

South Shore Charter Public School, (SSCPS) located in Norwell, opened in 1995 with 150 students in Kindergarten through Grade 2 and grades 6-12. The school gives preference in admission to students residing in its designated region, comprised of the districts of Abington, Boston, Braintree, Brockton, Cohasset, Duxbury, Hanover, Hanson, Hingham, Hull, Kingston, Marshfield, Norwell, Pembroke, Plymouth, Plympton, Quincy, Randolph, Rockland, Scituate, Weymouth and Whitman. In 1996 the school added third, fourth and fifth grades to become a K-12 school. The school is in its twelfth year of operation. SSCPS has been granted two charter renewals, in 2000 and 2005. In November 2005, the Board of Education granted the school amendment request to raise the enrollment cap from 468 to 540 students. As of October 1, 2006, the school enrolls 494 students and plans to expand to 540 students within the next three years.

The educational philosophy at SSCPS emphasizes both the development of basic skills and the application of these skills in cross-disciplinary, experiential projects. The school mission states,

[SSCPS] inspires students to achieve their potential in academics, career, and life. This is accomplished with an innovative curriculum that addresses the learning styles of the individual student, complemented by a real life experiential learning program, within a community that encourages service, leadership, and respect.

The school is organized into multi-age, multi-grade classrooms by Levels: Level I (K-2), II (3-4), III (5-6), IV (7-8), V (9-10) and the High School. The school has modified this approach to instruction; math and several other subjects are taught by grade level.

Of the 494 students enrolled at SSCPS: 267 are male and 227 are female; no students are classified as Limited English Proficient; 18.2 percent qualify for free- and reduced-price lunch; 17.6 percent receive special education services; and 17.2 percent are eligible for Title I services. The racial and ethnic composition of the student body, as reported by the school in January of 2007, is 78.5 percent White, 11.5 percent African-American, 4 percent Mixed Race, 3.4 percent Latino, and 2.4 percent Asian.

The following participants conducted the site visit on January 18, 2007:

- Barry Barnett, Coordinator of Federal Programs, MA DOE Charter School Office
- Claudia Ewing, Assistant Head of School, Martha's Vineyard Public Charter School
- Michael O'Keefe, Assistant Head of School, Rising Tide Charter School
- Emily Lichtenstein, Governance Specialist, MA DOE Charter School Office
- Juna Snow, Coordinator of Accountability, MA DOE Charter School Office
- Jessica Spohn, Accountability Specialist, MA DOE Charter School Office

Before the visit, the site team reviewed the 2005-2006 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, administrators, teachers, families, and students, and conducted 22 classroom visits.

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

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

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

1. Faithfulness to the Terms of the Charter

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

Finding: The school is faithful to its defined mission, vision, and educational philosophy. All Stakeholders described the school's mission and educational philosophy as focusing on students' individual learning styles and providing opportunities for real-life experiential and project-based learning. Interviewees discussed the importance of fostering respectful and caring relationships between students, staff, and parents. Administrators spoke of the importance of high levels of student/student engagement as well as teacher/student engagement in the classroom and that students exhibit ownership and leadership in their own educational experience. Students described the emphasis placed on teamwork and on developing leadership skills. Parents spoke of the school as a caring community where their children were treated as individuals. The team observed evidence of the school's mission, vision, and educational philosophy being implemented in the school. The school has dedicated time for project-based learning, and there were consistently high levels of respectful interactions between students and instructional staff members.

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

Finding: The school is making progress towards meeting the faithfulness to charter goals as defined in its approved Accountability Plan.

SSCPS has the following faithfulness to charter objectives in the school's approved Accountability Plan:

- Objective # 1: SSCPS will remain faithful to our charter in providing a balanced academic and project-based learning environment.
- Objective # 2: SSCPS will remain faithful to our charter by promoting a respectful culture and a responsive family/school partnership.
- Objective # 3: SSCPS will remain faithful to our charter and share the strengths of our model with schools and educators throughout the Commonwealth.

