

## **Introduction**

The Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School (BFCCS) submits this application for a second charter renewal with great pride in the successes attained under its current charter and with enthusiasm for future growth and creativity. BFCCS was among the first schools to receive an initial charter and the second school to have its charter renewed. As we submit this application for our third charter, we are delighted by the school's many accomplishments, and we present information showing that BFCCS is fulfilling both its own mission and the mission of the charter school movement.

Academically, the school is successful as judged by both internal and external standards. BFCCS is among the highest scoring MCAS schools in the Commonwealth, often outscoring the highest scoring schools in the state whose per pupil expenditures far exceed those of BFCCS. Our MCAS scores have soared during the last four years, and now in six out of eight tests, BFCCS'S MCAS scores exceed those from the Franklin School District (FSD).

Our Accountability Plan promotes a program dedicated to the school's Four Pillars: Core Knowledge Curriculum, Community Service, Character Education, and the role of Parents as Primary Educators. These pillars are derived from the school's mission as originally stated in its founding charter: "To assist parents in their role as primary educators of their children by providing the children with a classical academic education coupled with sound character education development and opportunities for community service." One section of the Accountability Plan is devoted to each of the four pillars, and a final section of that plan is devoted to ensuring that the school is a viable institution.

As a viable institution, the administrative structure of the school supports outstanding student achievement, limited faculty attrition, family satisfaction as indicated by low student attrition, and a long student waitlist. The Board continually reviews its policies and procedures, addresses important school issues, and is mindful that its role is to set policies and not to engage in the daily running of the school. In addition, the Board Committees are very active in supporting the school's pillars and in presenting analyses of important issues to the full Board.

As a financial institution, the BFCCS Board has met all the standards of its independent auditors in accordance with applicable Government Accounting Standards. The Board responds immediately to all recommendations for improved management from our auditors, has accrued over \$700,000 in savings, and skillfully manages its decreasing per pupil allotment over the last two years.

The school is maturing as an institution in many ways, refining its identity, programs, and successes. The school is increasingly disseminating best practices through, among other activities, teacher presentations at seminars, sharing published materials, and hosting visitors from other schools. In particular, our Accountability Plan requires that each year teachers write accounts of their best curriculum projects for dissemination. Also, our integrated, project-based curriculum continues to develop while engaging and challenging students, proving that a project – based, progressive curriculum is consistent with a high achievement in standards based curriculum.

When the school was chartered, the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (MCF) had not been adopted. We are currently investigating aligning the unaligned sections of the Core Knowledge (CK) curriculum with the MCF. (The history and social studies curriculum in grades four through eight, and the science curriculum in grade eight are unaligned.) This new alignment will result in, what we are calling, "an enriched frameworks curriculum". This curriculum will blend the CK curriculum with the MCF while retaining the CK curriculum. This expanded curriculum extends the MCF. The faculty has begun to think about new ways to make that curriculum intriguing. We look forward to becoming a leader in disseminating exciting, integrated, hands-on curricula based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and on our school's Four Pillars.

BFCCS is well poised to accept the challenges and excitement of a renewed charter, making contributions to education within the Commonwealth and to our own students.

**1. Is the academic program a success?**

Based on external and internal testing, the review from the Seventh and Eighth Year Site Visits by the Commonwealth, and standards from our Accountability Plan, the school’s academic program is a resounding success.

**1A. Has the school made reasonable progress in meeting internally established educational goals during the term of its charter?**

**1B. Has student performance significantly improved and/or been persistently strong on internal and external academic assessments?**

**Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)**

Our Accountability Plan states that BFCCS students will score higher than the students in the Franklin School District on all MCAS tests.

In this section, we examine our MCAS scores in several ways:

- comparing our 2000 and 2003 (the years under our existing charter) scores with the Franklin School District (FSD);
- comparing our 2003 scores with those from the thirteen school districts that send students to BFCCS;
- comparing our 2003 scores with those from the top scoring schools in the state;
- looking at our own rise in scores over the last several years;
- examining cohorts in different years, i.e. how do our students’ scores as eighth graders compare to their scores when they were sixth and fourth graders;
- reporting how we plan to address our eighth grade science MCAS scores, our lowest scores;
- reporting on our Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Comparing BFCCS and the Franklin School District (FSD) 2000 and 2003 MCAS scores:

There are many measures of the school’s academic improvement and success. One dramatic measure is noted by comparing the MCAS scores for BFCCS and FSD for 2000 and 2003. As noted in the chart below, in 2000 all BFCCS MCAS scores were below those from the Franklin School District; in 2003 BFCCS scored higher than the FSD on six out of eight MCAS tests.

**MCAS COMPARSION 2000 and 2003**

TEST	Percentage Combined Advanced/ Proficient 2000		Percentage Combined Advanced/ Proficient 2003	
	BFCCS	Franklin	BFCCS	Franklin
Grade 3 Reading	*	*	78	75
Grade 4 ELA	14	40	85	75
Grade 4 Math	54	71	79	65
Grade 4 Science	79	85	*	*
Grade 5 Science	*	*	87	73
Grade 6 Math	*	*	86	54
Grade 7 ELA	*	*	86	90
Grade 8 ELA	79	82	*	*
Grade 8 Math	41	52	75	49
Grade 8 History	8	13	*	*
Grade 8 Science	*	*	26	69

\*=No test given

Comparing BFCC 2003 MCAS scores with those from the FSD and from the five top scoring districts in the Commonwealth:

**Percent of Advanced and Proficient Combined  
MCAS 2003**

	<b>BFCCS</b>	<b>Franklin</b>	<b>Wellesley (1)</b>	<b>Winchester (2)</b>	<b>Harvard (3)</b>	<b>Westwood (4)</b>	<b>Wayland (5)</b>
<b>Grade 3 Reading</b>	78	75	83	91	86	82	80
<b>Grade 4 ELA</b>	85	75	82	88	78	84	83
<b>Grade 4 Math</b>	79	65	68	78	62	65	73
<b>Grade 5 Science</b>	87	73	66	83	88	73	75
<b>Grade 6 Math</b>	88	55	84	82	78	82	82
<b>Grade 7 English</b>	86	90	93	93	81	89	95
<b>Grade 8 Math</b>	75	49	75	75	68	62	72
<b>Grade 8 Science</b>	26	69	62	70	49	60	75

BFCCS, with far lower per pupil expenditure than the top five scoring school districts (based on rankings by the Boston Globe), frequently outscores these districts. BFCCS had more students in the combined Proficient and Advanced category for fourth grade math than did either the FSD or any of the five highest scoring districts. In fourth grade ELA, BFCCS ranked higher than the FSD and higher than all but one of the five top ranked school districts in the state.

In fifth grade science and in sixth grade math, BFCCS ranked higher than Franklin and higher than each of the six top scoring MCAS school districts. (A fuller analysis of all state MCAS scores indicates that BFCCS ranked fifth in the state for fifth grade math MCAS scores and sixth in the state for sixth grade MCAS scores.) In eighth grade math, BFCCS scored higher than the FSD and had the same top score as two of the six highest scoring districts.

In the 2003 MCAS tests, the FSD's math scores go down from fourth to sixth to eighth grades while the BFCCS scores remain among the highest in the state in all grades. This is noteworthy since we are so frequently compared to the FSD and because our Accountability Plan states that we will score higher than the FSD in all MCAS tests.

In seventh grade ELA, BFCCS had an impressive 86% of students in the combined Advanced or Proficient category. This is lower than the percent for the FSD (90%) and lower than the scores for all but one of the six top scoring districts. However, as will be seen when looking at our own test scores longitudinally, our seventh grade scores have gone up since the seventh grade test was introduced. Perhaps more impressively, as will be seen in the study of cohort groups, this group (admittedly with some changes in the cohort), increased from a combined Advanced and Proficient score of 18% as fourth graders in 2000 to a combined Advanced and Proficient score of 86% as seventh graders in 2003.

In the eighth grade science MCAS, 26% of the students scored in the Advanced/Proficient range. The school looked closely at this score, as it does with all MCAS scores, to determine what issues need to be addressed.

Our seventh and eighth grade science curricula, based on E.D. Hirsch's Core Knowledge curriculum, do not align with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (MCF). This year, the science faculty in grades 6-8, the Education Committee of the Board, and the entire Board addressed the issue of aligning the two curricula in a creative way that honors both Core Knowledge and the MCF. You will hear more about this in a later section in which we discuss plans for the future. Basically, we will be converting the eighth grade science curriculum to a more comprehensive project based curriculum that will allow us to incorporate the MCF that we do not currently teach with the Core Knowledge curriculum. We have hired a consultant to help us design this additional hands-on, project-based curriculum. Our eighth grade science teacher will be given a grant in the 2004 summer to start designing this curriculum.

