

Renewal Inspection Report

HEALTH CAREERS ACADEMY
BOSTON, MA

Table of Contents

	Page
About the renewal process and site visit report	1
How to read this report	1
Renewal inspection team	2
Setting	3
Findings	5
Renewal Question 1: Is the academic program a success?	6
Renewal Question 2: Is the school a viable organization?	16
Renewal Question 3: Is the school faithful to the terms of the charter?	23
Renewal Question 4: If the school's charter is renewed, what are its plans for the next five years?	26
Appendix A: Schedule of the renewal inspection visit	29

ABOUT THE RENEWAL PROCESS AND SITE VISIT REPORT

Beginning in the spring of the third year of its charter (and ending August 1st following its fourth year), a school may apply for renewal of its charter for another five-year term. Following guidelines set forth in the *Application for Renewal of a Public School Charter*, an application for renewal should be an articulate, affirmative response, based on clear, credible evidence, to the questions that guide charter school accountability. It must also offer compelling answers to questions about the school's plans for the future. The application should be a sound, well-supported explanation of why the Board of Education should renew a school's charter.

Once this application has met a minimal review of its clarity and coherence, the Department of Education will appoint an evaluation team to conduct a 3-4 day visit of the school to corroborate and augment the school's application for renewal. This report is the result of one such evaluation.

The renewal site visit process and report provide a detailed and current portrait of a public charter school at the time of its application for renewal. While the renewal site visit report itself is a vital source of information within the renewal process, it is most effective when used in conjunction with the longitudinal school performance data available to the Department of Education. The combination of more general long-term data with the detailed information gathered by the renewal visit constitutes an evidence base rigorous enough to inform decisions about the future of public charter schools responsible for the education of students in the Commonwealth. In keeping with Massachusetts Board of Education's commitment to a public charter school accountability system that is based in robust and diverse performance data, the renewal site visit report does not make recommendations about whether or not a school should be renewed. It presents a detailed picture of the present state of the school as one of several key sources of information to be considered by the Board of Education in its renewal decision.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

The first section of this report describes the school's setting. Included in this section are information on the origin and history of the charter, student demographics, staffing and the school's educational program. This is also an opportunity to include any organizational history, such as changes in the board and leadership or challenges the school has faced, and its response to those challenges.

The core of the report is the Renewal Inspection Team's findings. Findings are the team's assessment of the school's strengths and areas for improvement that, in their judgment, have the greatest bearing on the school's achievement of its defined goals. Findings are organized under each of the renewal questions: *Is the academic program a success? Is the school a viable organization? Is the school faithful to the terms of its charter?* The team's comments on the fourth question, *If the school is renewed, what are its plans for the next five years?*, reflect their judgment of the quality of the school's proposed new goals and their assessment of the school's capacity to fulfill those goals. Each finding is a bolded statement followed by explanatory paragraphs reporting the evidence supporting the team's judgments. Finally, **Appendix A** illustrates the team's schedule during the renewal visit.

RENEWAL INSPECTION TEAM

Ann Dinsmoor, Ed.D. Ann began her career in public schools as a speech/language therapist working with children pre-school to high school. Following middle school and central office administrative positions in special education and her tenure as Assistant Superintendent of Student Services for the Public Schools of Wellesley, Massachusetts, she developed a private practice team that consulted to school districts about the effectiveness of special education services. Her work has included publication, training, facilitation of strategic planning and organizational and management development. She has three degrees in education from Boston University: Speech/Language Therapy, Guidance and Counseling and Educational Leadership.

Linda Moriarty, CAGS, Ed. Linda began her career as an elementary school teacher in the Boston School Department. Following this, she became a Curriculum Specialist, working directly with a zone superintendent for the Boston Magnet School District consisting of 26 K-12 schools. She then served as assistant principal in two different K-5 schools in Boston and, subsequently, as a cabinet member for the superintendent of a K-12 Boston Public School Zone. She retired from a 12-year position as principal of a K-5 school in Marshfield, Massachusetts.

Joseph Nigro (OEQA): Mr. Nigro has 37 years of experience in public education. He served as a science teacher and science department chairperson during his career. At the present time, he is a school examiner for the Office of Educational Quality & Accountability and has held that position for five years. In addition, Mr. Nigro is beginning his third year as a program supervisor for practicum candidates in the teacher licensure program at The Education Cooperative. He has also served as a program supervisor for two years in the teacher licensure program at Simmons College.

Erin Patterson: Erin is a Project Associate at SchoolWorks. Prior to joining SchoolWorks, Erin worked in public education for 13 years. Erin worked for the Massachusetts Department of Education as an Education Specialist, where her assignments included coordinating the review of underperforming schools across the Commonwealth. She is licensed in Massachusetts as a teacher, principal and superintendent of schools.

Karl A. Smith, Ed.D. Karl is a Project Associate with SchoolWorks. Prior to joining SchoolWorks, he worked as a middle school principal. He has more than 30 years' experience as a teacher, department chair and administrator. In addition, he has taught graduate courses in Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment for Lesley University, and worked with Rhode Island College, teaching a support class for teachers seeking National Board Certification.

SETTING

The Health Careers Academy Charter School opened in 1995, originally as a pilot high school for grades 9-12 within the Boston Public School (BPS) district. Within three years, in 1998, the school applied for and was granted a Horace Mann Charter. Its purpose was to provide a “college preparatory high school for Boston students exploring careers in health and health-related professions.” The Health Careers Academy (HCA), located on the Northeastern University Campus, has 12 classrooms and 2 computer laboratories, with 9 offices for administrative and counseling purposes. In addition to this assigned space, HCA has use of Northeastern science labs, some additional classrooms, cafeterias, auditorium, library space and meeting facilities. As HCA plans to look for a larger space for expansion, it hopes to remain on or adjacent to the NU campus. Additionally, students use the gym at the local YMCA for their physical education program.

Health Careers Academy (HCA) draws from a diverse population of students entering grades 9-12. The majority of its students come from Dorchester, Roxbury and Hyde Park. It has a present enrollment of 220 students, with a consistent attendance rate of 94 % – just slightly below the state average. In March of each year, HCA distributes applications to all Boston middle schools and, using a lottery system, recruits students well above admission needs. There were 177 applications for grade 9 for the 2006-07 school year, with 69 students offered admission. There are presently 128 students on the waiting list for grade 9, 119 students for grade 10, 113 for grade 11 and 81 for grade 12 – for a total of 441 students. The waiting list has grown significantly since the charter school inception in 1998. The school has been trying to increase the number of male applicants, which is currently significantly lower than females. Due to the lack of a comprehensive sports program and some lingering stereotypes attached to the health care fields as primarily female occupations, this remains a challenge for the school. HCA’s long-range projection is for a new facility that would allow HCA to increase its enrollment to 300 students.

HCA has always had a diverse population with a high representation of people of color. It is to be noted that, although the racial representation has not changed significantly since the beginning, the number of students qualifying for free or assisted lunch has increased gradually over the years to above 62% for the 2007-08 school year. One significant change in population occurred in 2004, when the school was assigned a cohort of ninth grade students, who up to then had been in a special education, substantially separate (.4), placement. The school added a learning specialist, a special education teacher and a paraprofessional to support these incoming students. This change gave the school the impetus to increase the training of all staff in differentiated instruction. This year, HCA has begun a full inclusion program for all students. Student turnover rate has been kept in the five-to-seven-percent range over the last four years, with nearly half of the students who left attending schools outside of Boston due to family relocation.

HCA has had minimum turnover of staff during the years. The hiring of new staff has been handled with relative ease. New teachers are often selected from Northeastern University interns (five have been hired), who have been trained by HCA staff. Within the past two years, there have been two new science and two new mathematics teachers added to the staff. The majority

of staff meets Highly Qualified Teacher requirements. By the end of 2008, nine of these teachers will have dual certification in special education.

