

Renewal Inspection Report

RISING TIDE
CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL
PLYMOUTH, MA

October 16 - 19, 2007

Rising Tide Charter Public School
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rising Tide Charter Public School (Rising Tide) is a middle school located in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Rising Tide's mission statement is as follows:

The Rising Tide Charter School will provide a strong academic program rooted in the history of Plymouth, Massachusetts. Our students will harvest opportunity from the practice of language, the reasoning of mathematics, the analysis of science and the reflection of history. We want children to hone skills through rigorous studies, but skills alone do not make a whole education. The Rising Tide Charter School will also cultivate within its students a sense of belonging to our community, a tie with those who have come before them and a seed of continuity between the Plymouth of today and the Plymouth of tomorrow. The Rising Tide Charter School will graduate capable and prepared young adults who have already sown within themselves a sense of place and belonging that will be the bounty of the future, whether they remain among us or venture from our harbor.

Rising Tide opened in September 1998 with an enrollment of 162 students in grades 5 through 7; the school added grade 8 in September 1999. As of October 2007, Rising Tide enrolled 305 students in grades 5 through 8; 256 (84 percent) of the students came from Plymouth, and small numbers of students resided in 13 other communities, principally on the South Shore and Cape Cod.

According to Department of Education (DOE) data for the 2006-2007 school year, 88.7 percent of Rising Tide students were White, 3.7 percent were African American/Black, 2.7 were Multi-Race, 2.3 percent were Hispanic, and 2.0 percent were Native American. Compared to the demographics of students statewide, Rising Tide, like Plymouth, enrolled a higher percentage of White students and lower percentages of African American/Black students and Hispanic students, as well as lower percentages of students categorized as First Language Not English, Limited English Proficient, Low Income, and Special Education. The demographics of students at Rising Tide are comparable in many respects to those of students in Plymouth, with the exception that the percentages of students categorized as Low Income and Special Education are lower at Rising Tide than in the Plymouth school district.

In 2004, Rising Tide terminated its contractual relationship with its private management company, Imagine Schools (formerly Beacon Education Management), and subsequently assumed full control of school operations beginning in the 2004-2005 school year. In February 2006, the Commissioner of Education approved the school's request to add 45 minutes of instructional time to its school day, and on June 1, 2007, the Commissioner of Education approved the school's request to change the school's name to Rising Tide Charter Public School.

As of October 2007, Rising Tide's Board of Trustees had 10 members, five fewer than required by the school's bylaws. Since the 2004-2005 school year, when the school terminated its relationship with Imagine Schools, the Board has undertaken efforts to strengthen its capacity to oversee Rising Tide's operations and performance. The current Board committees are

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Executive, Nominating and Governance, Finance and Audit, Strategic Planning, Development, Technology, Facilities, and Curriculum.

Rising Tide is located on two floors of a leased building on Resnik Road in Plymouth, near several commercial and industrial buildings. The facility lacks lockers, playing fields, changing rooms, showers, and, according to the Board of Trustees, adequate convocation space. Through an arrangement with the nearby Boys and Girls Club of Plymouth, Rising Tide uses the Club's playing fields and facilities for physical education classes and sports activities. The Board of Trustees is aware of the school's facility needs and has designated a portion of the school's net asset balance to address these needs.

Rising Tide has submitted an Accountability Plan to the DOE each year but has not received DOE approval of the Accountability Plans. However, the school's annual reports have reported on progress relative to Accountability Plan goals and measures. Prior to the renewal site visit, the Team was provided with an Accountability Plan dated 2003 and an Accountability Plan dated 2005; the Accountability Plan goals and measures on which Rising Tide's Application for Renewal reports are drawn from both Accountability Plans. The following report discusses Rising Tide's performance relative to the goals and measures cited in the school's Application for Renewal.

The Renewal Inspection Team (Team) spent four days on site at the Rising Tide from October 16 through October 19, 2007. The Team also obtained and reviewed Rising Tide data and documents prior to the renewal site visit and on site.

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

MCAS Results

1. Rising Tide met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements for ELA and Mathematics for all students in the aggregate and for the only subgroup large enough for data to be reported, White students, each year in the current charter period.
2. The performance of Rising Tide students on the MCAS ELA exams improved for grade 5 and grade 7 but fell for grade 6 and grade 8 during the charter period. The most dramatic improvement on the MCAS ELA exam was shown by Rising Tide students in grade 7: the percentage of students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on the Grade 7 MCAS ELA exam increased from 66 percent in 2003 to 81 percent in 2007.
3. Over the five-year charter period from 2003 to 2007, the performance of Rising Tide students on MCAS ELA exam has been mixed in comparison to that of Plymouth students but has consistently met or exceeded the results of students statewide.

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4. Rising Tide's Accountability Plan includes two measures that relate to students' comparative performance on the Grade 7 MCAS ELA exam. The school met the measure requiring Rising Tide students to meet or exceed state averages on the MCAS ELA exam. The school did not meet the measure requiring Rising Tide students to obtain scores that were equal to or better than those of sending districts on the exam.
5. The performance of Rising Tide students on the Grade 6 and Grade 8 MCAS Mathematics exams did not show an improvement trend over the five-year charter period of 2003 to 2007. The school's Grade 5 and Grade 7 MCAS Mathematics exam results improved over the two-year period of 2006 to 2007. Overall, 50 percent or more of Rising Tide students in grades 6, 7, and 8 did not demonstrate proficiency on the 2007 MCAS Mathematics exams.
6. Rising Tide's overall performance on the MCAS Mathematics exams has been mixed in comparison to the performance of Plymouth students and students statewide on the same exams during the five-year charter period of 2003 to 2007. However, Rising Tide's grade 8 students have consistently performed better on this exam than their counterparts in Plymouth and statewide.
7. Rising Tide's Accountability Plan includes two measures that relate to students' comparative performance on the Grade 6 and Grade 8 MCAS Mathematics exam. The school met the component of the measure requiring grade 8 students to meet or exceed state averages on the MCAS Mathematics exam, but the school did not meet the component of the same measure pertaining to the performance of grade 6 students. Similarly, the school met the component of the measure requiring grade 8 students to equal or exceed the scores of students in sending districts on the exam, but the school did not meet the component of the same measure pertaining to the performance of grade 6 students.

Other Assessments

8. Rising Tide administered the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition (Stanford 9) until 2006, when the school began to administer the TerraNova. The school has not met its Accountability Plan measures of student improvement on nationally normed reading and mathematics achievement tests. The school has implemented new internal benchmarks and Quarterly Student Reports that are being refined. The school also uses other internal assessments, including a rubric to evaluate student speeches.
9. Rising Tide distributes MCAS and other assessment data to teachers and has implemented several programs designed to improve student performance. However, the school lacks systematic procedures for using refined data analysis to track the progress of, or effectiveness of school interventions for, students who have not achieved proficiency on the MCAS exams. The school's internal benchmarks are still being developed and calibrated. Teachers meet and share information with each other regarding student performance on tests, quizzes, and other internal assessments.

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Curriculum and Classroom Observations

10. Rising Tide offers an academically strong program. The school's curriculum has been developed and documented in all subject areas and grades. However, the curriculum documents reviewed by the Team were not consistently aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, and the Team observed significant variations in the format and level of completeness of the curriculum documents reviewed. The school's recently adopted internal benchmarks have not been calibrated by grade level, as required by the school's Accountability Plan. The school has already met three of the five curriculum-related Accountability Plan measures that are to be achieved by 2008.
11. Rising Tide maintains a well-staffed program for meeting the needs of students with disabilities. All Special Education services other than reading, occupational therapy, and speech therapy are provided in the classroom. Rising Tide also provides assistance to students with identified learning gaps through the Advisory program, Math Lab, and Writer's Workshop.
12. Overall, teacher instruction at Rising Tide was observed to be effective and challenging. Many classes observed were teacher-directed. The Team observed that students were well-behaved and that teacher-student interactions were respectful. The Team also saw some evidence that the school's inquiry-based approach to instruction is being implemented; students in some classes were highly interactive. Classrooms observed by the Team were well equipped and had access to technology. All classrooms were clean, well-lit, and pleasant, and some classrooms displayed student work.

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

1. Rising Tide's financial condition is sound; its net asset balance has consistently grown each fiscal year from June 30, 2003 through June 30, 2006. The Board of Trustees has designated \$314,595 of the school's net assets to meet future facility needs.
2. The Rising Tide Board of Trustees meets regularly and is appropriately engaged in school governance. The Board is working to increase its membership; its current membership of ten is below the 15 members required by the school's bylaws. The Board has established eight committees to support its work and continues to work on formalizing and documenting its structures and procedures. The Board has not completed development of a strategic plan. Rising Tide has met most, but not all, of the Board-related measures in the school's Accountability Plan.
3. Rising Tide's enrollment has increased over the current charter period, and it maintains a sizeable waitlist. Rising Tide has met the measures in its Accountability Plan relating to student enrollments and attendance rates.
4. Rising Tide has broadened the school's leadership capacity and has established clearly defined leadership positions that are well understood by staff. The school has established

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several organizational mechanisms through which teachers participate directly in decision-making. The school's distributive leadership model has fostered a shared sense of responsibility and accountability for the school's success among administrators and staff.

5. Rising Tide reports that 100 percent of its core academic teachers are Highly Qualified and that the school's staff turnover rate has greatly diminished since 2003.
6. Rising Tide offers a range of professional development programs and activities; training is also provided through informal communications. The school has begun a year-long professional development effort in the area of inquiry-based instruction.
7. Rising Tide evaluates all teachers through a two-step process of annual goal-setting and classroom observations. Teacher observations are also conducted informally throughout the school year. The four completed teacher observations reviewed by the Team were informative and reflective; they did not reference standards for the inquiry-based instruction model adopted by the school or student assessment data.
8. Rising Tide teachers interviewed by the Team praised the school's supportive and collegial professional community. They cited the school's efforts to help students strengthen their ELA and mathematics skills in preparation for the MCAS exams. They also told the Team that they have access to the materials and resources they require and that they have positive relationships with their students. The teachers interviewed appeared knowledgeable about inquiry-based instruction.
9. Rising Tide students interviewed by the Team expressed strong satisfaction with their school: they stated that they feel respected, academically challenged, and safe at Rising Tide. They reported that they are expected to take responsibility for their own learning, that their teachers are supportive, and that they appreciated the school's approach to discipline and sponsorship of after-school activities. The older students expressed the desire for changing rooms, showers, and lockers at the school.
10. The parents of Rising Tide students value the school's challenging academic program, supportive staff, and emphasis on student responsibility for their own learning. They appreciate the school's welcoming and safe environment: they said that their children were treated with respect, felt safe at the school, and were encouraged to excel.
11. Rising Tide's facility is clean and well maintained. The facility lacks lockers, changing rooms, showers, playing fields, and adequate convocation space. The entrance to the building is monitored, and students are supervised during outdoor activities. However, the Team observed that the school's use of the outdoor parking lot for physical education classes could pose safety issues for students.