Comparing BFCCS' 2003 MCAS scores with those of the thirteen districts that send students to BFCCS:

BFCCS students have higher MCAS scores than each of the thirteen districts that send to us in Grade 4 ELA and Math, in Grade 5 Science, in Grade 6 Math, and in Grade 8 Math.

**Advanced and Proficient Combined  
MCAS 2003**

	BFCCS	Fklin	No.Attbr	Bellhm	Fxboro	Hollstn	Hpkon	Mnsfld	Mdwy	Mlfd	Nflk	Plnville	Wrnthm	KP
Grade 3 Reading	78	75	81	73	83	73	78	78	77	62	79	60	81	0
Grade 4 ELA	85	75	74	54	84	61	81	66	65	49	80	66	78	0
Grade 4 Math	79	65	50	41	58	50	60	53	42	38	57	36	59	0
Grade 5 Science	87	73	73	65	71	71	79	65	76	54	76	64	78	0
Grade 6 Math	88	55	48	57	61	71	57	63	81	30	65	32	69	0
Grade 7 English	86	90	76	56	88	86	87	82	84	71	0	0	0	76
Grade 8 Math	75	49	45	33	57	66	62	49	68	35	0	0	0	55
Grade 8 Science	26	69	57	29	45	60	52	41	60	33	0	0	0	50

Comparing longitudinal MCAS scores:

A review of MCAS scores in each grade for tests given in 2003 and in previous years, shows increasingly strong performance or consistently high performance in recent years, except for eighth grade science which is discussed above. (As discussed, there are now plans in place to align Core Knowledge and MCF.) (See Attachments (1-1)-(1-3))

Cohort Comparisons for MCAS scores, as available:

One of the most interesting comparisons that indicate both academic success and improvement is a review of cohort levels over time, even while acknowledging that there is some change in each cohort group over time. We only have comparative tests for grades eight, seven, and six.

1. Grade 8 Students(2002-2003)

Math

As eighth graders, 75% scored either Advanced or Proficient in the math MCAS.

As fourth graders in 1999, 47% scored either Advanced or Proficient in the math MCAS.

Science and Technology

As eighth graders, 26% scored in the Advanced or Proficient category. (As stated above, we are taking steps to assure future curricula alignment. Interestingly, we analyzed this test to see how well students did in topics that were taught in eighth grade, and they do quite well when tested on materials they have studied.)

As fourth graders in 1999, 70% of them scored either Advanced or Proficient. (Our fourth grade curriculum aligns with the MCF.)

2. Seventh Grade Students (2002-2003)

ELA

As seventh graders, 75% scored either Advanced or Proficient in ELA

As fourth graders in 2000, 14% scored either Advanced or Proficient in ELA

3. Sixth Grade Students (2002-2003)

Math

As sixth grade students, 86% scored either Advanced or Proficient

As fourth graders in 2001, 61% scored either Advanced or Proficient

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) History

As indicated in the summary of our AYP provided by the DOE, we have met our AYP in every year.

ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS HISTORY										
	ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS					MATHEMATICS				
Students	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Aggregate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
All subgroups	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes

**The Educational Records Bureau Writing Assessment Program (ERB)**

Our Annual Report analyzes our ERB results in great detail. For purposes of this renewal application we provide the data and conclusions from the Eighth Year Site Visit (2002-2003) that states “over the past three years, BFCCS students on average have scored above grade level, which meets the Accountability Plan goal of having all classes score at the ‘hundred level’ for their grade.”(pg. 4)

**ERB Results\*, 1998-2003**

Year/Grade	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
1998	556	497	464	N/A	N/A
1999	588	561	617	758	N/A
2000	469	479	606	767	805
2001	452	538	624	781	836
2002	521	581	674	778	813
2003	499	666	722	851	835

\* grade equivalent score on the ERB for 4th graders is 400, for 5th graders is 500, etc.

Training students to be articulate writers is a key obligation of schools. Good writing requires clear thinking. Starting last year, we have been working with the “Writing Process” approach to teaching narrative writing. To launch this program, we visited the Lilja school in Natick which has won commendation for its literacy programs. After this school visit, Mary Canner, Lilja’s principal, came to BFCCS on several occasions to teach our staff about this program and to observe and teach in our classrooms. In addition, Ms. Canner recommended two books, “*Mosaic of Thought*” and “*Craft Lessons*” that she thought would help us create a community conversation and shared language about the teaching of writing. BFCCS purchased a copy of both of these books for our writing teachers. This year, based on reviews from many of our staff, the school bought a copy of “*Mosaic of Thought*” for every teacher in the school, and the book will be the discussion topic at an upcoming faculty meeting. This vignette is one example of how we work to ensure that our teachers are a group of professionals who are learning together. The Board and Administration plan programs that enhance the professional status of our staff.

We do not have the budget to hire full time curriculum coordinators for different subjects. Instead, we have successfully established multi-year training relationships with experts in various fields who get to know our school and our staff. Ms. Canner will be returning this year to work with our faculty on how to teach writing.

Similarly, we have a multi-year relationship with Maria Marolda, a math learning specialist from the Learning Disabilities unit at Children’s Hospital in Boston, who has worked with our faculty for the past four years. (See section 2c)

In addition, this year we will work with a science specialist who will help the faculty design and use hands-on science projects.

## **California Achievement Tests (CAT) scores**

This year, 2004, will be the last year that BFCCS uses the CAT test as an external assessment tool. The Education Committee of the Board will study the issue of external testing. They will make a recommendation to the Board whether another test should replace the CAT test or whether we should rely on the ERB and the MCAS for our external testing. The Board may want to retain a test that qualifies students for the John Hopkins Center for Talented Youth programs since we have had many students in the past qualify for this program based on the CAT test.

Once again, we turn to the data and conclusions from the Eighth Year Site Visit (2002-2003) to report on scores.

“These results (CAT scores) show persistently strong performance in all grade levels in both subjects over the past three years.”

### **CAT Scores, 2000-2003**

(National Percentile Rank of Mean NCE)

	<i>Reading Comprehension</i>				<i>Math Concepts/Application</i>			
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2000	2001	2002	2003
Grade 1	84	80	87	88	86	84	83	92
Grade 2	94	92	88	94	96	90	87	71
Grade 3	88	94	91	91	85	91	89	91
Grade 4	88	92	92	93	93	91	94	94
Grade 5	83	84	85	83	92	91	94	93
Grade 6	83	80	93	89	89	91	95	96
Grade 7	83	86	84	88	85	85	93	93
Grade 8	85	87	84	78	78	80	92	93

### **Accountability Plan: Internal Assessments**

Although we remain proud of our strong external testing results, we know that those scores, as important as they are, do not give a full sense of the school’s academic vitality and strength.

Our Accountability Plan, revised in the 2002-2003 school year, sets goals and assessment standards for each of the school’s Four Pillars: Core Knowledge, Character Education, Community Service, and Parents as Primary Educators. The Accountability Plan’s academic strand, which includes those for the Core Knowledge Curriculum, sets standards for internal achievement in all subjects: science, math, grammar, geography, history, ELA, the arts, Latin, French and PE. Since the plan was adopted after the start of the school year, not all aspects of the plan could be reported on last year.

Without fully repeating the more detailed analysis from the Annual Report, the following is a sampling of standards met from the Accountability Plan for several academic subjects.

### **Internal Accountability Results**

#### **Language Arts**

Goal from the BFCCS Accountability Plan:

- ❖ *75% of the tested students will score 80% or better on an internally designed grammar test.*

In grades one through eight, end of the year grammar tests were given to students based on the grammar requirements listed in both the Core Knowledge Sequence and in the State Frameworks. In every grade at least 75% of the students scored 80% or better on year-end grammar tests.

## **History**

Goal from the BFCCS Accountability Plan:

- ❖ *75% of tested students will score 80% or better on the internally designed and administered year-end test on Core Knowledge history that was studied during the year.*

In grades five, six, and eight year end tests on Core Knowledge history that was taught were given, and in each of those grades at least 75% of the students scored above 80%.

## **Geography**

Goal from the BFCCS Accountability Plan:

- ❖ *80% of the tested students will score 85% or better on an internally administered geography test.*

In grades five, six, and eight, eighty percent of the students scored 85% or better on internally administered geography tests based on the Core Knowledge curriculum.

## **Mathematics**

Goal from the BFCCS Accountability Plan:

- ❖ *At the end of sixth, seventh and eighth grades there will be a test on core topics (as indicated in our math outlines) and 80% of students will earn a grade of 80% or better. Will complete a full credit Algebra I course and will be eligible to gain a secondary school credit.*

In grades six and eight more than eighty percent of the students achieved a score of 80% or better. The alumni survey of graduates from the class of 2002 indicates that approximately 42% of the graduates received credit for one year of algebra.

