

Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School

Franklin, MA

December, 2007

Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School (BFCCPS), now in its thirteenth year of operation, is located in Franklin and is chartered to serve the district of Franklin with a maximum of 450 students in kindergarten through grade eight. The school opened in 1995, and was granted renewals of its charter in 2000 and 2005. There are currently 395 students enrolled at the school.

The school's mission statement is "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 school reports that the racial and ethnic composition of the student body, during the 2007-08 school year is 85% white, 11% Asian, and 4% African American, Hispanic, or multiracial. Special education students comprise 8.3% of the total student population. There are nine students (2.3%) classified as low income, and no students classified as limited English proficient.

The following visitors participated in the site visit on December 6, 2007:

- Anthony Ashton, MA Department of Education, Charter School Office
- Fernando Goulart, Atlantis Charter School
- Ruth Hersh, MA Department of Education, Charter School Office
- Emily Lichtenstein, MA Department of Education, Charter School Office
- Paul Marble, Sturgis Charter School
- Judith Miller, MA Department of Education, Charter School Office

Before the visit, the site team reviewed the 2006-07 Annual Report for the charter school, recent internal and external assessment data, and board materials. On site, the team reviewed curricular information and other documents provided by the school. The team conducted group interviews with trustees (9 members), administrators (2), teachers (8), families (7), and students (8). Team members conducted approximately 24 classroom observations across all grade levels and subject areas, spending an average of approximately 15 minutes in each classroom.

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, educational philosophy and pedagogical approach, as articulated in the charter and subsequent amendments, clear and understood by the school community?

Finding: The “four pillars,” which form the primary areas of the mission, continue to be a central part of the operation of the school, but have evolved over time.

Throughout the site visit, many stakeholders referred to the “four pillars,” which form the primary areas of the mission – a classical education (based on the Core Knowledge curriculum developed by E.D Hirsch), character education, community service, and the recognition that parents are the primary educators of their children. The school’s understanding and implementation of the four pillars has evolved over the course of the charter, but remain the central foundation of the school.

This year, the school is involved in an initiative to revitalize the school’s community service and character education programs. Under the direction of the board of directors, the head of school has developed a grid defining community service at each grade level, ensuring that the program follows a developmentally appropriate progression, has consistency for teachers at the same grade levels, and that there is no redundancy between grade level activities. The head of school is now working with a consultant, who was one of the founders of the school, to better link character education to the community service program.

Finding: The Board of Trustees is very focused on ensuring that the school remains true to its mission.

At the focus group interview, board members stated if the board does not pay attention to ensuring that the mission remains at the heart of the school, “things can drift.” The Board reviewed the mission statement in detail last year, with the goal of translating the words of the mission into practices that remain meaningful as the school evolves.

How is the school’s mission and vision integrated into day-to-day operations?

Finding: Parents have many opportunities to be the primary educators in their children’s lives.

Parents at the site visit focus group reported that the school makes a significant effort to both involve them in their children’s education and to help them with parenting skills. Parents are given both the Core Knowledge book for their child’s grade level and a monthly scope and sequence document listing upcoming areas of study, and often including specific suggestions for how parents can extend the learning at home. Parent participation in the school is welcomed and encouraged; there are many opportunities to volunteer, both in classroom activity and on a governance level. As discussed below, all but two board members (one teacher representative and one community member) are parents, and additional parents are involved in board committees and task forces.

Finding: Character education and community service were observed throughout classrooms.

Stakeholders told site visitors that character education is what defines the school, and makes it unique. Site visitors observed that character education and community service were incorporated into lessons, classroom discussion, activities, student/teacher and student/student interactions, and assessment instruments. One example that was observed was a project occurring in both fourth grade classrooms, where students were learning the mathematics, language arts, and business skills necessary to run a business baking and selling cookies, with the proceeds to be donated to a local charity. Samples of student work reviewed by the team at the student focus group also reflected the incorporation of character education; for example, a project that required students to design a zoo environment that would make the animals more comfortable.

Finding: Students at BFCCS receive a “classical education,” primarily through the use of the Core Knowledge curriculum, but also by the incorporation of additional subject matter not usually taught in elementary and middle public schools.