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

1. Rising Tide's challenging academic program, supportive school community, emphasis on community service, and involvement with Plymouth cultural organizations are consistent with the school's mission. The school has met several of the mission-related measures in its Accountability Plan. The school has drafted a revised mission statement for the next charter period.
2. Rising Tide has met 19 of the 31 measures listed in the school's Accountability Plan that were to be achieved during the current charter period and has already met more than half of the Accountability Plan measures that are to be achieved by 2008. Three Accountability Plan measures are not measurable, and the school did not report out data on one measure.
3. Rising Tide has undertaken dissemination efforts during the current charter period.

**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 Rising Tide contains an unmanageable number of goals and measures, many of which are unquantifiable. Several Board-related measures are problematic.
2. Rising Tide is well positioned for the next charter term in several important respects. However, the school has more work to do in the areas of data analysis, curriculum alignment, and inquiry-based instruction. Rising Tide is also considering expansion to include a high school, and how to address facility needs.

ABOUT THE RENEWAL PROCESS AND SITE VISIT REPORT

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

Once this application has met a minimal review of its clarity and coherence, the Department of Education 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 39 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. She has served as a Principal for 18 years, 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.

Dr. Tom Johnson has 43 years of involvement in public education. He has been an urban secondary school teacher and counselor; a professor of graduate policy studies; and chief personnel officer in three school districts in two states. He is a member of the advisory board of

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ASPIRE charter schools in California and has been an examiner or consultant to three Massachusetts charter schools, a charter school company, and 20 school districts in three states. In addition, he has been a consultant to state departments of education, foundations, and nonprofits. For a decade he was affiliated with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as a test site supervisor; a national consultant, and New England liaison. He was also an adjunct fellow at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. He holds earned degrees from Boston College, Stanford University, and Harvard University.

Jeanne Simons is a leadership consultant with a specialization in mathematics. She previously worked with the Massachusetts Department of Education as a Targeted Mathematics Specialist supporting mathematics reform in urban school districts. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from the California Institute of Technology and a Master of Education degree in Mind, Brain and Education from Harvard University.

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.

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 Jeanne Simons are members of Class Measures Ltd.

Tom Johnson is an independent contractor working for the Massachusetts Office of Educational Quality and Accountability.

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SETTING

Rising Tide Charter Public School (Rising Tide) is a middle school located in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Rising Tide's mission statement is as follows:

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Rising Tide opened in September 1998 with an enrollment of 162 students in grades 5 through 7; the school added grade 8 in September 1999. In 2004, Rising Tide received permission from the Commissioner of Education to increase the school's maximum enrollment from 228 to 300 students. On September 27, 2007, the Board of Education voted to increase Rising Tide's maximum enrollment from 300 to 320 students. As of October 2007, Rising Tide enrolled 305 students in grades 5 through 8; 256 (84 percent) of the students came from Plymouth, and small numbers of students resided in 13 other communities, principally on the South Shore and Cape Cod.

Table 1, on the following page, compares the demographic characteristics of Rising Tide students enrolled during the 2006-2007 school year with those of students from the Plymouth school district and of students statewide. As Table 1 shows, 88.7 percent of Rising Tide students were White, 3.7 percent were African American/Black, 2.7 were Multi-Race, 2.3 percent were Hispanic, and 2.0 percent were Native American, according to Department of Education (DOE) data for the 2006-2007 school year. Table 1 also shows that, compared to the demographics of students statewide, Rising Tide, like Plymouth, enrolled a higher percentage of White students and lower percentages of African American/Black students and Hispanic students, as well as lower percentages of students categorized as First Language Not English, Limited English Proficient, Low Income, and Special Education. The demographics of students at Rising Tide are comparable in many respects to those of students in Plymouth, with the exception that the percentages of students categorized as Low Income and Special Education are lower at Rising Tide than in the Plymouth school district.

In 2004, Rising Tide terminated its contractual relationship with its private management company, Imagine Schools (formerly Beacon Education Management), and subsequently assumed full control of school operations beginning in the 2004-2005 school year. In February 2006, the Commissioner of Education approved the school's request to add 45 minutes of instructional time to its school day, and on June 1, 2007, the Commissioner of Education approved the school's request to change the school's name to Rising Tide Charter Public School.

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**Table 1. Comparison of 2006-2007 Student Demographic Data
For Rising Tide Charter Public School, Plymouth, and State**

Subgroup	Rising Tide	Plymouth	State
African American/Black	3.7	2.9	8.2
Asian	0.7	0.9	4.8
Hispanic	2.3	2.2	13.3
White	88.7	92.0	71.5
Multi-Race	2.7	1.4	1.7
Native American	2.0	0.3	0.3
First Language Not English	1.0	1.2	14.9
Limited English Proficient	0.0	0.5	5.6
Low Income	13.6	19.1	28.9
Special Education	12.3	16.3	16.9
<i>Data source: MA Department of Education Enrollment/Indicators</i>			

As of October 2007, Rising Tide's Board of Trustees had 10 members, five fewer than required by the school's bylaws. Since the 2004-2005 school year, when the school terminated its relationship with Imagine Schools, the Board has undertaken efforts to strengthen its capacity to oversee Rising Tide's operations and performance. The current Board committees are Executive, Nominating and Governance, Finance and Audit, Strategic Planning, Development, Technology, Facilities, and Curriculum.

Rising Tide is located on two floors of a leased building on Resnik Road in Plymouth, near several commercial and industrial buildings. The facility lacks lockers, playing fields, changing rooms, showers, and, according to the Board of Trustees, adequate convocation space. Through an arrangement with the nearby Boys and Girls Club of Plymouth, Rising Tide uses the Club's playing fields and facilities for physical education classes and sports activities. The Board of Trustees is aware of the school's facility needs and has designated a portion of the school's net asset balance to address these needs.

Rising Tide has submitted an Accountability Plan to the DOE each year but has not received DOE approval of the Accountability Plans. However, the school's annual reports have reported on progress relative to Accountability Plan goals and measures. Prior to the renewal site visit, the Team was provided with an Accountability Plan dated 2003 and an Accountability Plan dated 2005; the Accountability Plan goals and measures on which Rising Tide's Application for Renewal reports are drawn from both Accountability Plans. In a message to the Team, Rising Tide's Head of School provided the following explanation of the goals and measures discussed in the school's Application for Renewal: "In the renewal application, I combined the 2003 and 2005 accountability plans. The reason I did that was to demonstrate growth over the 5 years." The following report discusses Rising Tide's performance relative to the goals and measures cited in the school's Application for Renewal.

FINDINGS

The Renewal Inspection Team (Team) spent four days on site at the Rising Tide Charter Public School (Rising Tide) from October 16 through October 19, 2007. The Team interviewed the Head of School, Assistant Head of School, Registrar, Business Manager, Assistant Business Manager, Technology Director, and a Special Education consultant to the school. The Team also conducted focus group interviews with representatives of the Rising Tide Board of Trustees, Team Leaders and Curriculum Coordinators, Thursday Committee, Special Education staff, students, parents, and teachers.

The Team obtained and reviewed Rising Tide data and documents prior to the renewal site visit, on site, and after the site visit. The information reviewed included, but was not limited to, the school's Application for Renewal; the school's Accountability Plan as represented in the Application for Renewal; Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) data for the five-year period of 2003 through 2007; other external test results; internal assessment materials; curricular materials; recent annual reports; the school's bylaws; minutes of Board of Trustees meetings held between September 2006 and August 2007 and related materials, principally financial reports; annual budgets; audited financial statements for the three fiscal June 30, 2006, June 30, 2005, and June 30, 2004; personnel evaluation records; handbooks; and the *Year Seven Site Visit Report* and *Year Eight 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 of the results obtained by Rising Tide 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 Plymouth students and students statewide. The Team also reviewed data presented in the school's Application for Renewal regarding the performance of Rising Tide students in comparison to that of the school's sending districts. 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 large impact on the results.

- 1. Rising Tide met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements for ELA and Mathematics for all students in the aggregate and for the only subgroup large enough for data to be reported, White students, each year in the current charter period.**

As shown in Table 2, below, Rising Tide student MCAS results met AYP requirements in the aggregate and for all subgroups for ELA and Mathematics each year in the charter period of 2003 to 2007. The only student subgroup for which AYP results are available is that of White students; no other student subgroup was large enough for AYP results to be reported.

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**Table 2. Rising Tide Charter Public School
Adequate Yearly Progress History
2003-2006**

Exam	Groups	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
English Language Arts	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	All Subgroups	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mathematics	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	All Subgroups	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Data source: Department of Education AYP data</i>						

2. The performance of Rising Tide students on the MCAS ELA exams improved for grade 5 and grade 7 but fell for grade 6 and grade 8 during the charter period. The most dramatic improvement on the MCAS ELA exam was shown by Rising Tide students in grade 7: the percentage of students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on the Grade 7 MCAS ELA exam increased from 66 percent in 2003 to 81 percent in 2007.

Table 3, below, presents the results of all MCAS ELA exams taken by Rising Tide students during the five-year period from 2003 to 2007. MCAS ELA exam results for grade 5, grade 6, and grade 8 are available only for 2006 and 2007; grade 7 results are available for the five-year charter period.

**Table 3. Rising Tide Charter Public School
MCAS English Language Arts Results
2003 - 2007**

Year	N	Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Warning	Proficient or Advanced
Grade 5						
2006	66	8	65	26	2	73
2007	82	11	72	15	2	83
Grade 6						
2006	69	7	71	22	0	78
2007	87	11	57	30	1	68
Grade 7						
2003	58	2	64	31	3	66
2004	57	0	72	25	4	72
2005	80	3	69	25	4	72
2006	59	10	56	29	5	66
2007	70	11	70	19	0	81
Grade 8						
2006	72	8	82	8	1	90
2007	52	10	73	17	0	83
<i>Data source: Department of Education MCAS data</i>						

As shown in Table 3, the performance of Rising Tide students on the Grade 7 ELA exams has been uneven with no clear trend over the five-year charter period: 66 percent of students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category in 2003; for the next two years, 72 percent of students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category; and this percentage declined to 66 in 2006, despite the increase in the percentage of students that scored in the Advanced category from three percent to ten percent. In 2007, the percentage of students receiving Proficient or

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Advanced scores increased to a five-year high of 81; that same year, no Grade 7 Rising Tide student scored in the Warning category, and 11 percent of students scored in the Advanced category.