Three of the primary leaders of the school – the executive director, the headmaster and the coordinator of planning and program development – have been with the school for several years (two, since its beginning) and have a strong commitment to its growth and success. The school has established strong partners within the health and science fields and has extended its relationship with Northeastern University to utilize services and classroom labs throughout its campus. The addition of a full-time health engagement coordinator has greatly strengthened the connection between the health care fields and HCa. The Board of Trustee members, whose chairman is an original charter member, have demonstrated deep commitment to supporting HCa in its charter mission and in keeping it financially solvent. Yearly audits demonstrate ongoing strong fiscal management and viability. Parents serve on the Board and participate in yearly annual reports and in long-term strategic planning. All stakeholders demonstrated deep commitment to supporting the efforts of this unique school, whose goal is to offer urban students – particularly those of color – opportunities for college and careers in the health science services.

FINDINGS

The Renewal Inspection Team (the team) spent three-and-a-half days at the Health Careers Academy, from October 22-25, 2007. During that time, the team observed 19 classroom lessons and conducted a total of 15 interviews, which included a comprehensive range of stakeholders involved in all aspects of the school. There were interviews with all school administrators and teacher-leaders – the executive director, the headmaster, the coordinator of planning and program development; the assistant headmaster, the director of curriculum and instruction (both teacher-leaders), the dean of discipline and student support and the health engagement coordinator. The team also met with: the majority of the Board of Trustees; the Boston Public School Partners; Northeastern University Partners; a group of other external partners in the health career fields; the finance committee; a very large parent group; all teaching faculty groups, including “collab” (department) leaders; and, with both alumni and student focus groups. The team heard a broad spectrum of views concerning HCa.

During the visit, the team spent time reviewing a wide range of documents. These included: financial statements; MCAS data, BPS mid-term exam data and SAT testing data; annual reports; both present and new accountability plans; reports of previous site visits; the school’s academic data analysis; all content area curriculum binders; samples of teacher binders (with syllabi and weekly and daily lesson plans); samples of teacher evaluation instruments, both formal and informal with feedback; professional development and staff meeting agendas; teacher and student and family handbooks; and, portfolios of student work. The team had access to demographic data and to teacher qualifications and experience. The following findings are based on a most thorough examination of all aspects of Health Careers Academy.

RENEWAL QUESTION 1: IS THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM A SUCCESS?

1. Since its charter renewal in 2003, the Health Career Academy has continued to increase the number of students performing in the advanced and proficient range and to reduce the percentage of students in Warning category in both English language arts (ELA) and in mathematics MCAS testing.

MCAS Health Careers Academy: Grade 10 History of Percent of Students in Each Category

Year/Subject	N	%A	%P	%NI	%W
ELA					
2003	45	0	44	44	11
2004	39	3	41	54	3
2005	44	11	53	34	2
2006	74	0	59	32	9
2007	45	6	44	40	0
Mathematics					
2003	45	2	16	44	38
2004	39	8	23	50	20
2005	44	11	34	46	9
2006	74	12	24	36	28
2007	45	27	42	29	2

N = number of students tested; A = Advanced; P = Proficient; NI = Needs Improvement; W = Warning

According to the school's accountability plan, the school is focused on increasing the number of students reaching the proficient and advanced performance levels on the MCAS exam each year. The school's goals are as follows:

From 2003-2008 the proportion of grade 10 students reaching the proficient or advanced performance levels on the mathematics MCAS exam will increase by 8 percentage points each year.

From 2003-2008 the proportion of grade 10 students reaching the proficient or advanced performance levels on the English MCAS exam will increase by 6 percentage points each year.

Although HCa has not consistently met the goals it set for itself - an increase by 6% each year of students reaching proficient or advanced in ELA – the school has continually outperformed its BPS peers in all areas since 2005. The only declining year in ELA MCAS results since 2003 was in 2006, when the large and disproportionate cohort of students – who had come to HCa as ninth graders from substantially separate special education programs – took the test. This resulted in a significant drop of MCAS scores in all levels. In the following year, 2007, the results again reflected a strong growth in the proficient and advanced categories, with 0% in the warning category in ELA.

An analysis of MCAS test results in mathematics from 2003 through 2007 shows that there has been a marked increase in students scoring in the advanced and proficient levels from 2003 through 2007 (69%, up from 18%) and a significant decrease in students in the warning category (2%, down from 38%). The total growth from 2003 to 2007 has been far greater than the goals, for a yearly 8% increase in these levels. It should be noted that a significant number of students, 27% (over one fourth of the 10th grade class), scored in the advanced level in mathematics in 2007.

As reported for ELA, a dip in mathematics scores in 2006 is attributed to the large cohort of special education students taking the test. The coordinator of planning and program development, using Test Whiz, analyzes all MCAS data and provides comprehensive individual student MCAS information to all staff.

MCAS Results Compared to the State

Health Careers Academy Comparison of School and State Performance Grade 10 – English Language Arts

		N	%A	%P	%NI	%W
2003	HCa	45	0	44	44	11
	State		20	41	28	12
2004	HCa	39	3	41	54	3
	State		19	43	27	11
2005	HCa	44	11	52	34	2
	BPS		11	27	35	27
	State		23	42	25	10
2006	HCa	74	0	58	32	9
	BPS		9	41	35	15
	State		16	53	24	7
2007	HCa	45	16	44	40	0
	BPS		11	41	36	12
	State		22	49	24	6

N = number of students tested; A = Advanced; P = Proficient; NI = Needs Improvement; W = Warning

Health Careers Academy Comparison of School and State Performance Grade 10 – Mathematics

		N	%A	%P	%NI	%W
2003	HCa	45	0	16	44	38
	State		24	27	28	21
2004	HCa	39	5	23	51	21
	State		35	27	24	15
2005	HCa	44	11	34	45	9
	BPS		22	17	28	33

	State		35	27	24	15
2006	HCa	74	12	23	36	28
	BPS		32	21	25	22
	State		40	27	21	12
2007	HCa	45	27	42	29	2
	BPS		11	41	36	16
	State		42	27	22	9

N = number of students tested; A = Advanced; P = Proficient; NI = Needs Improvement; W = Warning

Although HCa did not perform as well as the state in the advanced and proficient categories in ELA MCAS from 2003 through 2007, they did have a lower percentage of students falling in the warning level than the state in all those years, except for a slight change in 2006. As noted in the chart above, HCa students outperformed BPS MCAS averages in all levels from 2005-2007. During this time, HCa met its own goals for increasing student performance on MCAS for most years in ELA.

The most recent 2007 MCAS mathematics scores have documented strong achievement on all levels, surpassing Hca’s own goals for all other years. For the first time this year, HCa performed almost to state levels in mathematics, moving closer to its goal for “closing the gap” when measured against both urban and suburban performance. The total percentage of students achieving either advanced or proficient in mathematics were on par with the state, with a total of 69% combined and with HCa warning percentages lower than the state. In both 2005 and 2007, HCa outperformed BPS averages on all levels, although – similar to ELA MCAS results – MCAS mathematics scores dropped in 2006 below both state and BPS results.

2. There are other external measures that indicate that HCa is meeting its long-term goals for continued academic improvement.

Mid-year and end-of-year results of BPS tests

HCa participates in the BPS mid-year and year-end exams administered in all subject areas, except for world language. The results of these tests are analyzed by the BPS and sent to HCa. HCa relies on the BPS mid-term and end-of-year assessments to track interim progress of their students and to compare performance to other Boston schools.