Stakeholders have defined classical education to mean that BFCCPS students will receive a strong foundation in what all educated people should know, such as literary classics and significant events in history. The primary vehicle for ensuring that students are exposed to this content is through the use of the Core Knowledge curriculum that guides instruction. Stakeholders also described the school’s emphasis on and integration of the arts, and the teaching of French and Latin as additional components of a classical education.

2. Academic Program Success

Curriculum

What is included in the documentation of the curriculum and what form does it take?

Finding: Teachers are given a lot of autonomy in lesson planning.

Teachers described having a great deal of flexibility in designing instruction. Lesson plans are neither required nor reviewed. Instead, teachers develop detailed monthly scope and sequence documents that are reviewed by administrators and sent home to parents. Grade level teachers plan collaboratively, and jointly create the scope and sequence documents. Parents at the site visit focus group reported that the level of academic rigor varied between classrooms, with some teachers providing insufficiently challenging material to meet the needs of higher-achieving students. In some areas, particularly mathematics and English language arts, the school is moving towards more uniformity in the use of instructional materials throughout the school. In others, such as character education, individuality is valued and teachers are expected to develop their own approach to teaching in these areas. Parents confirmed that the character education program varied by classroom.

Is the school’s documented curriculum aligned with state standards?

Finding: BFCCPS uses both Core Knowledge and the Massachusetts Curriculum frameworks (MCF) as the basis for instruction. The school is in the process of completing

documents that align Core Knowledge standards with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.

The monthly scope and sequences mentioned in the previous finding form the primary documentation of curriculum for the school. These scope and sequence documents, which are based upon the Core Knowledge Sequence and the MCF, include the content and skills to be covered in all subject areas on a monthly basis, including character education and community service. These documents are archived so that teachers can access previous years' copies. The Year Twelve site visit team was informed that the school has also developed curriculum documents that blends and aligns Core Knowledge with the MCF for science in grades 3 through 8, and social studies in grades 4 through 8. During this year's visit, the team was informed that a similar document was in development for mathematics, and that the alignment for English language arts would begin next year. Future site visitors should look for the completion of this work.

Finding: Mathematics is a school-wide focus this year.

Performance on standardized tests, including the MCAS examination, has been less strong in mathematics than English language arts. The school has implemented some initiatives to strengthen the math program. In contrast to past years, when the same teacher taught grade 7 and 8 math and science, this year, a certified math teacher teaches only that subject. The school is in the process of selecting a school-wide mathematics curriculum, to be implemented next year. At the time of the visit, several options were on display in the school's library. The expectation is that the curriculum will be selected by March of this year. Also, the new position of math specialist was created. Though part time, the specialist was reported to be highly beneficial to the school in both providing direct assistance to students who need extra help and also in coaching teachers in math instruction techniques.

Finding: The school plans to make English language arts a focus during the next school year.

As stated above, the school does not have a document that aligns the state frameworks with the Core Knowledge curriculum in English language arts. Administrators reported that the English curriculum is "a bit fragmented," in that each strand is taught by means of a different program. The Head of School expressed the goal of implementing a more systematic approach to English language arts, such as the adoption of the Wilson Reading program for kindergarten. Writing is an area of concern, as reflected in standardized test results and parent reports. Future site visitors should look for the development of a more systematic approach to language arts instruction.

Instruction and Learning

Is the observed instructional practice aligned with what is described either verbally or in writing?

Finding: Team members observed a variety of instructional techniques.

The site visit team was able to make approximately 24 visits to classrooms. Observations were conducted in all levels, kindergarten through grade 8, in a variety of academic subject areas. Though objectives or agendas were generally not displayed in classrooms, the instructional focus of the lessons observed appeared to be clear to students. Site visitors

observed many teacher-directed whole group lessons, but also saw small groups, pairs, individual work and center-based instruction. Frequent use of worksheets to reinforce basic skills was observed, but visitors also saw games and project-based activities incorporated into lessons. Visitors saw a range of objectives being addressed, including some challenging assignments that were designed to elicit higher order thinking skills. The work shared and described by students at the student focus group also displayed evidence of both creativity and rigorous thinking, as did the student work on display throughout the building.

Does the school environment support student learning?

Finding: Students in most classrooms were observed to be focused and on task.

