

# **Renewal Inspection Report**

NEW LEADERSHIP  
CHARTER SCHOOL  
SPRINGFIELD, MA

**October 2 - 5, 2007**

New Leadership Charter School  
Renewal Inspection Report

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

New Leadership Charter School (New Leadership) opened in 1998 as a Horace Mann charter school in the Springfield school district and was granted a second five-year charter in 2003. The school currently enrolls 525 students in grades 6 through 12.

New Leadership's mission statement is as follows:

The mission of New Leadership Charter School is to develop young people in the sixth through twelfth grades morally, mentally and physically and to imbue them with the highest ideals of duty, honor and loyalty. Graduates will be academically prepared to attend the college or university of their choice. They will embody three cardinal principles of leadership: vision, integrity and compassion.

According to Department of Education (DOE) data for the 2006-2007 school year, New Leadership enrolled substantially higher percentages of African American/Black students and substantially lower percentages of White students than did Springfield or school districts statewide. New Leadership also enrolled a higher percentage of students categorized as Low Income in comparison with Springfield and a substantially higher percentage of students categorized as Low Income in comparison with school districts statewide. The percentages of New Leadership students categorized as First Language Not English, Limited English Proficient, and Special Education were lower than the comparable percentages of students enrolled by Springfield and by school districts statewide.

The New Leadership Board of Trustees currently has six members. According to the school's Application for Renewal, the Board has experienced very little turnover over the past four years.

Prior to 2001, New Leadership was located in a Springfield middle school and in a leased school building in West Springfield that was formerly a Catholic elementary school. Since 2001, the school has been located in Springfield at 180 Ashland Avenue in modular buildings leased by the City of Springfield from Western New England College; this facility is inadequate to meet the needs of the school. Under the Memorandum of Understanding between New Leadership and Springfield Public Schools, the latter is responsible for providing the school's facility. The Memorandum of Understanding states that construction by the City of a new facility for New Leadership is a priority of New Leadership and Springfield Public Schools.

In 2005, New Leadership was determined by the DOE to be an underperforming school and undertook a Performance Improvement Mapping process with the DOE. The process produced a School Improvement Plan (SIP) for 2005-2007. The DOE conducted a Year Nine Site Visit in May 2007 in order to assess progress made by the school in implementing the SIP, to corroborate and augment the information reported by the school in its *2005-2006 Annual Report*, and to collect information that would help the DOE Commissioner make a renewal recommendation for the school's charter.

New Leadership has not received DOE approval of an Accountability Plan, nor has the school tracked and reported on progress toward any Accountability Plan objectives in any of its annual reports, during the current charter period. Prior to the DOE year nine site visit in May 2007,

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New Leadership submitted to the DOE a draft Accountability Plan that had not been officially approved by the New Leadership Board of Trustees. As of October 2007, New Leadership continued to operate without an approved Accountability Plan, and the school's Application for Renewal did not report on any Accountability Plan objectives. The school's performance and progress relative to major issues identified in the DOE *Year Nine Site Visit Report* and to certain objectives identified in the SIP are discussed in the following report.

The Renewal Inspection Team (Team) spent four days on site at New Leadership Charter School (New Leadership) on October 2-5, 2007. The Team also obtained and reviewed New Leadership data and documents prior to the renewal site visit and on site.

**Renewal Question 1:  
Is the Academic Program A Success?**

**MCAS Results**

1. New Leadership has not met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements overall during the entire period from 2003 to 2007, although the school has shown improvement in the 2007 results. New Leadership met AYP requirements in the aggregate for both ELA and Mathematics in 2007; the school had previously met AYP requirements in the aggregate for both subjects only in 2005. In 2007, New Leadership met AYP requirements in ELA for all student subgroups for the first time during the current charter period. New Leadership did not meet AYP requirements for Mathematics for all subgroups in any year of the charter period.
2. The performance of New Leadership Grade 10 students on MCAS ELA exams improved consistently during the current charter period. The performance of Grade 7 students on MCAS ELA exams has been uneven with no clear trend, but showed a substantial improvement in 2007. However, large proportions of students, ranging from two-thirds in Grade 6 to one-half in Grade 10, did not demonstrate proficiency on these exams in 2007.
3. Over the five-year period from 2003 to 2007, the performance of New Leadership students on the MCAS ELA exam has been mixed in comparison with that of Springfield students, although in most instances smaller percentages of students scored in the Warning/Failing category, and New Leadership students performed substantially better than Springfield students in 2007. The performance of New Leadership students has been consistently and substantially weaker than that of students statewide.
4. The performance of New Leadership students on the MCAS Mathematics exams for Grades 6, 7, and 10 improved over the current charter period. Dramatic improvement on the MCAS Mathematics exam was shown by students in Grade 10. Scores on the Grade 8 MCAS Mathematics exam did not show a trend: the percentage of students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on the Grade 8 MCAS Mathematics exam was one percent in 2003 and again in 2007. Very high proportions of New Leadership students did not demonstrate proficiency on the 2007 MCAS Mathematics exams: 81 percent of sixth graders, 87 percent of seventh graders, 99 percent of eighth graders, and 63 percent of tenth graders did not score

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in the Proficient or Advanced category, and most seventh and eighth graders scored in the Warning category.

5. For most of the five-year period from 2003 to 2007, the performance of New Leadership students on the MCAS Mathematics exams trailed that of Springfield students. However, in 2007 higher percentages of New Leadership students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category than the comparable percentages of Springfield students in three grades (Grade 6, Grade 7, and Grade 10) of the four grades tested. The performance of New Leadership students on the MCAS Mathematics exams has consistently trailed the performance of students statewide by substantial margins.

### **Other Assessments**

6. In addition to MCAS, New Leadership administers the California Achievement Test to evaluate student competence relative to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks standards. The school also uses District Formative Assessments and a variety of other internal assessments of student progress.
7. Consistent with New Leadership's School Improvement Plan, the school is using data collection and analysis to identify student strengths and needs as well as to drive instruction. In addition, New Leadership has developed "essential standards," which represent a compilation of academic standards that New Leadership students have not mastered. The school uses these essential standards to assign students to flexible groups focusing on the identified areas of weakness.

### **Curriculum and Classroom Observations**

8. New Leadership has a fully developed curriculum that is aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The school continues to develop and modify its curriculum through curriculum committees and to take advantage of the extensive curriculum-related professional development opportunities offered by the Springfield Public Schools.
9. New Leadership's Special Education program is staffed and well organized. The school has a well-designed pre-referral process and a Student Teacher Assistance Team, and the school's Special Education students receive in-class support as well as pullout services when appropriate. The school has taken steps to identify students requiring Special Education services at New Leadership are provided by a full-time Special Education Director, six special educators (an increase of three from the 2006-2007 school year), and one school psychologist, assisted by a full-time secretary. One of the special educators also serves as the Evaluation Team Leader.
10. New Leadership's capacity to create an environment conducive to effective instruction and student learning is significantly impaired by the inadequate facility in which the school operates.

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11. All teaching at New Leadership is structured around the use of the Blackboard Configuration Model. Standards-based teaching is assessed weekly by the school's Academic Director and academic coordinators.
12. The quality of instruction by New Leadership teachers observed by the Team was generally high, although Team observed examples of weak and ineffective instruction. Learning goals and behavioral expectations were clearly communicated. For the most part, students appeared engaged in the learning process. The Team observed positive interactions between teachers and students indicating teachers' commitment to helping students reach high academic standards.
13. New Leadership classrooms observed by the Team were equipped with basic educational resources. The Team saw few instances of student use of technology in the classrooms. Classroom displays showcased student work as well as motivational posters and other information. The school facility was clean and adequately maintained, although the Team observed several broken or cracked windows.

**Renewal Question 2:  
Is the School a Viable Organization?**

1. New Leadership has had a negative net asset balance for past three fiscal years. The school's negative net asset balance increased from negative \$88,737 in fiscal year 2005 to negative \$428,818 in the 2006 fiscal year. The school's independent auditor noted uncertainty about New Leadership's ability to continue as a going concern in the fiscal year 2006 audit report. The school projects a surplus for fiscal year 2007, which would reduce the negative net asset balance.
2. New Leadership reported that the school's enrollment at the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year was 525 students and that the school had a waitlist for grades 6 through 10. The school's enrollment exceeds the maximum enrollment of 375 authorized by the DOE.
3. The New Leadership Board of Trustees meets regularly and is appropriately engaged in school governance. In 2006, the Board acted on its concerns regarding the adequacy of the school's leadership and the school's performance and financial problems by hiring a new Director and a new Academic Dean. The Board also changed the school's relationship with the school's financial services contractor to ensure Board control of the contract. The Board is currently working to secure a new facility for the school. The Massachusetts National Guard does not participate on the Board, as anticipated by the Board's bylaws.
4. Members of New Leadership's leadership team have focused their efforts on improving the school's academic performance and establishing a positive school culture. They reported that their efforts to improve academic performance had reduced the frequency of student behavioral problems. They expressed a common understanding of their commitment to and accountability for achieving the goal of proficiency for all New Leadership students.



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5. The percentage of New Leadership teachers identified as Highly Qualified under the No Child Left Behind Act has significantly increased in the past year to 82 percent. School records show that four teachers who lacked certification left the school involuntarily during the 2006-2007 school year. The rate of voluntary teacher departures was 11 percent in the 2006-2007 school year.
6. New Leadership provides a professional development program focused on the school's analysis of student achievement data and the school's assessment of teacher training needs. During observations, the Team found that New Leadership teachers used instructional approaches acquired through the school's professional development program. As required by New Leadership's School Improvement Plan, the school has taken steps to train the staff responsible for identifying and meeting the needs of students who are English Language Learners.
7. New Leadership is required to use the teacher evaluation protocol adopted by the Springfield Public Schools. The Team's review of formal teacher evaluations conducted by the school showed them to be clear and informative. New Leadership uses a variety of assessment methods in addition to the Springfield protocol to evaluate teacher performance.
8. Teachers reported that the efforts of the current leadership team have improved the school climate, student behavior, the quality of instruction, and student performance at New Leadership. They confirmed that they use assessment data to determine student needs, place students in groupings, and make adjustments to curriculum. They also discussed their efforts to encourage students to attend college.
9. New Leadership students feel that they are in an academically challenging school that will prepare them for college. Students reported to the Team that the New Leadership has intensified its focus on academics and that student behavior has improved in the last two years. All students interviewed by the Team expressed displeasure with the current facility and the desire for a "real" school building.
10. The four parents interviewed by the Team expressed satisfaction with New Leadership's teacher-parent communications, small class sizes, improved academic program, and heightened expectations for student behavior. They expressed strong dissatisfaction with the school's facility and said that the school needs additional extracurricular activities and electives. New Leadership recently hired a Parent Coordinator/Community Relations Manager who coordinates communications among students, teachers, and parents.
11. New Leadership has established effective procedures for monitoring student behavior throughout the school day; the staff's collaborative approach to supervision contributes to the positive, respectful environment described by students and observed by the Team. The rate of suspensions and expulsions reported by the school declined significantly from the 2005-2006 school year to the 2006-2007 school year. The Team observed that all entrances to the New Leadership building were locked or monitored and that the building is fully accessible.

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**Renewal Question 3:  
Is the School Faithful to the Terms of Its Charter?**

1. The Team found evidence that New Leadership is fulfilling its mission to prepare its students for college. The school reported that 86 percent of the school's recent graduates planned to attend four-year or two-year colleges. Consistent with its mission statement, the school has recently instituted programs and policies designed to help students learn leadership skills and behaviors. New Leadership has not received DOE approval for an Accountability Plan during the current charter period, nor has the school tracked and reported on progress toward Accountability Plan objectives.
2. New Leadership has reportedly disseminated its best practices at the Step Up Springfield forum, a community-wide campaign to help Springfield Public School students reach proficiency in their academics and character development.

**Renewal Question 4:  
If the School's Charter is Renewed,  
What are Its Plans for the Next Five Years?**

1. The Accountability Plan proposed by New Leadership does not meet the DOE *Guidelines for Writing Charter School Accountability Plans* in some respects.
2. New Leadership's improved MCAS scores indicate that school leaders have the capacity to improve the school's academic performance over time. To ensure accountability and transparency, the school will need to monitor and report on a DOE-approved Accountability Plan over the next charter period. The school has strengthened its leadership team and has taken steps to improve its financial condition. Continued vigilance in these areas, combined with successful negotiations with the Springfield Public Schools and the City of Springfield to secure a new facility, will be critical to the school's long-term viability.

## ABOUT THE RENEWAL PROCESS AND SITE VISIT REPORT

Beginning in the spring of the third year of its charter (and ending August 1<sup>st</sup> 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 works with an independent evaluation team, which conducts a site 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.