HCa students are tested in English, in both US and world history, in physics, biology, chemistry, algebra, geometry and in advanced algebra. World language teachers at HCa design their own mid-term and year-end tests. Except in algebra 1 and geometry, HCa students have almost consistently outperformed other BPS district schools in both the percentage of students passing and the overall average scores in all other subject areas. In the Spring, staff carefully analyze this data and identify strengths, areas of struggle and of weakness in every content area. They use these results to inform instruction for the following year.

SAT Performance for class of 2006 and 2007

HCa's accountability plan lists several goals that refer to SAT performance. The goals are as follows:

By the end of year five (June 2008), 100% of HCa students graduates will have participated in an SAT preparation course.

The average combined verbal/critical reading and math SAT score for HCa grade 12 students will increase each year.

By the end of year five (June 2008), 90% of HCa students will have participated in an SAT preparation course.

This is the second year that students have taken the SATs that include a writing component. HCa students have increased their total SAT scores by 122 points. Although HCa has continued to improve yearly on SAT results and meet their charter goals with this metric HCa staff have expressed ongoing concern that HCa student SAT results do not reflect the same competitive results as the MCAS and BPS testing results. Student rates of acceptance to four-year colleges have risen only slightly since 2003. Entrance to these institutions relies, among other qualifications, on strong SAT performance. HCa is focused on adding more student opportunities for honors and AP classes, as well as increasing general rigor and expectations in all classes to increase SAT performance. Please note the following charts regarding recent SAT performance.

Health Careers Academy SAT Scores by Graduating Class

	Class of 2006	Class of 2007	Improvement (% points)
Critical Reading	387	427	40
Mathematics	369	422	53
Writing	400	428	28
Combined Score	1,156	1,277	121

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

HCa has consistently met AYP and NCLB proficiency goals in both ELA and mathematics for every year and for every available subgroup since the system was established. Even with the decline in MCAS scores in 2006, HCa still met its AYP requirements for that year.

State Competency Determination

According to the HCa 2006-07 Annual Report, HCa has maintained a high competency determination rate for all grade 12 students from 2003 through 2007 – a determination in both mathematics and English required by the DOE for graduation. The competency determination rate of 100% for 2007 has surpassed HCa goals of 97% and the BPS goal of 86% set for June 2007.

Local and State Graduation Rates

Graduation rates for classes during the 2003 to 2007 cycle have remained well above BPS averages, and the school has been recognized for this. In 2006, HCa's graduation rate was 100% - as compared to the state's graduation rate of 79.9% and Boston Public School's graduation rate of 59.1% that same year. Of the 2007 graduates, 100% are attending higher education institutions, up from 90% in 2006. HCa continues to fulfill its mission of college preparation and high student acceptance rates.

- 3. HCa uses some internal measurements to document student academic progress and has generally met its yearly academic achievement goals in these areas as identified in the 2003 -2008 accountability plan.**

Scholastic Reading Inventory and Measured Progress Tests

HCa has administered the Scholastic Reading Inventory since 1999 to incoming ninth grade students to obtain a reading lexile for each student. From this information, students have been placed in the BoysTown Reading Support Program, as needed, until they reach the lexile goal of 975. This summer, there were only two students needing additional summer support to reach this goal. Starting this year (2007-08), the headmaster has decided to participate in the BPS testing used by other Boston schools. Using the measured progress test in both mathematics and ELA, incoming students are tested. The school has not yet analyzed these recent test results.

Cumulative Grade Point Averages (GPA)

An HCa goal was to have at least 75% of students in grades 10 through 12 reach a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher. By March of 2007, 76% of grade 10 students, 71% of grade 11 students and 75% of grade 12 students had a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or greater. At an average of 73%, HCa is just short of its accountability plan goal of 75% with another year ahead in which to reach its goal.

Unit Quizzes and Tests

HCa teachers give their own unit quizzes and tests, but there are no hard data showing these results or how they are used to improve instruction. HCa does not have benchmark testing to measure ongoing student performance, other than BPS mid-year exams, to track individual and collective student progress in any area. Starting this year, they have begun to look at student work as a means to address the need for interim data on student progress.

4. The HCa clearly understands the power of embedding health careers information into major subjects and in the development of curriculum to remain consistent with its goal for exploring careers in the health professions.

Health Careers Academy successfully uses the BPS curriculum guides based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks to drive its curriculum. The HCa has embedded exposure to different health services into the curriculum and instructional practice to support the HCa mission. Over the years, it has created opportunities for students to become involved at a personal level in many health care professions. Students are matched with internships and enrichment opportunities during the school year and, in particular, during the summer months in fields of their interest. They job shadow professionals during the year and visit nearby health care facilities, such as Brigham and Women's Hospital, the Forsythe Dental Clinic, Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) and the nursing programs at Northeastern University (NU), Bunker Hill Community College and other health care institutions. Wednesdays at HCa have become "Dress for Success" days, when students dress in professional attire to remind themselves of their future goals of becoming professionals.

Using a curriculum developed by the Boston Private Industry Council (PIC), HCa has developed required junior and senior seminars, in which students are trained in expectations for college and real-life work experiences. The junior seminar focuses on how to write a resume, how to interview, how to dress for success and other ways to learn how to operate with success in real world situations. During the senior seminar, students are guided through the college application process with teacher support throughout. These seminars are co-taught by the school's academic and clinical counselor, the school guidance counselor and a representative from the Private Industry Council (PIC). Both the school guidance counselor and the academic and clinical counselor give high praise for their involvement. They jointly acclaim, "Now that we are in the classroom, it is easier to deal with students as a whole, and we have better communications with other teachers." In discussions with partners and other outside providers, there was high praise for the unusual confidence and poise that HCa students exhibited in their job shadowing and internship and volunteering roles due to this special training. Student alumni expressed how they

would not have been able to get into college without the guidance and training from these unique high school classes.

One of the most effective programs for introducing students to all aspects of different health and science careers has been the Health Careers Engagement Program. A full-time health engagement coordinator was hired in 2005 under a three-year grant. According to the health careers engagement overview, through this program, “students are able to learn firsthand from health care professionals ... and to determine from there what colleges are best suited for them to accomplish their goals.” The coordinator has been able to systematize the inclusion of speakers, field site visits, job-shadowing experiences, internships and enrichment opportunities in the health fields for all students. Students are presented with several speakers from different health care professionals (15 speakers for students in grades 9 and 10 in 2006-07). In addition, grade 9 students had four site visits to health care programs and 20 students in grade 10 visited six different health sites (i.e., Harvard Public School of Health, Children’s Hospital, Massachusetts General Hospital, Pathways to Wellness, and Tufts University of Veterinary Medicines to name just a few).

Although there has been high acclaim for these experiences by staff, students, parents and the health care services themselves, the impact of these student opportunities on heightening student knowledge and awareness of health care career opportunities has not been formally measured. HCa relies primarily on anecdotal reports to affirm the effectiveness of these experiences in leading students successfully toward health care professions. The health engagement coordinator plans to document this impact by using a new evaluation tool created specifically for student self-reflection and feedback. The coordinator has also designed a tool for post-activity evaluation/reflection for partner organizations offering these opportunities to students to ensure the organizations’ commitment to this continued outreach to the school. As the program enters its second year, the Health Engagement Project has met most of its initial goals and has strong support from faculty, students and the school community at large. Out of the 2007 graduating class, 64% of the students (27 out of 42) intended to pursue higher education related to health professions.

5. Expectations for how teachers will improve their instructional practice are emerging, moving from informal ways of communicating to more systematic plans, especially through the “collab” structure.