## **Science**

Goal from the BFCCS Accountability Plan:

- ❖ *All students in grades 5-8 will prepare and present a science research project with a formal lab report, as appropriate for each grade, based on individual hypotheses formed by the students. Projects will be assessed using a rubric based on the scientific method, and 80% of students will demonstrate mastery of the skills delineated in this rubric.*

In grades five through eight, at least 80% of the students demonstrated mastery of the rubrics established for the projects. Comments from the outside evaluators include the following and provide both excellent reviews and the opportunity for growth for next year's projects, and that is the intent of this element of the Accountability Plan:

**Grade 5:** "The hypotheses were all very clearly stated and every student seemed to understand what was being tested and why." "Most of the students appeared to have a great deal of knowledge." "Encourage students to ...pose a hypothesis for which they truly have no knowledge prior to doing the experiment." "Have students develop a sense of skepticism about what they see on the Web." "Develop an awareness of limitations of their measurements. This is the area of greatest weakness. The idea of variability and its sources is key." "The (descriptive) posters were exceptional."

**Grade 6:** "All of the experiments had a clear hypothesis. The students were able to explain why they posed the hypothesis." "All of the students took the projects seriously. They knew the materials and had thorough reports. All posters were logical and organized." "Many students were able to say what they would do next time to test the problem further." "Many of the projects could have been designed to be "blinded'." "Some students had a better understanding of sampling error and significance than others."

**Grades 7 and 8:** "A majority of students had well executed and scientific approaches." "Consistently well-executed projects." "Methods of collecting data were great; students noted observations and unexpected results." "When asked questions about re: how change in variable or control might have changed result –only some gave it consideration."

**Latin:** In addition to the standards set in the Accountability Plan for Latin, students are encouraged to participate in the American Classical League's National Latin Exams. Our students have participated in these exams for five years and have earned many achievement medals. Last year twenty five students in grades seven and eight earned recognition ranging from summa cum laude to outstanding achievement.

## **Required Comments on Internal Assessment**

The directions for question 1A ask that BFCCS address the following:

*"If some of the student performance evidence is based on internal staff evaluations of student performance, the application should address the degree to which staff judgment is confirmed by objective assessment data, documented criteria, and consistently applied methods."*

**Confirmation by Objective Assessment:** Our students' achievement on external tests including MCAS, ERB, and CAT, confirms that the students are meeting standards in math and ELA, given our high scores in these areas on these tests. The reviews by the external evaluators for the fifth grade science fair projects are consistent with our fifth graders' outstanding MCAS science scores. The scores for our fifth graders are the fifth highest in the Commonwealth when compared with all state school districts. Also, these scores were higher than those of each of the thirteen school districts that send students to BFCCS.

**Documented Criteria:** The standards used for most of the internal assessments are based on the benchmarks provided by the Core Knowledge Curriculum.

**Consistently Applied Methods:** This is one area where we should look more closely at our internal testing. We will explore what kinds of "consistently applied methods" we may want to impose on these internal tests. For example, after studying this issue, we may ask teachers to give markedly similar tests each year; we may ask teachers to show these assessment tests to teachers in grades above and below the grades in which they are given to get input from other teachers; we may ask teachers from outside the school to look at these tests.

## **2. Is the school a viable organization?**

### **2A. Is the school financially solvent and stable?**

At the end of each year, BFCCS has had an independent financial audit conducted by Certified Public Accountants as required by Charter School Regulations. The auditors that the school has employed in the past have determined that the school has conducted its business and maintained its records in accordance with all applicable Government Auditing Standards. In addition, the school closely follows the Charter School Recommended Audit Guide and incorporates recommended policies and procedures into school guidelines and protocols. A Business Manager oversees daily school finances, provides a monthly report to the School Board, meets weekly with the Head of School, and works with the auditors.

Prior to the start of each year-end audit, the accountants meet with the school's Business Manager, Head of School, President of the Board, and Treasurer to review any changes that may have occurred during the audit year. At the conclusion of the audit, there is a final meeting with the same people to review the audit and to discuss any questions that arose during the audit and any procedural or accounting changes recommended for the upcoming year.

During the past two audit cycles, FY02 and FY03, the school engaged the accounting firm Tofias, PC Accountants and Consultants to conduct the audit. Prior to FY02, a smaller company had audited the school. In each of the past four years, the auditors' findings concluded that there were no material or immaterial weaknesses in internal control structures or operations. Management letters at the end of each audit provided recommendations, including: clearing out unused accounts; reconciling outstanding accounts between the school and the Benjamin Franklin Educational Foundation; renewing and changing signatory authorization for several bank accounts given personnel changes at school; establishing physical inventory of fixed assets; developing an accounting policies and procedures manual; recommending ways to work more efficiently with the accounting software, (Quickbooks). All of the issues raised in the management letters were immediately implemented.

At present, the school has accrued over \$700,000 in savings. The school primarily uses this money for exceptional expenses such as savings for a new building and as cash to cover deficits

that result from the timing of payments from the state. In addition, savings have been used for other purposes including the following: to purchase books; to send additional teachers to the Core Knowledge Conference after they were invited to present at the conference as a result of submitting competitive proposals; to cover the cost of mold remediation in August 2004; and to cover budget shortfalls, as needed.

During FY01, the school had a budget surplus of \$77,000.

During FY02, the school retired a loan that had been used to finance the construction of modular classrooms and offices needed as the school expanded, in accordance with original charter, to include grades 7 and 8. The \$200,000 owed on the bank loan was taken out of savings at the recommendation of the school's Finance Committee. As a result, the school was nominally \$170,000 over what had been budgeted for the year.

During FY03, the school incurred \$188,000 in budget deficits. The primary reason for the deficit was an unexpectedly large reduction in per pupil tuition from a state projected \$7,125 per pupil tuition to an actual per pupil tuition of \$6,697. In addition, four full-time teachers went on maternity leave, with the school obliged to pay for eight weeks of leave for each teacher and to pay for maternity leave subs. The FY03 shortfall was covered by savings, and after that expenditure there remained over \$700,000 in savings at the start of FY04.

In planning the FY04 budget, the school responded to the FY03's budget shortfall in several ways. First, the school budgeted \$6,350 in per pupil tuition, down significantly from the \$7,125 that had been projected by the DOE at the start of the FY03 budget, and down from the final FY03 per pupil tuition of \$6,697. (For FY04 the initial estimate from the DOE for our per capita tuition was \$6,500, and that has since been revised to \$6,400, and we retained our budgeted \$6,350 in per pupil tuition for FY04.) For the FY04 budget, the school also changed its disability coverage. The new policy includes coverage for most of the maternity leave benefits offered by the school, thereby avoiding a repeat of the unexpected additional charges against savings which had been necessitated in FY03. In addition, \$7,000 was included in the FY04 budget to cover a possible shortfall between the amount covered by disability insurance and the amount that might be owed in maternity benefits.

In order to create a balanced budget for FY04, the school was faced with the challenge of decreasing the budget from FY03. This was accomplished without cutting any direct services to students, and we actually increased direct services to Special Education students. Major cuts were made in the following areas: administration and school maintenance (by more closely monitoring the work done, we have hired a less expensive cleaning company). One part-time librarian was not rehired. Less significant budget cuts were made in several other areas, and BFCCS was still able to give the staff a 3% salary increase in FY04. In addition, we increased the size of several grades by one child per class for 2003-2004. (See 2B for a fuller discussion about enrollment.) We do not believe that any of the cuts in the FY04 budget will affect the quality of student education.

Curiously, as our per capita tuition has decreased since FY'00, our student achievement on MCAS has increased. To place our achievement and finances in state-wide perspective, a review of data from the DOE website confirms that BFCCS spends far less per pupil than do some of the highest achieving school districts in the state, many of whom we outscore. Also, a review of the range of per-capita student spending in all school districts reveals that BFCCS is in the lowest end of that range.

Our financial record confirms that we are financially cautious and responsible, responding creatively and honestly to the ebb and flow of available funds. The future economic parameters within which we will have to shape our school will be determined by the same exigencies of money and politics that concern all school districts. With our saving, our cautious approach to spending, our record of achievement with limited funds, we are confident that we will meet whatever financial challenges are imposed, while retaining our outstanding student achievement.

**2B. Is enrollment stable and near capacity?**

**Turnover rates:**

The table below shows the student turnover data for the last three years.