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## RENEWAL INSPECTION TEAM

**F. Daniel Ahern, Jr.** is the President of Clarus Group, a consulting firm dedicated to helping governments and nonprofit organizations meet high standards of performance and integrity. Clarus Group has conducted numerous charter school renewal inspections in Massachusetts and New York as part of the Class Measures inspection team. Clarus Group has also trained and monitored the work of Examiners for the Massachusetts Office of Educational Quality and Accountability and has developed and delivered procurement training to charter school business managers for the Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official program. Prior to co-founding Clarus Group, Dan served for ten years as the First Assistant Inspector General for Management in the Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General. He has also been a performance auditor for the Virginia General Assembly and an independent consultant to state agencies in Massachusetts and Virginia. He has taught graduate courses in nonprofit management and public administration at Northeastern University and Clark University. He holds a Master of Public Administration degree and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Northeastern University.

**Pamela Bloomfield** is the Vice President of Clarus Group, which has conducted numerous charter school renewal inspections as part of the Class Measures team, trained and monitored the work of Examiners for the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, and developed and delivered procurement training for the Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official program. Prior to co-founding Clarus Group, she served for ten years as the Deputy Inspector General for Management in the Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General., where she led several major reviews of Massachusetts charter schools. She has also been the Assistant Director of Finance and Administration for an Oregon county; a management consultant assisting federal, state, and local government agencies; and a course assistant teaching written and oral communications at the Harvard Business School. She currently serves on the Board of Editors of Public Administration Review and on the Board of Directors of a local nonprofit organization. She holds a Master of Public Administration degree from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Smith College.

**Christine Brandt** has been an educator for 38 years, serving as a classroom teacher, special educator, administrator, and principal. She began her career as a middle school teacher of English, French, and Reading. She moved into the administrator ranks as a Special Education Director at the middle school level. For the past 18 years, she has served as a Principal, first in Wellesley, then in Dover, Massachusetts. In addition, she worked with the Somerville Charter School as Lower School Coordinator. Currently, she mentors and supervises aspiring school administrators in both regular and special education. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association and is the Association's Federal Liaison and Legislative Chair. She earned her undergraduate degree from Regis College and her graduate degrees from the University of Massachusetts at Lowell in Reading and Learning Disabilities and from Northeastern University in Education Administration.

**Thomas E. Petray, Jr.** has over 32 years of experience working as a teacher, administrator, or consultant in public and private schools, at the university level, and at the state level. Currently he is in his second year working as a District Examiner for The Office of Educational Quality

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and Accountability. He has 12 years of experience working as a teacher or faculty associate with students of grades 2 through 6 in several public and private schools in San Antonio. In addition to his teaching experience, Tom has administrative experience, having served over the course of 20 years in university or public schools as an assistant director, administrative aide, assistant principal, principal, and assistant to the superintendent. As the principal of a large, urban, bilingual/ESL cluster school for seven years in San Antonio, Tom led the faculty in significantly closing achievement gaps across all subpopulations. He also implemented school-wide initiatives in reading and math in Texas, and in school environment in Massachusetts, with broad faculty support. Tom received his B.A. in Education and his M. Ed. in Educational Administration from Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio.

**Dr. Dennis Vogel**, *coordinator of on-site inspection*, worked as a public school educator for the past 36 years, most recently as the Executive Officer of Interventions for the Springfield Public Schools. As the intervention officer, he was responsible for facilitating leadership development and strategic academic changes as well as leading administrative and faculty teams in writing school improvement plans for underperforming schools (NCLB). He began teaching in South Central Los Angeles in 1970 and has worked continuously in education, serving as a special education teacher, a guidance counselor, an assistant principal, Director of Alternative Programs, and Executive Officer of Interventions. Currently, he works as an independent consultant to school districts around whole school reform and alternative education. He received his undergraduate degree in psychology from Long Beach State University and continued his education at the University of Southern California with emphasis on special education. Dr. Vogel holds a master's degree in counseling and a doctorate in school psychology from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

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**Peter Davies**, *team supervisor and report editor*, is a former British School Inspector who has worked in school and district accountability for more than ten years in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe, and the Middle East. He was formerly an administrator with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris and a visiting professor to the Oxford University Department of Educational Studies. He currently trains Examiners for the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability and monitors their work. He holds a Master of Arts degree from Cambridge University and an advanced graduate degree in educational administration from London University.

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Dan Ahern and Pamela Bloomfield are Clarus Group principals working under contract to Class Measures Ltd for the purpose of this contract.

Peter Davies, Christine Brandt, and Dennis Vogel are members of Class Measures Ltd.

Thomas Petray is an independent contractor working for the Massachusetts Office of Educational Quality and Accountability.

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## SETTING

New Leadership Charter School (New Leadership) opened in 1998 as a Horace Mann charter school in the Springfield school district and was granted a second five-year charter in 2003. The school currently enrolls 525 students in grades 6 through 12.

New Leadership's mission statement is as follows:

The mission of New Leadership Charter School is to develop young people in the sixth through twelfth grades morally, mentally and physically and to imbue them with the highest ideals of duty, honor and loyalty. Graduates will be academically prepared to attend the college or university of their choice. They will embody three cardinal principles of leadership: vision, integrity and compassion.

According to Department of Education (DOE) data for the 2006-2007 school year, 71.8 percent of enrolled New Leadership students were African American/Black, 24.2 percent were Hispanic, 2.2 percent were White, 1.3 percent were Multi-Race, .2 percent were Asian, and .2 percent were Native American. As Table 1, below, shows, New Leadership enrolled substantially higher percentages of African American/Black students and substantially lower percentages of White students than did Springfield or school districts statewide. New Leadership also enrolled a higher percentage of students categorized as Low Income in comparison with Springfield and a substantially higher percentage of students categorized as Low Income in comparison with school districts statewide. The percentages of New Leadership students categorized as First Language Not English, Limited English Proficient, and Special Education were lower than the comparable percentages of students enrolled by Springfield and by school districts statewide.

**Table 1. Comparison of 2006-2007 Student Demographic Data  
For New Leadership Charter School, Springfield, and State**

Subgroup	New Leadership	Springfield	State
African American/Black	71.8	25.5	8.2
Asian	.2	2.1	4.8
Hispanic	24.2	49.9	13.3
White	2.2	18.3	71.5
Multi-Race	1.3	4.1	1.7
Native American	.2	.1	.3
First Language Not English	.2	21.8	14.9
Limited English Proficient	0	13.7	5.6
Low Income	82.7	77.5	28.9
Special Education	12.9	22.0	16.9
<i>Data Source: Department of Education</i>			

New Leadership was originally created through a partnership between the Urban League of Springfield, Inc. and the Massachusetts Army National Guard. The National Guard provided the school with a Leadership Academy until 2002, when the demands of the Iraq war required the National Guard to end its participation in the school. The school continues to partner with the Urban League and companies, colleges, and universities in the region; the Leadership Academy has continued to operate with the assistance of other partner organizations.



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All New Leadership students are required to wear school uniforms. Although the school has no gymnasium, students participate in two sports: basketball and track and field.

The New Leadership Board of Trustees currently has six members. According to the school's Application for Renewal, the Board has experienced very little turnover over the past four years.

Prior to 2001, New Leadership was located in a Springfield middle school and in a leased school building in West Springfield that was formerly a Catholic elementary school. Since 2001, the school has been located in Springfield at 180 Ashland Avenue in modular buildings leased by the City of Springfield from Western New England College; this facility is inadequate to meet the needs of the school. Under the Memorandum of Understanding between New Leadership and Springfield Public Schools, the latter is responsible for providing the school's facility. The Memorandum of Understanding states that construction by the City of a new facility for New Leadership is a priority of New Leadership and Springfield Public Schools.

In 2005, New Leadership was determined by the DOE to be an underperforming school and undertook a Performance Improvement Mapping process with the DOE. The process produced a School Improvement Plan (SIP) for 2005-2007. The DOE conducted a Year Nine Site Visit in May 2007 in order to assess progress made by the school in implementing the SIP, to corroborate and augment the information reported by the school in its *2005-2006 Annual Report*, and to collect information that would help the DOE Commissioner make a renewal recommendation for the school's charter.

New Leadership has not received DOE approval of an Accountability Plan, nor has the school tracked and reported on progress toward any Accountability Plan objectives in any of its annual reports, during the current charter period. Prior to the DOE year nine site visit in May 2007, New Leadership submitted to the DOE a draft Accountability Plan that had not been officially approved by the New Leadership Board of Trustees. As of October 2007, New Leadership continued to operate without an approved Accountability Plan, and the school's Application for Renewal did not report on any Accountability Plan objectives. The school's performance and progress relative to major issues identified in the DOE *Year Nine Site Visit Report* and to certain objectives identified in the SIP are discussed in the following report.



## FINDINGS

The Renewal Inspection Team (Team) spent four days on site at New Leadership Charter School (New Leadership) on October 2-5, 2007. The Team conducted focus group interviews with the New Leadership Board of Trustees, students, parents, and teachers, and conducted interviews with the Director, the Academic Director, the Dean of Students, the High School Coordinator, the Middle School Coordinator, the Dean of Guidance, and the Special Education Director. In addition, the Team made 33 classroom observations.

The Team obtained and reviewed New Leadership data and documents prior to the renewal site visit and on site. The information reviewed included, but was not limited to, the school's Application for Renewal; Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) data for the five-year period of 2003 through 2007; curricular materials; recent annual reports; the school's bylaws; minutes of Board of Trustees meetings held between June 15, 2005 and July 30, 2007; Board meeting information packets; annual budgets; audited financial statements and management letters for the three years ending June 30, 2004 through June 30, 2006; personnel evaluations; handbooks; information on teacher qualifications; and the *Year Eight Site Visit Report* and *Year Nine Site Visit Report* prepared by the Department of Education (DOE).

### RENEWAL QUESTION 1: IS THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM A SUCCESS?

#### MCAS RESULTS

The Team examined all the results obtained by New Leadership students on the MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics exams during the period from 2003 to 2007. The Team compared the school's MCAS results in each grade tested to those attained by students in the Springfield school district and students statewide.

In reviewing the MCAS exam results, it is important to keep in mind that because of the relatively small numbers of students taking the exam each year in each grade, a small number of students can have a relatively large impact on the results. This is especially true for the tenth-grade test results: the number of tenth graders who have taken the exam have ranged from a low of 23 in 2003 and 2004 to a high of 54 in 2006.

- 1. New Leadership has not met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements overall during the entire period from 2003 to 2007, although the school has shown improvement in the 2007 results. New Leadership met AYP requirements in the aggregate for both ELA and Mathematics in 2007; the school had previously met AYP requirements in the aggregate for both subjects only in 2005. In 2007, New Leadership met AYP requirements in ELA for all student subgroups for the first time during the current charter period. New Leadership did not meet AYP requirements for Mathematics for all subgroups in any year of the charter period.**

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As shown in Table 2, below, from 2003 to 2007 New Leadership student MCAS results met AYP requirements in the aggregate for ELA in 2003, 2005, and 2007; and in the aggregate for Mathematics in 2005 and 2007. The school did not meet AYP requirements for all student subgroups in any year with the exception of ELA in 2007.

**Table 2. New Leadership Charter School  
Adequate Yearly Progress History  
2003-2007**

Exam	Groups	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
English Language Arts	Aggregate	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	No	Yes
Mathematics	Aggregate	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	No	No
<i>Data Source: Department of Education AYP Data</i>						

Table 3, below, presents New Leadership's AYP results in ELA and Mathematics for student subgroups over the five-year charter period. The table shows that New Leadership met AYP requirements in ELA for all student subgroups for the first time in 2007. The school's student subgroup AYP performance in Mathematics also improved in 2007, when African American/Black students met AYP for only the second time during the period, and Low Income students met AYP for the first time during the period. However, the school's Hispanic student subgroup did not meet performance or improvement targets in Mathematics in 2007, the first year in which the Hispanic subgroup was large enough to be reported on separately.

**Table 3. New Leadership Charter School  
Subgroup Adequate Yearly Progress History  
English Language Arts and Mathematics  
2003-2007**

Subgroup	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>English Language Arts</b>					
African American/Black	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Hispanic	No	-	-	-	Yes
Low Income	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Hispanic	-	-	-	-	Yes
<b>Mathematics</b>					
African American/Black	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Low Income	No	No	No	No	Yes
Special Education	No	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	-	-	-	-	No
<i>Data Source: Department of Education AYP Data</i>					

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2. The performance of New Leadership Grade 10 students on MCAS ELA exams improved consistently during the current charter period. The performance of Grade 7 students on MCAS ELA exams has been uneven with no clear trend, but showed a substantial improvement in 2007. However, large proportions of students, ranging from two-thirds in Grade 6 to one-half in Grade 10, did not demonstrate proficiency on these exams in 2007.

Table 4, below, presents the results of all MCAS ELA exams taken by New Leadership students during the five-year period from 2003 to 2007. MCAS ELA exam results for Grade 6 and Grade 8 are available only for 2006 and 2007.

