.*

After reviewing the school's MCAS 2008 performance, the inspection team determined that the school has accomplished this measure, with 55% of students at BHMCS, compared to 50% of students in the state, scoring in the advanced and proficient categories on the science, technology and engineering portions of MCAS.

- *At least 75% of all students in each grade will score a 3 or better on the school's science culminating activities scored on a 1 – 4 rubric.*

The school has exceeded this measure. According to the Annual Report 2007-08, 92% of 5<sup>th</sup> graders and 88% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders scored 3 or greater on the science culminating activities. The school's science culminating activities are designed to measure how well students apply content

knowledge and other higher-order thinking skills. These assessments help to determine to what degree students have mastered the content, skills and strategies taught in science. An example of a science culminating activity includes researching and reporting on a cell organelle.

**4. The percentage of the school's 5<sup>th</sup> graders scoring in advanced/proficient did not exceed the state by 5%. The school met its internal measures on social science culminating activities.**

- *The combined percent of students in grade five scoring in the advanced and proficient categories on the history and social science MCAS will exceed the state average by 5%.*

As stated in the Annual Report 2007-08 and confirmed by school leadership, the MCAS results in history and social science are not currently reported to schools. In focus groups, teachers explained that the results on these sections will be officially counted and reported to schools beginning in the 2008-09 school year.

- *At least 75% of all students in each grade will score a 3 or better on the school's social studies culminating activities scored on a 1 – 4 rubric.*

As reported in the Annual Report 2007-08, the school has surpassed this measure. In the school's social studies culminating activities, 90% of 5<sup>th</sup> graders and 83% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders attained a score of 3 or greater. The social studies culminating activities are devised to measure how well students apply higher-order thinking skills and content knowledge. These assessments help to determine to what degree students have mastered the content, skills and strategies taught in social studies.

### **Other Performance Topics**

**5. The school has been designated in the Improvement Year 2 category for mathematics.**

Over the past four years, the school has generally attained AYP for English language arts for the aggregate, as well as for all subgroups. In 2007, the school earned the NCLB status of Improvement Year 1 in mathematics for the limited English proficient subgroup. According to the Annual Report 2007-08, the school vigorously analyzed its subgroup 2007 MCAS performance and consequently decided to develop an after-school tutorial program for both ELA and mathematics. The school hoped that, with frequent and intensive remedial services combined with enhanced differentiated instruction and heightened focus on student achievement, that subgroup would increase.

However, after examination of MCAS 2008 student performance data, the team noted that the school has once again failed to attain AYP in mathematics for its subgroup – therefore, the school's status is Improvement Year 2. At the time of the renewal site visit, school leadership explained how the fluctuating nature of its subgroups has caused some concern. "We prefer to look at the specific cohort data of students instead of yearly subgroup performance," school leadership emphasized. When queried about how the school determines the effectiveness of its after-school tutorial programs for ELA and mathematics, school leadership could not provide the inspection team with any evidence of data collection or analysis.

## **6. The school uses SRI and DIBELS to place and measure student progress in English language arts (ELA).**

The school utilizes two forms of computer-based internal assessments – the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and DIBELS (a.k.a. oral reading fluency test) – to measure student progress in English language arts and to provide appropriate remediation and intervention for struggling students.

**SRI Assessment:** This interactive, computer-based reading assessment identifies student reading levels and reports them as lexile levels. As reported by the curriculum coordinator, the SRI is used primarily by reading specialists and Title I reading specialists. Both the assistant principal of academic affairs and the curriculum coordinator concurred that the SRI is an easily implemented, data-accessible program that appreciably helps teachers differentiate reading instruction.

**DIBELS Assessment:** The DIBELS, or oral fluency test, is a standardized and individually administered test that teachers utilize to measure a student’s level of accuracy and fluent engagement with various texts. In focus groups, school leadership verified that DIBELS is administered three times a year for at-risk students and twice a year for students scoring above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile. The assistant principal of academic affairs informed the inspection team that all teachers receive several trainings in how to administer this assessment. Reading teachers and reading specialists are frequently using the SRI and oral reading fluency and providing necessary support to other assistants, special education teachers, volunteers and enrichment teachers in understanding these assessments.

## **7. BHMCS has developed curriculum binders for each content area that incorporate a series of units based on the Massachusetts curriculum standards, such as the end-of-year units, culminating activities and ELA assessments. Teachers exercise the ultimate freedom in selecting various unit activities.**

BHMCS has a curriculum that is teacher-generated and documented for all content areas and grade levels. Originally grounded in the standards-based model of the Modern Red Schoolhouse (MRSch), the curriculum is aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks (MCF). In focus groups, however, teachers conceded that, while the school originally used MRSch, it has shifted from a sole reliance on the MRSch model to a more independent construction of standards. According to one teacher, BHMCS teachers download standards from the Massachusetts DOE website and work backwards in preparing units and documenting binders. Upon inspection of curriculum binders, the inspection team noted that most binders contained summaries of which standards are addressed and standards-based assessments modeled after the MCAS. Most teachers generally acknowledged that mathematics and science curricula were more aligned to the MCF standards than English language arts (ELA) or social studies. Teachers attributed this to the fact that the state hasn’t finalized the frameworks in ELA or social studies.