On the Grade 5 MCAS ELA exam, the percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category increased from 73 percent in 2006 to 83 percent in 2007. In the same period, the percentage of grade 5 students scoring in the Advanced category increased from eight to eleven percent and the percentage that scored in the Warning category remained at two percent. On the Grade 6 and Grade 8 MCAS ELA exams, the percentage of students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category decreased from 2006 to 2007: from 78 percent in 2006 to 68 percent in 2007 for grade 6 and from 90 percent in 2006 to 83 percent in 2007 for grade 8. For both grades, the decline was largely attributable to an increase in the percentage of students who scored in the Needs Improvement category (from 22 to 30 percent for grade 6, and from eight to 17 for grade 8). At the same time, both grades saw an increase in the percentage of students that scored in the Advanced category (from seven to 11 percent for grade 6 and from eight to ten percent for grade 8).

3. Over the five-year charter period from 2003 to 2007, the performance of Rising Tide students on MCAS ELA exam has been mixed in comparison to that of Plymouth students but has consistently met or exceeded the results of students statewide.

Table 4, below, compares the performance of Rising Tide students, students in the Plymouth school district, and students statewide on the MCAS ELA exams over the charter period 2003-2007. As previously noted, Grade 7 MCAS ELA results are available for each of the five years of the period, while results for grade 5, grade 6, and grade 8 are available only for 2006 and 2007.

The performance of Rising Tide seventh graders on the exam has been mixed in comparison to students in Plymouth and statewide over the five-year period. In the first four years, a higher percentage of Plymouth seventh graders scored in the Proficient or Advanced category than did Rising Tide students, while comparable percentages scored in the Warning category. In three years of the current charter period (2004, 2005, and 2007) a higher percentage of Rising Tide students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category than did students statewide, while in 2003 and 2006 comparable percentages of Rising Tide students and students statewide scored in the Proficient or Advanced category. In 2007, Rising Tide students did comparatively better than students in Plymouth and statewide: 81 percent of Rising Tide students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category, compared to 78 and 69 percent of students in Plymouth and statewide respectively. No Rising Tide student scored in the Warning category in 2007, compared to four percent and eight percent of students in Plymouth and statewide respectively.

In both 2006 and 2007, the percentages of Rising Tide students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on the Grade 5 MCAS ELA exam (73 percent and 83 percent, respectively) exceeded the comparable percentages of Plymouth students (68 percent and 74 percent, respectively) and the comparable percentages of students statewide (59 percent and 63 percent respectively). In both years Rising Tide had the lowest percentages of fifth graders scoring in

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the Warning category and in the Advanced category in comparison to Plymouth students and students statewide.

**Table 4. Rising Tide Charter Public School
Comparison with Plymouth and State
MCAS English Language Arts Results
2003 - 2007**

Year		N	Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Warning	Proficient or Advanced
Grade 5							
2006	RTCS	66	8	65	26	2	73
	Plymouth	627	20	48	28	4	68
	State	72714	15	44	31	9	59
2007	RTCS	82	11	72	15	2	83
	Plymouth	556	16	58	22	5	74
	State	71320	15	48	28	9	63
Grade 6							
2006	RTCS	69	7	71	22	0	78
	Plymouth	586	9	61	25	5	70
	State	73382	10	54	28	8	64
2007	RTCS	87	11	57	30	1	68
	Plymouth	612	10	63	23	5	73
	State	72887	9	58	25	7	67
Grade 7							
2003	RTCS	58	2	64	31	3	66
	Plymouth	674	9	68	21	2	77
	State	79208	8	57	28	7	65
2004	RTCS	57	0	72	25	4	72
	Plymouth	696	6	71	20	3	77
	State	77386	9	59	25	7	68
2005	RTCS	80	3	69	25	4	72
	Plymouth	663	9	67	22	2	76
	State	76719	10	56	27	7	66
2006	RTCS	59	10	56	29	5	66
	Plymouth	671	8	61	26	4	69
	State	76817	10	55	26	9	65
2007	RTCS	70	11	70	19	0	81
	Plymouth	589	12	66	19	4	78
	State	73577	9	60	23	8	69
Grade 8							
2006	RTCS	72	8	82	8	1	90
	Plymouth	665	12	70	14	4	82
	State	76243	12	62	19	7	74
2007	RTCS	52	10	73	17	0	83
	Plymouth	672	12	71	13	3	83
	State	74433	12	63	18	6	75
<i>Data source: Department of Education MCAS data</i>							

Rising Tide's results on the Grade 6 MCAS ELA exams have been somewhat mixed compared to students in Plymouth and statewide. In 2006, the percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category (78 percent) exceeded the comparable percentage of Plymouth students (70 percent) and students statewide (64 percent). In 2007, however, the

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percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category (68 percent) trailed the comparable percentage of Plymouth students (73 percent) and was essentially equal to the percentage scored by students statewide (67 percent). In both years the percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Warning category (zero in 2006 and one percent in 2007) was lower than the comparable percentages of Plymouth students (five percent each year) and students statewide (eight percent in 2006 and seven percent in 2007).

In 2006, the percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on the Grade 8 MCAS ELA exam (90 percent) exceeded the comparable percentages of Plymouth students (82 percent) and students statewide (74 percent). In 2007, the percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category declined to 83 percent, equaling the results of Plymouth students but still exceeding the percentage of students statewide (75 percent). In both years, Rising Tide had lower percentages of students scoring in the Warning and Advanced categories than did Plymouth and students statewide.

4. Rising Tide's Accountability Plan includes two measures that relate to students' comparative performance on the Grade 7 MCAS ELA exam. The school met the measure requiring Rising Tide students to meet or exceed state averages on the MCAS ELA exam. The school did not meet the measure requiring Rising Tide students to obtain scores that were equal to or better than those of sending districts on the exam.

The Academic Program section of Rising Tide's Accountability Plan includes the following goal: "All students at Rising Tide Charter School will become proficient readers, writers and speakers of the English language." Listed under this goal are two measures of student performance on the Grade 7 MCAS ELA exams, discussed below.

Measure 2: Students in grade 7 will meet or exceed state averages on the ELA portion of the MCAS.

As shown in Table 4, above, the percentages of Rising Tide Grade 7 students who scored in the Proficient or Advanced category essentially matched the comparable percentages of students statewide in 2003 and 2006, and exceeded these percentages in the other three years of the five-year charter period. Thus, the school has met the above-listed Accountability Plan measure.

Measure 3: Students in grade 7 will score equal to or better than students in sending districts on the ELA portion of the MCAS.

Rising Tide's Application for Renewal provides data relating to the comparative performance of six sending districts on the Grade 7 MCAS ELA exam for the four-year period of 2003 to 2006. According to the data reported by the school, Rising Tide did not meet this measure compared to all six sending districts in any of the four years:

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- Two sending districts, Plymouth and Silver Lake, had higher percentages of students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category in each of the four years.
- The percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category each year was higher than the comparable percentage of Wareham students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category each year.
- Carver students matched the performance of Rising Tide students in two years (2004 and 2006) and trailed them in the other two years.
- Rising Tide students exceeded the performance of Middleborough students in 2005 and 2006.
- A higher percentage of Pembroke district students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category in 2006, one of two years for which data were provided in the Application for Renewal.

5. The performance of Rising Tide students on the Grade 6 and Grade 8 MCAS Mathematics exams did not show an improvement trend over the five-year charter period of 2003 to 2007. The school's Grade 5 and Grade 7 MCAS Mathematics exam results improved over the two-year period of 2006 to 2007. Overall, 50 percent or more of Rising Tide students in grades 6, 7, and 8 did not demonstrate proficiency on the 2007 MCAS Mathematics exams.

Table 5, below, presents the results of all MCAS Mathematics exams taken by Rising Tide students during the five-year period from 2003 to 2007. Grade 5 and Grade 7 MCAS Mathematics exam results are available only for 2006 and 2007.

Grade 6 and Grade 8 MCAS Mathematics exam results are available for each year of the charter period, 2003 to 2007. Neither set of results shows an improvement trend. On the Grade 6 MCAS Mathematics exam, the percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category increased from 49 percent in 2003 to 58 percent in 2004, fell over the next two years to 43 percent by 2006, and increased to 44 percent in 2007. In the same period, the percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Warning category began with 16 percent in 2003, declined to 11 percent in 2004, increased to 27 percent in 2005, fell to 16 percent in 2006, and remained relatively steady at 17 percent in 2007.

The 2007 school's results showed that substantial percentages of Rising Tide students had not reached proficiency on the MCAS Mathematics exam: 50 percent of grade 8 students, 57 percent of grade 7 students, 56 percent of grade 6 students, and 39 percent of grade 5 students scored did not score in the Proficient or Advanced category on the 2007 MCAS Mathematics exam.

On the Grade 8 MCAS Mathematics exam, the percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category increased from 47 percent in 2003 to 55 percent by 2005, fell to 46 percent in 2006, and then increased to 50 percent in 2007. The percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Warning category during the same exam period declined from 20 percent

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in 2003 to 11 percent in 2005, only to jump back to 19 percent in 2007. Similar variation occurred in the percentage of students scoring in the Advanced category: 20 percent of Rising Tide students scored in the Advanced category in 2003; this percentage declined to four percent in 2005 and increased to a high of 29 percent in 2007.

**Table 5. Rising Tide Charter Public School
MCAS Mathematics Results
2003 - 2007**

Year	N	Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Warning	Proficient or Advanced
Grade 5						
2006	66	17	24	47	12	41
2007	82	18	43	29	10	61
Grade 6						
2003	61	10	39	34	16	49
2004	81	21	37	31	11	58
2005	56	14	34	25	27	48
2006	69	17	26	41	16	43
2007	88	17	27	39	17	44
Grade 7						
2006	59	14	20	37	29	34
2007	70	10	33	39	19	43
Grade 8						
2003	44	20	27	32	20	47
2004	46	13	33	37	17	46
2005	47	4	51	34	11	55
2006	72	10	36	39	15	46
2007	52	29	21	31	19	50
<i>Data source: Department of Education MCAS data</i>						

On the Grade 5 MCAS Mathematics exam, the percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category increased from 41 percent in 2006 to 61 percent in 2007. The percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Warning category decreased from 12 percent in 2006 to ten percent in 2007. On the Grade 7 MCAS Mathematics exam, the percentage of Rising Tide students who scored in the Proficient or Advanced category increased from 34 percent in 2006 to 43 percent in 2007; the percentage of students scoring in the Warning category decreased from 29 percent in 2006 to 19 percent in 2007.

Overall, 50 percent or more of the students in grades 6, 7, and 8 did not demonstrate proficiency on the 2007 MCAS Mathematics exams. The percentages of students that scored in the Needs Improvement or Warning category were as follows: 56 percent of sixth graders, 58 percent of seventh graders, and 50 percent of eighth graders.