**Table 4. New Leadership Charter School  
MCAS English Language Arts Results  
2003 - 2007**

Year	N	Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Warning/ Failing	Proficient or Advanced
<b>Grade 6</b>						
2006	69	0	29	54	17	29
2007	64	3	34	56	6	37
<b>Grade 7</b>						
2003	71	0	31	49	20	31
2004	80	0	16	60	24	16
2005	86	1	27	63	9	28
2006	81	0	21	42	37	21
2007	87	1	45	37	17	46
<b>Grade 8</b>						
2006	99	0	45	40	14	45
2007	84	2	44	42	12	46
<b>Grade 10</b>						
2003	23	0	22	57	22	22
2004	22	0	23	55	23	23
2005	30	0	30	53	17	30
2006	33	3	42	45	9	45
2007	54	6	44	46	4	50
<i>Data Source: Department of Education MCAS Data</i>						

The New Leadership Grade 7 MCAS ELA exam results have shown the greatest year-to-year variation with no clear improvement trend. In 2007, the performance of the school's seventh graders improved significantly: 46 percent scored in the Proficient or Advanced category, the highest percentage during the five-year period and the first time that the school had exceeded its 2003 results for this exam. The 2007 improvement over the 2006 scores – an increase of 25 percent in the percentage of seventh graders scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category – reflects a large decline in the percentage of students scoring in the Warning category, from 37 percent to 17 percent, and a large increase in the percentage scoring in the Proficient category.

The school's scores on the Grade 10 MCAS ELA exam have consistently improved during the five-year period: the percentage of New Leadership students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category more than doubled from 22 percent in 2003 to 50 percent in 2007. The

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percentage of students scoring in the Advanced category increased from zero in 2003 and 2004 to six percent in 2007. Conversely, the percentage of students scoring in the Failing category decreased from a five-year high of 22 percent in 2004 to a school-wide low of four percent in 2007.

As noted above, MCAS ELA exam results for Grade 6 and Grade 8 are available for only two years: 2006 and 2007. On the Grade 6 MCAS ELA exam, the percentage of New Leadership students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category increased from 29 percent in 2006 to 37 percent in 2007. In the same period, the percentage of students scoring in the Warning category decreased from 17 percent to six percent. The school's Grade 8 results on the exam remained stable from 2006 to 2007. In 2006, 45 percent of New Leadership students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category; in 2007 46 percent of students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category.

Although the school has seen improvements in MCAS ELA exam results over the five-year period, large proportions of students did not demonstrate proficiency on the 2007 exams. The percentages of students who scored in the Needs Improvement or Warning/Failing category were as follows: 63 percent of sixth graders, 54 percent of seventh and eighth graders, and 50 percent of tenth graders.

- 3. Over the five-year period from 2003 to 2007, the performance of New Leadership students on the MCAS ELA exam has been mixed in comparison with that of Springfield students, although in most instances smaller percentages of students scored in the Warning/Failing category, and New Leadership students performed substantially better than Springfield students in 2007. The performance of New Leadership students has been consistently and substantially weaker than that of students statewide.**

Table 5 compares the performance of New Leadership students, students in the Springfield school district, and students statewide on the MCAS ELA exams during the five-year period from 2003 to 2007. MCAS ELA exam results for Grade 6 and Grade 8 are available only for 2006 and 2007.

Grade 7 New Leadership students essentially equaled the performance of Springfield students on the MCAS ELA exam in 2003 with respect to the percentage of students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category (29 percent compared to 28 percent, respectively), and performed substantially better than Springfield students in 2007 (46 percent compared to 35 percent, respectively.) In 2004, 2005, and 2006, smaller percentages of New Leadership students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category than the comparable percentages of Springfield students. In comparison with Springfield students, a smaller percentage of the school's Grade 7 students scored in the Warning Failing category in three of the five years: 2003, 2005, and 2007, with the largest margin of 11 percent (17 percent compared to 28 percent, respectively) in 2007.

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**Table 5. New Leadership Charter School  
Comparison With Springfield and State  
MCAS English Language Arts Results  
2003 - 2007**

Year		N	Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Warning/ Failing	Proficient or Advanced
<b>Grade 6</b>							
2006	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>29</b>
	Springfield	1964	2	26	46	26	28
	State	73382	10	54	28	8	64
2007	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>37</b>
	Springfield	1942	1	28	45	26	29
	State	72887	9	58	25	7	67
<b>Grade 7</b>							
2003	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>31</b>
	Springfield	2041	1	29	47	23	30
	State	79208	8	57	28	7	65
2004	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>16</b>
	Springfield	2102	1	34	41	23	35
	State	77386	9	59	25	7	68
2005	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>28</b>
	Springfield	2070	2	30	46	23	32
	State	76719	10	56	27	7	66
2006	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>21</b>
	Springfield	1974	2	28	42	29	30
	State	74509	10	55	26	9	65
2007	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>46</b>
	Springfield	1972	1	34	37	28	35
	State	73577	9	60	23	8	69
<b>Grade 8</b>							
2006	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>45</b>
	Springfield	1975	3	39	36	23	42
	State	76243	12	62	19	7	74
2007	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>46</b>
	Springfield	1953	2	37	38	23	39
	State	74933	12	63	18	6	75
<b>Grade 10</b>							
2003	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>
	Springfield	1449	5	25	36	34	30
	State	69418	20	41	28	12	61
2004	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>
	Springfield	1324	4	28	39	29	32
	State	69808	19	43	27	11	62
2005	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>30</b>
	Springfield	1464	4	27	39	30	31
	State	72036	23	42	25	10	65
2006	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>45</b>
	Springfield	1554	2	31	46	21	33
	State	73351	16	53	24	7	69
2007	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>50</b>
	Springfield	1518	3	33	43	20	36
	State	72471	22	49	24	6	71
<i>Data Source: Department of Education MCAS Data</i>							

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The performance of New Leadership students on the Grade 10 MCAS ELA exam has improved in comparison with the performance of Springfield students on the same exam during the five-year period. In 2003 and 2004, a smaller percentage of New Leadership students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category, and in 2005 New Leadership students essentially matched the performance of Springfield students. However, in 2006 and 2007, New Leadership tenth graders outscored their Springfield counterparts by substantial margins: 45 percent compared to 33 percent, respectively, in 2006 and 50 percent compared to 36 percent, respectively, in 2007. Moreover, in each of the five years a smaller percentage of New Leadership students scored in the Failing category, ranging from six percent fewer in 2004 to 16 percent fewer in 2007.

The percentage of New Leadership Grade 6 students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on the MCAS ELA exam essentially equaled the percentage of Springfield students in 2006 (29 percent compared to 28 percent, respectively) and exceeded it in 2007 (37 percent compared to 67 percent, respectively). In both years, smaller percentages of New Leadership students scored in the Warning category than the comparable percentages of Springfield students: 17 percent compared with 26 percent, respectively, in 2006, and 6 percent compared with 26 percent, respectively, in 2007.

The percentage of New Leadership Grade 8 students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on the MCAS ELA exam exceeded the comparable percentage of Springfield students in 2006 and 2007: 45 percent compared to 42 percent, respectively, in 2006, and 46 percent compared to 39 percent in 2007. In both years, smaller percentages of New Leadership students scored in the Warning category in comparison with Springfield students: 14 percent compared to 23 percent, respectively, in 2006, and 12 percent compared to 23 percent, respectively, in 2007.

On each exam, students statewide performed substantially better than New Leadership and Springfield students with respect to the percentage that scored in the Proficient or Advanced category and the percentage that scored in the Advanced category. In almost all instances, students statewide also performed substantially better than New Leadership students with respect to the percentage that scored in the Warning/Failing category. The exceptions were the Grade 6 and Grade 10 exam results in 2007: the percentage of Grade 6 New Leadership students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on the MCAS ELA exam essentially equaled the performance of students statewide (six percent compared with seven percent, respectively) and the percentage of Grade 10 New Leadership students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on the MCAS ELA exam was somewhat higher than the percentage of students statewide (four percent compared six percent, respectively).

- 4. The performance of New Leadership students on the MCAS Mathematics exams for Grades 6, 7, and 10 improved over the current charter period. Dramatic improvement on the MCAS Mathematics exam was shown by students in Grade 10. Scores on the Grade 8 MCAS Mathematics exam did not show a trend: the percentage of students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on the Grade 8 MCAS Mathematics exam was one percent in 2003 and again in 2007. Very high proportions of New Leadership students did not demonstrate proficiency on the 2007 MCAS Mathematics exams: 81 percent of sixth graders, 87 percent of seventh graders, 99 percent of eighth**

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**graders, and 63 percent of tenth graders did not score in the Proficient or Advanced category, and most seventh and eighth graders scored in the Warning category.**

Table 6, below, presents the results of all MCAS Mathematics exams taken by New Leadership students during the five-year period from 2003 to 2007. MCAS Mathematics exam results for Grade 7 are available only for 2006 and 2007.

In 2003, four percent of New Leadership students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category on the Grade 6 MCAS Mathematics exam; by 2007, this percentage had steadily risen to 19 percent. The percentage of students who scored in the Warning category declined from 77 percent in 2003 to 48 percent in 2007.

In 2006, one percent of New Leadership students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category on the Grade 7 MCAS Mathematics exam. In 2007, this percentage increased to 13 percent. The percentage of students who scored in the Warning category declined from 71 percent in 2006 to 58 percent in 2007.

**Table 6. New Leadership Charter School  
MCAS Mathematics Results  
2003 - 2007**

Year	N	Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Warning/ Failing	Proficient or Advanced
<b>Grade 6</b>						
2003	73	0	4	19	77	4
2004	98	1	4	37	58	5
2005	77	0	6	26	68	6
2006	69	0	12	30	58	12
2007	64	3	16	33	48	19
<b>Grade 7</b>						
2006	78	0	1	28	71	1
2007	86	0	13	29	58	13
<b>Grade 8</b>						
2003	68	0	1	16	82	1
2004	57	0	4	37	60	4
2005	80	1	11	31	56	12
2006	98	0	3	24	72	3
2007	85	0	1	32	67	1
<b>Grade 10</b>						
2003	23	0	0	13	87	0
2004	23	4	13	57	26	17
2005	30	3	10	43	43	13
2006	33	9	21	33	36	30
2007	52	12	25	48	15	37
<i>Data Source: Department of Education MCAS Data</i>						

Very high proportions of New Leadership students did not demonstrate proficiency on the 2007 MCAS Mathematics exam: 81 percent of sixth graders, 87 percent of seventh graders, 99 percent of eighth graders, and 63 percent of tenth graders did not score in the Proficient or



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Advanced category, and most seventh graders (58 percent) and eighth graders (67 percent) scored in the Warning category.

- 5. For most of the five-year period from 2003 to 2007, the performance of New Leadership students on the MCAS Mathematics exams trailed that of Springfield students. However, in 2007 higher percentages of New Leadership students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category than the comparable percentages of Springfield students in three grades (Grade 6, Grade 7, and Grade 10) of the four grades tested. The performance of New Leadership students on the MCAS Mathematics exams has consistently trailed the performance of students statewide by substantial margins.**

Table 7 compares the performance of New Leadership students, Springfield students and students statewide on the Grade 6 and Grade 8 MCAS Mathematics exams over the period from 2003 to 2007 and on the Grade 7 MCAS Mathematics exams in 2006 and 2007. Table 8 provides the same comparison for the Grade 10 MCAS Mathematics exam.

In 2003, 2004, and 2005, the percentage of New Leadership sixth graders scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on the Grade 6 MCAS Mathematics exam was six percent lower than the comparable percentage of Springfield sixth graders. In 2006, New Leadership sixth graders essentially matched the performance of Springfield sixth graders on this exam with respect to the percentage scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category; however, seven percent fewer New Leadership sixth graders scored in the Warning category that year in comparison to their Springfield counterparts. In 2007, the percentage of New Leadership sixth graders scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category was six percent higher than the comparable percentage of Springfield students. On the other end of the scale, the percentage of New Leadership sixth graders scoring in the Warning category on the MCAS Mathematics exam fell from 77 percent in 2003 to 48 percent in 2007, in comparison with 58 percent of Springfield sixth-graders scoring in this category in 2003 and 65 percent in 2007.

The performance of New Leadership students on the Grade 7 MCAS Mathematics exam trailed that of Springfield students in 2006 with respect to both the percentage who scored in the Proficient or Advanced category (one percent compared with eight percent, respectively) and the percentage who scored in the Warning category (71 percent compared with 69 percent, respectively). In 2007, the percentage of New Leadership students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on the exam increased to 13 percent, surpassing the comparable percentage of Springfield students (10 percent). That year, the percentage of New Leadership seventh graders scoring in the Warning category declined to 58 percent, whereas the comparable percentage of Springfield students was 65 percent.

The percentage of New Leadership students who scored in the Proficient or Advanced category on the Grade 8 MCAS Mathematics exam trailed the performance of Springfield students in each year of the five-year charter period with the exception of 2005.