Throughout focus groups, teachers expressed pride in writing, developing and owning the curriculum. One teacher remarked, “We own the curriculum – we wrote it ourselves.” School leadership similarly reinforces teacher sentiments about curricular autonomy and ownership.

“These folks have a wealth of information. They live with the kids 6½ hours a day. They have more information to make informed decisions. Although it’s a double-edged sword, we don’t discuss the non-negotiables of content and curriculum coverage because it’s up to the teacher’s discretion. They own it,” administration reported. School leadership further explained that teachers only operate with two non-negotiables: the designated 40-minute time periods for lunch and enrichment classes.

The inspection team found that the curriculum coordinator is heavily relied upon by teachers and school leadership as the knowledgeable expert, decisive organizer and steward of the school’s curriculum. During an interview, the curriculum coordinator described her responsibilities as reviewing and evaluating curriculum, making necessary revisions of curriculum and implementing the curriculum. School leadership asserted that the “curriculum coordinator is allotted the greatest instructional leadership in the school.” Teachers agreed that the curriculum coordinator “provides great suggestions and allows for creativity in the curriculum.”

The curriculum coordinator also walked the inspection team through a display of the school’s extensive curriculum. Using an assortment of resources – commercial materials like Prentice Hall and National Geographic – the school blends various resources into a multi-faceted curriculum. The curriculum coordinator provided the inspection team with numerous examples of how these curriculum materials are utilized. For instance, the school uses National Geographic theme sets to provide essential standards-based curriculum in science and social studies.

Despite the abundance of school resources, the curriculum coordinator told the inspection team that the school is still working toward identifying and rectifying its curricular limitations. As reported by the curriculum coordinator and teachers, BHMCS is currently working to bring the mathematics and science curriculum up to par with ELA and social studies. Furthermore, the curriculum coordinator expressed concern over the need to re-visit and re-organize theme-based instruction at the school. School leadership corroborated this notion and stated that the school is working to engrain a stronger thematic approach to curriculum and instruction.

The inspection team determined that, largely, the school applies a team-based approach to implementing the curriculum. Teachers reported that they convene with the curriculum coordinator and partner reading specialists on a weekly basis to plan and integrate necessary elements into their particular content areas. Eight times throughout the year, a curriculum task force meets to generate and enhance curriculum. While on site, inspection team members were able to listen to a curriculum task force meeting. In the observed meeting, the curriculum task force brainstormed and generated activities and resources to-be-used in ELA and mathematics for the next few months.

**8. Although the school does not systematically and formally evaluate its program, school leadership still informally discusses and analyzes gaps in student performance and allows data to drive instruction.**

BHMCS informally evaluates its program effectiveness on student performance. The data gathered from various assessments – performance-based culminating activities, end-of-unit tests, writing prompts and criterion-based standardized state tests (e.g., MCAS) – are used collectively

to inform teachers, drive instruction and heighten learning in the classroom. According to the curriculum coordinator, the school's curriculum undergoes an extensive life cycle. During this elaborate re-examination and re-creation of the curriculum, the school utilizes varied data.

During the renewal site visit, school leadership provided the inspection team with a bulleted list of what consequential actions have resulted from data analyses of student performance. These data-driven actions occurred within ELA, mathematics, science and social studies. Beyond the bulleted list, school leadership did not specifically elaborate on how data are used to drive instruction in the school.

**ELA:** The school reported that it has revamped the service delivery of reading specialists and Title I reading teachers. Its current efforts center around improving coordination of the reading program to ensure consistent teaching of strategic reading strategies (i.e., visualize, clarify, summarize). The SRI, ReadAbout, and Oral reading fluency computer-based programs have been purchased to facilitate the differentiation of instruction. The ELA comprehension assessment and writing prompts have been implemented to strengthen student performance on the MCAS ELA section.

**Mathematics:** The school explained to the inspection team that it has also revamped the service delivery of Title I mathematics. Multiple mathematical strategies have been adopted to support diverse learners. The school has purchased an abundance of mathematics manipulatives (i.e., value blocks and geometric solids) and StudyIsland (a computer program known to increase performance on the MCAS). Moreover, the school's mathematics task force reviewed school-wide results of scores and analyzed MCAS questions the academic school year of 2007-08.

**Science:** BHMCS science teachers have collaborated with teachers from grades K through 4 and grade 8 to refine the 5<sup>th</sup> grade science curriculum. The end-of-unit assessments and culminating activities in science have incorporated questions that model those found on the MCAS.

**Social Studies:** The school has incorporated MCAS questions into social studies unit assessments.

The inspection team found supplementary evidence indicating that the school has scheduled staff meetings that are focused on using data in the classroom. The prospective meetings propose to separate teachers into various groups and allow them to analyze MCAS performance data (for previous and current students) on an item-by-item basis. School leadership intends to spearhead this effort and bring all teachers up to speed with the school's ELA and mathematics MCAS performance, AYP and subgroup data for the past three years. At the end of the meeting, teachers categorize themselves as a novice, an apprentice or a proficient or distinguished data-analyzing individual.