Based on observations and corroborated by information provided in the 2005-2006 Annual Report, SSCPS met Objectives 1 and 2. At the day of the site visit the team observed a school day that included core academic subjects and dedicated time for project-based learning. In a majority of classes observed, student-to-student and teacher-to-student relationships were

respectful. Parents interviewed characterized the school as responsive to their needs and open to their input. The school partially met Objective 3, providing a list of memberships, faculty activities, and visitors to the school. However, descriptions of these activities did not explain how the school shared information of the strengths of the school's model.

2. Academic Program Success

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

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

Finding: The school's K-8 curriculum is based on the Core Knowledge Sequence established by E. D. Hirsch; the high school curriculum was developed using the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (MCF). The school is in the process of assessing and re-aligning all curricula to be consistent with the scope and sequence of the MCF.

SSCPS's K-8 curriculum follows the Core Knowledge Sequence. Six years ago the school aligned the Core Knowledge Sequence with the MCF. The administration acknowledged that with the advent of the additional mandated state-testing, the school's curriculum needs to be re-aligned with the MCF. In the 2005-2006 school year the school has introduced the Singapore Math Program in response to a drop in students' math performance, but the Singapore Math Program has not been aligned with the MCF. The site visit team confirmed that the high school curriculum focus is college preparatory, and the school uses a mixture of commercial textbooks and teacher-selected materials, such as novels and short stories.

The site visit team reviewed curriculum maps for all grade levels that included the following aspects: scope and sequence, unit topics, key questions, unit assessments, related resources and links. The curriculum maps are documented, organized, and stored in a central binder holding paper copies. The curriculum maps are also available in a shared electronic folder via the school intranet.

Presently, only the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum maps are completely aligned with the MCF. This year the school will revise the math and science curriculum maps to be in alignment. Next year the school will align the social studies curriculum map with the MCF. The school's goal is to have all curricula in full alignment with the MCF by the time of the school's next renewal. The school engages in what they describe as a five-year curriculum rotation process. Over a five-year period, the school reviews all aspects of the curricula allowing them to add and or modify each subject area and to assess if the curricula are aligned with state-standards. The school plans to provide stipends for staff members to work on curriculum over the summer.

Finding: The school has Level Coordinators who have the responsibility of ensuring curriculum alignment.

Each teacher develops and revises their own core curriculum and assessment tools using the previous year's material and the MCF standards. Teachers meet weekly by level with supervision provided by Level Coordinators, to vet curriculum and assessment rubrics for alignment by grade and to look for curriculum alignment within the level. Each level spans two-to-three grades. Level Coordinators meet to assure curriculum and assessment are aligned throughout the school's K-12 grade span. The entire staff meets weekly to discuss curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

Administrators stated that they struggle with the issue of curriculum documentation because the school chooses to give teachers significant leeway in curriculum development and documentation, with some being more skillful than others. The team reviewed a Master Binder for Level III, grades 5-6. The binder included all curricula documents including curriculum maps, exit standards, examples of student portfolios, teacher developed activities and commercial worksheets, Rubrics for Exhibition of Mastery projects and examples of projects. Administrators stated that not all levels have Master Binders that include all curricula documents for that level. at the time of the visit; only Level III had a binder for review.

Finding: In a majority of classes observed, students exhibited high levels of engagement.

The team observed consistently high levels of student/teacher and student/student engagement. Classrooms are organized to foster student interaction with students seated at tables to promote group work and hands-on activities. Teachers encouraged student input with ongoing questioning. Students are not called on; they volunteer answers, with teachers checking in with students for comprehension. In a majority of classes, students were generally on-task and involved in the lesson. The team observed positive and respectful student/teachers and student/student interaction; classes were orderly and conducive to learning.

Finding: Teachers use multiple instructional strategies and methods.

The team observed a wide range of instructional strategies, including direct instruction, small and whole group activities, multi-age groupings, individualized instruction, and peer coaching. There were a wide range of instructional approaches that varied from class to class. It does not appear that there is school-wide teaching methodology, however, in a majority of classes observed, the skills and concepts of lessons were clearly articulated and understood by the students.

Finding: The team saw multiple examples of project-based learning that demonstrated a wide range of academic content and rigor.

SSCPS's day is comprised of core academic classes in the morning and project-based learning activities in the afternoon. The administration described development of projects as based on teacher interest but varied enough to meet the interests of all students. The school's instructional leadership oversees the development of the projects.