With a few exceptions, visitors observed that students were fully engaged in classroom activities. Most classrooms were well managed, with a calm, comfortable tone established and an appropriate noise level. Students were polite, respectful, and responsive to signals and directives from teachers. In some of the upper grade-level classrooms, however, visitors observed instances of students talking over each other and not listening. Visitors did not observe the use of a consistent disciplinary policy.

Do the school’s instructional practices include the implementation of strategies that address the needs of diverse learners, including special education students?

Finding: BFCCPS has implemented accommodations that address the needs of special education students but may not be differentiating instruction sufficiently to meet the needs of higher achieving students.

BFCCPS provides instructional supports and services to students with diverse learning needs in the least restrictive environment. The school’s structure provides supports for students and teachers through the development of individual student success plans for all students who have failed the mathematics or English language arts MCAS, reading and math specialists to provide support and guidance to classroom teachers and the Student Support Team initiative that focuses on instructional strategies that offer alternative methods of instruction for students not yet explored by the classroom teacher. The school’s District Curriculum Accommodation Plan describes the activities in place to assist classroom teachers in providing appropriate services and supports within the general education classroom including, but not limited to, services to address the needs of students whose behavior may interfere with learning. The school utilizes the School Council and parent support groups, including the special education Parent Advisory council, as methods for parental input and support. When students need additional help, the school first solicits the assistance of the family, in keeping with the mission statement that parents are primary educators. In addition to asking for support and reinforcement at home from parents, the school offers before school tutoring and an after school Homework Center.

The school’s special education program and services are integrated into the school’s regular education program. General and special education teachers have common planning time, and as a result, resource room services are aligned with the general education program. Special education teachers and paraprofessionals provide services according to each student’s IEP. The majority of students with disabilities receive IEP services within the general education classroom with supplementary aids and/or related services. A small number of

eligible students receive IEP services through a pullout model or small group instruction, ensuring a continuum of services. Classroom observations were conducted in a variety of grade levels and settings. A teacher and a paraprofessional, as well as a special education teacher or paraprofessional taught the majority of classrooms observed, resulting in a low student-teacher ratio. The inclusion setting and small group services observed were staffed to individualize instruction for students.

Aside from observing appropriate staffing levels, site team observers saw little evidence of differentiation of instruction, content, instructional methodology or materials. Parents who participated in the site visit focus group reported that differentiation is a need that could be better addressed, particularly to meet the needs of higher-achieving students.

How and from whom do teachers receive feedback and guidance to improve instructional practice and student achievement?

Finding: Administrators and teachers plan professional development collaboratively. In 2006-07, the school created a Professional Development Committee that includes administrators and teachers. The Committee discusses and defines priorities in professional development, and created a structure for the delivery of professional development. This year's focus is on mathematics, but other issues are also addressed, including a variety of special education topics and requirements. The school also encourages teachers to attend one or two external workshops and conferences each year, offering financial assistance and finding substitute teachers to cover absences.

How and by whom are teachers evaluated?

Finding: The system for teacher supervision and evaluation is in transition. Last year's site visit team was informed that a new teacher evaluation tool had recently been developed. This year, school administrators shared a teacher observation form and rubric with site visitors, but said that the form was cumbersome, and that a new instrument was under development. This year administrators were using a less structured, more open-ended format to conduct observations, with the goal of making the process collegial and collaborative. This year, the head of school, assistant head of school and the director of special education have replaced the former division deans in conducting teacher observations and provide supervision and evaluation. New teachers are observed and evaluated three times per year; second year teachers are observed and evaluated twice per year, and all others are observed and evaluated on a yearly basis.

Student Achievement

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

Finding: Student performance on the MCAS has been and continues to be strong MCAS results from 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

four MCAS performance categories. The CPI is a 100-point index that measures the extent to which students are progressing towards proficiency.