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**Table 7. New Leadership Charter School  
Comparison With Springfield and State  
MCAS Mathematics Results for Grades 6-8  
2003 - 2007**

Year		N	Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Warning/ Failing	Proficient or Advanced
<b>Grade 6</b>							
2003	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>4</b>
	Springfield	2088	2	8	27	62	10
	State	77941	16	26	32	26	42
2004	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>5</b>
	Springfield	2027	3	8	26	63	11
	State	76661	17	25	32	25	42
2005	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>6</b>
	Springfield	1978	2	10	26	62	12
	State	74784	17	29	30	23	46
2006	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>12</b>
	Springfield	1965	2	9	24	65	11
	State	73470	17	29	29	25	46
2007	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>19</b>
	Springfield	1937	2	11	28	58	13
	State	72889	20	32	28	20	52
<b>Grade 7</b>							
2006	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>1</b>
	Springfield	1984	1	7	23	69	8
	State	74647	12	28	33	28	40
2007	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>13</b>
	Springfield	1967	1	9	25	65	10
	State	73592	15	31	30	24	46
<b>Grade 8</b>							
2003	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>1</b>
	Springfield	2011	1	6	21	72	7
	State	78477	12	25	30	33	37
2004	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>4</b>
	Springfield	1981	2	7	24	67	9
	State	78893	13	26	32	29	39
2005	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>12</b>
	Springfield	2022	2	7	22	69	9
	State	77025	13	26	30	31	39
2006	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>3</b>
	Springfield	1992	2	8	24	66	10
	State	76276	12	28	31	29	40
2007	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>1</b>
	Springfield	1927	2	8	24	66	10
	State	74319	17	28	30	25	45
<i>Data Source: Department of Education MCAS Data</i>							

As Table 8 shows, the percentage of New Leadership tenth graders scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on the MCAS Mathematics trailed the comparable percentage of Springfield students in the first three years of the charter period, essentially matched the comparable percentage of Springfield students in 2006 (30 percent compared with 29 percent, respectively), and exceeded the comparable percentage of Springfield students in 2007 (37 percent compared

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with 31 percent, respectively). However, a lower percentage of New Leadership students scored in the Failing category in three of the five years (2004, 2005, and 2007); in 2007, the percentage of New Leadership students scoring in the Failing category was approximately half that of Springfield students (15 percent compared with 31 percent, respectively).

**Table 8. New Leadership Charter School  
Comparison With Springfield and State  
MCAS Mathematics Results for Grade 10  
2003 - 2007**

Year		N	Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Warning/ Failing	Proficient or Advanced
2003	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>0</b>
	Springfield	1491	5	13	29	53	18
	State	70071	24	27	28	21	51
2004	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>17</b>
	Springfield	1339	7	16	38	39	23
	State	70293	29	28	28	15	57
2005	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>13</b>
	Springfield	1462	7	16	31	46	23
	State	72140	35	27	24	15	62
2006	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>30</b>
	Springfield	1514	10	19	35	36	29
	State	72738	40	27	21	12	67
2007	<b>NLCS</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>37</b>
	Springfield	1475	11	20	38	31	31
	State	71692	42	27	22	9	69
<i>Data Source: Department of Education MCAS Data</i>							

Tables 7 and 8 show that the performance of New Leadership students on the MCAS Mathematics exams has consistently trailed the performance of students statewide by substantial margins in each of the grades tested during the five-year period. This was the case with respect to the percentages of students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced categories as well as the percentages of students scoring in the Warning/Failing category and the Advanced category.

## OTHER ASSESSMENTS

- In addition to MCAS, New Leadership administers the California Achievement Test to evaluate student competence relative to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks standards. The school also uses District Formative Assessments and a variety of other internal assessments of student progress.**

Since 2006, New Leadership has administered the California Achievement Test (CAT/5) twice yearly to all students in grades 6 through 10. CAT/5 tests measure achievement in reading, language, spelling, mathematics, study skills, science, and social studies. Prior to 2006, the school administered the Stanford 10, which the current Director replaced with the CAT/5, which is administered to all students in grades 6 through 9. At the time of the site visit, the school had not analyzed the CAT/5 reports of individual student scores, some of which the Team reviewed.. According to the Academic Director, the results were to be entered into the Galileo Online

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Educational Management System (described later in this report) for analysis, beginning in late October 2007. The school planned to use these analyses to assist teachers with instructional planning, indicate curricula directions for administrators, create flexible groupings, and help parents understand areas in which their children are academically strong and those in which their children require additional attention.

New Leadership also administers District Formative Assessments (DFAs), which are MCAS-like evaluations of student progress developed by the Springfield Public Schools, to students in grades 6 through 10. DFAs, which are administered three times per year, and are used to assess the validity of previously identified MCAS weaknesses. Timely scoring of the DFAs has been problematic for New Leadership because the scoring is done through the Springfield Public Schools; according to the Academic Director, the school did not receive the results of the last DFA administered for four months. However, New Leadership now has the in-house capacity to scan the DFA; the Academic Director told the Team that the school should be able to obtain results almost immediately. At the time of the site visit, the school had recently received individual student DFA scores from the previous year; the scores had not been compiled.

New Leadership also uses a variety of other internal assessments, including the following:

- Graded student writing assessments based on John Collins writing protocols are used in all content areas. Teachers are required to produce these rubrics at regular intervals during each per quarter.
  - Teachers are required to administer teacher-created assessments on a weekly basis, according to the Academic Director. Teachers develop five questions based on the standard(s) covered each week, as identified on the Blackboard Configuration model template (discussed later in this report). The assessment results provide the teachers with information on student progress relative to the standards.
  - End-of-unit assessments are administered monthly to provide a summative assessment of student mastery of the curricular units.
  - Mid-term assessments in all content areas are quarterly summative assessments of mastery of the units and standards covered.
  - Final exams are annual summative annual assessments of student academic progress.
- 7. Consistent with New Leadership's School Improvement Plan, the school is using data collection and analysis to identify student strengths and needs as well as to drive instruction. In addition, New Leadership has developed "essential standards," which represent a compilation of academic standards that New Leadership students have not mastered. The school uses these essential standards to assign students to flexible groups focusing on the identified areas of weakness.**

In 2007, New Leadership's School-Centered Decision Making Team identified three initiatives designed to build the school's capacity to use data to inform instruction and curriculum. These

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initiatives, documented in a report entitled “District Plan for School Intervention,” represented a synthesis of New Leadership’s School Improvement Plan for 2005-2007, which incorporated the Performance Improvement Mapping findings developed over the spring and summer of 2005 and the 2005-2006 school year. The three initiatives identified in the report were as follows:

1. Implement the use of standards-based teaching and learning in the classroom.
2. Use data collection and analysis to identify students’ strengths and needs as well as to drive instruction.
3. Implement an effective Administrative Instructional Leadership Team.

New Leadership has made progress on all three initiatives. The first and third initiative will be discussed later in this report. With respect to the second initiative: in 2006, New Leadership contracted with Community Partners Initiative (CPI) to help the school disseminate MCAS results to teachers in user-friendly formats. Teachers currently receive binders of MCAS data disaggregated by student, by group, and by teacher; the data include item analyses of student performance and standards competence. New Leadership students scoring in the Needs Improvement or Warning/Failing category on an MCAS exam are assigned to flexible grouping classrooms that focused on the areas of strength or weakness identified in the MCAS CPI analysis.

In an effort to isolate the standards that have proved problematic for New Leadership students, New Leadership established a Curriculum Committee consisting of a middle school teacher, a high school teacher and the academic coaches of Math, ELA, Science and Social Studies. The Committee met in the summer of 2007 to identify the questions that were answered incorrectly by students who scored in low end of the Needs Improvement category and in the Warning/Failing category. Using this information, the Committee compiled a list of “essential standards” that had proven to be problematic for low-scoring students. This information was provided to Assessment Technology Incorporated (ATI), which developed educational assessments for New Leadership based on the essential standards compiled by the Committee. These assessments are to be administered four times per year beginning on October 26, 2007. According to New Leadership’s Academic Director, the school plans to use the Galileo Online Educational Management System, through its agreement with ATI, to analyze the results of the CAT/5 and DFA assessments, thereby allowing the school to develop and uses assessments of student performance relative to the essential standards. These results will then be triangulated with MCAS and other assessment results.

## **CURRICULUM AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS**

- 8. New Leadership has a fully developed curriculum that is aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The school continues to develop and modify its curriculum through curriculum committees and to take advantage of the extensive curriculum-related professional development opportunities offered by the Springfield Public Schools.**

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New Leadership has a complete school-wide curriculum, which was most recently revised in 2007, that contains fully developed learning units in all content areas. The units contain lists of required and recommended texts, anticipatory sets and assessments. The curriculum is structured around the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (MCF) learning standards. The Team reviewed curricular maps and observed clear evidence of their use in all classrooms visited. The maps, which include scope and sequence and pacing guides, were developed for the 2006-2007 school year and revised by the school's curriculum committee for the 2007-2008 school year. Lesson plans are developed in a standard format and reviewed by the Academic Director each week.

The Team reviewed curriculum content binders for all core curricula. Each binder contained standards, skills, assessments, activities, and related curriculum sections. The social studies curriculum scope and sequence was presented as themes that included topics, activities, strands and questions. The school has adopted the Springfield Public Schools' Science and Social Studies curricula and guides and participates in related professional development.

The DOE *Year Nine Site Visit Report* reported that New Leadership had developed an extensive high school math curriculum that was aligned with the MCF and mirrored the Springfield Public Schools high school math curriculum. The *Year Nine Site Visit Report* also noted that the school had modified the curriculum by using the Glencoe Math series as the primary text and Connected Math as a supplemental text. The Team found that the school has continued and enhanced its use of Springfield's Math Instructional Guide (MIG) curriculum to include the high school curriculum. New Leadership now participates fully in professional development offered by Springfield around the use of the MIG and has expanded the use of the Connected Math Program (CMP) through extended math teaching blocks and using in-house-developed CMP unit plans. The plans include units broken into time, text and standards and mapped by month, grades and length of time.

All content course curricula reviewed by the Team were complete, with common templates, rubrics, guiding philosophies and recommendations for classroom block structures. As an example, the high school math teaching block recommends a 4 step teaching model that includes teacher guided instruction, guided practice, group processing, and assessment. Classroom observations of math classrooms verified this structure (as presented in the BBC) and saw the structure critiqued in the narrative section of teacher evaluations. As with the Math and English Language Arts curriculum trainings, the New Leadership staff participates in the Springfield Public Schools' professional development programs in all content areas whenever possible. The Academic Director continues to meet daily with the Middle and High School Coordinators and these three meet with staff weekly around curriculum and instruction (discussed further in the professional development section).

Students in grades 10 through 12 are required to take a College Advisory class. They also receive college information from materials maintained in the Student Services Office and through visits to the school by college representatives.

New Leadership also offers its students in grades 11 and 12 students a Virtual High School program consisting of challenging, full-semester, Advanced Placement (AP), Pre-AP, core, and

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elective courses that are not typically offered locally. Currently 20 New Leadership students are enrolled in Virtual High School courses.

- 9. New Leadership's Special Education program is staffed and well organized. The school has a well-designed pre-referral process and a Student Teacher Assistance Team, and the school's Special Education students receive in-class support as well as pullout services when appropriate. The school has taken steps to identify students requiring Special Education services at New Leadership are provided by a full-time Special Education Director, six special educators (an increase of three from the 2006-2007 school year), and one school psychologist, assisted by a full-time secretary. One of the special educators also serves as the Evaluation Team Leader.**

New Leadership has 55 enrolled Special Education students, who comprise 10.7 percent of the student population. These students receive in-class support and/or pull-out support. The Special Education Director disseminates information on students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to classroom teachers. Special educators reported to the Team that modifications are made for diverse learners when required by students' IEPs and that teachers sometimes initiate the requests for modifications in the classrooms. Self-contained Special Education classes in Math and ELA are provided when required by students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs); each of these classes consists of four to six students.

New Leadership has a well-designed pre-referral process in place and a Student Teacher Assistance Team (STAT) comprised of Special Education staff, other teachers, and administrators. In addition, teachers at each grade level meet routinely to review individual student needs and incorporate classroom modifications where needed.

Special Education records are maintained in file cabinets secured in an office. The Team reviewed six folders of Special Education students in grades 6 through 10 and grade 12 and found their contents to be thorough and well-organized.

New Leadership has one guidance counselor who services all students in grades 6 through 12. She meets and interviews all incoming students to obtain information about English Language Learners. The Special Education Director and the guidance counselor share an office. Both staff members reported to the Team that this arrangement facilitates communication about student progress.