Examples of the projects are Puppetry, Literary Magazine, School Store, School Newspaper, Year Book, Gardening, and Engineering. There are 25 projects and workshops offered at SSCPS each year (Annual Report, Page 6). Students choose their projects based on interest, with input from teachers. All Level I students work with their homeroom teachers. Level II, III, and IV students are mixed into interclass groups. Levels II and III students do two projects a year, and Level IV students do the same project all year. Administrators described the High School projects as having become more academically rigorous, in some cases to prepare students for Advanced Placement Exams. All students must complete all project requirements and present an

Exhibition of Mastery related to their projects to meet the school's exit standards. Exhibitions of Mastery are judged using a rubric and are evaluated by multiple staff members and some external judges.

The team observed multiple examples of projects that demonstrated a wide range of academic content and rigor. Some projects observed were extremely academically rigorous, such as an engineering class building functional bridges, but others did not appear to have extensive teacher oversight or a clear academic focus. The team did not observe how the projects are aligned with state or school-based learning standards. **Year 13 site visitors should spend more time observing project based activities to assess how the projects support acquisition of skills and content.**

Finding: The school has developed and implemented internal standards for student academic achievement and promotion.

The school has developed and uses Exit Standards as well as the Core Knowledge Sequence. The school measures each student's academic achievement by reviewing the student's Exit Standards Checklist. These checklists, built for each Level, include internal and external performance evaluation, a portfolio, and demonstration of community service. The site visit team reviewed the Exit Standards Checklists and the school included Exit Standards Checklists for each level in the 2005-2006 Annual Report. Level II-High School students must also present an Exhibition of Mastery based on each project. Each level has an Exhibition of Mastery rubric for assessment. The team observed several Exhibitions of Mastery presentations. There was a range of academic rigor demonstrated in the presentations.

Finding: The school accommodates the diverse and special needs of the student population.

Based on document review, interviews, and observations, the site visit team concluded that the school has an array of student support services and staff available to meet the needs of students. The school has a large number of related-services providers on staff or under contract to the school, including a school adjustment counselor, a school psychologist, and a behavior specialist to support student learning. Occupational, speech, and physical therapy service providers implement pull-out, pull-aside, and/or inclusion services. Five learning specialists and two 1-to-1 aides also support student learning.

The school provides a continuum of services to support the learning of both regular and special education students. A variety of student service options exist, including after school homework help from teachers and study skill groups. At Student Support Team meetings, teachers and specialists discuss needs of particular children and jointly develop program accommodations and modifications to benefit individual students. The school purchased the LEXIA personalized computer-based tutorial program.

The school operates a program of inclusive education and has implemented staff training in approaches for accommodating the needs of diverse learners in the general education classroom. Prior to the beginning of the school year, learning specialists provide regular education staff with written materials and discuss the particulars of individual students for whom special education accommodations are needed. In response to an increase in the numbers of students with autism, the school has implemented staff-wide training on the topic, established a social skill group, and utilizes the "Open Circle" program for building social skills.

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

Finding: SSCPS students have demonstrated variable progress toward meeting proficiency targets on state standards, as measured by the MCAS test. Mathematics performance has declined, and the school has been identified for improvement for subgroups in math.

Tables 1 and 2 present the MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics test results from the last five years. 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.

As the school Annual Report and administrator interviewees further explained, the school is aware of and concerned about the notable changes in student MCAS test performance. In ELA, grades 3,4, and 7 experienced a drop in CPI from 2002 to 2006, in Mathematics; grade 4 has experienced a drop in CPI for the same time period. To address these concerns, the school has implemented a new curriculum, Singapore Math, across grade levels and has moved to single grade math courses. In addition, the school is shifting to a more data-driven approach to curriculum revision, based on MCAS test results, to identify and target academic areas and grade levels for improvement. **The Year 13 Site visit team should investigate to what extent MCAS data informs curriculum revision.**