Additionally, the standards and assessment task force is actively preparing to create handbooks or flowcharts to allow teachers to easily analyze and understand student performance. (See Finding #18, Organizational Viability – Other Performance Topics, for more details about task forces.)

**9. BHMCS employs a range of instructional practices. Instruction is predominantly teacher-directed. There are limited opportunities for student ownership of work and expression of student voice.**

The team conducted observations in 39 classrooms across content areas and grade levels, including classes in Gateway (gifted and talented education), Title I mathematics, Title I reading, physical education, music, art and special education. Observations typically spanned from 20 to 30 minutes. The observation rubric provided by the MA DESE requires observers to rate eighteen indicators on the following scale:

- 0 Not observed
- 1 Partially observed (one to two pieces of evidence)
- 2 Fully observed (three or more pieces of evidence)
- N/A Not applicable

Across 39 observed classrooms, the inspection team recorded a range of instructional practices. In 72% (n=39) of classrooms observed, inspection team members noted teachers traditionally delivering instruction to students. In this format, the teacher presented material and the students either took notes or took turns raising their hands to respond to questions. In 18% of classrooms, students worked in small groups. In 10% of classrooms, students worked in pairs.

The overarching structure of lessons observed was effective in the clear goals and format of instruction. In 90% of classrooms observed (n=39), the inspection team noted that classroom activities and directions were clearly explained and understandable for students. Teachers spent time on instruction – such as delivering learning materials and promoting student engagement in learning exercises – in 72% of classrooms observed (n=39).

The inspection team observed evidence of the use of technology in more than half of the lessons observed. Several computer labs provided students to visually and aurally experience numerous BrainPOP lessons, such as nanotechnology, electromagnetic radiation, U.S. culture and political parties. Promethean boards and mathematics manipulatives were used as a learning tool in the majority of classrooms observed. The best examples of integrated technology included the use of the Promethean boards, which are a brand of interactive white board on which the teacher or student can use drawing and other display tools and save the work on a computer. In one classroom, students were observed using a handheld device to respond to teacher questions. Students chose a response and their collective answers were immediately displayed on the board, allowing the teacher and the class to see the extent to which the class understood the content.

In most classrooms, however, the team noticed that the predominant focus on whole-group, teacher-directed instruction curtailed opportunities for students to interact with their teachers and peers. In at least three classrooms, the use of technology was, at times, a distraction as teachers and students struggled to find the right website or connect to the Internet. In many classrooms, students were quietly engaged in listening to lectures, answering questions with little analysis and filling in worksheets. The inspection team noted that most students had minimal opportunities to engage in deep dialogue or informational exchanges about their learning. Many

students were not encouraged to express their opinions, put forth their ideas or demonstrate ownership of, and connection to, their work.

There were at least 10 examples of highly engaged instruction – ranging from a carefully structured and sequenced science lab to a teacher-directed, whole-class discussion about a short story.

### **10. BHMCS has a welcoming, orderly and respectful environment.**

BHMCS has strongly established an atmosphere permeated by mutual respect, orderliness and receptive attitudes at all levels. In 39 of the classrooms visited, inspection team members detected a high degree of orderliness and safety in 100% of classrooms; a positive rapport between students and teachers in 97% of classrooms; and, positive student-to-student relations in 74% of classrooms. Note: Because of teacher-centered instruction, 26% (n=39) of classrooms did not show any student-to-student interactions.

During focus groups, all stakeholders validated the notion of BHMCS as a jovial and supportive environment. Several students claimed that “teachers take the work seriously but they can be really funny.” Parents described the school environment as “a bunch of little villages in a big school.” The Board informed the inspection team that the school strives “to provide excellence for all, focus on inclusion and communication with all students and welcome marginalized kids.”

Hoping that BHMCS can become suffused with “a feeling of warmth and acceptance,” the assistant principal of student affairs devised a mentor/mentee initiative. This initiative is aimed at students who are experiencing trouble in assimilating to the school and who may gain from supportive meetings with teacher/administrator mentors. With minimal orientation and training, the teacher/administrator mentor applies to befriend and listens to a student. At the end of the year, the school collects feedback from both teacher mentors and student mentees. After examining mentor and mentee surveys, the team recorded the following: 90.5% of teacher mentors indicated that they would like to impact their mentee so that students experience teachers in a different manner; 66% of teachers indicated that they desired to help the student become more successful in school; 100% of mentees responded that they look forward to meeting with their mentor; and 100% of mentees enjoyed speaking with their mentor.

In addition to the mentor/mentee program, the school has invested much time and effort into its milestones achievement awards. As corroborated by students, teachers and school leadership, milestones celebrates student achievement with reward certificates in the areas of academic achievement, personal best performance and good citizenship. In focus groups, teachers and school leadership believe that milestones is an uplifting, positive and invaluable process that recognizes the personal achievements of all students.

Various interactions between teachers and school leadership were also marked by a strong receptiveness and respect. School leadership remarked that it is “impressed with the spirit of collaboration” that fuels resource-sharing and informational exchanges between teachers. In focus groups, teachers consensually acknowledged that the predominant strengths of the school are communication, sharing, collegiality and various volunteers. School leadership expressed

similar convictions: “We’ve sent so much time building the school’s culture. It makes sense that people come up to us and say the school just has a nice feel to it.”