Enrollment	Student Turnover		Other Public Schools	Private Schools	Home Schooled	% who left to attend other local public schools
	Sept.- Aug	Moved				
386	2000-2001	15	13	0	2	3%
372	2001-2002	9	5	3		2%
368	2002-2003	4	10	2		4%
383	2003-2004 Sept-Feb 04	2	1			<1%

Our Accountability Plan states that our goal is that no more than 5% of students will leave to attend other local public schools. This Accountability Plan goal has been met each year. It is interesting to note that four students who left the school in the past two years to attend local public schools have reapplied for enrollment for next year.

Although our attrition is low for students who are not moving out of the area, we look carefully at that turnover data to see what can be learned.

In 2000-2001 school year, there were two main factors that contributed to the decision of students to leave BFCCS for reasons other than the family moving out of town, and these reasons pertain to each year. First, is the general concern that besets all schools that are K-8 whether they be independent schools or public charter schools. Students often leave after the fifth or sixth grades to attend a school or system whose middle school starts in sixth or seventh grades. Second, both the Franklin School District (FSD) and the Foxborough School District have recently opened new schools, including a 6-8 grade middle school in Franklin.

In exit interviews each year, most of the families who have left the school to attend other local public schools have told us that they want their children to attend a new school with more extensive facilities. In the 2001-2002 school year only five students left to attend other public schools, and three left to attend independent schools that start in seventh grade.

In the 2002 – 2003 school year five students left to go to other public schools in Franklin or Foxborough, and two left to attend independent schools for grade seven.

**Enrollment Capacity:**

The chart below shows the enrollment and the enrollment capacity for each grade for the last four school years.

Enrollment and Capacity of Each Grade								
	2000-2001		2001-2002		2002-2003		2003-2004	
	Capacity	Actual	Capacity	Actual	Capacity	Actual	Capacity	Actual
K	40	40	40	40	40	40	44	44
1	42	42	42	42	42	42	44	44
2	44	42	44	44	44	41	44	44
3	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	45
4	46	46	46	46	46	42	46	46
5	46	45	46	46	46	46	48	48
6	46	46	46	33	46	46	48	38
7	46	39	46	39	46	30	48	48
8	46	40	46	36	46	35	48	26
Total		386		372		368		383

Most of our attrition occurs between grades five and six and between grades six and seven as indicated in the above chart, and most of those who do leave choose to go to the Franklin middle school for their facilities, especially sports and technology. We are looking into buying a portable computer lab to supplement the two or three computers that are currently in each classroom.

For next year, we are quite optimistic about enrollment in grades 6-8. We expect most of our seventh graders to stay, and that will give us almost a full grade eight (helping our budget), and we already have applications for grades 6, 7 and 8 for next year.

*(The notable drop of students between fifth and sixth grades between the 2000 –2001 and 2001-2002 school years is working its way through the school, as can be seen in the enrollment data, with consecutive years of low enrollment in sixth, seventh, and the current eighth grade.)*

This year we are planning to have an evening at school introducing our current fifth grade parents to the staff and programs in grades 6-8. That evening will also include comments from current and former parents and students from grades 6-8. We think that we can do a better job letting parents and students know about the education in grades 6-8 at BFCCS, but given the factors mentioned above, we do expect some attrition in those grades.

Also, we are specifically recruiting for grades 6-8 with open houses in neighboring towns that do not have the same middle school configuration as does FSD.

Applications and Waitlists		
Year	No.of Applications	No.on Waitlists
2000-2001	216	63
2001-2002	278	111
2002-2003	272	176
2003-2004	268	201
2004-2005	281	N/A

As indicated in the above chart, there has been a thirty percent increase in the number of applicants to the school, during the years of the current charter.

Although there is demand for the school and attrition is low, we carefully examine all enrollment numbers each year to determine what can be learned from the data to improve the school. For now, we are focusing on the attrition between grades five and grades six as discussed above.

**2C. Is the school governance sound and are professional staff competent and able to implement the school’s mission?**

**School Governance:**

The Board has functioned well in support of the school’s mission. The student achievement section of this report confirms that under the Board’s management the school has succeeded in maintaining the highest academic standards. In addition, a review of the major policies and decisions in the last three and a half years, a review of the work of Board Committees, and a review of the stability of Board membership, confirms that the Board has been responsible and effective in providing appropriate oversight and that it has handled organizational challenges competently.

Summaries of major policy decisions established by the Board of Trustees and as reported in the Annual Reports:

**2000-2001:**

1. Ms. Ruth Gass starts as Head of School.
2. The Board approves the hiring of Maria Marolda, a nationally renowned math specialist to undertake an extensive review of the math curriculum.

3. Maternity and Short-Term Disability Benefit approved.
4. Nomination of Board members policy was reviewed and updated.
5. Mr. David Lowry was hired as Interim Head of School during Ruth Gass' recovery from unexpected surgery.
6. School insurance policies were updated and reviewed.
7. Salary survey was conducted and compensation schedules were set.
8. A revised Faculty Handbook was approved.

**2001-2002:**

1. Revision of the Accountability Plan started.
2. Decision to make payment in full of the balance owed on the modular classrooms.
3. Approval of extensive leasehold improvements to the facility.
4. Initiation and funding of a summer grants program for the faculty.
5. Decision to examine the writing program in grades K-5 for 2002-2003.

**2002-2003:**

1. Final approval of a revised Accountability Plan after extensive reviews, including input from the staff.
2. Decision to change the size of the Board.
3. Revisions of the nominating policy.
4. Decision to hire Mary Canner, principal of the Lilja School in Natick as a consultant on writing in grades K-5.
5. Decision to enlarge size of K classes and to hire full-time aides for each of the K classrooms and each of the Grade 1 classrooms.
6. Adoption of New Code of Conduct as required by the PQA review.
7. Directed the Education Committee of the Board to examine the alignment between the Core Knowledge Social Studies and History curriculum and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and to make recommendations to the Board.

**2003-Present:**

1. Reluctantly accepted resignation of Ruth Gass, Head of School, effective July 1, 2004. Ms. Gass is leaving due to the length of her commute.
2. Established a detailed program for hiring a new Head of School. The search process is headed by Dennis Hatch, Chair of the Human Resources Committee of the Board.
3. Directed the Education Committee of the Board to examine alignment between the science curriculum in grades 6-8 and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and to make recommendations to the Board.

**Work of Board Committees:**

In addition to the number of major decisions made by the Board, the committees of the Board make substantial contributions to the school. The Board committees are designed to provide oversight and enhancement of the school's four pillars contained in its mission and to maintain oversight on academic achievement.

The Education Committee: This committee provides a forum for reviewing and soliciting opinions and data about issues on which the Board requests reports or information. This year the Education Committee is looking at alignment issues between the Core Knowledge Curriculum and the MCF.

The Character Education Committee: This Committee works to ensure that the Character Education Pillar is maintained throughout the school. This year the Character Education Committee has implemented several additions to school publications to highlight the importance of character education. In addition, the committee has started a Character Education newsletter and designed a character education questionnaire for parents. The committee and the staff will collaborate on writing a Character Education Handbook for Parents, Staff, and Students, based, in part, on the results of the surveys.

*The Community Service Committee:* This committee supports several all-school community service projects and offers assistance to classrooms that may want help in identifying and carrying out classroom community service projects.

*The Parent Enrichment Committee:* This committee organizes events for parents that help them in their role as their children's primary educators and organizes surveys stipulated in the Accountability Plan. In addition this committee sponsors a yearly symposium on one educational topic and several evening meetings on school curriculum and other issues.

*The Finance Committee:* This committee maintains budgetary oversight through monthly review of the school's finances, providing financial recommendations (i.e. the decision to payoff the debt from the modular construction, the decision to change auditors two years ago, the decision of where to deposit the schools savings), and meeting with the school's auditors before and after the yearly audit.

*The Technology Committee:* This committee assumes many of the tasks that a technology staff at school would often perform. However, BFCCS has two part-time compensated technology support staff. The Technology Committee, made up of volunteer parents, also helps with policy decisions about technology. This year the committee organized a successful technology professional development half-day and is looking into the possibility of a week-long summer staff training program. In other years, this group has wired the school, set up new and donated computers, and helped repair computers. This year the Technology Committee is looking into the feasibility of a portable, wireless computer lab for the school.

*The Human Resources Committee (HR):* This committee studies and presents issues relating to HR concerns to the Board. For example, the HR committee makes recommendations about amendments to the Faculty Handbook and other personnel related issues. In the past several years, the Committee examined, among other issues, the issues of Maternity Leave, Long Term Disability, and Sick Leave policies.

*The Public Relations Committee:* This is a new committee formed this school year. This committee reviews school publications, solicits appropriate press coverage for many of the exciting programs at school, and works on internal publicity for events at school. This new committee is proving to be very valuable in helping the school present itself to the broader community and to enhance the quality of internal communications.