Table 1: SSCPS ELA MCAS Test Results, 2002-2006

ELA	Students Included	% Advanced	% Proficient	% Needs Improvement	% Warning/Failing	CPI
Grade 3						
2002	28	0	86	14	0	94.6
2003	35	0	77	20	3	91.4
2004	23	0	43	52	4	80.4
2005	40	0	60	33	8	83.1
2006	37	11	49	35	5	83.1
Grade 4						
2002	20	0	55	45	0	86.3
2003	28	4	64	21	11	83.9
2004	34	3	41	50	6	78.7
2005	36	3	22	47	28	62.9
2006	38	0	32	53	16	68.4
Grade 5						
2006	32	3	38	38	22	71.9
Grade 6						
2006	40	5	70	23	3	90.6
Grade 7						
2002	35	3	91	6	0	98.6
2003	32	0	78	22	0	91.4
2004	38	5	79	13	3	94.7
2005	38	3	61	29	8	87.5
2006	34	0	62	32	6	84.6
Grade 8						
2006	39	13	67	18	3	92.3
Grade 10						
2002	12	0	50	33	17	77.1
2003	19	0	42	42	16	76.3
2004	19	11	63	26	0	92.1
2005	30	10	53	33	3	85.8

2006	33	9	73	15	3	93.2
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Table 2: SSCPS Mathematics MCAS Test Results, 2002-2006

Math	Students Included	% Advanced	% Proficient	% Needs Improvement	% Warning/Failing	CPI
Grade 3						
2006	37	0	41	38	22	72.3
Grade 4						
2002	20	5	45	35	15	76.3
2003	28	11	29	54	7	78.6
2004	34	12	26	50	12	73.5
2005	36	6	8	50	36	55.1
2006	39	0	23	49	28	59.0
Grade 5						
2006	32	6	16	34	44	53.9
Grade 6						
2002	29	10	24	45	21	69.0
2003	37	14	43	22	22	76.4
2004	25	8	32	36	24	69.0
2005	36	6	22	39	33	60.4
2006	41	5	39	29	27	68.9
Grade 7						
2006	34	3	24	47	26	63.2
Grade 8						
2002	22	0	9	68	23	58.0
2003	37	8	14	41	38	55.4
2004	28	4	25	50	21	66.1
2005	40	5	35	33	28	65.6
2006	39	10	23	28	38	60.3
Grade 10						
2002	12	0	17	42	42	58.3
2003	19	16	16	32	37	59.2
2004	19	11	42	47	0	85.5
2005	30	17	27	47	10	73.3
2006	32	34	34	25	6	87.5

Table 4 presents the SSCPS Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) history and 2006 accountability status. AYP determinations are calculated by the state, in accordance with the standards of the No Child Left Behind Act. A school that makes AYP is considered “on track” to have all its students score in the Proficient or Advanced categories on the MCAS exam by 2014. The school made AYP in the aggregate and for all statistically significant sub-groups in ELA but not in Mathematics. The school is identified for accountability purposes as Needs Improvement for math subgroups.

Table 4: AYP Determinations and Accountability Status for SSCPS

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

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

Finding: SSCPS student performance on the Terra Nova has been generally consistent as compared to the national average; however, recent total scores for students have not been as strong. As described in the annual report, the school administers the Terra Nova achievement test as an additional external assessment and has met its Accountability Plan goal of its students scoring at or above a 50 Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) total score in all grades except Grade 11. The school attributed variations in recent performance to the large number of new students to the school due, in part, to the expansion of the school's region. The school also administers the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and is adding DIBELS for reading fluency.

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

Finding: The team did not analyze data on the school's internal assessment.

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

Finding: SSCPS has met the majority of performance standards that assess the school's progress towards meeting the academic performance objectives.

SSCPS has the following academic performance objectives in the school's approved Accountability Plan:

- Objective # 1: All students will work towards developing essential skills in initiative, critical thinking, teamwork, and communication.
- Objective # 2: All students will master essential academic skills.

Based on observations and corroborated by information provided in the 2005-2006 Annual Report, and observed at the site visit, SSCPS met or exceeded the performance standard for each objective. However, the school did not meet its MCAS performance standard: 90% of SSCPS students (in grades 3-10) will meet or exceed the Needs Improvement Score on the MCAS. In Mathematics, Only 73% of students met or exceeded the Needs Improvement Score

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 school has established effective leadership and governance structures.