**Table I: BFCCPS MCAS Results by Performance Category
Annual Comparisons 2002-2007**

	Students Included	% Advanced	% Proficient	% Needs Improv.	% Warning/Failed	CPI
English Language Arts						
Grade 3						
2003	46	0	78	22	0	94.0
2004	44	0	89	9	2	97.7
2005	45	0	76	24	0	92.8
2006	47	15	60	26	0	91.5
2007	47	34	60	6	0	98.4
Grade 4						
2003	42	21	64	14	0	96.4
2004	46	15	65	17	2	93.5
2005	44	18	68	11	2	95.5
2006	46	15	50	28	7	85.9
2007	46	13	72	15	0	94.6
Grade 5						
2006	47	28	62	9	2	97.3
2007	48	17	63	10	10	89.1
Grade 6						
2006	46	22	65	13	0	96.2
2007	42	31	62	5	2	97.6
Grade 7						
2003	30	3	83	13	0	95.0
2004	47	13	79	6	2	96.3
2005	36	14	83	3	0	99.3
2006	34	12	74	6	9	90.4
2007	45	9	76	13	2	93.9
Grade 8						
2006	27	15	81	4	0	99.1
2007	28	29	68	4	0	99.1

Math						
Grade 3						
2006	46	2	57	39	2	87.5
2007	47	30	53	15	2	93.1
Grade 4						
2003	42	24	55	21	0	93.5
2004	46	33	33	33	2	87.5
2005	44	41	39	14	7	90.3
2006	46	20	35	41	4	83.7
2007	46	39	37	24	0	91.8
Grade 5						
2006	47	28	34	32	6	85.6
2007	47	28	38	26	9	83.5
Grade 6						
2003	46	43	43	11	2	95.1
2004	38	45	45	11	0	96.1
2005	43	49	28	19	5	90.1
2006	46	37	28	28	7	84.2
2007	42	36	40	14	10	91.1
Grade 7						
2006	33	39	30	21	9	84.8
2007	45	31	29	16	24	73.9
Grade 8						
2003	35	29	46	20	6	89.3
2004	25	20	44	28	8	82.0
2005	46	37	39	20	4	90.8
2006	27	26	48	19	7	87.0
2007	28	46	25	25	4	85.7
Science						
Grade 5						
2007	47	32	47	19	2	91.0
Grade 8						
2007	28	7	75	18	0	94.6

BFCCPS students continue to perform very well on the English language arts portion of the MCAS test. For the past two years, the grade 8 CPI was 99.1, with all but four students achieving a proficient or advanced score, and no students scoring in the warning category.

Performance on the mathematics portion of the MCAS continues to be strong but with more variable results than in ELA. In 2007, performance dipped significantly from 2006 in grade 7, but rose in grades 3, 4 and 6, and remained essentially stable in grades 5 and 8.

Because passage of the high school science and technology/engineering MCAS examination will be a statewide graduation requirement beginning with the class of 2010, this site visit report includes science and technology test scores. BFCCPS performance in science is strong, with 98% of grade 5 students, and 100% of 8 students passing the test.

Is the school making adequate yearly progress in the aggregate and in all statistically significant subgroups?

BFCCPS has consistently achieved AYP in the aggregate and for all significant subgroups in both Mathematics and English language arts.

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

Finding: Although the school did not meet all of its internally established goals, student performance on other external measures appears to be strong.

In addition to the MCAS tests, BFCCPS administers the TerraNova second edition/California Achievement Test (TerraNova), the Educational Records Bureau Writing Assessment Program (ERB), and the DIBELS reading test.

The Terra Nova is administered in reading/language arts and mathematics every fall to grades 1 through 8. The test is given during the last week of October and results are received and shared with teachers in late November. The school’s goal with regard to the TerraNova is that 80% of the students will score in the 85th percentile or better. Data provided by the school is summarized in the following table:

Table II : BFCCPS 2006 Terra Nova Results

Grade	Reading		Mathematics	
	% of students at or above the 85 th percentile	Average grade level score	% of students at or above the 85 th percentile	Average grade level score
1	74.7	89	70.9	85
2	70.9	88.3	68.3	80
3	69.9	87.3	66.9	84.7
4	74.2	89	66.9	90
5	73.8	88.5	69.9	78.3
6	73.3	83.7	70.4	91.3
7	75.6	84.5	74	82.3
8	73.6	91.2	75.9	91.7

These results indicate that although the average grade level score is above the 85th percentile for all grades in reading and most grades in mathematics, the school did not meet its goal of having 80% of its students score above the 85th percentile in any grade or subject area. Results for the 2007-08 school year were not made available to the site visit team.