### **11. The school provides teachers with freedom and autonomy to design, implement and schedule curriculum and instruction.**

BHMCS teachers lack systematic expectations or requirements for how instruction is delivered and how much content material is covered in daily lessons. However, school leadership stated that this is somewhat intentional, and that they seek to provide teachers with maximum freedom and autonomy to create, implement and execute curriculum and instruction. “We want to offer opportunity for change and allow for individuality and self-determination,” school leadership reported.

In focus groups, teachers expressed enthusiasm in their ability to determine how the curriculum is used and how much content is covered. One teacher mentioned that “we have flexibility—it’s fine to go over a planned amount of time...math may take longer than an hour, so ELA can be integrated in social studies or science.” In a similar vein, school leadership noted that, beyond the 40-minute requirement for lunch and enrichment classes, the school does not have strict rules around how often each content area must be addressed. The administrative team acknowledged that they do not discuss the non-negotiables of how much content should be covered on a daily basis in ELA, mathematics, social studies or science. They admitted that they are specifically aware that the 5<sup>th</sup> grade doesn’t put as much time into social studies and science. When the inspection team inquired about how the school would detect whether teachers were under-exposing students to certain content, school leadership did not have a predetermined and methodical plan for such detections. Instead, school leadership asserted that they would figure this out by examining the material circulation between collaborative teachers, monitoring content changes in teacher schedules and relying upon teachers to notify them of major changes to curriculum coverage.

The principal and two assistant principals stated that they share the observation and evaluation responsibilities over instructional staff. To monitor instructional practice, the administrative team relies on informal classroom walkthroughs and causal check-ins with teachers. School leadership emphasized that their main objective is to listen in an unobtrusive way and occasionally weave discussions about teaching and learning into informal meetings with teachers. The principal reported that her comments to teachers about their instructional practice would generally be expressions like “Excellent job – way to be productive!” or “Perhaps you can observe another teacher if you feel you are experiencing some difficulties with instruction.” In focus groups, teachers reported that they have been observed by school leadership on some occasions, but in a causal and friendly way and typically without a formal follow-up discussion on instructional best practices.

Through several follow-up meetings, school leadership expressed hesitation in obtruding into the instructional affairs of teachers. The administrative team collectively emphasized its role as a communicator of expectations for academics, school support and parent involvement. The principal explained that she is consistently encouraging exemplary teaching practices, but consciously limits herself from mandating too much. “We recognize that teachers have lives –

they are living and breathing individuals. It's a dilemma for school leadership because we want to help people, we want to have some changes—but we need buy-in," school leadership underscored. The administrative team stressed that its main desire is to validate, empower and channel decision-making for teachers when discussing possible instructional failings. Since school leadership appreciates the professional strengths and commitment that BHMCS teachers bring, the school does not feel there is an urgent need to formalize instructional feedback.

The inspection team found that teachers improve their instructional practice by relying on colleagues or professional intuition, rather than on consistent feedback from school leadership. Many teachers described how they utilize a trial-and-error approach to alter instruction. One teacher told the inspection team: "We just have to keep learning and trying with curriculum and instruction. If we didn't like how something worked, we'd try new things."

### **C. Organizational Viability**

#### **Progress toward Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures**

- 1. BHMCS has drawn from reserves in the past two years to fund enrichment programs. At the same time, the school has carefully managed expenditures and set a minimum reserve fund balance of \$300,000.**

Accountability measures related to organizational/financial responsibilities are:

- *A balanced budget will be developed annually and will be monitored by the Board of Trustees.*
- *A yearly independent audit will show the school has followed fiscally prudent practices and has acted in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices.*

The inspection team interviewed Board members, the staff accountant and the leadership team to learn about the school's financial practices and to determine that the school met its internal accountability measures. In addition, the inspection team reviewed the independent financial audits from 2007 and 2008. Both audits considered the school's internal control over financial reporting and certain legal compliance issues to determine that there were no deficiencies that were considered to be material weaknesses.

The Board and leadership reported that the school chose to use reserve dollars in the past two years to sustain programs. The most recent audit reports that, "... the school is under a non-binding agreement with the school committee of the Town of Barnstable to utilize a portion of the school's net assets to supplement available operating revenues, thereby resulting in operating losses (\$98,868 and \$6,281 for 2008 and 2007, respectively)."

The two operating losses were significantly smaller than what had been budgeted. The fall spending plan for the 2006-07 school year planned for a loss of \$244,606 and the fall spending plan for the 2007-08 school year planned for a loss of \$292,379. The school accountant reported that the school had generously estimated some of its expenses, such as required pension contributions and technology spending. They were able to manage these and other expenses to bring down the size of the operating loss during the year.

The finance committee of the Board and the school accountant and principal actively manage the budget during the year and have made efforts to plan for the future. The Board set a minimum reserve balance of \$300,000 at its May 2007 meeting. The renewal application reports a reserve balance of approximately \$964,186 at the end of the 2006-07 school year. The school has already begun to build a budget for the 2009-10 school year, with the concern that their funding could be cut by as much as 12%. The chair of the finance committee, the principal and the school accountant reported that they are beginning the process even earlier this year (October 2008).