The Board and administration clearly articulated their roles and responsibilities and how they work together to oversee and manage the school. The Board is comprised of 16 members, including 13 voting members and a parent, student, and faculty representative. There are five committees: Development, Facilities, Finance, Governance, and Personnel. Committees and the Board meet monthly. Board members described their jobs as providing direction for the school, setting priorities, and developing strategic plans for improvement and stated that they do not micromanage the school. They do this with input from all stakeholders. They are responsible for financial decisions; overseeing capital improvements, fund raising, and helping the school stay true to its commitment to experiential learning and meeting the needs of the individual child.

The Board identified several challenges facing the school. They have been successful in securing and partially renovating a permanent facility. The move from Hull to Norwell has been very positive for the school but has created new fiscal challenges. Fundraising to complete construction on the facilities is a central issue of concern, as described by interviewees from the Board, administration, teachers, and parents. Parent interviewees emphasized that future funding sources need to be planned and budgeted to reflect less reliance on parents.

The Board is also aware of a shift in the student population with is an increasingly diverse group of students attending SSCPS who bring a broader range of needs for the school to address. They are aware of decreases in the schools MCAS scores, especially in math and support the school's leadership team in adopting the Singapore Math program to improve student math performance.

The Board hires and formally evaluates the Executive Director . He is very involved with the Board, attending all meetings and serving on committees. The Executive Director updates the Board every month on school-wide issues. The Executive Director is responsible for the operation and day-to-day management of the school. He works closely with the Principal and Assistant Principal who are responsible for all issues pertaining to curriculum and instruction. The Parent Association works closely with the school leadership.

SSCPS has a School Council comprised of six parents three faculty members and three students. The Council meets monthly to discuss and revise school policies. The Council presents all revisions of school policy to the Board for approval.

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

Finding: The school is strengthening the organizational systems and structures that are in place to review the quality and effectiveness of the academic program.

The administrative team comprised of the Executive Director, Principal, and Assistant Principal meet weekly to discuss school-wide issues. Level Coordinators and Level teachers meet weekly and meet across levels several times a year to discuss student performance, curriculum issues, and teacher observations. Level Coordinator and Senior Teachers meet to look at the consistency of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment across levels. There is a monthly staff meeting to discuss staff needs and school culture and climate. The administration, teachers, parents, and the Board described identifying and addressing weakness in the school's math program by establishing a math task force that solicited input from stakeholders.

Finding: The school is developing a more systematic approach for using data to inform curriculum and instruction.

Interviewees described a school-wide shift to increase formal evaluation of the impact of the academic programs on student achievement. School administrators explained that the school recently received a grant, *Developing Data-Driven Instruction*, sponsored by the DOE, to support the SSCPS efforts to develop an assessment system aligned to the MCF. The goal is for the school to be able to use MCAS results to identify which subject areas require targeted curriculum and instruction review and revision. Teachers interviewed acknowledged some familiarity with the initiative and the shift in focus to more data-driven decision-making, but expressed concern with the shift away from the school's original mission.

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

Finding: The school establishes and maintains an environment that is physically safe and free from harassment and discrimination for students and staff.

Students, parents, and teachers interviewed described the school as both physically and emotionally safe. Parents explained that last year there were issues around bullying. The school was very receptive to the parent's concerns and addressed the issues by having meetings with parents and with the school's senior class. The school brought in a behavioral specialist to work with teachers and students. Parents and students said that the school was a close-knit community; everyone knows each other and cares about each other. The teachers are very aware of the students' needs and are very connected to their students. Students said the school allowed them to be themselves. They did not feel embarrassed or nervous about expressing themselves because the school's climate encourages self-expression.

Parents reported interest in a gymnasium and a cafeteria for additional facilities. The Board and administrators described plans to complete the development of the building to include additional facilities and a science lab.

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

Finding: The school's program meets applicable state and federal requirements and serves the needs of a diverse student population.

The school has been responsive to the DOE Coordinated Program Review (CPR) report issued in February 2005. Several program improvements have been implemented by the school as a result of findings contained in the CPR report, including the establishment of English Language Learner (ELL) assessments, student support team protocols and contracting with an outside consultant to conduct a special education program self-study analysis.