- 6. Rising Tide's overall performance on the MCAS Mathematics exams has been mixed in comparison to the performance of Plymouth students and students statewide on the same exams during the five-year charter period of 2003 to 2007. However, Rising Tide's grade 8 students have consistently performed better on this exam than their counterparts in Plymouth and statewide.**

Table 6 compares the performance of Rising Tide students, Plymouth students, and students statewide on the Grade 6 and Grade 8 MCAS Mathematics exam for 2003 to 2007 and on the Grade 5 and Grade 7 MCAS Mathematics exam for 2006 and 2007, the only two years for which results are available.

In 2003, 2004, and 2005, the performance of Rising Tide students on the Grade 6 MCAS Mathematics exam exceeded the scores of the comparable Plymouth students and students statewide: the percentages of Rising Tide students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category were seven percent to 23 percent higher than the comparable percentages of Plymouth students and were two percent to 16 percent higher than the comparable percentages of students statewide. In 2006, the percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on the Grade 6 MCAS Mathematics exam was comparable to that of the Plymouth students and somewhat lower than that of students statewide (43 percent, 44 percent, and 46 percent, respectively). In 2007, the percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on the MCAS Mathematics exam (44 percent) lagged behind the comparable percentage of Plymouth students (53 percent) and students statewide (52 percent). In three of the five years (2003, 2004, and 2006), Rising Tide had the lowest percentage of students scoring in the Warning category in comparison to Plymouth students and students statewide; Rising Tide had the lowest percentage of students scoring in the Warning category in 2004, the only year in which the school had the highest percentage of students scoring in the Advanced category on the exam in comparison to Plymouth students and students statewide.

The comparable performance of Rising Tide students on the Grade 8 MCAS Mathematics exam has been particularly strong, exceeding the performance of Plymouth students and students statewide in the current charter period. Within this period, the percentages of Rising Tide students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on this exam were between six percent (2007) and 21 percent (2005) higher than the comparable percentages of Plymouth students and between five percent (2007) and 16 percent (2005) higher than comparable percentages of students statewide. In the first four years of the current charter period, Rising Tide had the lowest percentage of students scoring in the Warning category; in 2007 Rising Tide students essentially tied students in Plymouth (19 percent compared to 18 percent in Plymouth) in this regard. In two of the five years (2003 and 2007), Rising Tide students had the highest percentages of students scoring in the Advanced category, and in 2004 the percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Advanced category tied the percentage of students statewide.

In 2006, 41 percent of Rising Tide students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category on the Grade 5 MCAS Mathematics exam, lagging behind the comparable percentage of Plymouth students (47 percent) and students statewide (43 percent). In 2007, the percentage of Rising Tide fifth graders scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category jumped to 61 percent, exceeding the comparable percentages of Plymouth fifth graders at 55 percent and students statewide at 51

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percent. In both years Rising Tide had the lowest percentage of students scoring in the Warning category in comparison to the Plymouth and statewide percentages.

**Table 6. Rising Tide Charter Public School
Comparison with Plymouth and State
MCAS Mathematics Results
2003 - 2007**

Year		N	Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Warning	Proficient or Advanced
Grade 5							
2006	RTCS	66	17	24	47	12	41
	Plymouth	627	17	30	35	18	47
	State	72798	17	26	34	23	43
2007	RTCS	82	18	43	29	10	61
	Plymouth	553	19	36	34	11	55
	State	71352	19	32	31	18	51
Grade 6							
2003	RTCS	61	10	39	34	16	49
	Plymouth	692	11	28	41	20	39
	State	77941	16	26	32	26	42
2004	RTCS	81	21	37	31	11	58
	Plymouth	673	9	26	42	24	35
	State	76661	17	25	32	25	42
2005	RTCS	56	14	34	25	27	48
	Plymouth	673	13	28	41	18	41
	State	74784	17	29	30	23	46
2006	RTCS	69	17	26	41	16	43
	Plymouth	585	14	30	34	22	44
	State	73470	17	29	29	25	46
2007	RTCS	88	17	27	39	17	44
	Plymouth	610	13	40	32	15	53
	State	72889	20	32	28	20	52
Grade 7							
2006	RTCS	59	14	20	37	29	34
	Plymouth	674	12	33	35	20	45
	State	74647	12	28	33	28	40
2007	RTCS	70	10	33	39	19	43
	Plymouth	591	13	36	35	16	49
	State	73592	15	31	30	24	46
Grade 8							
2003	RTCS	44	20	27	32	20	47
	Plymouth	723	8	23	41	28	31
	State	78477	12	25	30	33	37
2004	RTCS	46	13	33	37	17	46
	Plymouth	671	5	23	45	26	28
	State	78893	13	26	32	29	39
2005	RTCS	47	4	51	34	11	55
	Plymouth	694	9	25	38	28	34
	State	77025	13	26	30	31	39
2006	RTCS	72	10	36	39	15	46
	Plymouth	667	8	31	39	22	39
	State	76276	12	28	31	29	40
2007	RTCS	52	29	21	31	19	50
	Plymouth	674	12	32	38	18	44
	State	74319	17	28	30	25	45
<i>Data source: Department of Education MCAS data</i>							

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The performance of Rising Tide students on the Grade 7 MCAS Mathematics exam trailed that of Plymouth students and students statewide in 2006 and 2007. In 2006, 34 percent of Rising Tide students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category on this exam, in comparison with 45 percent of Plymouth students and 40 percent of students statewide. In 2007, the percentage of Rising Tide students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category on the Grade 7 MCAS Mathematics exam increased to 43 percent but continued to trail the comparable percentages of Plymouth students (49 percent) and students statewide (46 percent).

- 7. Rising Tide’s Accountability Plan includes two measures that relate to students’ comparative performance on the Grade 6 and Grade 8 MCAS Mathematics exam. The school met the component of the measure requiring grade 8 students to meet or exceed state averages on the MCAS Mathematics exam, but the school did not meet the component of the same measure pertaining to the performance of grade 6 students. Similarly, the school met the component of the measure requiring grade 8 students to equal or exceed the scores of students in sending districts on the exam, but the school did not meet the component of the same measure pertaining to the performance of grade 6 students.**

The Academic Program section of Rising Tide’s Accountability Plan contains the following goal: “All students at Rising Tide Charter School will demonstrate competency in the understanding and the application of mathematical computation and problem solving.” Listed under this goal are two measures of student performance on the Grade 6 and Grade 8 MCAS Mathematics exams, discussed below.

Measure 2: Students in grades 6 and 8 will meet or exceed state averages on the Math portion of the MCAS.

As shown in Table 6, above, the percentage of Rising Tide grade 6 students who scored in the Proficient or Advanced category surpassed the comparable percentage of students statewide in the first three years of the charter period (2003 to 2005), essentially matched this percentage in 2006, and trailed this percentage in 2007. Thus, Rising Tide did not meet the above-listed measure for students in grade 6. Rising Tide clearly met this measure as it pertains to grade 8 students: in each of the five years, a higher percentage of Rising Tide students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category than the comparable percentage of students statewide. The school’s Application for Renewal states that these results indicate that the longer students are at Rising Tide, the better they perform; however, the Application for Renewal provides no matched cohort analysis providing stronger support for that claim.

Measure 3: Students in grade 6 and 8 will meet or exceed Math scores of students in sending districts on the MCAS.

Rising Tide’s Application for Renewal provides data for the four-year period of 2003 to 2006 relating to the comparative performance of the seven sending districts of Rising Tide students in grade 6 and six sending districts of Rising Tide students in grade 8. According to the data reported, Rising Tide met the measure for grade 8 students: the school’s percentages of students scoring in the Proficient and Advanced categories were consistently higher than those of the

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sending districts during the four-year period. However, Rising Tide did not meet the measure for Grade 6 students:

- In two sending districts, Pembroke and Plympton, a higher percentage of grade 6 students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category than the comparable percentage of Rising Tide students in each of the four years.
- A higher percentage of Rising Tide students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category than the comparable percentage of Wareham students each year.
- A higher percentage of Kingston students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category than the comparable percentage of Rising Tide students in three of the four years (2003, 2005, and 2006).
- A higher percentage of Carver students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category than the comparable percentages of Rising Tide students in two of the four years (2003 and 2006).
- A higher percentage of Rising Tide students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category than the comparable percentage of Plymouth students in 2003, 2004, and 2005; Rising Tide essentially matched Plymouth's performance in 2006.
- A higher percentage of Rising Tide students scored in the Proficient or Advanced category than the comparable percentage of Middleborough students in 2004 and 2006; Rising Tide essentially matched Middleborough's performance in 2005 and trailed Middleborough's performance in 2003.

OTHER ASSESSMENTS

- 8. Rising Tide administered the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition (Stanford 9) until 2006, when the school began to administer the TerraNova. The school has not met its Accountability Plan measures of student improvement on nationally normed reading and mathematics achievement tests. The school has implemented new internal benchmarks and Quarterly Student Reports that are being refined. The school also uses other internal assessments, including a rubric to evaluate student speeches.**

Rising Tide administered the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition (Stanford 9) until the spring of 2006, when the school discontinued its use. According to school administrators, they concluded that the Stanford 9 no longer met the school's needs for item analyses and diagnostic assessment. Beginning in November 2006, the TerraNova, Second Edition reading and math assessments were administered to all Rising Tide students. School administrators told the Team that the TerraNova provides a better item analysis than the Stanford 9 for use in determining the impact of the school's curriculum and pedagogy on student performance. The first-year TerraNova results will provide baseline data to assess student progress in subsequent years.

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The Academic Program section of Rising Tide's Accountability Plan contains the following goal: "All students at Rising Tide Charter School will become proficient readers, writers and speakers of the English language." Listed under this goal is the following measure of student progress relative to nationally normed achievement tests:

Measure 1: Students at each grade level will maintain or improve their scaled scores, over time, on a nationally normed reading achievement test.

According to Rising Tide's Application for Renewal, approximately 65 percent of Rising Tide students progressing from grade 5 to grade 6 maintained or improved their scores on the Stanford 9 Total Reading Battery between 2005 and 2006; 50 percent of Rising Tide students progressing from grade 5 to grade 7 maintained or improved their scores on the same test between 2004 and 2006; and approximately 58 percent of Rising Tide students progressing from grade 5 to grade 8 maintained or improved their scores on the same test between 2003 and 2006. Thus, Rising Tide had not met the above-listed measure as of 2006. At the time of the site visit, the school had only baseline TerraNova data; thus, the school's performance on the TerraNova relative to the above-listed measure could not be evaluated.

The Academic Program section of the school's Accountability Plan also contains the following goal: "All students at Rising Tide Charter School will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of mathematical computation and problem solving." Listed under this goal is the following measure of student progress relative to nationally normed achievement tests:

Measure 1: Students who have been at Rising Tide for two or more years will maintain or improve their scaled scores on a nationally normed Math achievement test.