New Leadership underwent a full Coordinated Program Review (CPR) in March 2007. In the area of Special Education, the CPR assigned ratings of "partially implemented" for 15 compliance criteria and "not implemented" for one compliance criterion. In the area of English Learner Education, the CPR rated 18 criteria "not implemented." The school has prepared a Corrective Action Plan in response to these findings. At the time of the site visit, two school staff had received training in the Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral (MELA-O). The school planned to administer the MELA-O to all students whose Home Language Survey indicated that the student and/or family spoke a language other than English at home. The results of these assessments would determine the needs of any identified English Language Learner (ELL) students.



**10. New Leadership's capacity to create an environment conducive to effective instruction and student learning is significantly impaired by the inadequate facility in which the school operates.**

The impact of New Leadership's inadequate facility on the school's operations was evident to the Team. According to school administrators, 11 classrooms were split in half six years ago, when New Leadership moved to the current facility, in order to enable more classes to be held in the limited space. The half-sized classrooms are located in the wing near the front entrance of the school serving grades 6, 7, 10, 11, and 12. Of the school's 31 teachers teaching the core subjects of English, math, science, and social studies, 18 taught in classrooms that were half the size of the remaining classrooms. The remaining four half-sized classrooms were used as a Special Education resource room, an art room, an in-school suspension room, and a guidance/Special Education office.

According to school administrators, the use of half-sized classrooms for English, math, science, and social studies classes has dictated smaller-than-usual class sizes for these subjects. The Team observed that because the half-sized classrooms are long and narrow, students seated at the edges of these classrooms had difficulty seeing the whiteboards and the overhead projector screens. In several rooms where desks are set in two long rows and thus, do not permit easy travel between desks, regrouping for small group or paired learning is very challenging. It is also difficult for a teacher to walk among the students to observe their work in these classrooms. The placement of computers in these classrooms makes it difficult for students to access them. The smaller science classrooms lack sufficient space for displays. The placement of computers in the smaller rooms makes it difficult for students to access them.

The inadequate facility is detrimental in other significant respects. For example:

- The school lacks a library as well as a gymnasium.
- The school lacks science laboratories; thus, as noted in the *DOE Year Nine Site Visit Report*, New Leadership is unable to fulfill the laboratory requirements of the Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Frameworks.
- Because the small school's cafeteria can accommodate only 108 students at a time, the school is required to schedule five lunch periods for its 525 students. Accordingly, lunch periods begin at 10:30 a.m. and run until 1:00 p.m. The need to schedule five lunch periods reportedly complicates the task of scheduling instruction.
- In interviews with the Team, students and teachers reported that the school facility lacks lockers or other storage areas for winter coats and boots; thus, students are required to carry their coats and boots with them from class to class.

In interviews with the Team, members of the Board of Trustees and school administrators acknowledged school leaders acknowledged that the current facility does not effectively support instruction and learning. The Director told the Team that he planned to hire a librarian and to

house a library in a classroom not used to teach classes; he also stated that he planned to explore the option of renting a portable gymnasium.

**11. All teaching at New Leadership is structured around the use of the Blackboard Configuration Model. Standards-based teaching is assessed weekly by the school's Academic Director and academic coordinators.**

In order to institute the use of standards-based teaching and learning, as required by the first initiative documented in the District Plan for School Intervention, New Leadership has focused classroom instruction around the use of the Blackboard Configuration (BBC) model developed by the Lorraine Monroe Leadership Institute. This instructional format requires teachers to display on a blackboard, white board, or screen the aim, or objective, of the lesson; a “do now” activity for the beginning of the class designed to settle and prepare students; an agenda that includes a benchmark and learning standard; and a homework assignment. As will be discussed, the Team observed that the BBC was evident in every classroom visited. The school's Academic Director and Middle School and High School Coordinators evaluate teachers' use of the BBC on a daily basis. The BBC has become the established entry point for ensuring that each lesson structured around standards.

**12. The quality of instruction by New Leadership teachers observed by the Team was generally high, although Team observed examples of weak and ineffective instruction. Learning goals and behavioral expectations were clearly communicated. For the most part, students appeared engaged in the learning process. The Team observed positive interactions between teachers and students indicating teachers' commitment to helping students reach high academic standards.**

The Team observed 33 classes: six grade 6 classes, three grade 7 classes, five grade 8 classes, six grade 9 classes, five grade 10 classes, three grade 11 classes, four classes of students in grades 11 and 12, and one multi-grade high school Spanish class. Nine were ELA classes, 11 were math classes, six were science classes, three were social studies classes, one was a Spanish class, one was an art class, one was a college advisory class, and one was an MCAS preparation class. The sizes of the classes observed ranged from two to 19 students: 22 classes ranged in size from two to 14 students, and 11 ranged in size from 15 to 19 students.

The May 2007 DOE *Year Nine Site Visit Report* contained the following finding regarding the quality of instruction at New Leadership: “The quality of instruction observed in classes was uneven, ranging from lessons that fully engaged students to lessons during which a substantial portion of the class was off-task.” The Team's observations in October 2007 revealed a more positive picture: in all but four of the 33 classrooms visited, the Team observed effective teaching and student management strategies, and students in most classrooms appeared engaged in the learning process.

The *Year Nine Site Visit Report* also noted that the school had started to formally use data to inform instruction and that future site visit teams should assess the school's progress in doing so. In all classrooms observed by the Team, lesson plans posted on the whiteboards, following the BBC model discussed earlier in this report, indicated that student assessment data had been used



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to refine classroom objectives and determine classroom activities. The Team confirmed that the school has adopted a whole-school approach to analyzing and using student assessment data in interviews with school administrators and in the teacher focus groups. The Team noted that the aims posted in the classrooms were worded in student-friendly language, reflecting a deliberate strategy adopted by New Leadership's grade-level teams to make the standards meaningful to students. Students entering the classrooms read the posted activities and homework and began work, without apparent confusion or wasted time.

The following are examples of effective instruction observed by the Team.

- A history teacher provided definitions of critical terms about landforms in pictures and words. After starting with a teacher-directed activity, the teacher noted growing restlessness and switched to another type of activity, which corrected the restless classroom behavior. Students remained focused and productive for the remainder of the class.
- During a lively math class, pairs of students used fraction strips to check their prior work on word problems. Although the class was held in a small, narrow classroom the teacher checked in with each group to insure individual student effort and group accuracy.
- A math teacher used a combination of progressive cues to help students solve equations with like terms. "Do you understand up to here?" and "Let's try it together" helped the teacher used to gauge student understanding. When ready, the group of 16 students broke into pairs to work together to solve a set of problems. Work was focused and productive.
- In a chemistry class, the teacher used a variety of approaches to help students understand the link between location and element characteristics in the Periodic Chart. Visual and kinesthetic clues, discussion of prior knowledge, checking of hypotheses, and excellent teacher questions guided the students toward understanding. Students provided evidence of their understanding in a Collins Type One writing product.
- In an Advanced Placement English class on essay writing, the teacher used strong guiding and clarifying questions to facilitate a discussion on transcendentalism in poetry. All 17 students were highly involved and clearly understood the teacher's expectations for preparing a high-quality writing sample.

The Team also observed instances in which teachers were not teaching effectively and students appeared disengaged. For example:

- In an algebra class in which students were solving variable equations by multiplication and division, the instruction seemed unfocused and the teacher did not appear to have control of the class. The teacher continued to teach the content without checking for student understanding; the teacher's expectations for student behavior appeared low.
- An English class's primary activity was completing a worksheet based on the textbook. Students seemed bored and unclear about the purpose of the lesson. Although the teacher

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continually asked for student attention and focus, four of 11 students remained disengaged and apparently uninterested.

- In an English class, student response and engagement were poor. All instruction was teacher-directed; students appeared passive, although they were polite in the few observed interactions.

In most classrooms observed, the Team observed instructional methods that took into account students' diverse learning styles, such as small groups, paired learning, and whole group discussion. The Team observed that small group work presented challenges in the school's half-sized classrooms, yet students were able to shift from whole group activities to small group activities when directed, even in the small classrooms.

The Team observed consistent and effective classroom management strategies, to which students responded positively, in many classrooms. Teachers often conveyed reminders in respectful, caring, and sometimes humorous ways: for example, one teacher told the class, "The volume is a little high - I'll have to use my remote control," while displaying a remote control unit to the class. Team interviews with teachers and the Dean of Students confirm that student behavior has improved over time. According to the Dean of Students, the proportion of his time spent on student discipline has declined significantly since he was hired in 2006.

**13. New Leadership classrooms observed by the Team were equipped with basic educational resources. The Team saw few instances of student use of technology in the classrooms. Classroom displays showcased student work as well as motivational posters and other information. The school facility was clean and adequately maintained, although the Team observed several broken or cracked windows.**

All New Leadership classrooms observed by the Team contained basic resources such as books, writing supplies, whiteboards, overhead projectors, and one to three computers. As previously discussed, the science classrooms have no laboratories. The Team observed few examples of student use of computers (other than in the Virtual High School classroom) in either the smaller classrooms or in the standard sized classrooms.

Some classrooms showcased student work on the walls. All classrooms displayed the learning standards for their content areas. Some classrooms displayed motivational posters for goal setting, guidelines for classroom activities such as Collins Writing Focus Correction Areas, behavioral expectations, and career information. Classrooms, bathrooms, and hallways observed by the Team were clean and adequately maintained, although the Team observed broken or cracked windows at the end of several hallways.

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**RENEWAL QUESTION 2:  
IS THE SCHOOL A VIABLE ORGANIZATION?**

- 1. New Leadership has had a negative net asset balance for past three fiscal years. The school's negative net asset balance increased from negative \$88,737 in fiscal year 2005 to negative \$428,818 in the 2006 fiscal year. The school's independent auditor noted uncertainty about New Leadership's ability to continue as a going concern in the fiscal year 2006 audit report. The school projects a surplus for fiscal year 2007, which would reduce the negative net asset balance.**

New Leadership has received unqualified audit opinions in each of the independent auditor reports for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2006, June 30, 2005, and June 30, 2004. As shown in Table 9, below, according to the audited financial statements reviewed by the Team, the school has had a negative net asset balance in each of the past three fiscal years; the school's net asset balance decreased from \$306,328 in the 2003 fiscal year to negative \$428,818 as of June 30, 2006. The notes to the independent auditor report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2006 included a note regarding "uncertainty about the School's ability to continue as a going concern."

**Table 9. New Leadership Charter School  
Net Asset Balance History  
2003-2006**

	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005*</b>	<b>2006</b>
Unrestricted	\$ 39,115	(\$247,067)	(\$299,908)	(\$573,455)
Unrestricted invested in capital assets	196,534	162,710	141,171	144,637
Temporarily restricted	70,679	-	-	-
Total net assets	\$306,328	(\$ 84,357)	(\$ 88,737)	(\$428,818)
<i>*Amounts as restated in the June 30, 2006 audited financial statements. Data Source: Independent auditor reports for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2006; June 30, 2005; and June 30, 2004; 2003 results included the 2004 report.</i>				

The Board has a contract with NonProfit Data Management, LLC (NDM) for services that include maintenance and update of the school's general ledger, preparing budgets and projections, and periodic reporting of financial results to the School Director, Finance Committee, and the Board of Directors. The Team was informed by the President of NDM that the school was showing an unaudited surplus of \$79,299 for the 2007 fiscal year, which would reduce the negative net asset balance to \$349,519. He also noted that, depending on how the auditors treat grant monies received by the school, the surplus could be \$338,000 higher than currently projected.

The school is behind in its payments to vendors. As of June 30, 2007, the school's unaudited balance sheet indicates an accounts payable liability of \$322,930. (This amount represented a small decrease from \$340,612 the prior year.) According to NDM, the school has worked out a schedule for making its accounts payable current by the fourth quarter of the current fiscal year.

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According to the Board of Trustees, the school has had a line of credit with Bank of America. Due to the school's financial condition, New Leadership has paid only interest on the amount borrowed. The school is in the process of working with Union Bank to restructure the loan by turning some of the principal amount into a term loan and to obtain a new line of credit to meet the school's need for operating cash.

- 2. New Leadership reported that the school's enrollment at the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year was 525 students and that the school had a waitlist for grades 6 through 10. The school's enrollment exceeds the maximum enrollment of 375 authorized by the DOE.**

Enrollment information provided to the Team by New Leadership indicates that during the 2006-2007 school year, New Leadership's student enrollment that ranged from a low of 417 students in November 2006 to a high of 460 students in June 2007. The Director reported to the Team that the school had 525 students enrolled at the time of the renewal inspection visit. However, DOE documents indicate that New Leadership's maximum enrollment under its charter is only 375 students. In an April 9, 2006 letter to the Board, the DOE Commissioner stated:

On March 28, 2006, the Charter School Office at the Department of Education received [a] final amendment request from you on behalf of the Board of Trustees of New Leadership Charter School. This amendment request proposes an enrollment increase for New Leadership from the current chartered maximum of 375 students to a new maximum of 525 students. *The school, without prior approval of this amendment, pre-enrolled 525 students for the 2005-2006 school year.* Because a recommendation to the Board of Education on this amendment was delayed during the current school year while the school completed the Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process, *the school was also allowed to pre-enroll 525 students for 2006-2007.* [Emphasis added.]