To monitor the budget each year, the staff accountant works with the principal and chair of the finance committee to prepare monthly balance sheets as well as a report of the actual revenue and spending compared to the budgeted amount each month. The staff accountant includes color-coded notes in each month's financial statements, flagging such items as unanticipated costs or ideas for cost reductions. The finance committee works with the principal and staff accountant to manage line items. The staff accountant provided examples of decisions, such as "not washing all the windows last spring saved us \$6,000-to-7,000."

## **2. The Board of Trustees, in collaboration with the management team, conducts annual self-evaluations and evaluations of school leadership.**

- *The Board, in collaboration with the principal, staff and parents will conduct an annual review process for the school's leadership. The Board will conduct an annual self-evaluation, including discussion of each subcommittee. This annual review will be driven by data from survey returns. Surveys will ask the Board, staff and parents to state the extent to which they agree with positive statements about the school's performance on a scale of Strongly Agree, Tend to Agree, Tend to Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Responses will be aggregated to determine whether constituent parties are, on average, "tending to agree" with positive statements about the school's performance. The Board will produce an annual self-evaluation, publicly summarized and reported to parents and staff.*

The Board of Trustees has effectively collaborated with the management team to generate stakeholder-informed evaluations of the school's principal and publicized self-evaluations.

The Board revealed that the principal is evaluated according to the annual review of the principal template. Within this template, the principal is evaluated on six categories (e.g. instructional leadership, promotion of equity and appreciation of diversity) and rated on indicators within each category on a qualitative scale (EE – Exceeded Expectations; ME – Met Expectations; PTME – Progressing Toward Meeting Expectations; DNME – Did Not Meet Expectations). Each rated indicator is accompanied by comments from the Board. Both the principal and Board chair sign and indicate their understanding of the annual review. A principal evaluation questionnaire (containing approximately 40 questions) is also completed by the teaching staff, fellow Board members, support staff and teaching assistants. The principal is assessed on several categories, such as how well school expectations are established, how well professional development is provided for staff and how well the school's vision is articulated.

According to the Annual Report 2007-08, the Board meets formally and on a monthly basis with the management team to discuss the progress toward school goals. Members of the management team and teacher representatives report to the Board's academic affairs committee. The academic affairs committee addresses areas in need of improvement and informs the Board of all progress and recommendations that require its approval. The inspection team reviewed samples of communication between the Board and the management team. Notes from the principal's office – weekly notices that the principal prepares and specifically distributes to the Board – contain synopses of each day of the week. Minutes from management meetings also revealed continual discussions between school leadership and the Board of Trustees.

The inspection team reviewed summaries of Board self-evaluation surveys for the years of 2006, 2007 and 2008. These summaries are publicized for parents and other stakeholders on the school's website, <http://www.bhmcs.org/>, and within the appendices of the school's annual reports. These summaries provide an overview of survey participants, Board effectiveness and areas for improvement. They do not describe yearly accomplishments for each Board subcommittee.

### **3. The task forces of the school are structured as a means for the staff to improve the school.**

- *Members of the Board of Trustees and the school leadership team will monitor the progress of the school against the accountability plan. At the end of the year, the task forces will meet at least 75% of their established goals.*

The inspection team was able to determine only that the school has met the first component of this measure: the Board of Trustees and school leadership oversee school progress in light of the accountability plan. During the Board's focus group, the academic affairs subcommittee acknowledged their active work of monitoring the school's progress against the accountability plan. The head of the academic affairs subcommittee, also the vice chair of the Board, reported that she collaborates regularly with the management team. The Board of Trustees and school leadership are presently concentrating on refining curriculum measurement, reviewing formative and summative assessments and engaging in dialogue around results from the school's internal and external assessments. As stated in the Annual Report 2007-08, these varied assessments are used to judge the degree to which the school is making sufficient progress toward the goals set forth in the accountability plan.

The inspection team was unable to ascertain whether the school had met the second component of the measure: task forces will meet 75% of their established goals. While the school was unable to provide quantitative evidence for this measure, it nonetheless presented qualitative information about the past accomplishments and future goals of each task force. These various accomplishments are described below.

Until the current school year of 2008-09, BHMCS had task forces that were targeted around the academic areas of mathematics, ELA, science and social studies at each grade

level. The overarching goals of the task forces were to address academic areas in each grade level; to disseminate information to stakeholders; and, to implement new methods of instruction. In 2007-08, several task forces were successful in identifying and rectifying weak areas in the school's curriculum. For instance, the mathematics task force successfully identified weak areas in the mathematics curriculum and created lessons and games to strengthen the curriculum. Similarly, the science task force analyzed and determined strengths and weaknesses of 5<sup>th</sup> grade science curriculum and created a MCAS science review fair, aligned to state standards.

Since the beginning of the 2008-09 school year, the school has restructured and renamed its task forces. These teams are currently composed of teachers who participate in self-selected committees in the areas of leadership, technology, organization and finance, professional development, parents and communication, standards and assessment, and curriculum. School leadership described that the task forces are currently formulating tangible, product-based goals for the year in their respective areas. At the time of the site renewal visit, the task forces were in the process of establishing goals and plans for accomplishing those goals. The curriculum task force – the only task force whose goals were approved by school leadership – was examining thematic units for all content and enrichment areas and creating common academic and behavioral expectations for all students. The standards and assessment (SA) task force was brainstorming how to develop a step-by-step, formulaic approach (like a handbook or flowchart) to understanding assessments. The professional development task force decided to create a professional library, designate more teacher lunch talks and build collegiality through teacher exercise groups.