According to Rising Tide's Application for Renewal, approximately 73 percent of Rising Tide students progressing from grade 5 to grade 6 maintained or improved their scores on the Stanford 9 Math Battery between 2005 and 2006; approximately 79 percent of Rising Tide students progressing from grade 5 to grade 7 maintained or improved their scores on the same test between 2004 and 2006; and approximately 53 percent of Rising Tide students progressing from grade 5 to grade 8 maintained or improved their scores on the same test between 2003 and 2006. Thus, Rising Tide had not met the above-listed measure as of 2006. At the time of the site visit, the school had only baseline TerraNova data; thus, the school's performance on the TerraNova relative to the above-listed measure could not be evaluated.

In 2006, according to the school's Application for Renewal, 63 percent of Rising Tide eighth graders chose to take the National Latin Exam. Of these, one student received the highest commendation, *summa cum laude*; three students received the commendation of *maxima cum laude*; and four students received the commendation of *magna cum laude*.

Rising Tide's leadership team and faculty told the Team that they spent significant time during the 2005-2006 school year developing an extensive set of internal benchmarks for use in assessing student progress. The benchmarks, which were provided in an appendix to the school's

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Application for Renewal, are divided into four broad categories: Communicator, Investigator, Self-Directed Learner, and Community Steward. Within each category, categories of skills (such as “Reading Skills,” “Problem Solving Skills,” “Self-Awareness Skills,” and “Leadership Skills”) are identified, with benchmarks listed under each skill category. Students receive Quarterly Student Reports providing summative assessments of their progress against the benchmarks. Currently the school uses the same set of benchmarks for each grade level; however, the Team was told that the school is planning to identify the benchmark skills that will be expected at each grade level.

Under the previously cited goal of English language proficiency, Rising Tide’s Accountability Plan contains the following measure related to the school’s internal benchmarks:

Measure 4: All Rising Tide students will achieve and master strong skills, as stated in the Rising Tide Grade Level Benchmarks, as they progress through the school, so that they can graduate after 8th grade and move on to high school.

The school’s Application for Renewal provides data in chart form from the first three terms of the 2006-2007 school year showing the percentages of students in each grade level attaining the internal benchmarks at each of four levels: Emerging, Learning, Accomplished, and Distinguished. The charts show that the highest percentage of students in each grade attained the level of “Accomplished” in each term. However, the above-listed measure does not specify the performance at each benchmark level required in order to meet the requirement that all Rising Tide students achieve and master strong skills. It is thus impossible to determine whether or not the school met the measure.

Under the previously cited goal of English language proficiency, Rising Tide’s Accountability Plan contains the following measure relating to public speaking:

Measure 5: All Rising Tide students who attend the school through 8th grade will have the opportunity to create and present a public speech to class members and staff.

Information provided by the school shows that Rising Tide has met this goal since the 2005-2006 school year. All Rising Tide students are given opportunities to speak in front of groups during the school year, and each student in grade 8 is required to deliver a public speech. The team was provided with a teaching packet that included material used in preparing each eighth grader for this presentation. The packet included a set of guidelines; faculty sponsors; a self-evaluation sheet; technique clues; examples from American history and literature to show emphasis and inflection; and a final scoring rubric.

Other internal assessments used by Rising Tide include tests, quizzes, and assessments used within departments. Rising Tide students maintain portfolios with examples of completed projects, tests, and other materials documenting their academic progress.

9. Rising Tide distributes MCAS and other assessment data to teachers and has implemented several programs designed to improve student performance. However,

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the school lacks systematic procedures for using refined data analysis to track the progress of, or effectiveness of school interventions for, students who have not achieved proficiency on the MCAS exams. The school's internal benchmarks are still being developed and calibrated. Teachers meet and share information with each other regarding student performance on tests, quizzes, and other internal assessments.

The Team found that Rising Tide is at an early stage of using data analysis to inform curriculum and instruction. The Head of School and the leadership team are aware of the school's general areas of strength and weakness on the MCAS exams. As previously discussed, the school recently replaced the Stanford 9 with the TerraNova assessments in order to obtain more detailed information on student performance. The school's Head of School and Assistant Head of School distribute MCAS and other external assessment results to Curriculum Coordinators and Team Leaders, who review these results with teachers. School administrators and teachers told the Team that several curricular and program modifications have been implemented in areas where student performance is found to be weak: for example, Rising Tide lengthened the school day in 2006 and instituted two academic support programs, Math Lab and Writer's Workshop, to assist students who performed poorly on MCAS exams and other assessments. They stated that they did not have data indicating whether or not these interventions have been effective in improving the performance of the targeted students. They also told the Team that the math and ELA coordinators were planning a teacher workshop to help teachers improve student performance on open-response questions on the MCAS exams, an area that was shown by the MCAS results to need improvement. MCAS preparation is offered during Focus Periods, which are extra classes used for interdisciplinary projects as well as skill-building and enrichment activities.

However, the Team found that Rising Tide has not instituted systematic procedures for using refined data analysis to track the progress of students who have scored in the Needs Improvement or Warning category on the MCAS exams or to determine whether the school's interventions have improved students' performance on the exams.

Rising Tide's Application for Renewal provides the following explanation of the school's approach to MCAS preparation:

. . . Rising Tide did not specifically focus on MCAS test taking during the first several years. Instead, teachers were aware of the questions and topics on the tests and made sure that all of the MCAS topics and types of questions were covered during the school year. Students in the early years of the school fared quite well on MCAS but scores were not outstanding. As MCAS have become more important in the state and the DOE and schools have come to be judged more and more by their students' performance on MCAS, RTCS has focused more on the tests; however, MCAS preparation is still not the primary focus of the school because the staff wants to provide students with a broad academic base and teach critical thinking skills.

The new benchmarks and Quarterly Student Reports adopted by Rising Tide are still under development: in an interview with the Team, the Head of School stated that the benchmark skills have not yet been calibrated; teachers interviewed by the Team confirmed that they are now working on calibrating the benchmark skills by grade level. Nevertheless, teachers

interviewed by the Team said that they frequently analyze and share information regarding individual student performance on internal assessments such as test and quizzes at the grade-level and subject-level meetings.

CURRICULUM AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

10. Rising Tide offers an academically strong program. The school's curriculum has been developed and documented in all subject areas and grades. However, the curriculum documents reviewed by the Team were not consistently aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, and the Team observed significant variations in the format and level of completeness of the curriculum documents reviewed. The school's recently adopted internal benchmarks have not been calibrated by grade level, as required by the school's Accountability Plan. The school has already met three of the five curriculum-related Accountability Plan measures that are to be achieved by 2008.

Consistent with Rising Tide's mission to provide a strong academic program, Rising Tide offers a challenging curriculum that uses a variety of texts and resources. Curriculum documents exist for all grades and subject areas. The ELA curriculum examines a number of forms of literature, including plays, novels, stories, and poems, all of which are accessed from a number of sources. Grammar instruction is supported by *Correct Writing* and *Rules of the Game*, both by Educators Publishing Service. The mathematics curriculum uses the Glencoe series for all grades. The science curriculum uses a number of textbooks for each grade, including *Science*, by Macmillan McGraw-Hill for the fifth grade. In sixth through eighth grade, the science curriculum becomes more diverse, with texts used as a resource to supplement the teacher-designed curricula. Examples of texts in use are the *Science Explorer Series* by Prentice Hall, *Science Interactions* by Glencoe, and *LHS GEMS* developed at the University of California, Berkeley, in addition to many more resources used for each grade.

The social studies curriculum primarily consists of teacher-developed units supported by several textbooks. The fifth-grade program uses *United States: Adventures in Time and Place* by Macmillan McGraw-Hill; the sixth-grade program uses *Geography* by Macmillan McGraw-Hill and *Desk Atlas* by Nystrom. The seventh-grade program uses *A Message of Ancient Days* by Houghton Mifflin and *World History: Connections to Today* by Prentice Hall, and the eighth-grade program uses Glencoe's *The American Journey*. Rising Tide's Latin curriculum uses Scott Foresman/ Addison Wesley's *First Latin* for the fifth grade and part of the sixth grade and *Cambridge Latin Course, I and II* for the other part of the sixth grade as well as the seventh and eighth grades.

The school's curriculum includes project-based learning periods, referred to in the school's 2007-2008 *Staff Handbook* as "Focus Periods." According to the handbook, student-selected topics are explored in project groups with students from all four grade levels, overseen by a faculty member; topics are linked to Plymouth or the Southeastern Massachusetts region. The school also offers a grant-funded Virtual High School program for certain eighth-grade students working under the direction of a Rising Tide teacher.

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The Academic Program section of Rising Tide's Accountability Plan contains the following goal: "Rising Tide Staff will develop an inquiry and skills-based curriculum that is age appropriate and aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the New Standards." Under this goal, the Accountability Plan lists six measures, one of which was to be achieved by 2006 and five of which are to be achieved by 2008. These measures are discussed below.

Measure 1: By 2006, the Rising Tide staff will produce grade level benchmarks that reflect the skills and content in the Massachusetts State Frameworks and the school's philosophies.

Although the school's Application for Renewal states that Rising Tide met the above-listed measure in 2006, the Team's review did not confirm this statement: as previously noted, the school's benchmarks have not yet been calibrated by grade level. The Team found that the benchmarks overlap with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for ELA but not for mathematics. However, the benchmarks do appear to reflect the school's philosophies: for example, students are assessed based on "leadership skills," "skills in respecting difference," and "skills in service to community."

Measure 2: By 2008, the Rising Tide staff will produce and document specific skills in each curriculum area that reflect the skills and content in the Massachusetts State Frameworks.

The Team found that Rising Tide has not yet met this measure, which is to be achieved by 2008. The Team's review of the school's curriculum found that documentation of specific skills reflective of the skills and content in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks was incomplete. Although the school's documentation listed skills for each subject and grade level, the skills were not clearly linked to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in all cases. For example, the mathematics curricula for grades 5 and 6 and the science curriculum for grade 8 did not list standards. In addition, the mathematics curriculum for grade 7 was aligned to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Standards rather than to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks; the latter require more specificity with respect to measurable mathematical knowledge than the former. For all curricula, the Team did not find evidence that the scope and sequence documents had been cross-linked to grade-level standards to ensure complete coverage of the standards.

Rising Tide's Application for Renewal provides the following description of the school's curriculum:

The RTCS curriculum is presented in a variety of ways. This presentation is based upon the assumption that RTCS considers curriculum a living, not static, process and that the curriculum will never look exactly the same two years in a row. The various curriculum documents that may be viewed at RTCS are:

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1. Scope and Sequence for each curriculum area
2. Unit overviews by grade level for each curriculum area
3. Term narratives written by each teacher at the end of every term (included with report cards)
4. Project templates, including multidisciplinary projects as well as Exposition projects, Focus curriculum, grade level team academic and social curriculum
5. Individual teaching portfolios, maintained by each teacher

The Team's review of Rising Tide's curriculum documents confirmed that the curriculum format was inconsistent. The inconsistency was most pronounced in the case of the math and science curricula, which varied substantially from the ELA and social studies curricula with respect to content as well as format, as previously discussed.