Board members interviewed by the Team indicated that New Leadership disagrees with the DOE's position regarding the school's authorized enrollment. They stated that the school was originally chartered to enroll 525 students. However, the school was relocated for 2.5 years during its first charter term by the Springfield School Department to a facility outside of Springfield. According to the Board members interviewed, the relocation of the school impeded the school's growth; when New Leadership's charter was renewed in 2003, the DOE mistakenly reduced the school's authorized enrollment to 375 students. The Board members indicated that New Leadership had always planned to expand to 525 students and believed that the school could do so after moving back to Springfield.

- 3. The New Leadership Board of Trustees meets regularly and is appropriately engaged in school governance. In 2006, the Board acted on its concerns regarding the adequacy of the school's leadership and the school's performance and financial problems by hiring a new Director and a new Academic Dean. The Board also changed the school's relationship with the school's financial services contractor to ensure Board control of the contract. The Board is currently working to secure a new facility for the school.**

**The Massachusetts National Guard does not participate on the Board, as anticipated by the Board's bylaws.**

The Team interviewed three of the six members of the Board including the Chair, Vice Chair, and the Treasurer; all three members had served on the Board for ten years. The Team's review of Board meeting minutes and meeting information packets indicated that the Board meets regularly and is engaged in overseeing the school's academic and financial performance. In the interview with the Team, the Board members demonstrated that they were knowledgeable about the school and its academic performance.

The Board members told the Team that the Board had not traditionally focused on management of school operations; instead, the Board had focused on external issues and on generating resources for the school on the assumption that the school's Director was attending to the school's management needs. However, they said that during the 2005-2006 school year, they learned that the school's academic performance was declining and that the former Director had not met the Board's expectations: for example, he had not applied for Title 1 for which the school was eligible. The Board then became more directly involved in managing the school: the Board hired a new School Director as well as an Academic Dean and contracted directly with NDM for financial services. The School Director, Academic Dean, and NDM report to the Board at every Board meeting.

Asked to identify the three largest issues considered by the Board last year, the Board members interviewed by the Team indicated that the Board was primarily focused on hiring a new head of school, working toward obtaining a new facility, and improving school finances. For the current school year, the Board members cited five major areas of emphasis: maintaining the school's recently improved financial performance; improving student performance, with special emphasis on improving student scores on the MCAS mathematics exams and addressing the needs of the Hispanic subgroup; obtaining a new school through the City of Springfield with Massachusetts School Building Assistance funding; securing renewal of the school's charter, and supporting the Director.

The Board members cited a number of shortcomings of the current facility, including the small cafeteria, inadequate common space and laboratories, and lack of a gymnasium. The Board has met with the Mayor of Springfield to discuss the possibility of acquiring a new facility, and is planning to meet with the Springfield Control Board. The Board members said that they are considering a capital campaign to help meet the funding requirements for a new facility. They also noted that a new building would be cost-effective for the City, which currently pays approximately \$1 million annually to Western New England College for rent.

The DOE *Year Nine Site Visit Report*, written in May 2007, observed: "The Board does not seem to be involved in developing long range strategic plans, priorities, or goal setting for the school, but rather, relies on administrators to develop such plans and to inform them of progress." Asked about strategic planning, the Board indicated that strategic planning had been done as part of the Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process and that the Board plans a strategic planning retreat in July 2008.

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The Board of Trustees consists of six members, fewer than the seven members required by the school's bylaws. The Board does not include a representative of the United States National Guard as required by the bylaws. The Board members explained that the Army National Guard had been a regular participant on the Board but that, due to the war in Iraq, the Guard could no longer devote resources to the school. However, the Board has been working to secure Guard participation on the Board in the future, and the members interviewed expressed their belief that the new Adjutant General of the Guard will be supportive of the school.

In response to the Team's question regarding Board committees, the Board members indicated that, since the Board is small, it does not need to use committees for its work. The school's bylaws require the Board to appoint from its members seven committees, including an Academic Standards/Curriculum Committee, each comprised of at least two Board members. The Board members interviewed identified only three committees: Finance, Site, and Personnel. Of these, the Finance Committee reportedly has three members; the other two committees consist of just one Board member each.

The Team reviewed the Board's evaluation of the Director. The Board used an evaluation protocol that examined six categories of performance: administrative ability and performance, school operations, parents, community, qualifications, and students. Each performance category contained subcategories. In preparing the evaluation, the Board solicited and obtained the views of stakeholders; the Team's review of the evaluation confirmed that parents and teachers had commented on the Director's performance. The Team concluded that the evaluation protocol was comprehensive and well designed.

**4. Members of New Leadership's leadership team have focused their efforts on improving the school's academic performance and establishing a positive school culture. They reported that their efforts to improve academic performance had reduced the frequency of student behavioral problems. They expressed a common understanding of their commitment to and accountability for achieving the goal of proficiency for all New Leadership students.**

New Leadership's School Improvement Plan identified "[i]mmediate and strategic hiring of required administrative and teaching staff" as one of the immediate actions to be undertaken by the school. The Plan also included the following objective for continued improvement: "NCLS leaders and teachers will continue building an effective leadership and management infrastructure." In August 2006, the school's new Director restructured New Leadership's administrative team. The core leadership team now consists of the Director, the Academic Director, the Dean of Students, the Middle School and High School Coordinators, the Dean of Guidance, and the Special Education Director. The leadership team meets every Monday at a scheduled time and at other times during the week if necessary.

The team met with these members of the leadership team as well as the Parent Coordinator, a position created in April 2006. Those interviewed stated that the leadership team, led by the Director, has focused on two major issues: improving academic performance and establishing a positive school culture. (It should be noted that the DOE *Year Nine Site Visit Report* found that New Leadership had demonstrated weak and inconsistent student performance as measured by



the MCAS and that the school's climate and culture was improving.) The Director noted that the school needed to control student behavior in order to increase the time spent on learning. Other administrators emphasized that as the school increased its focus on improving instruction and student performance, student behavioral problems decreased. All agreed that the ultimate objective was student proficiency. Related to this objective, the Academic Director noted that she and the Middle School and High School Coordinators continually evaluate teachers against high standards. At the weekly leadership team meetings, the discussion reportedly focuses on student performance, teachers' effectiveness and needs for support, and the implications of the most recent assessment data for classroom restructuring. As a group, the leadership team expressed a common understanding regarding their joint commitment to and accountability for achieving the goal of academic proficiency for all New Leadership students.

- 5. The percentage of New Leadership teachers identified as Highly Qualified under the No Child Left Behind Act has significantly increased in the past year to 82 percent. School records show that four teachers who lacked certification left the school involuntarily during the 2006-2007 school year. The rate of voluntary teacher departures was 11 percent in the 2006-2007 school year.**

New Leadership currently employs 44 full-time teachers with an average of 6.9 years of teaching experience, according to data provided to the team by the school. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires all teachers of core academic subjects (English, reading/language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography) to be Highly Qualified under NCLB guidelines. Data provided to the team by the school show that the percentage of New Leadership teachers meeting the Highly Qualified standard increased from 58 percent in the 2006-2007 school year to 82 percent in the 2007-2008 school year. According to the school, nine percent of the school's teachers involuntarily left their positions during the 2006-2007 school year because they lacked certification. The rate of voluntary teacher departures dropped slightly from 13.6 percent in the 2005-2006 school year to 11 percent in the 2006-2007 school year, according to data reported by the school.

- 6. New Leadership provides a professional development program focused on the school's analysis of student achievement data and the school's assessment of teacher training needs. During observations, the Team found that New Leadership teachers used instructional approaches acquired through the school's professional development program. As required by New Leadership's School Improvement Plan, the school has taken steps to train the staff responsible for identifying and meeting the needs of students who are English Language Learners.**

The DOE *Year Nine Site Visit Report* noted that in previous years, teachers had described "being overwhelmed with the amount of professional development and identified a lack of connection between training, implementation, and follow-up." In an interview with the Team, the Academic Director confirmed that the professional development program offered at New Leadership had contained too many different topics and lacked a school-wide focus prior to the 2005-2006 school year. The Academic Director told the Team that the school's professional development program has since evolved into a program that targets the training needs of teachers based on an analysis of student achievement data and reports. Training in the Program Improvement

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Mapping (PIM) process for the school's leadership not only led to the formation of a quality School Improvement Plan but also identified school-wide professional development needs. Since the new Director was hired, the school's leadership team regularly discusses the training needs of the faculty based on data gleaned from walkthroughs and observations, according to the Academic Director. From these discussions, the leadership team obtains additional information to consider with student achievement data for the establishment of professional development priorities for all school staff.

In August 2006, New Leadership provided training to all teachers in the BBC model and the John Collins Writing Program. The school leadership subsequently implemented the BBC model for all staff: during the 2006-2007 school year, all teachers were expected to use the BBC model to organize their lesson plans and to focus the start of each day's lesson. As previously noted, the Team observed the BBC model in use in the classrooms observe; the Team also saw evidence of the John Collins Writing Program in all English classes observed as well as in some other classes.

During the 2006-2007 school year, New Leadership arranged for CPI to train staff in the use of student achievement data on a monthly basis; CPI provided a full set of customized MCAS data reports as well as a list of target standards for use in the training. This CPI training is scheduled to continue through the 2007-2008 school year.

The Team reviewed New Leadership's Professional Development Calendars for the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years. Staff training covering a range of topics was provided by school administrators during two weeks before the start of both school years. According to New Leadership administrators and teachers, the school has provided additional, embedded teacher training during additional in-service days, grade-level team meetings, subject matter team meetings, and whole staff meetings; the school has also provided staff with individual coaching and mentoring.

New Leadership's School Improvement Plan included the following objective: "A comprehensive English Language Learning program will address the educational needs of students determined to be English Language Learners." The School Improvement Plan listed three strategies for achieving this objective, one of which was for selected staff to participate in professional development training offered by the DOE Office of English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement. As previously discussed, two New Leadership staff had recently received training in the MELA-O at the time of the site visit.

**7. New Leadership is required to use the teacher evaluation protocol adopted by the Springfield Public Schools. The Team's review of formal teacher evaluations conducted by the school showed them to be clear and informative. New Leadership uses a variety of assessment methods in addition to the Springfield protocol to evaluate teacher performance.**

As a Horace Mann Charter School, New Leadership is required to comply with the collective bargaining agreements of Springfield Public Schools. Under these agreements, teachers with fewer than three years of experience are formally evaluated each year; teachers with three of



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years of experience are formally evaluated every other year depending on whether their social security numbers end in odd or even numbers.

The Team reviewed nine teacher evaluations: four were evaluations of middle school teachers, and five were evaluations of high school teachers. All evaluations made significant use of the narrative section of the Springfield Public Schools protocol. The comments contained in the evaluations were pointedly succinct: for example, one evaluation stated, “After several modeling sessions with the coordinator, I saw no evidence of student engagement strategies,” and another stated, “The aim of the BBC agenda was not aligned with the standard under study.” The “needs improvement” category was checked in approximately 50 percent of the evaluations reviewed by the Team, and the corresponding narrative sections of the evaluations contained clear recommendations for the teacher to follow.

According to the Academic Director, the formal teacher evaluations of New Leadership teachers have represented a fraction of the ongoing evaluations conducted weekly and sometimes daily at the school. Middle and High School Coordinators and the Academic Director visit classrooms every day, often using the Lorraine Monroe Leadership Institute’s short form for informal observations of teachers or a Learning Walk protocol specifically developed for New Leadership to evaluate teachers informally. The Lorraine Monroe form specifically evaluates the BBC classroom structure, while the Learning Walk protocol judges classrooms more globally. The Team reviewed several versions of each protocol and found the comments to be unambiguous in tone and content.

According to the Director, several teachers chose not return to New Leadership in the 2007-2008 school year because of the close scrutiny of the administration and negative evaluations. The Director noted the difficulties confronted by the school in removing an underperforming teacher because of the school’s obligation to comply with union guidelines, but he emphasized his commitment to demanding high-quality instruction from New Leadership staff.

To comply with a new collective bargaining agreement between the Springfield Public Schools and Springfield teachers, Springfield has developed a new evaluation system, entitled the Springfield Teachers Evaluation and Development System (STEDS), and has included New Leadership administrators in STEDS trainings, most recently on September 27, 2007. Under the STEDS system, teachers are rated against seven principles including Currency in the Curriculum, Effective Planning and Assessment of Curriculum and Instruction, Effective Management of Classroom Environment, Effective Instruction, Promotion of High Standards and Expectations for Student Achievement, Promotion of Equity and Appreciation of Diversity, and Fulfillment of Professional Responsibilities. If a teacher’s performance relative to any of these principles is rated as not meeting expectations, a Professional Improvement Plan is developed for the teacher.

