

### **Barnstable Horace Mann Charter School**

*Marstons Mills, Massachusetts*

April, 2007

Barnstable Horace Mann Charter School (Barnstable), now in its eighth year of operation, is chartered to serve all of the grade 5 and 6 students in Barnstable, Massachusetts. During the current year, the school has enrolled 899 students, including 448 students in grade 5 and 451 students in grade 6.

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

As of March 1, 2007, the student population was 84% white, 5% Hispanic, 4% black, 2% Asian, and 5% mixed ethnicities. Twenty three percent of the students are low income. Fifteen percent receive special education services.

The following participants conducted the site visit on April 12, 2007:

- Chris Andre, Sturgis Charter Public School
- Barry Barnett, DOE Charter School Office
- Ellen Barol, Class Measures
- Paul Fay, New Bedford Global Learning Charter School
- Emily Lichtenstein, Charter School Office
- Jared Rose, South Shore Charter Public School

Before the visit, the site team reviewed the 2005-2006 Annual Report for the charter school and recent internal and external assessment data. On site, the team reviewed curricular information, board materials, and other information provided by the school. The team conducted group and individual interviews with trustees, administrators, teachers, families, and students, and observed approximately thirteen classes, spending approximately fifteen minutes in each classroom visited.

The purpose of this visit was to corroborate and augment the information contained in the school's Annual Report, to investigate the school's progress relative to its Accountability Plan goals, and to collect information that will help the Commissioner and Board of Education make a renewal recommendation for the school's charter. The focus of the visit is on three central areas of inquiry:

- Faithfulness to the terms of the school's charter;
- Academic program success;
- Organizational viability.

The team's findings in each of these areas are presented below.

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

### **Are the school's mission, vision, and educational philosophy clear and understood by the school community?**

*Finding: All stakeholders understood and articulated the mission and gave examples of how the mission is realized in the daily life of the school.*

Participants in all focus group interviews said that “excellence for all” is the essence of the schools’ mission, vision, and philosophy. Parents of students with significant disabilities as well as parents of students with academic talents agreed that BHMCS is a place where “every child gets to shine,” with many opportunities to excel and to be recognized for academic, social, and civic achievements. Board members noted that these opportunities take place in the regular classroom, but also in enrichment and remediation settings. Teachers noted that the expectations for excellence include everyone, and they described the school structures, such as the task forces detailed below, that promote continuous professional improvement. Multiple stakeholders talked about the school’s internal assessments as a way to track and respond to student progress in order to support excellence for all. Stakeholders also mentioned that the work of the Volunteer Coordinator strengthens connections between school and community.

### **Has the school met the faithfulness to charter goals set out in its Accountability Plan?**

*Finding: With some modification, the school has met the faithfulness to charter goals set out in its Accountability Plan.*

BHMCS has four faithfulness to charter goals set out in its Accountability Plan. The first goal, that “the school will adhere to design elements of the Modern Red School house design,” has been modified over time. The team observed that MRS is no longer used as the whole-school change model it was when the school was first chartered. Administrators explained that the Modern Red Schoolhouse (MRS) design was utilized more fully and more explicitly in the earlier period of the school’s charter as a way to unify the school and to coherently begin the curriculum development process. Although many elements of the MRS approach, such as backwards-designed curriculum and standards-based units, are embedded in the culture of the BHMCS, some MRS elements, such as mandatory membership in task forces, have been modified to better meet the current needs of the school.

The second faithfulness to charter goal states that “the school will actively involve parents and community members in the development of the school and in the education of the children.” Measures include parent survey responses, number of parent volunteers, and number of community events. Results of the June, 2006 parent survey, to which 20% of parents responded, were strongly positive in virtually all areas, with slightly less positive responses to questions related to equity in discipline issues and level of parent input into decisions. A survey sent to parents in October, 2006 invited comments on positive experiences and areas for improvement. Parents were enthusiastic in their responses, and included some suggestions for improvement, for example in drop-off and pick-up procedures. In 2005-2006, “at least 278 parents, or 30%” volunteered in some capacity in the school. There have been many annual school-community events, some hosted by the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) to welcome and inform families. There have also been community activities such as “Globing the Water” and the “Moon Party,” which highlighted project-based learning in science.

The third faithfulness to charter goal is that “technology will be infused within the curriculum: planning, implementation, and assessment.” Technology is used extensively and effectively throughout the school to support instruction and remediation, to develop, document, and revise curriculum, to communicate with parents and staff, and to track student progress on external and internal assessments. The school is currently building a portal that will include lessons, activities, and assessments, as well as student and class data. The school’s Director of Technology provides training and support, and there is a student Technology Team, which in 2005-2006 included 143 students.