Measure 3: By 2008, the Rising Tide staff will have produced documents that describe how the scope and sequence is achieved in each subject area.

The Team found that Rising Tide has met this measure: the school has developed a curriculum alignment and scope and sequence document for each subject and grade, as required by the above-listed measure, which is to be achieved by 2008. The scope and sequence documents reviewed by the Team provided broad time frames for instruction, although most did not provide timing by week or unit.

Measure 4: By 2008, the Rising Tide Staff will define inquiry-based learning for the school and demonstrate its use in all classrooms.

The Team found that Rising Tide has met this measure, which is to be achieved by 2008. According to the school's Application for Renewal, the Head of School included a definition of the school's inquiry- and skills-based approach in the school's 2006-2007 Faculty Handbook. The definition states, in part:

Learning at Rising Tide is approached as a process of exploration that may begin with a guiding question, rather than a reporting of information and memorization of facts. An inquiry approach acknowledges each student as a critical thinker who brings prior knowledge to the classroom; the student is encouraged to ask questions and find answers through research and questioning, resulting in discovery of new or connected information.

As will be discussed, the Team saw evidence of this inquiry-based approach in observing classroom instruction at Rising Tide, and teachers interviewed by the Team demonstrated an understanding of the importance of inquiry-based learning.

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Measure 5: By 2008, the Rising Tide staff will build study skills into the grade level curricula.

The Team found that Rising Tide has met this measure, which is to be achieved by 2008. Rising Tide's internal benchmarks include nine benchmarks under the heading of "Study Skills," listed under the broad category of "Self-Directed Learner." As previously discussed, the benchmarks have not yet been differentiated by grade level. Although the benchmarks were not explicitly incorporated into the curriculum documents reviewed by the Team, the school's expectation that students will master study skills is reflected by the fact that the Quarterly Student Reports assess student progress against these benchmarks. Rising Tide's Application for Renewal states that teachers have taught study skills during the first two weeks of school since the fall of 2006 and that a study skills curriculum at each grade level was under development at the time that the Application for Renewal was written.

Measure 6: By 2008, the Rising Tide Staff will have documented a complete curriculum that is fully aligned with the Massachusetts State Frameworks and the New Standards.

As has been discussed, Rising Tide has worked to develop and document a curriculum using a number of different approaches to curriculum development but has not yet met the above-listed measure, to be achieved by 2008. The Team noted that several curriculum documents were aligned to *Performance Standards Volume 2, Middle School, New Standards 1997* ("New Standards"), published by the National Center on Education and the Economy and the University of Pittsburgh.

With respect to the above-listed measure, the school's Application for Renewal notes:

The RTCS staff has been working on this goal since the school opened in 1998 and will have a fully documented curriculum by the fall 2007 renewal site visit; however, curriculum is ever evolving, changing and improving, so the curriculum documentation is not static and will also be changing.

The Academic Program section of Rising Tide's Accountability Plan contains the following goal: "Rising Tide staff and students will demonstrate increased acquisition and mastery of computer technology skills, consistent with the guidelines contained in the Massachusetts State Frameworks." Listed under this goal are two curriculum-related measures, discussed below.

Measure 2: Every project in all grade levels shall be examined for the inclusion of at least one educational technology application that addresses one or more of the performance indicators called for in the MA State Instructional Technology Standards.

Rising Tide's Application for Renewal states that the school has met this measure. In addition, the school's Technology Director told the Team that he had polled the school's staff to determine whether every project included at least one educational technology application addressing one or

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more of the performance indicators called for in the Massachusetts Instructional Technology Standards. He reported that all teachers had met this objective.

Measure 3: Each year every grade level team shall review the performance indicators from the MA State Instructional Technology Standards and assess the coverage of those indicators by the current curriculum.

Rising Tide has met this measure: according to the Technology Director, this review is conducted by the grade-level Team Leaders each year. He told the Team that the most recent review disclosed that the curriculum did not adequately cover the requirement in the Massachusetts Instructional Technology Standards relating to database skills; accordingly, Rising Tide instituted the teaching of Access, a database program, in the seventh grade.

The Academic Program section of Rising Tide's Accountability Plan contains the following goal: "Community leaders and organizations will recognize the Rising Tide Charter School and its students as a resource for community activism and volunteerism." Listed under this goal is one curriculum-related measure:

Measure 3: By 2008, the Rising Tide staff will incorporate service learning into the regular curriculum at each grade level.

Rising Tide is making progress toward this measure, which is to be achieved by 2008. A faculty member has been assigned to develop a service learning program that blends community service activities into the curriculum. According to the school's Application for Renewal, the service learning program is being connected to the Guiding Questions used by each grade-level team, which are as follows:

Grade 5: What is my place in the community?
Grade 6: How do I connect with others?
Grade 7: How do we adapt to challenges?
Grade 8: Where can we go?
School-wide question: Who am I?

The Team's interviews with the Head of School and the faculty member overseeing this task confirmed that the work to develop and connect the service learning program to the school's Guiding Questions was proceeding: the Team was told that this program has been developed for the seventh and eighth grades and is still under development for the fifth and sixth grades.

11. Rising Tide maintains a well-staffed program for meeting the needs of students with disabilities. All Special Education services other than reading, occupational therapy, and speech therapy are provided in the classroom. Rising Tide also provides assistance to students with identified learning gaps through the Advisory program, Math Lab, and Writer's Workshop.

Rising Tide provides a range of support services to students with learning needs. According to the school's Special Education Coordinator, teachers with concerns about students meet with a

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Child Study Team that may include the parent. If the student does not make satisfactory progress within approximately one month, the student may be referred for a Special Education evaluation. Special Education services are provided to students determined to be eligible for such services through Rising Tide's referral and diagnostic processes. Forty-six of the school's students qualify for Special Education services. All such services, with the exception of reading, occupational therapy, and speech therapy, are provided in the classroom; math and ELA inclusion classrooms exist at each grade level. Fourteen Rising Tide students have been placed on 504 Plans, all of which are maintained and monitored by the Head of School. A home language survey is completed for each new student; according to the Special Education Coordinator, there were no Rising Tide students whose home surveys indicated a need for English Language Learner support or programs at the time of the site visit.

In addition to employing the full-time Special Education Coordinator, who also teaches one section of fifth-grade inclusion math, Rising Tide contracts with a part-time consultant who supervises the work of the Special Education Coordinator, who is not certified as a Special Education administrator. This consultant also provides professional development to the staff: for example, the Team was told that the consultant will teach a multi-session workshop on Asperger's Syndrome during the 2007-2008 school year and will also assist the school in refining its child study process. In addition, the school employs two special educators, called Learning Specialists; one part-time occupational therapist; one part-time Speech Therapy Evaluator; one part-time Speech Therapist Assistant; two classroom aides, one of whom also serves as the Learning Center Manager; and one part-time reading specialist. A full-time nurse also serves as a member of the Special Education team, and a part-time (four days per week) school psychologist also serves as a regular education counselor. One staff person is a trained Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral administrator.

The Special Education office contains locked file cabinets containing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students. Access to the files is carefully monitored and recorded by the Learning Center Manager. The Team selected and reviewed four student files, one from each grade; within the files, records were well-organized, and the information was clearly presented and accessible to appropriate staff. All teachers with students on IEPs receive copies of the accommodations page from each IEP as well as a list of student learning strengths and weaknesses.

Other students requiring academic support are able to obtain assistance in a variety of ways. All students attend a grade-level Homework Hall held in the multi-purpose room twice a week where all of their subject teachers are present and available to help students. Students also receive help from Advisors during Advisory period, which is scheduled for two 15-minute periods at the beginning and the end of each day. Each Advisor is assigned approximately 20 students and, according to Rising Tide's 2007-2008 Staff Handbook, is the primary advocate for the student within the school. In addition, students may be assigned to Math Lab or Writer's Workshop, both of which are taught by full-time regular education teachers assisted by learning specialists, if their MCAS scores or their classroom performance indicate a need for additional support in math and/or writing. Behavioral issues are addressed at the classroom, Advisor, and team level. Serious discipline issues are referred to a three- to five-person discipline committee that is formed as needed.

12. Overall, teacher instruction at Rising Tide was observed to be effective and challenging. Many classes observed were teacher-directed. The Team observed that students were well-behaved and that teacher-student interactions were respectful. The Team also saw some evidence that the school's inquiry-based approach to instruction is being implemented; students in some classes were highly interactive. Classrooms observed by the Team were well equipped and had access to technology. All classrooms were clean, well-lit, and pleasant, and some classrooms displayed student work.

The Team conducted 33 classroom observations of 19 teachers, some of whom were observed multiple times. The 33 observations included six science classes, five ELA classes, four Latin classes, eight math classes, six social studies classes, one health class, two physical education classes, and one art class. Seven fifth-grade classes, eight sixth-grade classes, 13 seventh-grade classes, and five eighth-grade classes were observed. The number of students per class in the classrooms observed ranged from 13 to 22; the average class size was 18. In conducting the observations, the Team focused on five areas: objective of the lesson plan; expectations of learning and attitudes; methodology, pedagogy and formative assessment; classroom management; and resources.

In each focus area, the Team observed a range of instruction that the Team considered to be acceptable to strong in the majority of classrooms observed. Overall, the Team observed that classroom instruction was generally effective and reflected Rising Tide's mission to provide a strong academic program. The level of difficulty of the lessons observed was appropriately challenging, and students were provided with sufficient time to absorb the material. Teachers observed by the Team were well prepared and had materials ready for the students. Relatively few teachers had posted the objectives of the lessons on the board, but some teachers explicitly stated the objectives of the lesson. (Because some classes were not observed at the beginning of class, the Team was not able to determine how many classes began with an explicit statement of the lesson objectives.) It was clear to the Team that teachers expected high performance from the students.

The Head of School told the Team that the Team would likely observe a hybrid of direct instruction and group activities. Although the majority of classes observed by the Team were taught using a teacher-directed format for the entire observation period, some classes provided differentiated instruction through games, groupings, and lessons that allowed for students to work at to their own ability levels. Classroom grouping strategies varied among teachers. Many classrooms had traditional arrangements with rows of desks, although some teachers instructed students to work with their peers at their regular seats at larger tables.

Students appeared to have the appropriate background knowledge to be able to engage with the lesson in the classes observed by the Team. In most classes observed by the Team, students were very productive and focused throughout the class, although student focus appeared to falter at the end of several teacher-directed classes. The Team observed no behavioral problems: students were well-behaved and appeared to understand and comply with classroom expectations and procedures. Teacher-student interactions observed by the Team were respectful.