#### **4. The attendance has consistently been greater than 92%.**

- *Average daily attendance will be 92% of higher each year as identified by NCLB.*

According to the Annual Report 2007-08, the school has achieved this measure. The school reported that it has maintained an average daily attendance of 95.26% over the past four years. An interview with the assistant principal of student affairs further substantiated that the school is vigilant about student absences, promotes parental support of regular student attendance and monitors chronic attendance offenders.

#### **5. School leadership observes and evaluates teachers according to Barnstable Public School's professional evaluation policy for teaching staff. The school has planned a professional development agenda to remedy areas of instructional weakness (e.g., differentiation and higher-order thinking).**

- *Observations and evaluations will provide feedback on planning, evaluating, teaching methodology, classroom climate, classroom management, progress through the curriculum, and implementation of standards-based instruction and assessment using best practices.*

As mentioned earlier, the school does not have ongoing, systematized instructional feedback for teachers. However, the school does utilize an assortment of observation and evaluation tools to provide staff with yearly feedback on their overall professional development. The school strongly adheres to the Barnstable Public School's professional

evaluation policy and uses the Barnstable observation form during teacher observations and evaluation. The administrative team reported that their formal observations are influenced by the models presented in John Saphier's book, *The Skillful Teacher: Research for Better Teaching*.

As outlined in the 2008-09 BHMCS observation schedule, all BHMCS teachers are observed according to the school's classification system, which includes years 1 through 3, an evaluation year, a professional growth year and an observation year. In year 1, teachers receive three informal observations, two summative educator evaluation forms and one educator evaluation form. Years 2 and 3 allow teachers two informal observations and one summative evaluation form. Within an evaluation year, teachers have discussions with school leadership before and after their two formal observations and receive one summative evaluation form. During a professional growth year, each teacher submits a professional growth form, summarizing their reflections and experiences. Throughout interviews and focus groups, the administrative team reported that it divides the evaluation responsibilities among the principal and two assistant principals.

Inspection of several documents indicated that teachers are provided feedback in both a narrative and check-list form. One two-paged sample of a Barnstable Public Schools educator evaluation form gave an example of narrative feedback. The form contained anecdotal comments on Teacher X's performance and a discussion of Teacher X's concerns. For instance, school leadership summarized their evaluation of Teacher X's performance: "Because of Teacher's X strategies, the students have both a sense of ownership and support as they address the issue of bullying."

The summative educator evaluation form is a more extensive form of evaluative feedback for teachers. Teachers are evaluated on seven principles of instruction (e.g., planning of curriculum and instruction) and graded on a rubric with three categories (proficient; in progress; not met). In addition, teachers receive general comments and specific recommendations on these areas from school leadership.

The inspection team found that BHMCS teachers are not observed regularly outside of the formal system described above. School leadership reported that, while they strive to "touch base regularly" with all of the teachers, they agreed that each observation is not a planned occurrence. School leadership stressed its desire to be flexible and eliminate unnecessary anxiety for the staff.

- *Each teacher will receive approval for an IPDP from the principal that will meet the goals and mission of the school and the requirements of No Child Left Behind.*

School leadership orally substantiated and provided documentation for teacher IPDP (individualized professional development plan) approval. Inspection of one teacher's IPDP revealed that the professional plan incorporates a variety of information. Teaching and learning recertification requirements, obtained licensures, personal goals aligned to both current district and school goals, self-generated goals and professional development activities are outlined in the

portfolio. Teachers are able to accumulate a certain number of professional development, content and pedagogy points, based on their hourly involvement in certain activities. Each IPDP is signed and dated by the principal and reveals whether a teacher is within an initial, first or second year of review and approval.

- *A twelve-month calendar of professional development will provide staff with training in best instructional practice, current subject area knowledge and education practices associated with student success. The annual report will include both a staff profile and description of how the staff profile has changed from the previous year and whether any changes in the staff profile has affected the goal of having 100% of the staff highly qualified. Annual curriculum task force reports will cite professional development accomplishments aligned with student academic performance goals.*

The school provided the inspection team with extensive evidence of its professional development activities, accomplishments and priorities. Within the upcoming year, the school is broadening its efforts to provide teachers with meaningful and relevant professional development. According to the BHMCS 2008-09 staff meeting schedule, the school has scheduled a series of professional development sessions and days that will be interspersed throughout the year. For 2008-09, the school is preparing for seminars on using formative and summative data in assessment, differentiating the curriculum and thematic instruction.

In the past, the school has hosted several in-service professional days with a range of topics. Many BHMCS teachers have attended general workshops, such as “What does effective teaching look like?” and “Sharing of best practices among Cape schools.” Other teachers have attended workshops tailored to specific content areas. For instance, teaching assistants and paraprofessionals attended a reading and writing seminar, while enrichment teachers simultaneously attended a technology seminar. The in-house summer institute provides the most professional development opportunities, with course offerings in subjects such as motivational methodology, differentiated lesson planning, strategies for teaching ELL and guided reading.