Both leadership and other staff members extol the close relationship, camaraderie and the ongoing informal collaboration among faculty to improve instructional practice and work toward the HCa goal of academic rigor and high expectations. Because of the informality of this process, there remains a lack of oversight to ensure consistency in practice and methodology in the classrooms. To address the need for more systematic ways to address the issue of expectations for improvements in instructional practice, leadership has created two teacher-leader positions to support curriculum and instruction and supervision. One is the position of assistant headmaster, who, among other administrative duties, facilitates curriculum and instruction collab (department) meetings for the mathematics, science and technology departments, as well as serving as a mentor and coach for new teachers. The other is a director of curriculum and

instruction, who facilitates collabs in ELA, history and world languages. She, too, oversees the mentoring and coaching of teachers in these departments. Both these new teacher-leaders are enrolled in educational leadership training, CAGS programs at Simmons and are working in an intern capacity as they fill these much needed leadership roles.

Although departments met in collabs in previous years, this is the first year that there are administrative facilitators to guide the process. These new leaders set agendas for collab meetings and keep minutes of progress and changes regarding curriculum and instruction. They e-mail these minutes to the headmaster to keep her abreast of actions and discussions during these meetings.

Special education staff members are included for the first time in the collab meetings this year. In focus groups, staff members commented on the power of this design in increasing the opportunities for true collaboration and sharing regarding instructional practices to best serve the needs of the special education population, as well as other students struggling in some areas. There is now more consistency of academic support, materials and content because of this additional forum for planning and discussion.

The technology teacher has expressed enthusiasm, in particular, for the collab meetings. She stated that this new opportunity for teacher communication and sharing is already showing some positive results. She has been more able to use actual content from different disciplines as she teaches students to use technology as a tool for learning. Students seem more interested in learning technology skills when simultaneously working on projects and assignments for other classes.

6. Lesson plan templates require teachers to write an agenda or list of activities that they are planning, rather than to focus on teaching strategies or methods for achieving their student learning objectives.

HCA teachers are required to use standard HCA lesson plan templates for designing both weekly and daily lesson plans. The team noted that, although teachers are conscientious in developing these plans and keeping them in teacher binders, the templates fall short of supporting documentation of special attention to common instructional goals and practices (that is, differentiation of instruction, using special education strategies, using Looking At Student Work [LASW] to inform instruction) that are the focus at HCA for instructional improvement. The templates do not label a place to note specific plans for instructional strategies and they provide little feedback to supervisors as to what is happening in the classrooms to ensure high expectations, rigor and strong instructional practice.

The review team noted that teachers list activities such as “Do Nows,” page numbers, assignments and the like, rather than strategies used to achieve learning objectives. Some instructional strategies, such as differentiated instruction methods, were seen documented in the beginning of the year’s syllabi in the teacher binders, but were not seen described in either the weekly or daily lesson plans. There was no way for supervisors or observers, by reviewing such plans, to ensure that teachers were planning to use differentiation, group and inquiry practices, higher-order thinking strategies or the other best practices on a consistent basis.

During the review visit, the team, using a standards-based classroom visit tool, observed 19 classrooms, looking for consistent instructional practices as described by the headmaster. All teachers were expected to have available their teacher binder, which included the syllabus for the year, and both weekly and daily lesson plans. Objectives were to be posted, as well as “Do Nows” – a consistent practice described by a teacher in a focus group as, “getting the brain” ready for learning. During classroom visits, all teachers had binders to share with observers. Out of 19 classes, 14 had objectives clearly posted with accompanied “Do Nows” and agendas for the class. Objectives were explained verbally, as well, in 13 of these classes to ensure student understanding of the day’s lesson. Even though there was occasional off-task talk and behavior, behavioral expectations were high in all but two of the classes observed. Observers noted a strong rapport between teachers and students and respectful behavior among all. Observers documented that students were generally engaged at some level in all but two of the classes observed. Most of the classes were teacher-directed, with questioning as the primary mode of instruction. School-wide classroom expectations, as described by the headmaster, were seen in practice in most classrooms.

Teachers connected lessons to student experiences in 16 out of 19 classes and to previously-learned material in 18 out of 19 observations. Several teachers used the white/blackboard or visual and graphic organizers to support the lesson. There was evidence of group work in only 7 of the 19 classes, with most of the instruction teacher-directed and with students working individually at their seats. Although there was some evidence of differentiation of instruction, such as students working in small groups using different materials as they worked independently, such instances were noted in only 6 out of the 19 classes observed. There was some questioning and students’ responses eliciting higher-order thinking in 14 of the 19 classes recorded. Although observers saw pockets of strong instructional practices, there was not enough evidence to support the notion that there is a common practice of differentiation of instruction and consistency of critical thinking activities to support the school’s goal for more rigor in the classroom.

7. A common language for talking about instruction has not been clearly established throughout the school.

Three primary goals for the school listed in the five-year plan are to train all staff in SPED inclusion strategies and practices, to ensure differentiation of instruction and to look at student work (LASW) to inform and improve instruction. Although the headmaster and two teacher-leaders spoke of such goals using a common language and description, the review team did not consistently hear the same language in focus group discussions with teachers. In teacher focus groups, staff members were not able to describe these goals with the same clarity, confidence and consistency. Teachers are pleased that they are beginning to look at these instructional goals with more attention in collab meetings this year. Although there are pockets in which these practices are being implemented with skill, they were not seen as part of common practice in most classrooms observed. There have been no annual plans to ensure that there are consistent and measurable goals for achieving these more long-term goals. A more focused approach to collab meetings has begun to address these goals with more purpose and accountability, although benchmarks and timelines for measuring progress are not as yet established.

According to teachers, the inclusion of the special education teachers and the technology teacher in the collab meetings has already made a difference in working toward a common language for discussions of classroom instruction.

8. Teachers have access to individual student assessment data (MCAS, BPS Measured Progress, BPS mid-term exams) and are beginning to analyze data to drive improvement in instruction and identify gaps in student learning.

To address the need for a consistent practice for benchmarking student achievement and informing instruction, the school has begun some formal methods of using data. In May 2007, HCa had each content department thoroughly analyze mid-year and end-of-year test results from the BPS content area exams, and use MCAS and PSAT results to determine strengths and weaknesses in student achievement. They documented areas in which students showed mastery, areas in which they were struggling and areas in which they were weak. From these data, they identified areas of focus for the following year. They adjusted curriculum goals and pace. Each department then presented their findings to the rest of the staff. Leadership intends to increase this presentation to twice a year, in addition to the ongoing work that departments engage in during weekly collab meetings.

All students who fail grade 10 MCAS have Individual Student Success Plans (ISSP) developed for them. These plans clearly identify areas in which students will receive additional support and tutoring during the school day (some individually or in small groups with the learning specialist), in after-school tutoring sessions and as part of Saturday morning classes. These students continue to be enrolled in MCAS prep classes. Students continue on these plans until they successfully meet MCAS and graduation requirements.

Ongoing data analysis, facilitated by the assistant headmaster or the director of curriculum and instruction, has begun to become formalized in collab meetings. Looking at student work (LASW) to inform and improve instruction and consistency of rigor, to identify student needs and to assess program effectiveness has been a goal included in the 2002-08 plan for school-wide improvements in instruction. It is only this year, however, that it has actually been a planned focus with documented oversight during collab meetings. Although there are pockets of teachers who compare and use student work to improve instructional practice, there has been no plan to systematically use this practice to meet the goals of the plan, which determined that 90% of teachers will be doing this by the year 2008. There was a general training of several staff members about five years ago through the University of Massachusetts in Boston, but no follow-through to ensure that staff was using the practice. At present, only five staff members are trained to be able to train others in LASW. The goal of the collab facilitators is to train all staff in using data and, using rubrics, looking at student work. For example, in the mathematics and technology collab, there has been a focus on LASW, where two out of three teachers have already presented examples of student performance. Together, the collab members dissected and analyzed the work, giving ideas and feedback to the presenter. Teachers describe that this is creating an excellent model for collaboration and for using data to inform instruction.