- 8. Teachers reported that the efforts of the current leadership team have improved the school climate, student behavior, the quality of instruction, and student performance at New Leadership. They confirmed that they use assessment data to determine student needs, place students in groupings, and make adjustments to curriculum. They also discussed their efforts to encourage students to attend college.**

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The Team conducted a focus group consisting of 10 New Leadership teachers whose subject areas included English, history, math, and science taught in grades 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12. Their teaching experience at New Leadership ranged from less than one year to five years. The teachers interviewed told the Team that the new Director has had a positive effect on the climate at New Leadership and that the work of the school's leadership team has led to a significant reduction in the number of student behavior problems at the school. They also said that prior to the hiring of the current Academic Director at the end of the 2004-2005 school year, the teacher turnover rate was high, and student performance was weak. According to the teachers, the Academic Director's focus on teaching and on holding teachers accountable for student achievement has improved the quality of their instruction as well as student performance.

The focus group teachers discussed their use of the detailed information produced by the Galileo system and the detailed MCAS reports from CPI to identify students' academic needs and adjust student groupings. They said that in addition to assessment data, New Leadership staff considered teacher, student, and parent feedback in arriving at a grouping decision for each student and that the Academic Director approved all such decisions. Teachers use their team meeting times to discuss student needs, grouping, and the materials needed to support those needs, according to those interviewed. Teachers in the standard-sized classrooms stated that they had sufficient space for student groupings. However, teachers in the half-sized classrooms said that they lacked sufficient space to group students or to use overhead projectors.

The teachers interviewed by the Team also elaborated on New Leadership's commitment to using differentiated instruction and to including Special Education students in the mainstream classrooms to the greatest possible extent. They stated that teachers report on student progress to parents through midterm progress reports and that each student is also given personal performance information. Students in grades 8 and above also prepare self-assessments.

The focus group teachers said that they emphasize the importance of college attendance in discussions with students about their options after graduating from high school. The teachers noted that New Leadership counselors arrange for student field trips to colleges and write college recommendations.

**9. New Leadership students feel that they are in an academically challenging school that will prepare them for college. Students reported to the Team that the New Leadership has intensified its focus on academics and that student behavior has improved in the last two years. All students interviewed by the Team expressed displeasure with the current facility and the desire for a "real" school building.**

The Team conducted a focus group of 12 New Leadership students representing 6 through 12 – i.e., all school grades. Although the students were initially subdued, they quickly became gregarious and appeared to welcome the opportunity to talk about their school. All students were respectful and courteous to the Team and to each other; they often commented on the prior statements of their schoolmates, a behavior that indicated to the Team that the students were listening carefully to one another.

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The students told the Team that they had enrolled in New Leadership, most often in grade 6, from a variety of schooling situations, including home schooling, parochial schools, and the Springfield Public Schools. Several students said that they had come to New Leadership because their siblings had attended the school and because their parents were pleased with the school. The students who had attended Springfield schools made statements such as, “The middle schools are too big and there are lots of fights and stuff.” Almost all of the students interviewed commented on New Leadership’s small size as a positive attribute that had attracted them and their parents.

A common theme from students who had been at New Leadership for several years was that the school has changed, especially over the past two years. One eleventh-grade student said that last year he had felt very prepared to take MCAS exams, whereas he hadn’t been prepared to do so on previous occasions. Several other students expressed the view that the school has become more academically challenging. According to an eleventh grader, “They won’t let you fail here. They’re on the phone to your parents if you miss one homework assignment.” Other students told the Team that their parents frequently called their teachers and had their teachers’ cell phone numbers. A twelfth grader student said, in reference to the assessments of essential standards discussed earlier in this report, “I like the tests that tell us how we’re doing on MCAS.” One student noted that if students who found their classes to be insufficiently challenging could talk to their teachers, who then consulted with the Academic Director; if the students’ work was sufficiently strong, the students were moved to more demanding classes. Other students noted that New Leadership’s Saturday School program had changed over the past year: one twelfth grader said that the program used to consist mostly of clubs but had become more academic in focus since the new Director had begun work at the school. Students also noted that student behavior at the school has improved. They indicated that they regard the school environment as safe and secure.

When Team members asked students how they would describe New Leadership, the students made it clear that they liked the school’s strong academics and small classes but that they wished they had a “real” school facility. An eleventh grader said that New Leadership was academically strong and that all of the students knew that they would attend college, but that the student’s friends in other schools sometimes made negative comments about the school facility. Other students expressed the desire for laboratories, lockers, a gymnasium, “a real lunch room,” and a second floor. They said that they would like to have their own school. Some students talked about the difficulty during the winter months of carrying their boots, coats, and books with them from class to class because of the lack of lockers at the school; they said that they could not leave their belongings anywhere because of the risk that they would be stolen.

The focus group students discussed the integration of leadership training into all of their classes, reflecting the school’s mission to promote leadership. Although they were able to articulate some of the leadership skills they were taught, most of those interviewed felt that the school’s real leadership training took place in the classroom on a daily basis. One student commented that New Leadership students are expected to behave maturely, to treat each other with respect, and to be responsible.

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The students appeared to have thought through the issue of whether or not to stay at New Leadership, especially after grade 8, by weighing the costs and benefits. All of the students told the Team that they planned to attend college and that New Leadership offered them the best opportunity to do so; the school's facility was the biggest disadvantage they cited. Nevertheless, the students all appeared convinced that New Leadership was the best choice for them.

**10. The four parents interviewed by the Team expressed satisfaction with New Leadership's teacher-parent communications, small class sizes, improved academic program, and heightened expectations for student behavior. They expressed strong dissatisfaction with the school's facility and said that the school needs additional extracurricular activities and electives. New Leadership recently hired a Parent Coordinator/Community Relations Manager who coordinates communications among students, teachers, and parents.**

The Team met with two parents of the 15 parents invited by New Leadership to participate in the focus group. One of the two parents had a child who received Special Education services from the school. The Team requested additional parent meetings and was subsequently able to meet with the school's Parent Coordinator, who had three children enrolled in New Leadership, and with an additional parent at a third meeting. The children of the parents interviewed by the Team were in grades 8 through 11.

All four parents expressed satisfaction with New Leadership. They offered strong praise for the school's teacher-parent communications: all cited instances in which the school informed them immediately regarding issues such as their children's behavioral problems, missing work, or academic progress. Although New Leadership subscribes to Edline for communications among teachers, parents, and students, parents reported that the system is rarely updated and that they do not use it to obtain information regarding the work or progress of their students. The parents were unaware of whether a parent-teacher organization existed at New Leadership; one parent stated that she was sometimes the only parent who attended school meetings. Another parent noted that there is currently no school newsletter.

Nevertheless, all four parents said that New Leadership teachers made an extra effort to reach out to students and parents and that they provided their children with the support they needed to succeed academically. The parent of the child receiving Special Education services told the Team that when her child enrolled in New Leadership, he had a successful school year for the first time. Parents also commented positively on the school's small class sizes as well as the school's increasingly challenging academic program and the gradual improvement in school expectations for student behavior over the past two years. When asked if they knew about the performance of New Leadership students on MCAS exams, all four parents responded that they knew that the school's performance had been poor in the past and had recently improved. In general, the parents said that they felt that their children were safe at New Leadership.

The parents interviewed by the Team expressed strong dissatisfaction with New Leadership's lack of a school facility providing students with typical school features such as a gymnasium and lockers. One parent said that the school needed more extracurricular activities and elective classes. Another parent expressed concern about teacher turnover.

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As noted above, one of the parents interviewed was hired by the school as a full-time Parent Coordinator/Community Relations Manager at the end of the 2006-2007 school year. In addition to coordinating communications among students, teachers, and parents, his role includes public relations, marketing and promotions, parent workshops, fund-raising, community service and civic responsibility projects, classroom support, youth business and entrepreneur workshops, and career awareness/college exposure. The Team learned that the Parent Coordinator/Community Relations Manager is viewed positively by the staff and is frequently included in meetings of students, teachers, and parents regarding academic and behavioral issues.

**11. New Leadership has established effective procedures for monitoring student behavior throughout the school day; the staff's collaborative approach to supervision contributes to the positive, respectful environment described by students and observed by the Team. The rate of suspensions and expulsions reported by the school declined significantly from the 2005-2006 school year to the 2006-2007 school year. The Team observed that all entrances to the New Leadership building were locked or monitored and that the building is fully accessible.**

The Team observed that New Leadership staff actively supervised students throughout the school day: the Team observed adult supervision by New Leadership staff outside the school when students arrived in the morning and were dismissed at the end of the day; there was also constant supervision provided within the building, especially in the hallways, during all class changes and lunch periods. Student behavior in the hallways was observed to be lively but generally orderly. The team also observed student gatherings in the school yard and a fire drill conducted by the Springfield Fire Department. At both gatherings, student behavior was calm and respectful; the younger students seemed comfortable among the older students. In interviews, teachers and administrators told the Team that New Leadership staff demonstrated their commitment to the students and to each other by being present in the hallways during class changes. As previously discussed, students told the Team that they feel safe and secure at the school. The Team observed that the staff's collaborative approach to supervision contributed to the safe, secure school environment experienced by the school's students.

As previously noted, New Leadership's School Improvement Plan included the following continued improvement objective: "NCLS leaders and teachers will continue building an effective leadership and management infrastructure." One of the strategies listed under this objective was as follows: "Develop revised policies for attendance and discipline and train teachers in their use." The Team reviewed the school's 2006-2007 Code of Conduct, which contains attendance and discipline policies. The Dean of Students told the Team that he provided Code of Conduct training to all school staff in August 2007. Teachers were directed to review classroom expectations and the Code of Conduct with students each day during the first week of the school year. To reinforce the importance of discipline, the Dean of Students and the Assistant Deans walk through the building continuously throughout the school day to monitor behavior in the hallways and classrooms. The Dean of Students reported that he meets with grade-level teams on Mondays to discuss students exhibiting behavior problems and possible approaches to solving the problems.

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The Team's review of the rates of student suspensions and expulsions reported in New Leadership's most recent annual reports indicates that these rates declined dramatically from the 2005-2006 school year to the 2006-2007 school year. For the 2005-2006 school year, the school reported 15 internal suspensions, 150 external suspensions, and no expulsions. For the 2006-2007 school year, the school reported 18 suspensions (the school did not specify whether these suspensions were internal or external) and one expulsion.

The Team observed that school staff kept all exterior doors locked other than the front door during the school day and that office staff continuously monitored the front door. Team members were not asked to sign in or wear visitor badges during the four-day visit. The Team confirmed that New Leadership's facility is totally accessible: it has handicapped access ramps, wheelchair accessible bathrooms, and fire alarm systems with horns and flashing lights.



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

- 1. The Team found evidence that New Leadership is fulfilling its mission to prepare its students for college. The school reported that 86 percent of the school's recent graduates planned to attend four-year or two-year colleges. Consistent with its mission statement, the school has recently instituted programs and policies designed to help students learn leadership skills and behaviors. New Leadership has not received DOE approval for an Accountability Plan during the current charter period, nor has the school tracked and reported on progress toward Accountability Plan objectives.**

New Leadership's mission statement is as follows:

The mission of New Leadership Charter School is to develop young people in the sixth through twelfth grades morally, mentally, and physically and to imbue them with the highest ideals of duty, honor, and loyalty. Graduates will be academically prepared to attend the college or university of their choice. They will embody three cardinal principles of leadership: vision, integrity and compassion."

Previous sections of this report have discussed New Leadership's curriculum and activities designed to prepare and encourage students to attend college. Students in grades 10 through 12 are required to take a College Advisory class; they also receive college information from materials maintained in the Student Services Office and through visits to the school by college representatives. Through the school's guidance counselor, students are able to receive preparation for the PSAT and SAT exams as well as assistance in college and scholarship applications. The Virtual High School program offers students the opportunity to take more varied and challenging courses than are available at the school; these courses include economics, statistics, creative writing, and world religions, according to the school's Application for Renewal. The Application for Renewal cites several other college preparation opportunities for New Leadership students: SAT preparation courses and scholarship opportunities offered through Mass Mutual Achievers, a program sponsored by MassMutual Financial Group, and Project Jump Start, a school partnership with American International College (AIC) that enables eligible twelfth-grades students to take courses at AIC. New Leadership's *2006-2007 Annual Report* stated that 54 percent of the senior class would be attending four-year colleges and that an additional 32 percent would be attending two-year colleges; the plans of the remaining 14 percent were unknown.

New Leadership's School Improvement Plan contains the following improvement objective: "Students will build character and develop leadership qualities as described in the school's mission statement." The Team found that New Leadership has recently taken steps to strengthen the school's leadership focus, in accordance with the school's mission statement. The Director told the Team that he intends to increase the emphasis on leadership in the school's curriculum and activities.