BHMCS staff is encouraged to take advanced professional development courses and workshops that are offered off-site in the district and by independent contractors. To help widen teachers’ professional horizons, the principal actively distributes weekly memos to staff with highlighted professional development opportunities, such as seminars on how to deal with difficult parents and disruptive students.

The renewal team was able to review various summaries of accomplishment for the task forces. (Refer to Finding #18, Academic Success – Other Performance Topics.)

### **Other Performance Topics**

#### **6. The school has established and adopted an internal control plan to guide fiscal operations.**

The school’s Internal Control Plan was written in 2005 and revised in 2008. Included in this guide are overall fiscal management goals, as well as budgeting processes, internal control

concepts and systems for purchasing, payroll and other functions. The inspection team saw examples of a purchase order requisition form and teacher supply request forms.

When a teacher requests an item, for example, the staff accountant reported that one of her two assistants processes the form and provides it to the principal for a signature. When the item arrives at the school, the assistants work with the accountant to attach the invoice, packing slip and requisition form together to provide to the principal. The accountant then calls up a purchase order in the town's accounting system. All payables then become part of the weekly warrant, which is reviewed and then signed by the chair of the finance committee and the principal before being issued to the town for payment.

### **7. Stable and collaborative school leadership has created an environment that is supportive of student learning.**

BHMCS has developed and sustained an interactive network of leadership that facilitates all aspects of student learning and development. The administrative, management and guidance teams – along with the task force subcommittees – are the foundation for the school's distributed leadership.

**Administrative team:** This team, composed of the principal, assistant principal of academic affairs and the assistant principal of student affairs, is designed to provide ultimate oversight, governance and guidance over the school. In focus groups, the administrative team referred to themselves as largely indistinguishable from one another in terms of their roles. They operate without a hierarchy of roles and engage in unscheduled and informal meetings around school happenings.

**Management team:** This team encompasses the principal, two assistant principals, curriculum coordinator, director of technology, special education coordinator, head of guidance, staff accountant and one Board member. The management team chiefly explores school-wide initiatives and global objectives on a weekly basis.

**Guidance team:** Also known as the student support personnel team, the guidance team is comprised of two guidance counselors (each separately designated to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades), school adjustment counselor, school psychologist, two prevention specialists, two nurses and director of student services. The guidance team purposefully operates to supply all students with lessons and activities related to academic/technical development, as well as personal/social development.

During an interview, the 6<sup>th</sup> grade guidance counselor presented documentation for the classes he teaches for students and parents. Students receive standards-based lessons on cooperation, compromise and career-planning. Workshops for parents include: effective communication with parents; how to help your child with homework; and, parenting skills.

**Task force committees:** These teams are in the areas of leadership, technology, organization and finance, professional development, parents and communication, standards and assessment, and curriculum. Generally, the task forces work on realizing concrete, product-based goals for the 2008-09 academic year. However, each task force

is charged with monitoring, remedying and innovating specific characteristics of the school. The curriculum task force is responsible for creating a thematic scope and sequence in all content areas. The technology task force is charged with integrating hardware and software into the curriculum and ensuring effective technological communication. For the organization and finance task force, the main objective is to analyze teacher and student schedules in conjunction with school finance. The professional development task force takes on the development and coordination of in-service opportunities for school staff. The standards and assessment task force handles the analysis and implementation of all student assessments. The parent and community partnerships task force is designated to build collegiality among staff, parents and the Barnstable community. (For more information on task force goals and structure, refer to Finding #18, Organizational Viability – Other Performance Topics.)

In focus groups, school leadership emphasized that all school teams are invaluable contributors to the operations of the school. According to the administration, the school relies on the teams to provide multiple conduits of communication; to bring different thoughts and ideas to enrich the school; and, to help empower all stakeholders in revising various school issues.

#### **8. Constituents reported satisfaction with the high quality of the school.**

As previously mentioned, the summary of results from the 2007-08 parent survey illustrates a high level of parental satisfaction with the school. Some indicators illuminate the following: 99% of parents strongly agree that their child is making academic progress at BHMCS; 96% of parents are satisfied with the school's responsiveness; and, 96% of parents concur that the professionalism of the school's administration is evident and contributes to the school's success. (Refer to Finding #2, Faithfulness to Charter – Annual Parent Surveys for more details.)

#### **9. The school ensures a physically and emotionally safe environment for students**

Ample evidence indicated that BHMCS affords an environment in which students feel physically secure and emotionally fortified. The school has developed several support systems and initiatives to ensure the safety of students. All stakeholders underscored their commitment to protecting BHMCS students. Additionally, the assistant principal of student affairs confidently asserted that, despite the school's size, it is predominantly safe. The school ensures a protective adult presence around students and requires all visitors to check in with the main office. Video cameras are interspersed throughout the school and exterior doors are consistently locked.