A goal of leadership was to have each teacher keep portfolios of significant student work to examine and share with each other, with parents at conferences and with students themselves.

This goal is also included in the five-year plan, which states that, "...90% of teachers will create and maintain student portfolios." Student work is collected in portfolios in several classrooms but, due to space issues for storing these materials – particularly for those teachers who did not have their own classroom or who have to travel to science labs across campus – this is not currently a priority focus. This practice, as yet, has not become one that will measurably affect improvement and rigor of instructional practice.

RENEWAL QUESTION 2: IS THE SCHOOL A VIABLE ORGANIZATION?

1. School leadership demonstrates strength in identifying talents, interests of staff and creating new opportunities for leadership that support program development and leadership continuity.

Presently, HCa has an executive director who has been a leader in the school since its inception. He is held in most high esteem by all stakeholders for his deep commitment and creative work in helping to strengthen and develop HCa. The present headmaster has provided leadership at the school for seven years and has been instrumental in bringing in resources and exciting the stakeholders in the school to higher standards and expectations. The coordinator of planning and development is also a founding member of the school who has also been a consistent and strong force for bringing resources, programs and funding into the school.

In addition to the strength of school leadership in ensuring school success, the Board of Trustees has developed a plan for succession to ensure that the present standard of highly respected leadership is continued at the school. The Health Careers Academy has had an evolving history of leadership development. It began with a program director, who also served in a headmaster role, but without such title, when the school first became a Horace Mann Charter School. It also had a coordinator of planning and development who oversaw grant writing and program development. In 2001, this director became the headmaster. The director then selected an assistant headmaster to assist with evaluation and instruction. In 2006, and for this year only, the headmaster and assistant headmaster became co-headmasters. At the end of the school year, in 2007, the Board voted to make the senior co-headmaster the executive director of the school, with a clearly-defined role in managing and overseeing programs and development. The other co-headmaster is now headmaster of the school, with a primary role in overseeing curriculum and instruction, supervision and evaluation.

To fill their need for stronger leadership oversight in curriculum and instruction, the headmaster promoted two teachers to teacher-administrative roles – one as assistant headmaster and one as director of curriculum and instruction – a most powerful example of staff advancement. Both are enrolled in CAGS educational leadership courses at Simmons and are able to work in leadership intern roles while acting in influential administrative positions.

Each of these teacher-leaders has responsibilities for facilitating collab meetings and for serving as mentors and coaches of new teachers to support the attainment of Charter goals. Both are well-trained in differentiation of instruction and are required to teach 1 – 2 classes per day to model for other teachers. Neither have supervisory or evaluative responsibility, although they accompany the headmaster during informal evaluations.

Through a grant, HCa hired a full-time health engagement coordinator, who develops and oversees the schools and students involvement with health care professions.

Leadership at all levels has clearly communicated the mission and goals to all constituents and to the community at large. When speaking about the mission that all students attend college, the headmaster stated that she would like the conversation to change from, “Are you going to college?” to, “What college are you going to?”

The school updates both teacher and student handbooks yearly to include focus on mission, and all policies, expectations and the code of conduct are reviewed by faculty, parents and students. Parents and students sign an agreement to abide by the expectations.

2. HCa has developed strong partnerships with mutual commitments with higher education and health care organizations that are extensive and will support its long-term success.

Due to the persistence of leadership and the Board of Trustees, a memorandum of agreement has been signed between HCa and the Boston Public Schools for the continued support of the HCa charter and the mutual exchange of resources and best practices. A similar agreement between Northeastern University (NU) to continue to share its facilities and supports with HCa is close to signing. In focus groups with the BPS, NU and other external partners, participants expressed a deep commitment to HCa and its strong belief in its mission to positively effect academic achievement of urban students and their opportunities for higher education, particularly in the health career fields.

By hiring a full-time health engagement coordinator, the school has a liaison with the several partnerships and health organizations to ensure their continued involvement with HCa students and students' involvement with them. As one of the NU partners, with consensual agreement of his peers, stated, "Keep the position of health engagement coordinator. It makes such a difference in expanding and sustaining the relationship between external partners and HCa."

HCa has become a place where NU interns are trained in the classroom by HCa practiced personnel. It has offered professional development opportunities to these students and to other teachers in the BPS. Several staff members present yearly at conferences throughout the region (5 presenters in 2006-07) to share best practices and to hone their own skills as teachers.

3. While the team believes all significant issues are currently being addressed at some level within the school, administrative systems that can support reflective leadership practices and the capacity to prioritize initiatives so that consistent excellence in teaching practice can be achieved are just being developed.

Administrators do not have a formal meeting time embedded in the yearly schedule to ensure consistent ongoing planning, decision-making and instructional oversight. The executive director and headmaster meet frequently to discuss school issues informally, but there is no planned meeting time to ensure this happens to provide consistent oversight in all areas. In addition, the assistant headmaster and director of curriculum and instruction have no formal and consistent meeting time with the headmaster to discuss and set instructional priorities and to assess progress toward instructional goals. Again, such meetings – when they happen – are generally informal and, at times, in response to questions or comments from the headmaster in reference to minutes from the collab meetings. Much of the day-by-day and long-term planning and decision making is in the "heads" of the personnel involved is not formalized so new personnel could carry on with the same level of effectiveness.

The teacher-leaders, the HCa assistant headmaster and director of curriculum do not have a regularly scheduled system for planning together and holding each other accountable for professional development and staff training that is aligned to school goals. There is no formal meeting time to plan and compare agenda focus for their collab meetings. Although they e-mail the minutes of their respective collab meetings to the headmaster, they do not share these with each other. Other than informal conversations, which do happen frequently, there are no formalized expectations that they collaborate on the training and direction they give their departments. In addition, there is no supervisory and administrative oversight to ensure that teachers are carrying out decisions or initiatives decided upon in the collab meetings. The facilitators, as members of the teacher contract, cannot provide this oversight in any evaluative mode.

There are set times built into the schedule where such oversight could be more formalized and consistent. Time is set aside every Wednesday from 2:00 -4:00 PM for grade-level and staff meetings and ongoing professional development. Since the beginning of this school year, staff has engaged in a range of activities during these times. One of the primary focuses for discussion is on the special education inclusion model newly started this year. Time has been used to review teacher self-reflections to focus especially on professional development needs for the year.

This time is also used for once-a-month grade-level meetings – reflecting an increase from quarterly meetings last year – with informal agendas set by grade-level staff. Common planning time during the school day is not an option at present, due to the small number of staff members in a discipline or grade level at HCa. Other time is taken for general administrative issues and information. During this time, teachers are encouraged to attend seminars, workshops and other professional development offered by BPS that meet their needs. The headmaster is hoping that more teachers will avail themselves of BPS extensive professional development offerings and participate in an exchange of best practices between HCa and the BPS. Although agendas are developed for this staff development time, there are no minutes kept. At this time, there are no action plans with benchmarks and timelines for accomplishments.

Another example of a highly effective program – but without a clear set of roles and responsibilities in place – is the pairing of the guidance counselor with the academic and clinical counselor to provide surround-care for students. Each of the two leaders divides up the students to have general responsibility for the guidance and support of half the student body at a time. In addition to this role, they co-teach the junior and senior seminars with a Private Industry Council (PIC) representative each week. The roles for handling this teaching responsibility, the guidance of students, crisis intervention and interface with teachers and parents are “in the minds” of the experienced personnel at present. During a meeting with these personnel, there was an expressed wish for a more formal curriculum or role description to make these clear to future personnel and ensure continuity of this important program.