The fourth goal is that the school “will communicate its mission and educational program throughout the school district with assistance from the Barnstable Public Schools school committee.” There have been several examples of dissemination within the Barnstable district, including presenting the BHMCS Annual Report to the school committee and sharing curriculum and internal assessment strategies with Barnstable administrators. There are also some examples of dissemination outside the district, including a presentation by the BHMCS Director of Technology at the Department of Education’s Technology Conference.

## **2. Academic Program Success**

**Does the school’s instructional program, as documented and implemented in the classroom:**

- 1. address the skills and concepts that students must know and be able to do to meet state standards?**
- 2. articulate school developed or identified internal standards for student performance?**
- 3. establish and implement accommodation plans that address the needs of diverse learners?**

*Finding: Curriculum is documented, aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, and based on elements of Modern Red Schoolhouse principles.*

BHMCS’s teacher-generated curriculum is documented for each grade level in all content areas. It is aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (MCF) standards, and built on the Modern Red Schoolhouse model of standards-based, backwards-planned curriculum. Teachers have created units for each subject and grade, documented in grade-level binders. Binders include, for every unit in each core area, unit overview, summary of content, list of standards covered, suggestions for reinforcement at home, supporting material, and standards-based assessments modeled after MCAS. Learning activities and best practices are documented and shared online. A variety of resources, including commercial materials from Glencoe, Prentice Hall, Harcourt, and National Geographic are utilized; no single series is used exclusively.

*Finding: Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are refined collaboratively.*

Teachers and administrators reported that curriculum, instruction, and assessment are continually examined and adjusted, using formal and informal student performance data as the basis for revision. Teacher work groups, such as the task forces described below, provide a structure for collaborative revision. In addition, units are taught on a schedule common to all classes in that grade, in order to facilitate sharing ideas and best practices. Because curriculum is online as well as in binders, teachers can easily access and modify curriculum materials.

*Finding: Instructional strategies are varied. There is evidence of student-centered learning, especially at Grade 5.*

The site team visited approximately thirteen classes in both grades and across content areas. Visitors noted both individual and small-group work; there was ample evidence of project-based, hands-on learning, particularly in math and science classes. Although much of the instruction was student-centered, there were also classrooms in which instruction was teacher-centered, with little discussion or interaction among students, with questioning that was predominantly recall, and with little or no wait time built in. Observers noted that in some cases, instruction in fifth grade classrooms appeared to be approached differently from more traditional instruction in some sixth grade classrooms. This may reflect the curriculum, which stakeholders described as “more thematic” and “more collaborative” at Grade 5 and “more structured” at Grade 6. It may also reflect the transition of the school in 2003-2004 from a single-grade building to one to which arriving sixth grade teachers brought a more “junior high” set of expectations and practices. Administrators commented that the process of implementing the vision of a single instructional approach is an ongoing one in which progress continues to be made.

*Finding: There is evidence that teachers share best practices.*

Teachers commented that the culture of collaboration strengthens instruction and achievement at BHMCS. As they visited classes, visitors noted strong evidence of shared practices. They heard common use of sophisticated content-specific language and observed the use of common writing, thinking, and reading strategies, such as “KWL” and “golden brick.” Committee, department, and faculty meetings, as well as common planning time, provide multiple opportunities for collaboration. In addition, best practices and strategies for differentiation are “roadmapped” on the school’s server.

*Finding: There are multiple strategies used to support diverse learners*

BHMCS has structures in place to support diverse learners. Students in targeted areas who are in need of MCAS remediation are invited to participate in ELA or math after-school tutoring sessions. One parent commented that although she “completely understand[s] that resources are limited,” she hoped that at some point the school would be able to provide tutoring to everyone who needs it. Gifted And Talented Education With Able Youth (Gateway) supplements the academic needs of motivated and talented students. BHMCS’s Milestones program recognizes students every quarter for academic, social, and civic achievements. Parents commented that Milestones gives all children a chance to be honored; in 2005-2006 approximately 500 students were recognized each term. In the classroom, visitors noted examples of differentiation, including the use of differentiated reading books correlated with students’ MAZE scores, and enrichment activities for those who finished first. “Roadmapping” in curriculum documents supports varied approaches to a concept in order to meet the needs of diverse learners; curriculum units contain project-based culminating activity options from which students may choose.