Two guidance counselors – each separately designated to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades – are crucial in allowing students to feel emotionally comforted and safe. The guidance counselors deliberately designate their time to benefit students: 37% of their time in responding to students' needs; 26% of their time in supporting students and parents; 20% of their time delivering the guidance curriculum; and, 17% of their time planning with students. Every year, the guidance team rotates through 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes, teaching several health-related courses like anti-bullying and

cooperation. (Refer to Finding #14, Academic Success – Other Performance Topics and Finding #22, Organizational Viability – Other Performance Topics for a more details.)

In the Student/Parent Handbook, the school has extensively outlined a strict code for what constitutes student misconduct and appropriate consequences of misconduct. For instance, any student caught threatening harm to, disrespecting or racially or sexually harassing another student may lose recess or be suspended or expelled. In focus groups, students reported that bullying instances are quickly and effectively solved. “When I’ve been bullied, a teacher makes me feel safe and helps me solve the problem,” one student disclosed to the inspection team.

Beyond the handbook, the school has prepared a prevention plan for student crises, such as hitting, fighting and harassing other students. In the first line of prevention, teachers are advised to conference with students and inform their parents of the particular problem. If the crisis continues, the school refers a student to the prevention office. During the final phase of prevention, the assistant principal of student affairs intervenes and participates in the decision-making around minor infractions and serious transgressions committed by students. “I negotiate with the teacher and student to not only bring an impact to the consequences, but also to show the parent that this is a united front,” the assistant principal of student affairs described to the inspection team.

Furthermore, BHMCS has devoted itself to the peace-pledging initiative, “No Place for Hate.” Throughout hallways and classrooms, the inspection team noted the abundant display of individual contracts, peace posters and classroom contracts affirming the school’s “No Place for Hate” commitment. During focus groups, the Board of Trustees and teachers confirmed that all students enter BHMCS and sign a peace pledge and actively participate in learning to appreciate diversity. Teachers explained how 80% of BHMCS have been training in the school’s anti-bullying, second step program. “Most teachers here have either attended or come from the responsive classroom and have the skills to teach students how to negotiate and respect each other,” one teacher commented. In addition, during an announcement by the principal, the inspection team heard the principal reminding school members of their promises to peace and tolerance.

## Appendix: Renewal Inspection Site Visit Schedule

**Monday, October 20, 2008**

	Team Member A	Team Member B	Team Member C	Team Member D
7:00 am	TEAM ARRIVES ON SITE-			
7:00- 8:00	TEAM MEETING			
8:00- 9:00	Meet with Administrative Team			
9:00 – 9:30	Classroom Observations			
9:30 – 10:00	Classroom Observations			
10:00– 10:30	Classroom Observations			
10:30- 11:00	Classroom Observations			
11:20– 12:05	First Teacher Interviews			
12:05- 1:00	Team Working Lunch			
1:00 – 1:30	Classroom Observations			
1:30 – 2:00	Classroom Observations			
2:00 – 3:00	<b>DOCUMENTS</b>			
3:00 – 5:00	TEAM MEETING AND DEBRIEF			

**Tuesday, October 21, 2008**

	<b>Team Member A</b>	<b>Team Member B</b>	<b>Team Member C</b>	<b>Team Member D</b>
<b>7:00</b>	TEAM ARRIVES ON SITE-			
<b>7:00- 8:00</b>	TEAM MEETING			
<b>8:00- 9:00</b>	<b>Board of Trustees Focus Group</b>		Classroom Observation	
<b>9:00 – 10:00</b>	<b>Check – in with leadership</b>		<b>Student Focus Group</b>	
<b>10:00 – 10:30</b>	Classroom Observation			
<b>10:30- 11:00</b>	Classroom Observation			
<b>11:00 – 12:00</b>	<b>Team Lunch and Debrief</b>			
<b>12:07- 12:52</b>	<b>Second Teacher Interviews</b>			
<b>1:00 – 2:00</b>	<b>Guidance Counselor (1:00 – 1:30)</b>		<b>Parent Focus Group</b>	
<b>1:30 – 2:15</b>	<b>Curriculum Coordinator</b>		<b>Document Review</b>	<b>Document Review</b>
<b>2:15 – 3:00</b>	<b>Asst. Principal</b>		<b>Tech. Director</b>	
<b>3:00 – 5:00</b>	TEAM MEETING AND DEBRIEF			

**Wednesday, October 22, 2008**

	<b>Team Member A</b>	<b>Team Member B</b>	<b>Team Member C</b>	<b>Team Member D</b>
<b>7:00 am</b>	TEAM ARRIVES ON SITE-			
<b>7:00- 8:00</b>	TEAM MEETING			
<b>8:00 – 9:00</b>	<b>Check – in with leadership</b>			
<b>9:00 – 9:30</b>	<b>Classroom Observations</b>			
<b>9:30 – 10:00</b>				
<b>10:00– 10:30</b>				
<b>10:30- 11:00</b>	<b>Team Deliberations</b>			
<b>11:00– 11:30</b>				
<b>11:30– 12:00</b>				
<b>12:00- 12:50</b>	Team Working Lunch			
<b>12:54 – 1:40</b>	<b>Third Teacher Interviews</b>			
<b>1:40 – 2:00</b>	Team Deliberation			
<b>2:00 - 3:00</b>				
<b>3:00 – 4:00</b>				
<b>4:00 – 4:30</b>	Final Check-in with Leadership			