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The Head of School predicted that the Team would observe partial implementation of Rising Tide's inquiry-based approach to instruction and learning in the classrooms. This proved to be the case. The predominant model for inquiry-based learning observed by the Team was teacher questioning, and the level of teacher questioning varied. Some teachers probed for higher-level thinking; for example:

- One teacher asked the students to synthesize scientific facts they had learned about evolution, the extinction of various species and hominid biology into an explanation of various evolutionary phenomena seen in hominids. Students responded to the teacher with rich explanations of their understanding and synthesis to provide answers.
- An ELA teacher used multiple stations to allow children to explore poetry. At one table children were encouraged to use resources, such as seashells, cranberry plants, sea glass, etc. to inspire their poetry to be more poetic. At another table they used a thesaurus to broaden their vocabulary use within their poems. The children were highly engaged and collaborative.

Other teachers observed by the Team probed primarily for facts; for example:

- A math teacher stated at the beginning of class that the activities for that class period were homework review and review for a chapter test. After a lengthy homework review of twenty minutes where individual students put their answers on an overhead, the teacher began probing for answers to questions she asked in preparation for the next day's test. The questions required single correct answers and did not facilitate student interaction.
- Another reading lesson consisted of children sitting in a circle where each child was asked to read four lines, round robin style. There were few questions from the teacher other than checking for basic comprehension.

When students asked for clarification, teachers responded in a positive and supportive manner. Many teachers observed by the Team used phrases that encouraged risk-taking, such as "you're close," and invited other students to add to the student's response. Student mistakes were sometimes treated as teaching moments. In one case, an art teacher was facilitating a whole class effort to draw a dog. After the class brainstormed the different parts one might see on a dog, individual students were asked to come to the white board and draw a single component onto the dog image created by the group. The class laughed when one child drew a very small dog's head. The teacher said, "Oh, heads can be many sizes" and remarked that it was a wonderful head. Through the lesson, he accepted every child's addition, conveying the message that learning is a process of exploration and that mistakes in art can be possibilities rather than errors. One classroom had posters on display that said, "Mistakes are expected and cherished" and "Good Questions \geq Good Answers." The Team observed that this teacher used the Socratic method to help students who were making incorrect guesses refine their thinking so that they could arrive at the correct answer on their own.

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Discussion among students was observed in some cases: for example, in one Latin class observed by the Team, the teacher encouraged questioning and rich discussion and dialogue among students. The class was intrigued by a satchel brought in by the teacher, who had created the scenario of an anthropological dig. Within the satchel were artifacts that had allegedly been left on her office desk by a mythological figure whom the students had already studied. The students guessed about the possible owners of the artifacts, which included a bottle of aspirin and a wedding magazine, and the teacher solicited names of mythological characters, such as Agamemnon, Apollo, Aphrodite, and Zeus, and wrote them on the board. Over the class period, as the teacher skillfully drew out reasons for the students' guesses, the students provided a substantial review of their prior knowledge while under the control of a teacher in whom they appeared to have high trust and confidence.

The Team also observed active student discussion and questioning in a health class working on a nutrition project to create an innovative food product. Students were placed in groups of four, and the groups interacted well, questioning each other and checking their work against the teacher's requirements for the project.

All students observed by the Team had the necessary books and other resources for the lessons. Computers were available in all classrooms, and students also had access to two computer labs. The Team saw computers in use in two classrooms; the Team also saw students writing lab reports in one of the computer labs. Some classrooms were equipped with interactive whiteboards that other teachers were able to use when needed. All classrooms were clean, well-lit and pleasant; in some classrooms, student work was displayed on the walls.

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

- 1. Rising Tide’s financial condition is sound; its net asset balance has consistently grown each fiscal year from June 30, 2003 through June 30, 2006. The Board of Trustees has designated \$314,595 of the school’s net assets to meet future facility needs.**

Rising Tide 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. The auditors identified no compliance issues and issued no management letters. As shown in Table 7, the school has realized an increase in its net asset balance from \$177,875 in fiscal year 2003 to \$1,033,421 in fiscal year 2006. Notably, the unrestricted portion of the net asset balance has increased from negative \$51,331 in fiscal year 2003 to \$836,129 (designated and undesignated) in fiscal year 2006. Beginning in fiscal year 2005, the Board of Trustees has designated a portion of the unrestricted net assets to meet future facility needs; as of June 30, 2006, the Board had designated \$314,595 for this purpose.

**Table 7. Rising Tide Charter Public School
Net Asset Balance History
2004-2006**

	2003	2004	2005*	2006
Invested in capital assets, net of debt	\$ 229,206	\$ 44,549	\$ 201,960	\$ 197,292
Unrestricted				
Board Designated	0	0	150,000	314,595
Undesignated	(51,331)	405,993	366,866	521,534
Total net assets	\$ 177,875	\$ 450,542	\$ 718,826	\$1,033,421
<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 were included the 2004 report.</i>				

- 2. The Rising Tide Board of Trustees meets regularly and is appropriately engaged in school governance. The Board is working to increase its membership; its current membership of ten is below the 15 members required by the school’s bylaws. The Board has established eight committees to support its work and continues to work on formalizing and documenting its structures and procedures. The Board has not completed development of a strategic plan. Rising Tide has met most, but not all, of the Board-related measures in the school’s Accountability Plan.**

The Team conducted a group interview with four of Rising Tide’s ten Board members. The four members interviewed included the Chairperson, Secretary, and the Treasurer who also serves as chair of the Finance and Auditing Committee. Three of the four members had children attending the school.

The Board members interviewed generally described the school’s mission, including “using Plymouth as a textbook.” They said that their role is to make sure that the school is financially viable and safe and to support the work of the Head of School. They also indicated that they are working to increase the visibility of the school in the local area. The Board members reported

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that they believe that the school's academic performance has been impressive, especially in comparison to other schools, that the curriculum is strong, and that the teachers are passionate about their work in the school.

The Team's interview with the Board members and review of Board meeting minutes indicates that the Board meets regularly and is appropriately engaged in school governance. The Board minutes reviewed by the Team showed that the Board met monthly in the period from September 2006 through August 2007, although in July 2007 the Board did not have a quorum present. At each meeting the Board received a written report with detailed information on the school's budget and finances, reports from Board Committees, and a report from the Head of School. Information reported by the Head of School included updates on enrollment, staffing, school events, and information relevant to charter renewal. Based on the minutes reviewed by the Team, information provided to the Board on assessments appears to have been limited; however, in November 2006 the Head of School did report to the Board on the school's MCAS results and adoption of the TerraNova assessment. Asked about assessment results, the Board members told the Team that the Head of School presented them with data, including TerraNova and MCAS data. The minutes show that the Head of School distributed and reviewed Rising Tide's Application for Renewal at the June 2007 meeting; she discussed the upcoming charter renewal inspection visit and the Board's role in the visit. The Board members interviewed by the Team also described the addition of administrative staff and other changes to support the Head of School, including the recent promotion of the Assistant Head of School to full-time status and recent hiring of the Assistant Business Manager and Registrar; they noted that the school's human resources functions have been outsourced.

The current Board membership of ten falls below the 15 members required by the school's bylaws. The Board members told the Team that recently there has been a significant turnover in Board membership, with several founding Board members retiring from the Board. Some of the retired members have joined a school advisory board, which, the Board members said, has enabled the school to benefit from the former Board members' wealth of institutional knowledge. As describe below, the Board has been actively recruiting new members through its Nominating and Governance Committee. Board members interviewed by the Team reported that they are currently pursuing three candidates for membership.

The Board currently has eight committees: Executive, Nominating and Governance (listed in some materials as Nominating), Finance and Audit (sometimes referred to as Finance or as Audit), Strategic Planning, Development, Technology, Facilities, and Curriculum. The last of these committees, Curriculum, was recently established for the 2007-2008 school year and is comprised of two Board members, two teachers, and the Head of School, according to the Board members interviewed. The purpose of the committee, according to Board meeting minutes, is to oversee the development and maintenance of curriculum working with teachers and staff. The Board members told the Team that in the past the Board committees did not take and maintain minutes as required by the state's open meeting law but that they have begun to do so in the current school year.

The Board members also told the Team that the Board held a retreat in the summer of 2007 at which they set goals for the Board. They cited four Board goals: generating a surplus;

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continuing to strengthen the Middle School; examining the possibility of developing a high school; and meeting the school's facility needs, which include the need for playing fields, convocation space, and space for a lunch program. As will be discussed, the Board has not yet completed development of a strategic plan.

Overall, the Rising Tide Board of Trustees has improved its governance capacity, policies, and practices since 2004 when it terminated the school's relationship with its former management company. The DOE *Year Seven Site Visit Report*, prepared in April 2005, noted that the Board had made some progress in remaking itself from a "weak board" into a board with stronger governance practices; however, the DOE report noted that the Board needed to continue making progress. As the previous discussion indicates, the Team found that the Board has continued to improve but that its structures, policies, and procedures have yet to be finalized; in addition, as will be discussed, the Board has not yet finalized a strategic plan to guide the school.

The Organizational Viability section of Rising Tide's Accountability Plan includes the following goal relating to the Board of Trustees: "Rising Tide's Board of Trustees will work to become stronger as a Board and to increase its effectiveness as the governing body of the school." Listed under this goal are five measures, discussed below.

Measure 1: By June 2007 the Board will create and record specific jobs for board members and job descriptions.

Rising Tide's Application for Renewal states, "The Nominating and Governance Committee has assigned each board member a role. Evidence of the creation of job descriptions for board members may be found in the Board notebook at the school." The school provided the Team a variety of Board-related documents, one of which was a one-page document entitled "Expectations and Responsibilities of the Board of Trustees." The document summarized the role of the Board and the expectations of Board members to undertake certain activities, such as attending meetings, serving on at least one Board committee, advocating for the school, overseeing adherence to the school's mission, approving the selection and compensation of the Head of School and ensuring that the Head of School's performance is evaluated annually, providing oversight and support to staff, and participating in fundraising.

In addition, the documents provided to the Team included the following information on the roles and responsibilities of members serving on committees:

- Roles and responsibilities of the Executive Committee
- Nominating and Governance Committee Charter
- Finance and Audit Committee Charter
- Facilities Committee Charter
- A list of seven committees, including the four noted above (although the list names a Finance Committee rather than a Finance and Audit Committee and a Nominating

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Committee rather than a Nominating and Governance Committee), with bulleted information about membership and responsibilities.

While these documents did not define specific jobs and job descriptions for each Board member, as implied by the above-listed measure, it appears that Rising Tide has met the intent of the measure by defining the expectations of Board members.

Measure 2: By June 2007, the Board will develop and conduct an evaluation of the board, which will then become an annual board review.