As discussed in the setting section of this report, New Leadership was originally created through a partnership between the Urban League of Springfield, Inc. and the Massachusetts Army



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National Guard. The National Guard provided the school with a Leadership Academy until 2002, when the demands of the Iraq war required the National Guard to end its participation in the school.

When the Dean of Students was hired in August 2006, he enlisted the involvement of the Connecticut National Guard in the school. In the summers of 2006 and 2007, with the training support and cooperation of the Connecticut National Guard, the Dean of Students organized a weekend camp for 20 New Leadership boys with the goals of developing fitness, discipline, academic preparation, and testing their leadership reaction to different scenarios.

The current Director and the Dean of Students have recently instituted other leadership programs as well. Although the Team found little formal documentation of these programs, the Team's interviews with the Director and Dean of Students revealed that the school has devoted considerable thought and effort to building students' leadership skills. For example, the Team learned that the Dean of Students organized a program called "Wall Street" during the 2006-2007 school year in order to help at-risk students learn leadership skills. He selected 15 boys, describing them as "the toughest kids who needed help," from a pool of 40 to 45 eligible boys in grades 9 through 12 with a minimum GPA of 2.0; the candidates were required to be interviewed. The students selected for the Wall Street program had to maintain passing grades and appropriate behavior in order to remain in the program. The Wall Street group met with the Dean of Students three or four times each week during or after the school day to discuss the issues that the students faced. In these discussions, the Dean of Students reportedly focused on students' self-knowledge, awareness of their environment, assertiveness, confidence, and appearance. According to the Dean of Students, the Wall Street program resulted in behavior changes, improved dress, and good grades on the part of most of the participating students; four Wall Street students maintained passing grades, passed the MCAS exams, and received free college tuition. At the end of the school year, ten of the 15 participants had met all requirements and were permitted to remain in the Wall Street program. For the 2006-2007 school year, New Leadership has continued the Wall Street program for high school boys and started a similar Wall Street program for high school girls.

The Dean of Students also described "leadership days," a practice instituted in the 2006-2007 school year to help certain students develop leadership skills and behaviors. Leadership days consisted of "dress-up" days on which certain students were required to wear a dress shirt and tie to school instead of the school uniform. The Dean of Students told the Team that he had communicated to all students participating that dress up day was a privilege but that he had selected students who had made poor behavioral choices as well as students who were doing well in school to participate in leadership days. For students in the former category, the selection was intended to allow students to show that they could change. Five or six students participated in leadership days each day for approximately 100 days during the school year. The Dean of Students reported that most students participating in leadership days exhibited positive changes in their behavior and that all parents supported the practice of requiring students to dress up on certain days.

New Leadership has instituted leadership training program, which program documents reviewed by the Team referred to variously as Leadership Training and Leadership Camp, for all students

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in grades 6 to 12. (The school's Application for Renewal refers to this program as Leadership Academy.) The stated mission of the program is to cultivate within young people the potential to become civic leaders in their school community and beyond; the program employs a leadership curriculum to develop communication, problem solving, critical thinking, group process, and leadership skills. This twice-yearly training was provided during two two-day field trips in the 2006-2007 school year. The Team reviewed the schedule for the field trip that took place in April 2007. The schedule showed that students in certain grades received leadership training at Camp Atwater led by Massachusetts ROTC cadets as well as school staff; older students took a field trip to Yale University, and all students received leadership classes covering topics such as leadership, goal-setting, character and values, and the book entitled *What Color is Your Parachute?*

Finally, the school has revised its Parent Handbook to include 10 leadership principles as well as a school-parent-student contract requiring all signers to agree to "act in all ways according to the six pillars of leadership." The Director reported that counselors asked all new parents and students to sign the contract as they registered for this school year and would ask those who had not done so to sign the contract during the school's forthcoming open house.

As previously noted, New Leadership has not received DOE approval for an Accountability Plan during the current charter period, nor has the school tracked and reported on progress toward Accountability Plan objectives. According to the DOE *Year Nine Site Visit Report*, New Leadership submitted a draft Accountability Plan to the DOE in 2003 as part of its Application for Renewal; the school did not receive DOE approval for this plan and did not report on the objectives listed in the plan in the school's annual reports for 2003-2004, 2004-2005, or 2005-2006. The school submitted a draft Accountability Plan to the DOE as part of the documentation submitted to the DOE before the year nine site visit; however, this plan had not been formally approved by the New Leadership Board. Although the school's *2006-2007 Annual Report* included a section entitled "Accountability Plan Goals and Objectives," this section in the report did not reference any specific Accountability Plan goals or objectives, nor does the school's Application for Renewal. The Application for Renewal does include a proposed Accountability Plan, discussed later in this report.

**2. New Leadership has reportedly disseminated its best practices at the Step Up Springfield forum, a community-wide campaign to help Springfield Public School students reach proficiency in their academics and character development.**

Unlike Commonwealth charter schools, Horace Mann charter schools are not required by the charter school law, M.G.L. c. 71, §89, to provide models for replication and best practices to the commissioner and to other public schools in the district where the charter school is located; this responsibility rests with the school district. Nevertheless, New Leadership has disseminated the school's best practices at the Step Up Springfield forum and plans to host two dissemination programs in the 2006-2007 school year, according to the school's Application for Renewal.

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

**1. The Accountability Plan proposed by New Leadership does not meet the DOE *Guidelines for Writing Charter School Accountability Plans* in some respects.**

The DOE *Guidelines for Writing Charter School Accountability Plans* specify that a school's Accountability Plan should measure the most critical areas of the school's performance and should not attempt to measure all of the work performed by a charter school. Accordingly, the *Guidelines* encourage charter schools to "articulate a limited number of clear, critical, and carefully measured goals." The *Guidelines* set forth four general standards that a charter school Accountability Plan should meet: the plan should be rigorous and realistic, it should be measurable, it should measure outcomes rather than inputs, and it should be focused and manageable. Although the Accountability Plan proposed by New Leadership contains numerous measures that are quantifiable outcome measures, it does not meet the DOE *Guidelines* in some important respects. For example, The proposed Accountability Plan lists 25 separate academic measures to be applied over the five-year charter period with respect to five assessments: MCAS, PSAT, SAT, California Achievement Test, and portfolios. For some of these assessments, the proposed Accountability Plan lists a different measure, or two different measures, to be applied for each year of the charter period. The multiplicity of academic measures proposed is likely to complicate the task of tracking and reporting on the school's progress over the charter period.

Moreover, the measures listed for the PSAT and for portfolios are not outcome measures of academic progress. For example, the PSAT measure for year 1 states: "40% of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students will take the PSAT." The number of students taking the PSAT may be affected by multiple factors other than academic performance and, thus, may not reliably reflect the school's academic performance. The measures related to portfolios indicate that the school will establish a graduation requirement for portfolios for grade 12 students and that, in the subsequent year, "100% of graduating 12<sup>th</sup> grade students will achieve a passing score on their Leadership portfolio." If achieving a passing score on the portfolio is a requirement for graduation, then by definition all graduating seniors will have achieved the passing score on their portfolios. Thus, the measure as stated will not measure academic progress.

The organizational viability measures contained in the proposed Accountability Plan are also numerous; moreover, some are not readily quantifiable and appear to represent planning objectives rather than outcome measures. For example:

- "Budgets are prepared on time for BOT approval in April."
- "Financial policies and procedures are in place and followed without deviation."
- "BOT is made aware of and approves financial assumptions in each budget or major financial transaction."

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While these are appropriate planning objectives, they do not provide clear measurement standards; opinions may differ with respect to whether a budget was prepared “on time,” whether financial policies and procedures have been followed, and whether the Board of Trustees has been made aware of and approved every financial assumption underlying each budget or major financial transaction.

Finally, the following measure listed in the proposed Accountability Plan is problematic: “100% of BOT makes a donation to New Leadership.” Although this measure is the sole measure listed under “Fund-raising” and is intended to reflect the school’s progress toward the goal of achieving financial stability, it does not measure the Board’s success in raising funds for the school or in improving the school’s financial condition.

- 2. New Leadership’s improved MCAS scores indicate that school leaders have the capacity to improve the school’s academic performance over time. To ensure accountability and transparency, the school will need to monitor and report on a DOE-approved Accountability Plan over the next charter period. The school has strengthened its leadership team and has taken steps to improve its financial condition. Continued vigilance in these areas, combined with successful negotiations with the Springfield Public Schools and the City of Springfield to secure a new facility, will be critical to the school’s long-term viability.**

New Leadership’s recent academic progress, as shown by the school’s significantly improved MCAS scores, suggests that the school is capable of continued improvement under the leadership of the current Board and Director. As previously discussed, the school does not currently have a DOE-approved Accountability Plan; an approved Accountability Plan for the next charter period will be essential to guide the school and provide the necessary transparency and accountability for the school. In addition, during the site visit the Team learned about several notable school initiatives, such as the school’s analysis and use of data generated by external and internal assessments and the school’s efforts to build leadership skills within the school community, which have not been fully documented by the school. Documenting these initiatives in greater detail would enable New Leadership to provide stakeholders within and outside the school community with more thorough and accurate information regarding the school’s approach to fulfilling its mission.

As discussed in the previous findings of this report, the Board of Trustees has taken steps to strengthen the leadership team at New Leadership, including the appointment of a new Director at the outset of the 2006-2007 school year. The school has also improved its financial management, resulting in an operating surplus for the 2006-2007 school year. Attention to leadership and financial viability will continue to be critical to the school’s success.

The previous findings of this report have also discussed the fact that the school’s current facility is inadequate. The Memorandum of Understanding between New Leadership and the Springfield Public Schools (SPS) states in part, with respect to facilities:

SPS and New Leadership agree to work cooperatively to identify a long term, permanent site for the New Leadership school and related facilities (the “New Site”). SPS and New Leadership agree to work cooperatively to cause the City of

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Springfield . . . to construct at the New Site a long term, permanent school for New Leadership and appropriate facilities consistent with the SPS schools and related facilities. SPS and New Leadership acknowledge and agree that the identification of a New Site and the construction by the City of a new school and related facilities at the New Site is a priority of SPS and New Leadership.

Thus, New Leadership's ability to secure a satisfactory facility depends upon its negotiations with the Springfield Public Schools and the City of Springfield. The successful resolution of this issue will be key to New Leadership's capacity to fulfill its mission over the next charter period.

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**APPENDIX**

**SCHEDULE OF THE  
NEW LEADERSHIP CHARTER SCHOOL  
RENEWAL INSPECTION VISIT**

**Tuesday, October 2, 2007**

Time	Inspector 1	Inspector 2	Inspector 3	Inspector 4
7:30	Team Meeting			
8:30	Orientation with School Personnel			
8:45	Interview with the Principal			
9:30	Interview with Trustees/Board			
10:30	Observation Grade 6, English	Observation 7th Grade Math	Observation 6th Grade Science	Interview with Business and Finance
11:00	Observation 10th Grade History	Observation 9th Grade Algebra	Observation 11/12 AP English	
11:45	Lunch			
12:46	Observation 6th Grade English	Parent Focus Group		
1:45	Observation Grade 11 US Hist. 2	Observation Honors Chemistry	Observation 11/12 AP English	
3:00	On Site Document Review and/or Interview			
4:00	Corporate Work or further Interview as necessary			
5:00	Close			

**Wednesday, October 3, 2007**

7:30	Team Meeting			
8:30	Teacher Focus Group			
9:15	Interview with Leadership Team			
10:00	Observation 8th Grade Math	Observation MCAS Prep 11th Grade	Observation 11/12 Grade Calculus	
10:32	Observation Grade 6 Math	Observation 8th English	Observation 10th English	
11:00	Observation Biology 10	Observation 11th/12th Chemistry	Observation 7th Math	
11:25	Observation 10th English	Observation 10th College Advisory	Observation Art, Grade 6	
12:00	Lunch			
1:00	Observation 7th Grade English	Observation 9th Grade English	Observation Grade 6, History	
1:45	Student Focus Group			
2:45	On-Site Document Review and/or Interview			
3:45	Corporate Work or further Interview as necessary			
4:45	Close			

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**Thursday, October 4, 2007**

Time	Inspector 1	Inspector 2	Inspector 3	Inspectors 4 and 5
7:30	Team Meeting			
8:00	Observation Grade 8 Science			
9:00	Observation Math 6			
10:00	Observation Grade 9 Algebra	Observation Grade 10	Observation History, Grade 8	
10:30	Observation Grade 10, Geometry	Observation Algebra 2	Observation Honors History, 11/12	
11:00	Observaton A Studio Art, Grade 11/12			
12:00	Lunch			
1:00	Observation Grade 8, Math			
1:45	Observation Spanish			
1:45	Observation Grade 8 Math			
1:45	Observation Reading, Grade 8			
2:45	On-Site Document Review Corporate Work or further Interview as necessary			
	Close			

**Friday, October 5, 2007**

7:30	Team Meeting
8:00	On-Site Document Review Corporate Work or further Interview as necessary
12:00	Closing Meeting with Director