*Finding: Virtually all students are engaged and on-task.*

Site team visitors noted respectful, collaborative behavior in BHMCS classrooms. Interactions were positive; teachers used praise to acknowledge appropriate behavior and utilized proactive interventions to head off misbehavior. Students were generally on-task and engaged; teachers circulated to include or redirect the few students who were off-task.

**Are students reaching Proficiency on state standards, as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)?**

*Finding: MCAS results show strong performance in ELA; math results are less strong but improving.*

All MCAS results for English language arts and mathematics that are available for the last five years are presented below in Table I. This Table includes the Composite Performance Index (CPI), which reflects the distribution of student scores over the four MCAS performance categories. The CPI is a 100-point index that measures the extent to which students are progressing toward proficiency.

**Table I: Barnstable Horace Mann Charter School MCAS Results by Performance Category**

**Annual Comparisons 2002-2006**

| ELA            | Students Included | % Advanced | % Proficient | % Needs Improv. | % Warning/Failed | CPI  |
|----------------|-------------------|------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------|------|
| <b>Grade 5</b> |                   |            |              |                 |                  |      |
| 2006           | 447               | 13         | 53           | 27              | 8                | 85.5 |
| <b>Grade 6</b> |                   |            |              |                 |                  |      |
| 2006           | 463               | 16         | 62           | 19              | 3                | 91.0 |

| Math           | Students Included | % Advanced | % Proficient | % Needs Improv. | % Warning/Failed | CPI  |
|----------------|-------------------|------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------|------|
| <b>Grade 5</b> |                   |            |              |                 |                  |      |
| 2006           | 450               | 17         | 31           | 34              | 18               | 73.9 |
| <b>Grade 6</b> |                   |            |              |                 |                  |      |
| 2002           | 583               | 9          | 31           | 31              | 28               | 64.9 |
| 2003           | 492               | 13         | 27           | 35              | 25               | 68.2 |
| 2004           | 526               | 17         | 29           | 34              | 21               | 70.6 |
| 2005           | 418               | 22         | 31           | 34              | 13               | 76.6 |
| 2006           | 466               | 21         | 35           | 28              | 16               | 77.1 |

In English language arts, MCAS scores show strong performance at both Grade 5 and Grade 6 in the first year of ELA testing, with the CPI reflecting stronger performance at Grade 6.

In mathematics, overall performance has been less strong than in English language arts, and math has been targeted by the school for improvement. The CPI for Grade 5 in the first year of testing is 73.9. At Grade 6, for which there is longitudinal data, the CPI has increased every year, from 64.9 in 2002 to 77.1 in 2006.

*Finding: The school has made Adequate Yearly Progress in the aggregate, but not in the Special Education subgroup.*

Table II below shows the 2006 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determinations for BHMCS and its statistically significant subgroups. AYP determinations are calculated by the state, in accordance with the standards of the No Child Left Behind Act. A school that makes AYP is considered to be “on track” to have all students score in the proficient or advanced category on the MCAS exam by 2014. BHMCS’s math data shows that the school has made adequate

improvement to achieve AYP in the aggregate. However, in the Special Education subgroup the school has not made AYP, since it did not meet state targets for performance and improvement.

|      |               | Adequate Yearly Progress History |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | Accountability Status |
|------|---------------|----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----------------------|
|      |               | 1999                             | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |                       |
| ELA  | Aggregate     | -                                | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | No Status             |
|      | All Subgroups | -                                | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    |                       |
| MATH | Aggregate     | -                                | -    | -    | -    | -    | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  | No Status             |
|      | All Subgroups | -                                | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | Yes  | No   |                       |

**Has student performance been strong, or improved over time on other external assessments?**

BHMCS no longer uses the Stanford 9 as an additional external assessment. The school felt that Stanford results were not useful in informing instruction, and they were not proven to correlate with MCAS results.

**Has student performance been strong, or improved over time on internal assessments?**

*Finding: BHMCS internal assessment results compiled for 2005-2006 show areas of strength and areas targeted for improvement.*

BHMCS has developed internal assessments for writing, ELA, and math. Writing prompts are administered in fall and spring and measure performance in Topic Development and Conventions. Quarterly assessments in ELA include reading comprehension, vocabulary, and language conventions; ELA unit tests mirror MCAS format. Math internal assessments are unit tests, which are multiple choice, and culminating activities, which follow the ORQ format. According to the compiled results of internal assessments in 2005-2006, the school identified areas for improvement in ELA at both Grade 5 and Grade 6, and in math at Grade 6 and implemented strategies for improvement, such as increased after-school tutoring and school-wide literacy efforts. Although internal assessments for 2006-2007 have not yet been completed, results as of March, 2007 show an average score of 80.5 in ELA for Grade 5 and an average of 82 in ELA for Grade 6. Averages for Grade 5 math as of March, 2007 range from 83.2 to 84.9. Results as of March for Grade 6 math were not available. In writing, results as of March, 2007 are comparable to those for fall, 2005-2006, for both Grade 5 and Grade 6.