#### Board Stability and Turnover:

The BFCCS Board of Trustees has remained stable with appropriate turnover. The Board has always retained more than two-thirds of its Board members from year to year as required by charter school regulations. The Board policy for recruiting new Board members is designed to assure an open process. The Nominating Committee includes Board members, staff, and parents. The Nominating Committee makes recommendations to the full Board, and ensures that there are nominees to fill the needed skill sets for a strong Board with diverse talents.

#### Areas for Board Improvement:

1. As noted in the Eighth Year Site Visit Report of July 10, 2003 the school would like to have more non-parent members of the Board. Currently there are 14 members of the Board: eleven of whom are parents of students at the school; one member is a former teacher at BFCCS; the Head of School is an ex officio member; and one member is a teacher representative. The school has not successfully recruited and retained many Board members who are not parents.
2. Also, as noted in the Eight Year Site Visit Report of July 10, 2003, the school has an informal practice of orienting new Board members. The school does not have an orientation program for new Board members.
3. The Board may also look into more formal Board development activities, Board evaluation, and development of a strategic plan apart from the Accountability Plan.

All of these possible areas for improvement were noted in the Eighth Year Site Visit of July 10, 2003. After commenting on these aspects of the Board, the Site Visit Report stated: "It is important to note, however, that the academic outcomes which BFCCS has consistently produced suggests that though its practices may be informal, the Board has thus far effectively served the needs of the school." (pg. 6)

In addition to the suggestions from the Eighth Year Site Visit Team, the Board also hopes to increase its use of the BFCCS website to inform the community about upcoming board issues.

*The school's administration and professional staff are competent and able to implement the school's mission and have performed capably to have met the performance goals in the school's Accountability Plan.*

The data and analysis in answer to Question 1 of this Renewal Application confirms outstanding student achievement over the past three and a half years. This information provides strong evidence to support the claim that the administration and staff are able to ensure that the terms of the Accountability Plan are met. More information about the staff's capacity to meet the terms of the charter is detailed in the answer to Question 3 of this Renewal Application.

This year as result of budget constraints, the position of Assistant to the Head of School was eliminated. This change coincided with the decision of the person who had held that position for two years to vacate this position in order to attend graduate school. In order to accommodate the administrative needs of the school after this change, a middle school teacher assumed the role of part time Middle School Coordinator in addition to her other duties; section leaders (K-2, 3-5, and 6-8) assumed more duties, and other administrative staff also assumed additional duties. This new administrative reconfiguring is working well.

#### Outside Consultants

BFCCS supplements its academic staff by hiring multi-year outside consultants who get to know the school and the staff. We are now in our fourth year of working with our math consultant, Maria Marolda, a math specialist at the Learning Disabilities Unit at Children's Hospital in Boston. Her guidance and advice have helped the school become an innovative math school with exceptional math MCAS scores in all grades.

Mary Canner, as discussed in 1B, is in her second year working with our K-5 writing teachers.

David Smith, author of the award-winning book, *If the World Were a Village* worked with the school on our geography curriculum last year, and is available for consultations this year.

We are about to hire a science consultant to help us design more hands-on science projects. All of our consultants have helped make the school better and have supported our staff.

#### Evaluations

Each staff member is formally evaluated once a year either by the by the Head of School, the Fine Arts Director, or by the Director of Special Education. In addition, each staff member meets with the Head of School at the beginning of the school year to review the goals that each staff member has set for her/his self for the year. After a classroom visit by the Head of School, there is another meeting about the teacher's performance. The standards for review are generally set forth in a review document written several years ago by the staff and by the administration. The Human Resources Committee plans to review this system with the new Head of School.

#### Staff Turnover

Staff turnover has reflected the change in life interests of the staff who have left. The limited staff turnover has not affected student achievement nor has it affected the ability to attract excellent teachers. For each opening that arises, the school usually has at least a hundred qualified applicants. BFCCS works hard to maintain an exciting, professional staff and a professional, respectful work environment.

At the end of the 2000 -2001 school year, out of a teaching staff of 37, nine full time teachers and one person who taught a dance class once a week left the school. The staff left for the following reasons: three teachers relocated to join spouses; two teachers left to be full-time mothers ; one teacher left for medical reasons; one teacher moved to be closer to family; two teachers left to accept positions in other schools where they could earn substantially more money; the part-time dance teacher left to open up her own dance studio. Although we were sorry to see these teachers leave, as so often happens, we hired superb replacements each of whom has enhanced the school.

At the end of the 2001-2002 school year, out of a teaching staff of 37, five full-time teachers left the school. They left for the following reasons: one teacher moved to the Berkshires to live in a more rural community; one teacher accepted a teaching position in China along with his wife; one teacher moved to Georgia to join her spouse; one teacher accepted a teaching position closer to home; and one specialist resumed a private practice in Speech and Language Pathology. Once again, great teachers took these open positions.

At the end of the 2002-2003 school year, one secretary and one part time librarian were not rehired due to budget constraints. In addition, seven other teachers left; one teacher left to enter a doctoral program in education; two part-time teachers left to look for full-time positions; one teacher finished his doctorate in educational administration and accepted an administrative/teaching position in an independent school in New Jersey; one teacher retired; one teacher decided to be a full-time mother; one teacher accepted a teaching position at another school for more money where she could use her technology training more fully.

Most of the teachers who leave the school stay in touch with people at the school and return to visit. Many teachers who left still correspond with their students, and when the teachers return for visits, they are greeted warmly.

### **3. Is the school faithful to the terms of its charter?**

The Eighth Year Site Visit from the DOE asked the question, “Is the school faithful to the terms of its charter?” In answering that question the report concluded that BFCCS “has a clearly defined and rigorous curriculum, strong school leadership, an experienced faculty, and a Board which has thus far served the school well. Students have shown a strong attainment of state standards as measured by the MCAS test, and have performed well on other standardized measures. Overall, BFCCS demonstrated and reported outcomes that form the foundation for a strong argument that the school is an academic success, a viable organization, and that it is faithful to the terms of its charter.”

#### **3A. Have the school’s program and operation been consistent with the terms of its charter?**

The Accountability Plan is divided into five sections. Each of the first four sections sets standards for one of the school’s Four Pillars that are embodied in the school’s mission: Core Knowledge Curriculum, Character Education, Community Service, and Parents as Primary Educators. The fifth part of the Accountability Plan sets standards for determining that the school remains “a thriving organization” and includes both numerical and non-numerical standards.

The 2002-2003 Annual Report explains in detail how the school has met the standards and goals established in the Accountability Plan. What follows is an overview and discussion of each section of the Accountability Plan.

The mission of the school as stated in the original school charter indicates that the school is committed to far more than academic success:

*“To assist parents in their role as primary educators of their children by providing the children with a classical academic education coupled with sound character development and opportunities for community service.”*

**The following five sections (mission objectives) of the Accountability Plan flow naturally from the mission statement.**

**Mission Objective 1:** to teach students the enriched classical academic curriculum based on E.D. Hirsch's Core Knowledge Sequence and through this experience to build a high degree of competence in and a strong command of the content base that will comprise the foundation of their future education.

Question 1 in this renewal application presents the data that shows that the Core Knowledge curriculum is consistent with the highest student achievement. Other standards in Mission Objective 1 of the Accountability Plan require that students study both Latin and French, that they take courses in art and in music, that they present their work to their peers and to the broader community.

Students are encouraged to be thinkers and doers. The Core Knowledge curriculum does not indicate how the subjects are taught, and the Accountability Plan puts an emphasis on creative, project-based work, and on an integrated curriculum. Each humanities teacher must submit an example of a curriculum project that involves performance, curricular integration, clear standards, and strong demonstration of skills.

The school is looking at aligning the Core Knowledge curriculum for history and social studies with the MCF. We will call the resulting blend an "enriched frameworks curriculum."

**Mission Objective 2:** to foster the development of a virtuous life through a program of character education based on the four cardinal virtues. (Justice, Temperance, Fortitude, and Prudence.)

Benjamin Franklin stated, "Without virtue, men can have no happiness in the world." Franklin's personal enrichment program serves as a model for the character development program at the school. Universally accepted and respected virtues such as temperance, honesty, discipline, compassion, sincerity, justice, moderation and humility are integrated into the classroom work.

In all grades students examine history and literature by looking at the character traits of literary and historic figures. For example, in second grade students study the Ancient Greeks, read *Aesop's Fables* and write and perform their own fables, focusing on the virtues that are the object of the stories. In an elementary grade book called *The Empty Pot* (a story about honesty) students may talk about what character trait made the protagonist successful and why that was important in the story. In science classes students study biographies of scientists and talk about the virtues like perseverance and honesty that helped make these men and woman successful. In the upper grades the concepts get more sophisticated, and when studying the Holocaust students discuss the lack of morality present in the "bystander syndrome". They learn that inaction can also be immoral.