The ERB is administered annually to all students in grades 4 through 8. This test is a criterion-referenced instrument that evaluates written compositions on six characteristics (e.g., overall development, sentence structure, mechanics) against standards established for the student’s grade level. The school’s goal with regard to the ERB is that 80% of students will meet or exceed grade level standards as compared to suburban norms. Data provided by

the school indicates that in 2006-07, the aggregate score for each grade level was above grade level, but the goal of 80% of students attaining an on or above grade level score was achieved only in grades 4 and grade 6. In grade 5, 57% of students met grade level standards, in grade 7, 56% of students met grade level standards, and in grade 8, 68% of students met grade level standards.

The DIBELS reading test is administered three times per year to all students in Kindergarten through grade 4. This test is used to assess the progress of individual students and to drive reading instruction; the data is not aggregated to determine overall student progress.

Finding: Teachers have developed a variety of internal assessments that are used to measure student performance.

Teachers have developed tests and rubrics to assess students work in all academic subject areas, as well as art, music and physical education. In some subject areas and some grade levels, teachers have aggregated data on student performance on summative assessments, but this appears to be a work in progress. Teachers are also beginning to assemble an archive of assessment tools to ensure that students are held to consistent standards over time.

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 has a clear understanding of its role as the school's governing body, and sets a clear line between administration and governance.

The Board shows a commitment to meeting the needs of the school, and ensuring that the mission remains embedded in the day-to-day operations. Ten of the twelve current board members are parents of students at the school, one is a faculty representative, and one is from the community at large. Despite the preponderance of parents on the board, board members were clear how to separate these two roles. While, as parents, they receive a lot of useful information about how the school is doing, board members reported that they were good at “toeing the line” between being parents and board members. Board members reported that for the past year, they had worked with a consultant to better delineate of roles within the school, an issue that had previously caused some tension. There is a clear understanding that the school administrators manage day-to-day operations, while the board is focused on finance, policy, and oversight. The Head of School continues to serve as the primary information conduit between the board and the faculty, and presents a report on the state of the school at every board meeting.

There are many standing committees of the board, including Finance, Human Resources, Nominating, Mission and Facilities. In addition, task forces and subcommittees are organized on an as-needed basis. Currently there are task forces or subcommittees on enrollment, board elections, and the employee salary grid. Some of the Board's recent priorities have been reorganizing the administrative structure, marketing and outreach to ensure that enrollment remains strong and middle school students are retained, re-examining the school's commitment to community service and character education, finding ways to include faculty in decision making, and locating a permanent facility for the school.

Finding: This year the school transitioned to a new administrative structure.

The board reported that they have been very pleased with the performance of the head of school, who had been serving on an interim basis last year, and has now been appointed the permanent school leader. The school has eliminated the position of division deans, and instead hired a new assistant head of school. Board members and administrators described the head of school's position as one of managing the "big picture" for the school, while the assistant head of school works more directly with teachers to supervise their work and help them with curriculum development. Some of the details concerning this new structure are still being worked out to ensure that no administrative responsibilities fall through the cracks.

Finding: Systems have been implemented to give teachers a sense of empowerment in the running of the school.

An Organizational Task Force of the board was formed during the summer of 2006 in order to find ways to get teachers more involved in decision-making. Following the recommendations of this task force, this fall the school established the Faculty Input Team (FIT). Though membership is open to all teachers, 6-8 core members participate in the FIT, coordinated by a veteran teacher who volunteered for this responsibility. The FIT team chooses topics to address and creates Research Action Teams (RATs) that study specific topics and propose solutions. Approximately 25 teachers have participated in a RAT. The RATs have addressed such issues as recess restructuring, lunchroom systems, discipline, the teacher salary grid and teacher collaboration. Administrators participate in RATs, but primarily just to listen to the process, and have generally adopted the recommendations that have grown out of the RATs. Teachers reported to the site visit team that through the FIT and the RATs they have a powerful voice in the school.

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

Finding: The school environment is safe and supportive.

Both parents and students described feeling safe in the school. Students respect each other. When problems arise, they are quickly resolved. Students reported that, in contrast to their experience in other schools, it is never embarrassing to ask for help at BFCCS. They stated that every student is considered smart, and that they always feel supported and encouraged.

Finding: The facility is adequate to support the academic program, but there is some urgency around finding a more permanent location.

Facility planning is a major concern for the Board of Trustees. The current space restricts enrollment to a level that is below its capacity. In addition, use of the building after 3:45 is restricted because the space is then used by the local Catholic church, the school's landlord. The Board is working to resolve complex legal issues surrounding the land that the school has purchased, and is committed to resolving these issues by the end of the current school year. The school can extend its lease on a one-year basis for the 2008-09 school year, but after that will need to either into a long-term lease with its current landlord or find an alternative site.