The headmaster, along with collab leaders, has begun a process of conducting informal observations for all staff with timely written feedback. After completing this process by the end of November, the headmaster plans to complete another cycle of observations for the following term. The headmaster uses information from teacher self-reflections collected in the Spring

to focus on issues raised by teachers themselves. On these self-reflection forms, teachers respond in writing to a comprehensive set of questions that touch on all aspects of their instructional practice and professional development goals for improvement. The headmaster reviews these and meets individually with teachers to discuss them. They are a tool for leadership to guide both these informal evaluations and later summative evaluations.

This form of informal supervision is ambitious, but the effectiveness of it in changing instruction for some teachers is questionable. The feedback from the headmaster, at present, is in the form of suggestions and questions (i.e., “Have you thought about doing it this way?”), instead of clear expectations for changes in practice in specific areas. The teacher must respond to the headmaster in writing after an observation and meet with the respective collab leader for discussion of the observation. Even though this process is thoughtful and involving, it becomes up to teacher discretion as to whether areas suggested are addressed. There is no system of accountability that ensures that certain areas of weaknesses are addressed in a timely manner.

Another way designed by leadership to encourage teachers to expand on their instructional practices is to engage in peer observations. Leadership provides a “cluster substitute,” assigned full-time by the BPS to HCa to cover any classes needed within the school. At a teacher’s request, the substitute will cover the class while the teacher visits a peer’s classroom. At times, after an informal observation, a collab leader may suggest that a teacher visit a peer to observe a particular practice. Although there have been some instances where this has happened, it is entirely voluntary for staff to engage in this practice. Collab leaders have no evaluative role to require such a visit.

Using the BPS process for summative, end-of-year evaluations, administrators evaluate teachers. HCa extends the evaluation process by implementing interim evaluations for new staff and informal evaluations, such as those described above. Administration effectively uses feedback from classroom walk-throughs and informal observations to support summative yearly evaluations for all staff. In reviewing samples of teacher evaluations, the review team noted references to informal observations to support evaluation recommendations. The evaluations are lengthy and detailed and give specific suggestions for instructional improvement and professional expectations. However, despite strong summative evaluation practices, when written feedback following informal observations during the year fails to make expectations clear for how and when needed instructional improvements will be made, supervision and evaluation altogether have not resulted in consistent school-wide excellence in teaching practice.

4. HCa is working towards establishing an effective inclusion model. Students who receive special education services receive the majority of their instruction in inclusion classes; however, clear guidelines are not yet in place to define what inclusion looks like at HCa.

The school’s strategic plan states that all students will be serviced in an inclusion setting by 2007. Students are receiving the majority of their instruction in inclusion classes, but there are no written plans for benchmarks with timelines for measuring the impact of inclusion on student

achievement. Also, models for co-teaching relationships – special education teachers with classroom teachers – were not being discussed.

When several learning-disabled students from a substantially separate class were placed at HCa, a learning specialist, a special education teacher and a paraprofessional trained in moderate disabilities were added to the teaching staff. This student cohort placement gave impetus for the school to decide to train all staff in dual certification – both SPED and regular education – to address the needs of these students, as well as to better differentiate instruction for all students. The learning specialist provides one-on-one instruction and small group support to identified students, in addition to overseeing and assisting with general delivery of instruction by SPED staff.

This year, all special education students are included in general curriculum and instruction. Although it has been difficult, as teachers stated, for SPED staff “to let go” of the charge of special education service delivery, special education personnel expressed the positive effect of being in an inclusion model and part of collab meetings and discussions. They described the positive ways in which it has begun to impact their delivery of instruction. They have a much clearer picture of the curriculum and teaching goals in the classes of their students. They are more able to use the same materials as regular education students while working individually with their students. They can plan and share instructional practices with more frequency and ease with their peers. SPED students are paired with more typical peers and the stigma of difference and separation is fading. Special education and regular education students participate in summer enrichment together with further melding of differences of academic strengths.

During classroom observations, review team members were not able to see evidence of the modifications and accommodations that teachers stated are being made for students. While, in one classroom observed, one teacher conducted a very teacher-directed lesson with all students, two other staff members were, for the most part, just listening and observing. There was no evidence that there was a planned way for support teachers to intervene and to give extra support to struggling students. In at least one classroom, desks were packed so tightly together in the small classroom that there was no room for a second teacher to circulate to help individual students. In 16 out of 19 classroom observations, team observers saw no evidence of differentiation of instruction for any students for using content, instructional methodology or work products that indicated any difference. The school recognizes that they have not as yet established clear guidelines for the most effective inclusion model for the school and are working toward this.

5. In order to increase rigor in the academic program, HCa is looking for ways to develop a common understanding of what rigor means and what the implications are for increasing rigor in curriculum, instruction and program development.

Rigor in classroom instruction has been a focus for the present five-year plan and continues as a focus of the new five-year plan. There is attention in collab discussions to defining what “rigor” in classroom expectations and practice means and what it looks like in classrooms. As LASW becomes more common practice, this, too, will be used to increase expectations and academic

rigor in all disciplines. There is school-wide focus on improving writing, with everyone using the same grammar book, so expectations for writing will be more consistent in all disciplines. When asked about rigor in focus groups, staff members and HCa partners spoke about “closing the gap” when discussing academic performance. They explained that this meant that HCa students would attain levels comparable to those of exam schools and high-performing suburban schools in MCAS and SAT scores. Recently, the whole staff visited Boston Latin to see what rigor looked like in their classrooms.

HCa has been concerned that PSAT and SAT scores do not reflect the same level of student academic achievement as do the MCAS and BPS assessments. The school is struggling to find out why there is such a discrepancy in achievement in this area, relative to the higher-performing Boston schools. Besides attempting to address rigor in the classroom, the headmaster is considering providing students with more accessibility to SAT prep courses, by using the same model as MCAS prep classes that are offered after school two days a week.

To get a better picture of what academic rigor should look like in classrooms instruction, in September of this year, leadership invited a team from the Urban Superintendent Program at Harvard to look at instructional practices at HCa and to give feedback. The Harvard program focuses on small schools and learning communities. The feedback from the group highlighted some examples of what they considered rigorous practice in a classroom (i.e., examples of differentiated instruction and some attention to higher-order thinking through effective questioning). Their feedback included questions as to how these practices are described by the HCa staff and should look like in practice in all classrooms. The review team looked at similar areas for evidence of school-wide expectations in these areas – areas that they found still need to be addressed in a more systematic way.

Another plan to increase academic rigor at HCa is to increase the number of AP and honors classes available to students. Because of the small number of staff, both at grade levels and in content areas, it is difficult for HCa to provide these courses itself. To address this need, HCa hopes to make the class for native Spanish speakers into an AP class in Spanish. In addition, the school is looking at Wentworth, Northeastern and the University of Massachusetts in Boston to offer pre-college courses to a select number of HCa students to increase the rigor of their learning. The school has introduced a Virtual High School through distance learning to offer course work for its top performing students.

The headmaster encourages teachers to train NU interns, which helps them to raise expectations and rigor in their classrooms as they teach these future teachers. To increase rigor in science, HCa has invited two NU graduate students to support the science program by bringing a strong content piece and, at times, by actually teaching a class. A senior science teacher is in charge of overseeing these internships.

Another goal for measuring progress toward more academic rigor is to increase the number of students eligible for Adams scholarships, which pay full tuition to a state college or university. The school has increased the number of students who are eligible for the Adams scholarship for each of the past two years. There were three students selected for this scholarship in 2007, up from two the previous year.

The review team found multiple evidence that HCa is truly looking at a wide range of ways to define and increase academic rigor in classroom instruction.