Sheltered English Immersion (SEI)/ELL education programs are in the beginning stages of implementation at the school. The school conducts a home language survey to identify students who are potentially limited English proficient (LEP), and English proficiency assessments are administered and interpreted by a qualified individual. This process has led to the identification of six LEP students currently in attendance. Staff at each level have been trained to implement SEI programming within the classroom and English as a Second Language (ESL) support classes, previously unavailable, are anticipated to begin within a month.

Special education self-evaluation activities have recently been initiated. In response to the CPR report findings, the school has initiated an independent special education program self-study process during a three-year period.

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

Finding: Staff members employed by the school are qualified in their respective areas.

Based on information submitted to the team and on interviews with teachers and administrators, SSCPS faculty and staff are educated and/or trained in the areas to which they are assigned. Table 6 presents the total number of teachers reported and aggregated by total years of teaching

and total years of teaching at SSCPS. The school reported 37 of the 50 teachers are considered Highly Qualified as defined by the regulations of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

The school supports ongoing faculty training through professional development opportunities including in-service training and external experiences. Recent in-service sessions focused on supporting diverse learners in classrooms, as well as curriculum mapping and standards alignment in lesson planning. Outside experiences are supported through stipend allocation for professional conferences and continuing education courses.

The school demonstrates a commitment to retaining its instructional staff by implementing a mentoring program and by formalizing teacher evaluation. Teachers undergo an orientation process before the school year and are evaluated informally involving classroom observations by administrators and by peers throughout the school year. The formal evaluation process occurs annually and involves classroom observation by administration, teacher self-assessment, and a demonstration portfolio. These programs and performance expectations are documented in the faculty handbook and with the teacher evaluation instruments.

Table 6: Teaching Years for SSCPS Teachers (N=50)

	<1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	20+ years
Total Teaching	13	8	17	9	3
Total Teaching at SSCPS	19	15	12	4	0

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

Finding: Stakeholders are satisfied with overall school performance.

Parents interviewed explained that staff members generally meet the needs of individual students by both challenging and supporting learners. Students described the school as a special place where they develop self-motivation, interest in learning, and leadership abilities. The students further described how the experiential projects have been beneficial and are “preparation for life.” Students characterized the teachers as supportive both academically and socially, and they “will help you with anything.”

Teachers characterized the communication with each other and the administration as open and collegial and felt that they agreed with implementations for change in curriculum and policy within the school, such as with Singapore Math and grade-level assignment of subject-based classes. The teachers described positive relationships with their students and parents. However, teachers specifically described current challenges as parent communication and addressing student needs within the context of increasing enrollment and changing demographics.

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

Finding: The school has partially met the majority of the organizational viability goals in its Accountability Plan.

SSCPS has the following organizational viability objectives in the school’s approved Accountability Plan:

- Objective # 1: SSCPS will maintain financial solvency and stability.
- Objective # 2: SSCPS will demonstrate itself to be a viable organization.

These objectives have multiple expectations, strategies for attainment, and assessment methods (2005-2006 Annual Report, Page 66). Based on information provided in 2005-2006 Annual Report, observed at the site visit, and submitted to the Charter School Office, SSCPS met the majority of the multiple expectations and assessment measures for organizational viability. However, administrators, Board members, and parents spoke of the ongoing challenges in raising sufficient funds to fully renovate the school's new facility.

Conclusion

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

SSCPS continues to work towards its mission of providing an educational experience that respects the learning styles of the individual student, and provides a project-based, experiential learning program. The team observed that the school is experiencing challenges balancing their commitment to experiential learning and preparing students for additional mandated state testing. SSCPS has started the process of aligning the school's new Singapore Math program with MCF, and realigning the entire curriculum with the MCF. This process is projected to continue until the school's curriculum is fully aligned with the Massachusetts State Frameworks. School leaders expressed the importance of increasing the academic rigor of the project-based learning component of the academic program, especially at the high school level to better prepare students for college.

The school has successfully purchased and moved to its new permanent facility in Norwell. The school is experiencing a shift in student demographics and is working to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body. The school's new facility is partially renovated and multiple stakeholders expressed the opinion that the school needs to develop strategies to complete the renovation.