**Have students met the academic performance goals set out in the school’s Accountability Plan?**

*Finding: The school has met the academic performance goals for which data is currently available.*

BHMCS has set four academic performance goals measured by students’ progress toward proficiency in ELA, math, science and technology, and history and social science. Measures are both internal and external assessment results; results of internal assessment will not be compiled until later in the year. One external measure, the Stanford 9, is no longer administered; the other external measure is MCAS, specifically the “combined percent of students scoring in the advanced and proficient categories” in each tested area as compared with the state. In all tested

areas (Grades 5 and 6 ELA, Grades 5 and 6 math, Grade 5 science and technology), the percent of BHMCS students in the combined advanced and proficient categories “exceeded the state average by at least 5%.” Results were especially strong (at least 10% difference) in Grades 5 and 6 ELA and in Grade 6 math.

### **3. Organizational Viability**

#### **Does the school have an effective leadership and governance structure for carrying out the mission, vision, and educational philosophy of the school?**

*Finding: The Board of Trustees is clear about its governance responsibilities and is committed to supporting the school’s mission.*

Board trustees described their role in carrying out the school’s mission as one of oversight and not “day-to-day management of the school.” The board’s work is guided by the Accountability Plan and the newly implemented strategic plan; each Board subcommittee (Finance, Executive, Academic Affairs, Development and Community Relations, and Governance) is responsible for a part of the strategic plan.

*Finding: There are multiple channels for communication among board, administration, staff, and parents.*

Board-school communication is facilitated by including representatives from multiple stakeholder groups on some of the board subcommittees; a member of the board also attends weekly school management team meetings. One trustee described the “nice channel of communication” that results; another said, “It’s not us and them.” Communication was mentioned by stakeholders as one of the principal’s particular strengths. She sends a weekly email update to board members, a separate one to staff, and a monthly newsletter to parents, as well as a twice-monthly update via the school’s auto call system. There are parent coffees once a month and a regular school column in the local newspaper. Staff, parent, and board surveys are used to provide feedback and determine areas for improvement. Parents commented that administrators and teachers are easy to reach and willing to help; they described unit overviews that are sent home for every unit and include “suggestions to support unit standards.” Stakeholders noted that the principal maintains an “open-door policy” and is “very accessible,” and that all administrators are “out and about” and available. Communication is also maintained through the task force structure. Task forces are teacher work groups in each core academic area at each grade level. Task forces, which meet once a month, are charged with ongoing examination of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; they share their work with the rest of the staff at curriculum department meetings.

*Finding: The school’s relationship with the Barnstable district is evolving.*

Stakeholders reported that there are challenges inherent in being a Horace Mann charter school; one is establishing and maintaining open, productive conversation with the Barnstable district. Trustees commented that because this is the first year of the new Superintendent’s tenure, the process is in the beginning stage; they agreed that the district and the school have made efforts to foster constructive dialogue.

*Finding: School leadership is distributed, both within the administrative team and among teachers.*

The management team noted that although there are delineated areas specific to each job, administrators at BHMCS share leadership and responsibility for the school as a whole; they described their administrative style as “very collaborative.” Teacher leadership is encouraged through the task force and committee structure described below.

### **Does the school have systems and structures in place to guide improvement?**

*Finding: Task force groups, committees, and curriculum departments provide structures for curriculum revision and for sharing best practices.*

Teacher work groups in each core area at each grade level are called task forces; they are a component of the Modern Red Schoolhouse model. Task forces develop curriculum; they also continually examine and revise curriculum, instruction, and assessment based on student progress. They provide a structure for sharing best practices and information from workshops or conferences; members serve as liaisons to their respective curriculum departments. There is also a literacy committee that meets once a month to consider school-wide issues and initiatives related to literacy, as well as a reading specialists’ meeting every Friday. Curriculum departments meet once a month to look at scope and sequence and “swap lessons,” and team teachers, along with the Special Educator attached to the team, have common planning time. Although task forces, committees, and departments are a formalized way for teachers to share information and ideas, teachers noted that at BHMCS, “we share all the time.” One teacher said, “If I have a great idea for a lesson, all the other fifth grade teachers are going to get it, too.”