In addition to weaving character education into the academic work, character education is promoted in other ways. For example, students are acknowledged at assemblies for displaying good character as part of our "Forest of Virtue" program; students set and monitor personal goals; and students in grades 6-8 participate in a combined positive character building and service program, "Stepping Stones", which was designed at BFCCS. Each month students in grades 6-8 write about and shape an activity that involves the virtue that the school is highlighting. In addition, each eighth grader designs his or her own community service project, called a "Capstone Project".

The Character Education Committee of the Board has started several programs this year that are designed to promote the school's character education pillar. This year the committee started both a parent book club and parent/student book clubs for different age groups. The books chosen for each of the book clubs are selected to promote conversation about character. In the fall, parents read and discussed Kilpatrick's *Why Johnnie Can't Tell Right from Wrong*. In the spring, three different student/parent groups will meet to discuss a book. These book clubs will become yearly

events. In addition, the Character Education Committee is planning to advertise these book clubs to the public in the upcoming school years, both to promote the school and to welcome more parents and students into these book clubs. We see these invitation as a direct form of dissemination of best practices.

As is evident, character education is not a separate topic, but is woven into the life at the school.

Each graduating eighth grader is obliged to write an essay about their experience at BFCCS. Parts of each of these essays become the centerpiece of their graduation program. As evidenced by the following representative quotes, students do experience BFCCS as a place where values and a strong, supportive community matter.

*“The most important thing my Latin teacher taught me is to respect people from the inside and not the outside.*

*“My English teacher taught me many lessons that will stay with me for the rest of my life. As you can see, this school has given lessons to treasure for years to come.”*

*“BFCCS not only cares about the size of your mind, but about the size of your heart.”*

**Mission Objective 3: to build self esteem and the ethic of giving to others through a program of regular community service at all levels.**

Service to the community is one of the best ways to engage youthful energy. Accomplishments in the real world give children the opportunity to take themselves and their endeavors seriously and to gain self-esteem through participating in genuinely valuable work. To accomplish this end, students participate in a variety of service projects each month. Among other activities, students sing and perform plays at senior centers; they participate in environmental clean-ups; they help keep the school grounds clean. Each of the older students has a reading buddy in the younger grades. In addition, the older grades often present projects to the younger grades. By making a real contribution, students recognize that they are capable of positively influencing other people, their local environment and the larger world. It is the intention of the program that through real and valued contributions on a regular basis, students gain self esteem and an understanding of responsible citizenship.

Community service starts in the classroom, extends to the school, and to the local and larger communities beyond the school. We expect students to give of their own energy, time and creativity.

Our graduating eighth graders are required to plan and carry out an extensive service project. In past years students have painted parts of the school, helped in a lunch program for AIDS patients, coached in local youth sports programs, started an after-school homework club, and made gifts for hospital patients, among many other projects.

This program helps students learn that we all have responsibility as community members and the also promotes self-esteem.

**Mission Objective 4: to recognize the Parent’s as Primary Educators who work with the School to help students grow academically and morally.**

To help support the parents in their role as primary educators, the school sends home several publications. Each week a brief newsletter is sent home that provides parents with important information about current and upcoming events. Also, each month, each teacher sends home a Scope and Sequence for the upcoming month that notes what topics will be studied and what community service the class will be doing that month. If parents know what the students will be studying, they can better work with and support their children and the school. In addition, BFCCS publishes a monthly newsletter, *The Courant*, in which all staff members and the Head of School write about the events of the past month, usually highlighting one activity and explaining the pedagogy behind an activity or project.

All parents are asked to sign a Family Pledge (See Attachments (2-1)-(2-2)) acknowledging both their support and understanding of the school's Four Pillars. Our Accountability Plan set the goal that 100% of the families will sign the pledge. So far this year, over 90% of the families have signed the pledge.

The school can not exist without the thousands of hours that parents volunteer each year. Parents volunteer at lunch and recess, freeing teachers from these duties. Each teacher, as a result, only has one twenty minute duty each week. Parents also volunteer in classrooms, for Board Committees, in fundraising activities and in many other ways. Parent involvement is a hallmark of the school.

In the past several years the school has presented many programs for parents including:

- An evening with Mac Bledsoe on child development. This event was followed by a series of eight parent evenings in which Mr. Bledsoe's video series on child development, "Parenting with Dignity," was viewed and discussed; the video series is being repeated in the 2003-2004 school year.
- An evening presentation by David Smith, the school's geography consultant and author of the book *If the World Were a Village*;
- An evening presentation by Maria Marolda, the school's math consultant;
- An evening about the language arts program during which teachers taught mini-lessons to parents to help them understand how we teach at BFCCS;
- Book fairs for parents and students to purchase books which support the curriculum and pillars of the school;
- An evening for parents to discuss the mission of the school;
- An evening for parents to hear a talk about Multiple Intelligence given by a member of Harvard's Project Zero, a group that promotes education about Multiple Intelligence.

**Mission Objective 5: to remain a thriving organization that is trustworthy, responsible, open, and well managed.**

In this section the school establishes objective criteria that can help support the claim that the school is a viable institution. All of the standards were met.

- The school will receive 100% more applicants than there are available spaces.
- Fewer than 5% of students will leave the school for other school choice options.
- Average annual attendance rate will be 90%.
- Parents will form an active partnership with the school by performing extensive service to the school via in-school and at-home volunteer opportunities.
- The Board will review 50% of its policies and procedures each year.

In addition to these numerical goals listed above under the "Mission Objective 5", the Board commits itself to other goals including, publishing all agendas and minutes; to developing a long term financial plan; to preserving the mission of the school.

**3B. Has the school made efforts to disseminate models for replication and best practices to the public?**

The Eighth Year Site Visit Report states: "BFCCS has made various efforts at dissemination, including providing consultations to other schools regarding the BFCCS math program, sharing its character education program through school visits and seminars, and, presentations at the national Core Knowledge Sequence Conference. The school has also been awarded a grant from the Department of Education to produce a book of best practices based on submissions from several teachers. The book, expected to be finished in 2004, will be widely distributed. These efforts represent a strong commitment to dissemination of best practices." (pg. 7)

The information below adds detail to the findings of the Eighth Year Site Visit team and lists some examples of dissemination that have occurred under the current charter:

1. BFCCS' Accountability Plan includes the goal of distributing a compilation of best curriculum projects each year. Each humanities teacher in grades K-8 must submit an account of a project that is related to a Core Curriculum topic, requires a performance element, and has specific rubrics. Each year these articles will be compiled and widely distributed. This year,

the publication of the best practices book, “Ben’s Best” will be paid for by a competitive grant awarded to BFCCS by the DOE.

2. BFCCS has shared math materials with several public charter schools and with non-charter public schools. Since our math MCAS scores are so high and have shown dramatic improvement over the last several years, we get calls from other schools asking if we have recommendations for their math programs. We have sent teachers to other schools, sent materials we have prepared, and recommended books that support creative problem solving.
3. A teacher who worked with the Boston University Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character traveled to many schools and conferences to present both the principles of character education and practical examples culled from BFCCS. These visits included presentations at the following schools: the Bourne Public Schools; consortium of MA schools who received a DOA charter education grant; a workshop sponsored by the Connecticut School for Ethics and Education; a workshop sponsored by the state of Connecticut; two leadership training seminars at Boston University which brought together educators from many states; Sunset Ridge School District in Northfield, Illinois; and East Fairhaven Elementary School, East Fairhaven, MA.
4. Our Director of Special Education conducted seminars for Special Education Directors from several charter schools.
5. In January 2002, Jossey-Bass published the workbook *Building Character in Schools: Resource Guide*. This book was co-authored by an administrator at BFCCS and includes several BFCCS documents. Those documents include the school’s character education calendar, examples of the school’s service initiatives, excerpts from the school’s news letter, and examples culled from daily life at BFCCS.
6. Many individuals or organizations visited the school to learn more about character education. These visitors include the following: a professor/researcher from the Cambridge University (UK) who was visiting the U.S. to research character and civics education; a candidate for State Representative who wanted to know more about character education at BFCCS and how this could be extended to other schools; State Senators from Vermont researching how to start a charter school; educators and administrators from Canada who wanted to learn more about integrating character education into schools; many teachers from other charter schools who wanted to learn about our character education program.
7. Teachers have presented at national charter school conventions, and in the last four years, five BFCCS staff have presented, on several curriculum topics, at the national Core Knowledge Conference. There is a rigorous competition to be selected to present at this conference.
8. The Head of School consulted on math education at two schools and spoke at Lesley College about charter schools, and three schools have visited BFCCS to learn about our math program.
9. A sixth grade teacher was selected to be on the state team that will design the seventh grade History and Social studies MCAS test. This teacher was also chosen in a competitive process to present a paper on teaching writing at the upcoming Massachusetts Charter School Association convention.
10. Two schools visited to learn about parent involvement and character education.
11. We invite local reporters to come to school and write articles about innovative programs. Attached are newspaper articles on our math program, community service, character education program, and part of our geography program. (See Attachments (3-1)-(3-6))

**3C. Is the school within the bounds of applicable statutory and regulatory requirements?**

Special Education Student Census

IEP'S and 504		
Year	# of students	% of total students
2000-2001	82	21
2001-2002	69	18
2002-2003	57	16
2003-2004	37	12

## Staffing

The Special Education staff includes a part-time Director of Special Education, four full-time Special Education inclusion teachers, a full-time Speech and Language Pathologist, a part-time Occupational Therapist, a part-time School Psychologist, a part-time Physical Therapist, and three full-time Special Education aides. All of the staff is appropriately certified.