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

Finding: BFCCPS underwent a Coordinated Program Review in 2007, and is operating in a manner consistent with legal and regulatory requirements.

BFCCPS underwent a Coordinated Program Review (CPR) conducted by the Department’s Program quality Assurance unit in January 2007. A two-member team visited BFPCS to evaluate the implementation of selected criteria in the program areas of special education, Civil Rights and English language learner services. In October 2007, BFCPS submitted a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) in a timely manner that was reviewed and approved by the Department in November 2007. The school’s CAP follow-up Progress Reports are due to the Department on January 11, 2008.

BFCCPS conducted a special education program self-evaluation in 2006-07 that reviewed several areas, including: outcomes of students’ IEP goals as evidenced by IEP progress reports and report card grades; MCAS subgroup scores of students with disabilities; and staff survey results that address the IEP Team process and collaboration between special education and general education staff. Parents of special education students, in the parent focus group, were very satisfied with the level of services provided to their child and the frequent communication about their child’s academic progress.

The school has developed identification and assessment policies and procedures for limited English proficient students; however, there are no limited English proficient students currently enrolled.

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

Finding: Most of the teachers at BFCCPS are experienced. All core subject area teachers are highly qualified, as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act.

Table III shows the years of teaching experience of BFCCPS professional faculty. As indicated, there are twenty-five teachers with six to over twenty years of experience, and only seven who have had only one or two years of experience.

Table III: Years of Teaching Experience for Current Staff*

Years teaching (including current year)	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-20	20+
<i>Number of teachers</i>	7	10	8	7	10

* The school did not provide this information for six staff members

Table IV: Years spent at BFCCPS for Current Staff*

Years at BFCCPS (including current year)	1	2	3-5	6-10	11-13
<i>Number of teachers</i>	10	10	11	10	5

* The school did not provide this information for one staff member

Table IV shows the years of experience at BFCCPS. Six lead teachers are new to the school this year, but only three are new to the teaching profession. The school reports that all teachers are highly qualified under the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. To support new teachers, the school has created a mentorship structure, and one teacher has been trained as a mentor trainer.

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

Finding: Parents and students are pleased with the school.

The parents that participated in the site visit focus group reported that their children have been very successful at BFCCS. They appreciate the small size of the school, and believe their children have benefited from the “socially inclusive environment” built on a strong culture of mutual respect and cooperation, in which “it is cool to be geeky.” Parents of children with special needs were pleased with the services that their children have received, and with the implementation of the inclusion model.

Students also reported that BFCCS was different from and better than other schools. They spoke very highly of their teachers, saying that the teachers respect them, and that students, in turn, respect their teachers more than in other schools. They said that the teachers make learning fun, and are always available to provide extra help.

Both students and parents expressed a desire that the school be better supplied, particularly with additional computers, and that the building be improved, with the addition of a better gym and larger lunchroom. All participants stressed, however, that facility and supply issues were minor inconveniences that did not significantly diminish the quality of the school.

Has the school met or is it making progress towards the goals set out in its Accountability Plan?

Finding: The school does not have an approved Accountability Plan.

The school adopted a draft Accountability Plan in 2003 that was not approved by the Department of Education. During the site visit, board members and administrators reported that the current plan was being revised because it includes many goals and objectives that are not measurable. The board expressed a desire to incorporate the recent changes that have been made to the community service and character education programs into a new Accountability Plan. At the time of this site visit report, the school had begun the process of working with the Charter School Office to finalize a new plan.

Conclusion

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

BFCCPS has entered its thirteenth year of operation with a stable governance and leadership structure in place. Effective measures have been implemented to ensure that staff members have a meaningful voice in the operation of the school, and staff retention remains strong. The school’s mission is clearly integrated into the day-to-day operations of the school, and stakeholders are thoroughly committed to maintaining core elements of the mission as the institution evolves over time. The challenges that lie ahead for the school include permanent

resolution of issues concerning the facility, and the completion of documentation of curriculum to ensure that both Core Knowledge and MCF standards are incorporated, and that skills and content are horizontally and vertically aligned.