*Finding: Data is used to track and support improvement of student performance.*

Data from internal assessments and from MCAS, compiled in a database, is used to track student performance and to continually revise curriculum and instruction to meet students’ learning needs. Internal assessments are given in the form of reading tests, writing prompts, unit tests, and culminating activities. Analysis of assessment results allows the school to target areas for improvement, such as reading or open-response questions, and to respond with initiatives such as a literacy committee, after-school tutoring, or Study Island, a web-based remediation program.

*Finding: There are multiple professional development opportunities.*

Teachers noted that the principal keeps them informed about external professional development opportunities, encourages them to participate, and reimburses “as much as possible.” Such experiences are shared with colleagues through faculty meetings, task forces, and department meetings. Teachers have expressed, through surveys, their preferences for in-house professional development and “inspirational speakers.” As a result, both formats are provided. In-house professional development is driven by school-wide improvement efforts, such as those from the literacy committee.

*Finding: Evaluation processes are in place for teachers and for the Principal.*

BHMCS follows the district Professional Education Policy. The evaluation format is based on a four-year cycle comprised of an Evaluation year, a Professional Growth year, an Observation year, and a second Professional Growth year. There is no district evaluation tool for assistant principals; the BHMCS principal uses an “informal narrative” to evaluate members of her management team. The Board of Trustees evaluates the principal, based school-wide surveys and observations. The Executive subcommittee reviews survey results, conferences with the principal, and collaborates with her to set annual professional goals.

## **Is the school safe and are the physical facilities adequate for the program of the school?**

*Finding: All stakeholders described the school as safe, both physically and emotionally.*

Visitors noted a positive climate, with consistently respectful interactions among students and between adults and children. Both students and parents commented that bullying or other inappropriate behavior is addressed immediately and effectively; students said “the teachers make sure we’re safe,” and “we can always talk to teachers.” Parents said that a lock-down procedure is in place; they also described the attention to safety at after-school activities. Parents spoke enthusiastically about the level of emotional safety in the school, particularly the way the school helps fourth graders transition successfully to this much larger setting. The facility is welcoming, spacious, and attractive.

## **Is the school operating in a manner consistent with legal and regulatory requirements?**

*Finding: The school serves students with a broad range of educational needs.*

The school serves students with very diverse needs including a blind student, students with intellectual disabilities, autism, emotional disabilities, Down’s syndrome and two students who require wheelchairs. The building is fully handicapped accessible. Four Personal Care Assistants are employed by the school. Due to the school’s strong inclusion efforts, however, only four students are actually in substantially separate placements for the full school day.

*Finding: A full continuum of placements and services is available to support the needs of students with disabilities.*

The school operates several resource rooms and a separate classroom for severely emotionally disturbed students. Student-teacher ratios in the pull-out settings are very low, with most groups observed operating at ratios of two or three to one. All classes observed were in excellent physical condition. Students in all resource rooms were engaged in their work, and received frequent praise and continual support from instructors and staff. The classes were orderly and well-organized. Students were observed working in a variety of settings across classes including in whole groups, on computers independently or with an aide, in small groups with an aide, and receiving one-to-one instruction. Inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom is accomplished with the support of eighteen special education assistants. The geography curriculum observed in the Grade 6 science class was mirrored in the corresponding special education resource room in which there was a geography terms quiz, and in the English language development class, in which students were studying the names of the states.

*Finding: The school has extensive supports available for English language learners.*

In cases where previous data does not exist, incoming students are administered a home language survey, and students then suspected of being limited English proficient are assessed using appropriate tools. Limited English proficient students attend an English Language Development program in which students receive English as a second language instruction in a small group setting. Beginner English Language Learner students receive 2.5 hours per day of English Language support; intermediate students receive an hour per day. The classroom observed was in excellent physical condition and all students were engaged in their work. Students were happy to be there, received frequent praise, and enjoyed the attention of their instructors and their interactions with peers. Students received whole group practice learning the names of the states, and then broke into groups to do worksheets, some working independently, others working in a small group with the classroom aide, while another worked independently on the computer.

Nine classrooms are implementing Sheltered English Immersion. Staff persons responsible for implementation have received training, although that process is ongoing. A full forty-two hours of training will have been administered to staff at the program's completion. Two teaching assistants, one full time and one half time, are employed to support the school's Sheltered English Immersion program.