Most of the Special Education support is provided in the classrooms. Pull-out services are limited to students who are judged to need support outside the classroom setting. Currently, twelve students receive support in reading and math outside the classroom, and these students usually have two or three forty-five minute pull-out sessions a week. Most of the OT, and Speech and Language services are provided outside of the classrooms. We contract out our PT services.

All entering kindergarten students are screened in the spring before they enter, and some students are re-screened in the fall after they start school. Students already enrolled in the school can be referred for Special Education screening by a teacher or parent in accordance with Special Education guidelines.

## Special Education Students who left the school

This year we have started keeping a list of Special Education students who have left the school and Special Education students who have returned to the school. A Special Education student in third grade left the school in October to go to a non-charter public school in Franklin. After several weeks, the parents called the Head of School and asked if the child could be re-enrolled immediately at BFCCS. After the Head of School checked with the charter school office, the parents were advised that the child could not be re-enrolled and that the child would have to apply for grade four as part of the regular enrollment and lottery procedure. The parents have submitted an application for grade four.

A Special Education student who left BFCCS two years ago applied last year and was readmitted into the current grade eight class.

Although we started this record on Special Education students this year, the Director of Special Education recalls two Special Education students who left to attend private schools for students with special needs.

## Complaints Filed

Two complaints have been filed against the school with the Department of Special Education. In one case the parents argued that the student did not receive required Speech services and that the student's teacher did not have a copy of his IEP. BFCCS later provided the services that had been missed as required by the findings. (The required services had been missed in the period between the time the School's Speech and Language Pathologist unexpectedly quit a few days before school started and the time it took to hire another Speech and Language Pathologist.) In addition, the DOE found that the school had no recorded evidence that the student's homeroom teacher had received the IEP for the student. Subsequently, BFCCS adopted a system which requires each teacher to sign an acknowledgement that she/he did receive a copy of an IEP for each child they teach. This new system works very well.

The second complaint filed asked that BFCCS be required to provide computer training in addition to the computer that BFCCS had provided for the student. That complaint was settled before mediation began by the school agreeing to offer limited computer training.

## Statement of Assurances

A copy of the approved statement of assurances is attached. (See Attachment (4))

Coordinated Program Review Audit: We are scheduled for a mid-cycle review in the spring:  
As a result of the Coordinated Program Review Audit for Special Education, BFCCS responded to every issue raised to ensure compliance. Among other actions taken, the school instituted a

Parent Advocacy Committee (PAC), established pre-referral protocols, and amended its Code of Conduct. The school was commended for its electronic record keeping systems and for its systems ensuring parent involvement at every step of the IEP and 504 processes.

As a result of the Coordinated Program Review Audit for Civil Rights, the school made several changes that were needed for compliance. These actions included ensuring that a Statement of Non-Discrimination was included in all school materials, enclosing a parent and student civil rights handbook in materials sent to families, including information about sexual harassment in the staff handbook, and revising the Code of Conduct.

### Limited English Proficiency

We do not formally assess students for LEP given the school's population. However, we will include home language surveys in the information that we request of all parents for the 2003-2004 school year and provide follow-up as needed.

### Student Support Team (SST):

A major improvement to the Special Education Program was promoted by the PQA for Special Education. As part of that review the school was told to refine its pre-referral program for Special Education. The school psychologist with teachers from Special and Regular Education worked together to devise a pre-referral system. The system this group designed, includes that teachers who are concerned about a student, meet with other staff and discuss the problems and then use suggestions provided by the staff. The SST meets every other week for an hour during faculty meetings, and each member of the faculty is assigned to be on the team for several weeks to hear the cases presented by the sending teacher and to help with recommendations.

### **3D. What changes have been made to your charter during this term?**

There have been no amendments requested to the school's charter.

The founding charter has served the school remarkably well in educating students and in creating an exciting community of parents, students, and staff. The school's Four Pillars, (Core Knowledge Sequence, Character Education, Community Service, and Parents as the Primary Educators) provide a strong identity and an excellent framework for ensuring that the school's actions are based on its charter.

We are particularly delighted with the content and spiraling of the CK curriculum designed by E.D. Hirsch. For example, each year this curriculum provides both a United States history and a World History strand with art, music, geography, and literature connected to the history topics. This curriculum is designed to ensure a content base which is exciting and which children can use as a basis for understanding the world in which they live and for future learning.

There are some areas where clarification may be needed. For example, BFCCS has learned that the meaning of the phrase "Parents as the Primary Educators" often needs to be clarified. The parents are responsible for determining the child's attitude toward school and for ensuring that the child is prepared to succeed by providing a quiet place to study, by being interested in the school's work, by providing both enrichment and support, and by supporting the school's pillars. The phrase does not mean that parents are the people responsible for teaching the materials taught in school. Also, we are examining the alignment between Core Knowledge and MCF.

We are continually learning how well the Four Pillars serve the school. Other aspects of the charter also serve the school well. For example, we have also learned that the size and grade span of the school stipulated in the school's charter offer profound benefits to students. BFCCS has three hundred and eighty students in grades K-8. This is not the configuration of the Franklin School District. We find that having a small school allows all students to participate in all activities. All students can choose to participate in plays and performing musical groups. (Recently, a father informed the Head of School that his son's ability to be in a major school play each year has changed his son's life for the better). As a result of the size of the school, students each get to perform with their classes once a month at sharing assemblies.

Our oldest students feel grown-up when they care for younger students as they teach them, play with them, and help supervise them at times during the day. For example, the students in the older grades prepare a morning field day for the younger students in the spring, and in the afternoon they have their own field day. This program blends character education and community service.

Each student in each grade is known by the entire staff for that grade and by many other teachers in the school. Students see teachers they had when they were young and retain friendships with teachers across the years. All of these benefits derive from the size of the school and create a close and caring community. This closeness is delightfully apparent when faculty, including former faculty, speak about graduating eighth graders at the student- faculty graduation dinner.

There have been refinements in how the school implements the clear, Four Pillars that form the basis of its charter, while the pillars remain unchanged. As teaching the Core Knowledge (CK) curriculum has evolved, there had been increasing emphasis on projects and interdisciplinary studies, and on integrating the Four Pillars into academic work.

This project based interdisciplinary approach is consistent with much of the brain-based learning literature that is currently available, indicating that students learn best when many aspects of their thinking and many skills are employed in learning. The CK curriculum is uniquely appropriate for this approach to teaching since the arts, music, history and literature are connected each year. For example, students in sixth grade recently did a project based on reading Shakespeare's "*Julius Caesar*" and studying Roman History and Roman gods. They combined that study with their work in art and in Latin. They made puppets of the Roman gods, wrote about them in Latin and performed plays for the younger students. A seventh grade class studied the Spanish Civil War and Picasso's *Guernica*, and then they created a modern day mural showing both the good and the bad possibilities in the world today. In second grade they study immigration, read books about children who immigrated, draw pictures, write imaginary journals, and then present their own family's immigrant history in an evening program to which parents are invited.

One of the school's strengths is the performing and visual arts program. In particular the school has a large performing music program that has won numerous awards over the past three years. Over eighty-five percent of the students in grades 5-8 participate in the school's instrumental band program.

We are continually discovering the richness and potential inherent in the school's Four Pillars, and, in particular, how they can be woven together to create successful, intriguing curricular units and projects. Both together and separately, the pillars shape a strong academic institution and cohesive community.

#### **4. If the school's charter is renewed, what are its plans for the five years of the next charter?**

**4A. Please attach an accountability plan that defines the school's measurable objectives for its next charter term.**

(See Attachment (5-1)-(5-20))

**4B. Based on the schools' past years of operation, please describe what changes to the charter are foreseen for the coming term.**

**4C. Please explain how the school plans to evaluate and disseminate effective elements of the school's structure or program in the next term of the charter.**

We do not expect to request any formal changes to the charter.