6. The Health Careers Academy is a safe school for all students and adults physically, socially and emotionally.

The review team found evidence of a powerful sense of community, support and safety among all constituents at the school. Within this, HCa personnel have created a strong culture for learning that impacts both faculty and students alike. During focus groups discussions with alumni and present student population, all students described experiencing a sense of security and safety as they went through HCa. They did not feel harassed or bullied and they stated that teachers were “on top of any issues.” Students stated that they could turn to any adult for help. They described a gradual development of inner self-confidence and strength that they felt was hard to come by in other school settings. They learned quickly not to be embarrassed to ask questions and to turn to others – both adults and peers – for help in areas of concern. Students said that adults really took care to get to know them, support them and give them ongoing respect.

Parents expressed strong support for the school on all levels. Several felt that their students would not have met the same success in other BPS situations. They expressed pride in their children’s goal for college and continuing education. They expressed gratitude for the intensity of the caring and support their students receive from all staff at the HCa.

Parent participation in school events – conferences, Open House, the Science Fair, the Jazz Festival – has continued to meet most of the goals of the five-year plan. Their participation is tracked by attendance at such events. Parents are kept abreast of news and events through weekly e-mails. They receive mid-term reports, as well as four report cards a year. Teachers frequently call parents concerning their children’s progress and encourage parents to call them if there are any concerns and issues. Communication channels are strong and consistent in this area.

Teachers expressed strong camaraderie and support among each other. Through collab experiences, they said they are more forthcoming with each other in asking for help in some areas of instruction and are becoming more open to sharing and examining each other’s best practices.

RENEWAL QUESTION 3: IS THE SCHOOL FAITHFUL TO THE TERMS OF THE CHARTER?

1. There was overwhelming evidence that the mission of Health Career Academy drives all aspects of its operation and that all stakeholders understand, support and promote the school mission.

The HCa mission statement is as follows: *HCa is a college preparatory high school for students exploring careers in the health professions. The Academy provides a supportive environment that promotes respect and embraces diversity. Students will attain the life skills needed to become productive and positive members of society.* There was wide agreement that, within this mission, there is an additional interest in expanding opportunities for people of color to pursue careers in the health services.

There is a strong culture of learning and excitement at HCa, where both HCa leadership and staff work tirelessly to provide a strong academic college-oriented program and to acculturate students through a broad range of experiences into the world of health care services. In all interviews with leadership, staff members, Board of Trustees, partnerships, parents, alumni and students, there was consistent discussion of the how well students were being prepared for college and general life experiences particularly focused on health career fields. In examining the programs in place and the attention to instructional practice, the team found ongoing evidence that the school's mission was the driving force behind all actions.

All students are required to take and pass four years of core subjects. The comprehensive academic program, which includes AP and honors courses, is expanded by both in-school and after-school tutoring programs to support struggling students. In addition, students are offered a range of extracurricular activities (weekly group advisory session, intramural sport teams and chess, to name a few) to support and enhance students' talents and interests.

The Board of Trustees worked extensively in designing an agreement between BPS, called a memorandum of understanding, to ensure that BPS will continue the supports in terms of finances, professional development opportunities and the continual exchange of best practices among its school. This document was recently signed by both HCa and representatives of the BPS.

In addition to this written agreement with the BPS, HCa has sought a similar written commitment with NU to continue and strengthen its relationship. NU intends to continue to provide space on its campus for HCa and to share its labs and other resources. It intends to supply interns to train at HCa and send student observers and tutors. The agreement was close to being signed when NU hired a new president. NU partners express the president's deep commitment to supporting the HCA program and all parties believe that a signed agreement between NU and HCa is close at hand.

The hiring of a full-time health engagement coordinator clearly underscores HCa's commitment to its charter mission to channel students into the health care fields and to prepare them for the academic demands and life skills necessary for reaching professional goals.

HCa applications for student enrollment further support its mission by requesting essays and statements concerning interest in pursuing college and, in particular, interest in health careers. In discussions by both alumni and present students, all students praised the strong message that they receive to pursue higher education and the exposure to continual information and opportunities to understand the health profession choices available.

2. HCa has continued to surpass other BPS schools in most MCAS assessments in mathematics and ELA and has almost continually met its goals for ongoing improvement in this area.

Except for one year, in 2006 (when a disproportionately large SPED cohort with a background of substantially separate programming took the test), HCa has continually met its goals for improvement in MCAS performance in both mathematics and ELA for every other year of its charter renewal. The percentage of students reaching advanced and proficient levels in ELA has grown from 44% to 60% from 2003 to 2007. Warning rates have decreased from 11% to 0% during the same time period. In mathematics, 69% of students scored in advanced and proficient in 2007, up from 18% in 2003. The warning rate in mathematics for those years decreased from 38% to 2% for 2007. This year, more than one fourth of 10th grade students (27%) achieved the advanced level in mathematics. Also, in mathematics in 2007, HCa students were on a par with the state MCAS performance levels and above BPS performance levels. It has met its goals in this area.

HCa had a goal that 90% of grade 12 students would meet local graduation requirement by 2008. They have already surpassed this goal, with 98% of this year's seniors meeting both state and local requirements for graduation. The school has been recognized yearly for meeting competency requirements for graduation for all its students. HCa has performed above the average of Boston Public Schools in both the mid-year and end-of-year BPS exams in both English and mathematics. HCa has surpassed its goal of 90% of its students passing their health science course, with 97% passing for the 2006-07 school year. It has met its goal of increasing SAT scores each year, achieving a total score of 1247 for 2007. Although the goal for student enrollment in advanced placement or honors courses each year was for 30%, more than 45% of all students in grades 10-12 are presently enrolled in these courses. HCa has been consistent in meeting most of its goals for academic achievement and have still one more year to increase academic performance at an even higher level.

3. HCa has developed several means of disseminating the school's best practices and intends to serve as a future model for other urban schools.

The HCa has a growing reputation throughout Boston, and applications for enrollment are increasing yearly. The BPS department has high praise for the professionalism of the HCa staff and their willingness to share best practices at conferences and seminars. HCa teachers have been sought by the BPS to mentor new teachers and provide workshops for other Boston Horace Mann Schools, for Boston Public School teachers and at charter school conferences. HCa ensures that staff members present yearly at conferences to share best practices and highlights of its effective program. HCa is, in effect, a lab school for NU, providing numerous opportunities for

classroom observation and training of teacher interns. HCa has an open door policy and encourages interested parties to observe at any time. Recent visitors, who are exploring the option of creating small schools to improve student achievement, have come from all over the country and from different parts of the world to see HCa in action. The school continues to send students to job fairs and college fairs. HCa runs annual fund-raising events, such as the Jazz Festival and the Science Fair, to ensure attention to the school and secure ongoing funding. Each Spring, HCa disseminates their professionally-designed flyers, along with applications, to all middle school students. Several university and health care partners stated that HCa is a unique model for other urban schools.

RENEWAL QUESTION 4: IF THE SCHOOL'S CHARTER IS RENEWED, WHAT ARE ITS PLANS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

1. The Proposal for Charter Renewal has included some goals that intend to increase the rigor of classroom instruction and to ensure the continued growth toward college acceptance in four year colleges and student pursuit of health career professions.

The Proposal for Charter Renewal includes some similar goals to the previous charter with some minimum changes in percentages of gains in some areas. Yet, the review team found HCa's proposed accountability plan to be less comprehensive and more reserved in setting specific goals for increasing academic rigor and growth than the former plan. The HCa charter renewal committee acknowledges within this accountability plan that, "Beyond specific goals and objectives, we hope and expect that this new round of planning will also yield action steps, timelines, and person(s) responsible." The review team interprets this to mean that HCa is aware that these action steps with accompanied timelines were not documented in previous plans and will be addressed in some way during this next cycle.