*Finding: The school has programs and services available to meet students' social/emotional needs.*

Two prevention specialists work at the school. These staff members handle student referrals out of class made on a preventive basis. When referred, the students go to the prevention specialists' office, where they are provided with an opportunity to analyze and reflect on the behavior which resulted in the referral, and to strategize about how to successfully re-enter the classroom. Students sent out on a prevention referral are not subject to punishment, although repeated referrals lead to parent notification. Referrals can be made by staff or by the students themselves. Parents reported that students are not "afraid of the prevention teachers; they feel they can talk to them." Administrators noted that in 2005-2006, although enrollment increased, discipline incidents decreased.

In addition, a crisis intervention team exists to handle various situations, such as informing the school of the death of a community member. The school adjustment counselor operates a number of groups, some on an ongoing basis and others as needed, that address a variety of issues including divorce, bereavement, depression, social skills, anger management, and anxiety, with additional individual meetings available.

**Are professional staff members qualified by training and/or experience in the areas to which they are assigned?**

*Finding: All of the teachers at BHMCS meet the definition of highly qualified under the No Child Left Behind Act. Most are veteran teachers with more than ten years' experience.*

Table IV below shows the years of teaching experience of the BHMCS staff. As indicated in this table, there are forty teachers on staff who have had more than ten years of teaching experience; only four are new teachers.

Table IV: Years of Teaching Experience for Faculty 2006-2007

|  | 1-2 Years | 3-5 Years | 6-10 Years | 11-20 Years | 20+ Years |
|--|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|-----------|
| Teachers with this number of years teaching          | 4         | 8         | 10         | 22          | 18        |
| Teachers with this number of years teaching at BHMCS | 15        | 43        | 3          | 1           |           |

**Are school community members satisfied with the performance of the school?**

*Finding: All stakeholders expressed a high level of satisfaction with the performance of the school.*

Students expressed very positive feelings about the school, commenting that the school challenges them, and also encourages them to do their best. Teachers were described as “empowered” and said they felt supported by administrators, coordinators, and “fabulous personnel resources.” They described the school’s environment as collegial and “non-competitive.” Administrators noted that staff morale is high. Parents praised the school for its academic rigor, its attention to students’ emotional well-being, and its efforts to include and welcome them. Trustees described the positive and cooperative relationship that exists between the board and the school and highlighted the school’s assessment and communication efforts.

### **Has the school met the organizational viability goals set out in its Accountability Plan?**

*Finding: The school has met the organizational viability goals set out in its Accountability Plan.* The first organizational viability goal is that “the school will be fiscally sound.” BHMCS’s budget is balanced, and the school benefits from a “large reserve” which helps support ample staffing, supplies, and professional development opportunities. The second goal is that “the Board of Trustees will provide effective and sound governance and will work collaboratively with the Leadership Team to improve student achievement.” The Board of Trustees, guided by the Accountability Plan and its new strategic plan, and informed by results of school community surveys, collaborates with the school’s leadership in implementing the BHMCS’s mission. The third goal is that “student attendance will be maintained at a level consistent with, or higher than state averages.” Since 2005-2006, the school has maintained an attendance rate of at least 95%.

### **Conclusion**

#### **Is the school becoming the school it promised to be in its charter?**

BHMCS is becoming the school it promised to be in its charter. All stakeholders are actively implementing the school’s mission of “excellence for all.” Teachers are dedicated, collegial, and interested in continuous improvement. Administrators are effective and supportive “cheerleaders” for the school. Parents feel welcome; they appreciate the school’s many outreach efforts, and its efforts to provide ways for all children to be recognized. Students feel both challenged and encouraged. The Board, clear about its governance role, takes responsibility for overseeing the achievement of the school’s goals. The school benefits from ample resources, in terms of the facility and also in terms of supplies, support personnel, and professional development opportunities. Curriculum is documented and standards-based; results of continual assessment of student performance drive revision of curriculum and instruction.

The school also faces some challenges. Teachers articulated that they need to find ways to help their students reach state standards, while “remembering that they are still children.” This balance will be important as the school continues to improve MCAS results, particularly for their Special Education population. The school’s status as a Horace Mann charter also offers challenges, since BHMCS is responsible not only to its own Board of Trustees, but to the Barnstable district as well. The school will need to continue its efforts to build a collaborative relationship with the district. Finally, the school will need to examine and evaluate differences in instructional practice between the two grade levels in order to pursue the vision of an instructionally unified school.