We do expect the school to continue to mature and improve within the terms of its charter and to continue to be a major contributor to ideas and to curriculum in Massachusetts and in the country.

1. We expect to continue to blend the Core Knowledge Sequence with the MCF and to disseminate excellent curriculum that we design. In particular, in the early years of the next charter, we will be looking at the grades four and five history and social studies curriculum and at the eighth grade science curriculum as we examine alignment with MCF. We expect to shape the fourth grade history and social studies curriculum to be a celebration of diversity in the United States today. Based on preliminary conversations, we expect that the fourth grade curriculum will celebrate immigration through stories, songs, dance and food (with math connections). We will combine the geography curriculum in those grades with science and math. The eighth grade science curriculum will be based on new projects. We look forward to sharing these integrated curricular ideas.
2. We expect to increasingly become a school leader in proving that a project-based curriculum is consistent with high achievement in a standards based curriculum marked by external testing. As we design curriculum, we will continue to find ways to weave together the school's Four Pillars.
3. BFCCS will continue to work with consultants to supplement our administrative team since we do not have the resources at this point to hire department chairs. In addition, the school will continue to evaluate its administrative structure with the help of the new Head of School who will be hired before the end of this school year.
4. The Board will continue to assess the Accountability Plan and work to educate the community about the school's Four Pillars while responding to parent concerns and questions.
5. The Board will consider working on a specific, long-term strategic plan and decide whether to eliminate or replace the CAT test.
6. We expect to continue to be a school that is exceptionally strong in math by continuing to work with our math consultant and to continue to share our math best practices.
7. We will continue many of the extensive dissemination practices discussed in 3B. Some of those practices are set in our charter and some will come from continued participation in conferences, welcoming visitors, direct sharing with other schools, and with sharing our written materials. We create a culture where individual and school sharing and disseminating is expected, and we will continue past dissemination practices while looking for new ways to contribute to conversations and best practices about education.
8. We expect that we will both retain and increase leadership in promoting and designing character education in schools.

**4D. What facility or facilities do you plan to use during the term of the next charter?**

See attachments for documentation that the school is in compliance with all building, health, safety, and insurance requirements, and that all related inspections and approvals are current. (Attachments 6-1)-(6-5))

Our current lease expires in June 2005. We expect to renew our current lease.

The Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School Foundation, whose goal is to support BFCCS, is leading an investigation and fund-raising program to explore the possibility of building a school on ten acres that the Foundation owns in Franklin.

As required in the "Application for Renewal of Public School Charter," please see attached (6-6) the signed "Public Charter School Certification Statement."

**MCAS Data**

**MCAS Grade 3 Reading**

Number of BFCCS Students Tested in Current Year:

45

	Advanced			Proficient			Needs Improvement			Warning			Average Raw Scaled Score		
	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State
1998															
1999															
2000															
2001	NA	NA	NA	96%	80%	62%	4%	17%	31%	0%	2%	7%	36	33	30
2002	NA	NA	NA	84%	80%	67%	13%	19%	27%	2%	2%	6%	33	33	30

2002: BFCCS raw score was equal to Franklin and 3 points higher than the State.

2003	NA	78%	75%	63%	22%	21%	30%	0%	3%	7%	NA
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**MCAS Grade 4 English Language Arts**

Number of BFCCS Students Tested in Current Year:

46

	Advanced			Proficient			Needs Improvement			Warning			Average Raw Scaled Score		
	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State
1998	0%	2%	1%	24%	36%	19%	76%	60%	66%	0%	1%	15%	238	238	230
1999	0%	1%	0%	36%	37%	21%	64%	61%	67%	0%	1%	12%	236	237	231
2000	0%	4%	1%	14%	36%	19%	84%	58%	67%	2%	3%	13%	233	238	231
2001	2%	15%	7%	59%	61%	44%	39%	22%	38%	0%	2%	11%	242	247	239
2002	13%	16%	8%	76%	61%	46%	11%	21%	37%	0%	2%	10%	250	248	239

2002: BFCCS raw score was 2 points higher than Franklin and 11 points higher than the State.

2003	21%	14%	10%	64%	61%	45%	14%	22%	34%	0%	2%	10%	NA
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**MCAS Grade 4 Mathematics**

Number of BFCCS Students Tested in Current Year:

46

	Advanced			Proficient			Needs Improvement			Warning			Average Raw Scaled Score		
	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State
1998	33%	21%	11%	24%	36%	23%	38%	38%	44%	5%	4%	23%	246	244	234
1999	7%	22%	12%	40%	35%	24%	43%	39%	44%	10%	3%	19%	240	244	235
2000	14%	29%	12%	41%	36%	28%	41%	33%	42%	5%	2%	18%	242	85	235
2001	22%	26%	10%	24%	33%	24%	48%	36%	46%	7%	5%	19%	242	246	235
2002	46%	28%	12%	43%	37%	27%	11%	31%	42%	0%	4%	19%	254	247	236

2002: BFCCS raw score was 7 points higher than Franklin and 18 points higher than the State. In 2002, BFCCS had the highest fourth grade math MCAS scores of all state districts.

2003	24%	24%	12%	55%	41%	28%	21%	31%	43%	0%	4%	16%
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MCAS Grade 6 Mathematics

Number of BFCCS Students Tested in Current Year:

33

	Advanced			Proficient			Needs Improvement			Warning			Average Raw Scaled Score		
	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State
1998															
1999															
2000															
2001	14%	12%	13%	53%	34%	23%	21%	38%	30%	12%	15%	33%	243	238	233
2002	39%	15%	13%	33%	44%	28%	21%	31%	29%	6%	10%	29%	251	242	235

2002: BFCCS raw score was 9 points higher than Franklin and 16 points higher than the State.

2003	43%	16%	16%	43%	39%	26%	11%	36%	32%	2%	9%	26%	NA		
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MCAS Grade 7 English Language Arts

Number of BFCCS Students Tested in Current Year:

39

	Advanced			Proficient			Needs Improvement			Warning			Average Raw Scaled Score		
	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State
1998															
1999															
2000															
2001	3%	15%	6%	68%	66%	49%	29%	16%	32%	0%	2%	12%	243	248	239
2002	5%	19%	9%	69%	71%	55%	26%	8%	28%	0%	1%	8%	245	252	242

2002: BFCCS raw score was 7 points lower than Franklin and 3 points higher than the State.

2003	3%	19%	8%	83%	71%	57%	13%	9%	28%	0%	1%	7%	NA		
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MCAS Grade 8 Mathematics

Number of BFCCS Students Tested in Current Year:

36

	Advanced			Proficient			Needs Improvement			Warning			Average Raw Scaled Score		
	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State
1998		6%	8%		35%	23%		32%	26%		27%	42%		233	227
1999		13%	6%		30%	22%		34%	31%		23%	40%		235	226
2000	8%	16%	10%	33%	36%	24%	29%	28%	27%	29%	20%	40%	233	238	228
2001	10%	16%	11%	48%	28%	23%	33%	38%	34%	10%	18%	31%	241	233	233
2002	11%	16%	11%	42%	32%	23%	42%	36%	33%	6%	17%	33%	242	238	232

2002: BFCCS raw score was 4 points higher than Franklin and 10 points higher than the State.

2003	29%	14%	12%	46%	35%	25%	20%	37%	30%	6%	14%	33%	NA		
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M CAS Grade 8 Science & Technology

Number of BFCCS Students Tested in Current Year:

	Advanced			Proficient			Needs Improvement			Warning			Average Raw Scaled Score		
	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State	BFCCS	Franklin	State
1998		1%	2%		33%	26%		41%	31%		26%	41%		230	225
1999		8%	5%		31%	23%		33%	27%		28%	45%		233	224
2000	8%	6%	6%	25%	40%	29%	50%	35%	27%	17%	20%	37%	233	235	228
2001															
2002															

2003	0%	16%	4%	26%	53%	28%	71%	25%	37%	6%	31%
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Names that accepted for next year:

Mr. Michael & Julie Blair  
6 Fuller Place, Franklin

Mr. Raymond & Christine Cadorette  
508 Maple Street, Franklin

Mr. John Lim & Bellina Nurmala  
56 Stewart Street, Franklin

Mr. Jim & Laura Mastrobuono  
33 Madison Ave, Franklin

Mr. Paul & Susan Mc Dermott  
10 Longobardi Drive, Franklin

Mr. James & June Miller  
40 Miscoe Brook Drive, Wrentham

Mr. Richard & Elisabeth Rioux  
One Lawrence Drive, Franklin

Mr. Jeffrey & Heidi Winiker  
2 Crystal Drive, Franklin