The first goal in the next five-year cycle is to *1. Provide a Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum across All Major subjects.*" The majority of the objectives under this goal are the same as in the previous cycle. HCa has added additional grade point achievement objectives for history, world language and health sciences, stating that 60% of HCa students will earn a grade of B or better in all these subjects by 2013. In this new plan, there is no mention of MCAS goals for either raising or sustaining achievement levels in the advanced or proficient levels in ELA and mathematics. There is no mention, as in the previous plan, of increasing SAT scores, although the performance level in this area and on the MCAS tests are of concern to the school.

The second major goal is to *2. Drive Teacher Instruction and Professional Development by Examining Student work and Assessment Data.* Objectives under this area are less comprehensive than in the previous charter. The new objective for the percentage of teachers' maintaining student assessment portfolios that contain evidence of formative assessments, tests and student work with rubrics, is 50% – down from 90%. Because of space difficulties (as mentioned earlier in this team review), teachers have difficulty storing portfolios of student work, so the previous objective had been unrealistic. Another objective under this goal is to increase the subject-level presentations that thoroughly examine assessment data to improve teacher instruction to twice a year. There are no other explicit objectives listed in this area regarding increased rigor in instructional practice, such as differentiation of instruction and the use of special education strategies that were more of a focus in the previous report. There are no common professional development goals listed for staff to clearly identify the areas in which the school needs training for more common practice. The review team considers this an area of concern if HCa is going to continue to meet the competitive requirements needed for students' achieving college acceptance over the next five years.

Other goals and objectives of the charter renewal plan are adequate to continue to drive the overall mission and focus of the school toward student college acceptance and pursuit of health career professions.

2. With the exception of constraints imposed by limited classroom space and size, HCa has the capacity to continue to grow in strength and reputation to achieve its future goals for continued success toward becoming a model school for urban students interested in the health career fields.

There are many factors that lead this review team to support this judgment. The school demonstrates strong capacity for achieving its new five-year goals and has demonstrated resilience and consistency in addressing new challenges every year. The school has changed leadership roles and positions and organizational structures as there was a need. For example, as the involvement with health care partners became more encompassing, a grant was written to hire a full-time health engagement coordinator to oversee and evaluate the effectiveness of these programs. When there was a recognized need to raise SAT scores and the rigor of classroom instruction, new leadership roles were created – an assistant headmaster and a director of curriculum and instruction. Just recently, there is a plan for the director of student services to track former students to document their retention rates in college and their pursuit of careers in the health fields. The Board of Trustees ensures that succession planning for leadership is in place.

Fiscal stability is still an ongoing issue for HCa (as with many charter schools) and Board of Trustee members expressed that they are operating without an adequate margin for unforeseen expenses. To partially address this risk, the HCa Board signed a memorandum of understanding with the BPS, so that HCa is assured of continued support as a charter of school, with full access to BPS resources and professional development. A similar agreement with NU, in which NU will ensure its commitment to renting space and providing other campus resources for the future, is almost to a signature point. The Board is looking for ways to increase its grant funding by expanding present fund-raising efforts and strengthening partnerships with prominent health care facilities in the area.

Health Careers Academy is looking for a new site as they consider expanding its student population to 300 and to ensure adequately-sized classrooms and gym facilities. HCa has been constrained in expanding some classroom practices (such as small group work and co-teaching arrangements) because of the close quarters in which they are forced at present to operate. There is discussion of the possibility of obtaining a larger site for the school on a parcel of land belonging to Northeastern University. NU plans to develop this parcel for its own use and is strongly considering dedicating some of the space to HCa. They want to continue their strong connection to HCa in this way, to ensure that urban students – particularly those of color – continue to enter NU and the health career professions at greater rates. The Board of Trustees is looking to ways to set aside a slush fund to keep ahead of ongoing and escalating expenses and to meet these future space needs. Although funding issues, such as these, are not fully addressed at this point, the review team supports that HCa is competently working with deep commitment to meet its fiscal needs.

Emerging development of systems for sustainability and oversight and accountability are in development, with positive response from leadership and faculty at HCa. The review team finds

that all these changes and interventions support well HCa's capacity for addressing any future challenges in its pursuit in developing and sustaining a model school for urban students.

APPENDIX A: SCHEDULE OF THE RENEWAL INSPECTION VISIT**Health Careers Academy Visit Dates: October 22-25, 2007****Monday, October 22, 2007**

Time	Team Member A	Team Member B	Team Member C	Team Member D
12:00-2:30	Initial Team Meeting with Lunch Kerr Hall - Back Room			
2:30-4:00	Discussion with HCa Executive Director and Headmaster Kerr Hall - Back Room			
4:00-5:00	Discussion of HCa Health Careers Engagement Activities Cahners – Room 100			
5:00-5:30	Team Meeting & Debrief Kerr Hall - Back Room			
5:30-7:00	Dinner with HCa Alumni Kerr Hall – Front Room			
7:00	Team Departure			

Tuesday, October 23, 2007

Time	Team Member A	Team Member B	Team Member C	Team Member D
7:30-8:00	Team arrival & preparation Kerr Hall Back Room			
8:00-9:36	Breakfast with Boston Public Schools Partners Kerr Hall – Front Room			
9:36-10:06	Class Observation	Class Observation	Class Observation	Class Observation
10:06-10:36	Class Observation	Class Observation	Class Observation	Class Observation
10:36-11:25	Discussion with HCa Faculty over Lunch English, History, World Language Kerr Hall – Front Room			
11:30-12:00	Class Observation	Class Observation	Document Review	Document Review
12:00-12:30	Document Review	Document Review	Class Observation	Class Observation
12:30-2:00	Team Lunch and Debrief Kerr Hall Back Room			
2:00-3:00	Discussion with HCa Student Support Team Kerr Hall – Front Room			
3:00-5:00	Team Debrief/Working Session Kerr Hall Back Room			
5:30-7:00	Dinner with HCa Parent Focus Group Kerr Hall – Front Room			

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Time	Team Member A	Team Member B	Team Member C	Team Member D
7:00-7:30	Team arrival & preparation Kerr Hall Back Room			
7:30-8:30	Discussion with Northeastern University Partners Over Breakfast Kerr Hall – Front Room			
8:30-9:00	Document Review	Class Observation	Class Observation	Document Review
9:00-9:30	Class Observation	Document Review	Document Review	Document Review
9:30-10:00	Class Observation	Document Review	Document Review	Class Observation
10:00-10:30	Document Review	Class Observation	Class Observation	Class Observation
10:30-11:45	Team Deliberation Session			
11:45-12:30	Discussion with HCa Students National Honor Society Advisory Cahners - Room 100		Discussion with HCa Students Multicultural Advisory Cahners - Room 101	
12:30-2:00	Lunch with External Partners Focus Group Kerr Hall – Front Room			
2:00-4:00	Team Deliberation Session			
4:00-5:00	Discussion of HCa Finances Kerr Hall – Back Room			
5:30-7:00	Dinner with HCa Board of Trustees Focus Group Kerr Hall - Front Room			

Thursday, October 25, 2007

Time	Team Member A	Team Member B	Team Member C	Team Member D
7:00-7:30	Team arrival & preparation Kerr Hall Back Room			
7:30-8:30	Discussion with HCa Curriculum Leadership Group Over Breakfast Kerr Hall – Front Room			
8:30-9:00	Class Observation	Class Observation	Class Observation	Class Observation
9:00-10:30	Discussion with HCa Guidance and Academic Support Staff Kerr Hall – Back Room			
10:36-11:25	Discussion with HCa Faculty Over Lunch Math, Science, Technology and Health with Angela Hedley Kerr Hall - Front Room			
11:30-12:30	Float	Float	Float	Float
12:30-3:00	Team Debrief Kerr Hall Back Room			
3:00-3:30	Follow up with HCa Leadership/Team Departure Kerr Hall Back Room			