Rising Tide met this measure in February 2007. The school's Application for Renewal reports that the Board conducted a self-evaluation in the fall of 2005 based upon a template provided by an outside consultant, that the Board revised the template to better suit its needs, and that the Board conducted its second self-evaluation in February 2007. The Application for Renewal includes a copy of the Board self-evaluation instrument in an appendix; the instrument asks each member to rate his or her involvement in seven areas of Board responsibility, and to assess the Board's performance as a whole in each of the seven areas, and poses a series of open-ended questions. The Application for Renewal reports that the Board plans to perform self-evaluations annually.

Measure 3: The Governance and Membership Committee of the board will follow a process wherein they will identify and recruit trustees with a variety of vocational and personal skills in order to create diversity in the board.

Based on the information reviewed by the Team and provided in the school's Application for Renewal, the school has met the above-listed measure. As noted above, the Board notebook provided to the Team included a charter for the Nominating and Governance Committee. The charter defined specific duties related to the recruitment and selection of Board members. Board members interviewed by the Team described the Board's approach to recruiting and selecting members and the role of the Nominating and Governance Committee. In addition, the school's Application for Renewal includes a description of the process that has been developed to recruit and select Board members; this process includes interviews by the Nominating and Governance Committee and the Head of School, a school tour, attendance by the candidate at a Board meeting, and a briefing for the candidate on the responsibilities of Board members. The Application for Renewal states, "Between 2005 and 2007, the board has successfully recruited members whose backgrounds and skills include nonprofit fundraising, marketing, publishing, entrepreneurship, company management, legal, real estate development and engineering." The Board members told the team that the Board was actively pursuing new members, and had three candidates under consideration.

Measure 4: By 2008, the Board will create a procedures manual for all board members to follow.

Rising Tide's Application for Renewal notes that the Board has begun to develop a procedures manual. (As will be discussed, however, the school's proposed Accountability Plan for the next

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charter period sets a completion date of 2011 for this task.) The Team was provided with a copy of a Board notebook that included a compilation of pertinent materials.

Measure 5: Rising Tide board members will continue to strengthen their leadership of the school through participation in continuing education for board members.

The school's Application for Renewal reports that Board members underwent training about Board responsibilities in 2003 and 2004, and that the Board planned to hold a retreat in August 2007 for the purpose of goal-setting, a "first step in figuring out the type of training on which the Board will focus in the coming years." Board members interviewed by the Team reported that the retreat had been held during the summer of 2007. However, these activities do not appear to constitute "continuing education" for Board members.

The Organizational Viability section of Rising Tide's Accountability Plan also includes the following goal: "The Rising Tide Board and Head of School will ensure that the school's physical plant is adequate to meet the demands of the school program." Listed under this goal are three measures, discussed below.

Measure 1: By June 2007, the Board will create a draft of a Strategic Plan for the school.

According to the school's Application for Renewal, a strategic planning committee of the Board conducted brainstorming sessions with various stakeholders during the 2005-2006 school year, compiled information from the sessions, and presented a draft strategic plan to the Board in February 2007; the Application for Renewal states that a final plan was completed in May 2007. However, when the Team requested a copy of the strategic plan referenced in the Application for Renewal, the Team was given a document entitled "Strategic Plan Outline." Another document provided to the Team, dated August 25, 2007, referenced a strategic planning meeting of the Board held on August 25, 2007; this document identified ten goals with bulleted action steps. Subsequent to the site visit, the school provided the Team with a brief, incomplete document entitled "Rising Tide Charter School Strategic Plan." Thus, the school did not meet the above-cited measure.

Measure 2: The Board and Head of School will facilitate the school's expansion so that the physical plant will be adequate to house 300 students and 35 staff members.

In August 2006, Rising Tide completed a fit-out of additional space in its rented building to accommodate its full enrollment and staffing. Thus, the school has met this measure.

Measure 3: The Board and Head of School will work to develop a positive relationship with the Boys and Girls Club of Plymouth so that Rising Tide may utilize space at the Club in order to provide a wide range of facilities' needs for the school.

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The school's Application for Renewal, and Board members interviewed by the Team, reported that the school has actively pursued good relationships with the Boys and Girls Club. The club is across the street from the school, and the school accesses the gymnasium and playing fields through a rental agreement. The Team was told by the Board that some Boys and Girls Club of Plymouth board members have not been receptive to a closer partnership because they oppose charter schools in general. Although the above-listed measure is not quantifiable, Rising Tide appears to have met the intent of the measure by working to promote a closer relationship with the Boys and Girls Club of Plymouth.

Measure 4: The school will provide evidence of a balanced budget which will include adequate school facilities.

Rising Tide has met this measure. The school has budgeted for and realized surpluses; the budget for the current (2007-2008) school year includes a small surplus. The school has been able to provide facilities that are adequate for its enrollment and staffing. Moreover, as reported above, the Board has designated a portion of its net asset balance to be used for future facility needs.

The Organizational Viability section of Rising Tide's Accountability Plan also includes the following goal relating to the Board of Trustees: "The Board of Trustees will work with the Head of School and staff to improve oversight of the school." Listed under this goal are five measures, discussed below.

Measure 1: The Board Finance Committee will meet monthly with the Business Manager and Head of School to review the monthly financial statements.

Rising Tide's Application for Renewal reports that this measure was achieved during the 2005-2006 school year and that the monthly meetings required by the measure are now regular practice. In addition, Board members interviewed referenced the monthly meetings of the Finance Committee with the Business Manager and Head of School in advance of regular Board meetings.

Measure 2: The Board Chairperson will meet twice a month with the Head of School in order to review issues and concerns at the school.

The school's Application for Renewal states that the school has met and surpassed this goal for the past two years and that, whenever possible, the Board Chairperson and the Head of School meet weekly.

Measure 3: The Executive Committee will conduct a yearly review of the Head of School.

Rising Tide's Application for Renewal states that the Executive Committee initiated annual reviews of the Head of School during the 2005-2006 school year (which was the first school year following the school's separation from Imagine Schools, its former management company) and that reviews of the Head of School have since been conducted every year. According to the

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Application for Renewal, the Head of School develops goals in conjunction with the Executive Committee each year; in December and again in June, the Head of School writes self-assessments of her performance, which are reviewed by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee then determines whether or not to award the Head of School a monetary bonus based on her performance. The Board members interviewed by the Team described this evaluation process in a manner that comports with the description in the school's Application for Renewal.

Measure 4: The board will create at least two opportunities, during the school year, for board members to informally meet with staff members.

The Rising Tide Application for Renewal reports that the Board does convene at least twice a year in informal, social gatherings with the staff, and that the school holds a "Board Visiting day" annually during which Board members are encouraged to visit the school, attend classes, and speak to teachers individually. Thus, the school has met this measure.

Measure 5: The Board will review and address, with the Head of School, any staff concerns expressed in the bi-annual staff survey.

The school's Application for Renewal indicates that this measure has been met, beginning in 2005. The application describes the process by which the Head of School surveys staff twice a year, reviews the results with the Board Chair, and reports the results to the full Board at one of its regular meetings. A copy of the "End-of-Year Staff Survey 2006-07" is included in an appendix to the school's Application for Renewal.

3. Rising Tide's enrollment has increased over the current charter period, and it maintains a sizeable waitlist. Rising Tide has met the measures in its Accountability Plan relating to student enrollments and attendance rates.

As of date of the site visit, Rising Tide enrolled 305 students and maintained a waitlist of 80 students. Rising Tide's Application for Renewal provides data showing the school's enrollment for the prior years; these data as well as the enrollment for the 2007-2008 school year are summarized in Table 8, below.

**Table 8. Rising Tide Charter Public School
Enrollment History**

School Year	Enrollment
2004-2005	243
2005-2006	265
2006-2007	294
2007-2008	305
<i>Data sources: Application for Renewal; 2007-2008 figure from data provided to the Team by Rising Tide</i>	

The Organizational Viability section of Rising Tide's Accountability Plan includes the following goal: "The Rising Tide staff and Board members will attain strong organizational viability by

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maintaining strong parent support and commitment to the school.” Listed under this goal is the following enrollment-related measure:

Measure 1: By 2008, Rising Tide will maintain an enrollment level equal to or exceeding 90 percent capacity and a waitlist equal to or exceeding 15 percent of the school’s population.

Rising Tide has already met this measure, which is to be achieved by 2008. The school’s enrollment exceeds 95 percent of the maximum number of students permitted by its charter, and the number of waitlisted students equals 26 percent of the current student enrollment.

Also listed under the same goal is the following attendance-related measure:

Measure 3: Each year, the average daily attendance rate of all Rising Tide Charter School students will be greater than 92%.

Rising Tide has met this measure. Rising Tide’s attendance rates for the first four years of the current charter period, reported in the school’s Application for Renewal, were as shown in Table 9, below.

**Table 9. Rising Tide Charter Public School
Attendance Rates**

School Year	Enrollment
2003-2004	95.77
2004-2005	96.16
2005-2006	95.77
2006-2007	95.50
<i>Data source: Application for Renewal</i>	

- 4. Rising Tide has broadened the school’s leadership capacity and has established clearly defined leadership positions that are well understood by staff. The school has established several organizational mechanisms through which teachers participate directly in decision-making. The school’s distributive leadership model has fostered a shared sense of responsibility and accountability for the school’s success among administrators and staff.**

Rising Tide’s leadership team consists of the Head of School; the Assistant Head of School, who was appointed to full-time status in the 2007-2008 school year; a part-time Business Manager; a full-time Assistant Business Manager; a full-time Registrar; a part-time Technology Director; and a full-time Special Education Coordinator, working in conjunction with a part-time Special Education consultant. The DOE *Year Seven Site Visit Report* found that Rising Tide had not clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of the school’s administrators. (This issue was not addressed in the DOE *Year Eight Site Visit Report*.) However, the Team found that the responsibilities of each leadership position were well understood by staff and had been defined in the school’s 2007-2008 *Staff Handbook*.

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Rising Tide has created a distributive leadership model that enables teachers to participate directly in school decision-making. The school has created several organizational mechanisms to ensure this participation:

- The Thursday Committee, which meets weekly, is composed of school specialists and teacher representatives from each grade. According to the 2007-2008 *Staff Handbook*, the Thursday Committee's role is "to make preliminary decisions and accomplish tasks related to the teaching and learning at Rising Tide." One major task completed by this group was the establishment of benchmarks for the school's new Quarterly Student Report. Thursday Committee members told the Team that calibration of the report card benchmarks will be an important task addressed by the committee during the 2007-2008 school year.
- The Summer Work Group provides direction for the school on issues such as homework, teaching methodology, and student behavior. According to the school's 2007-2008 *Staff Handbook*, this group has met for two weeks in July for the past two years to focus on a range of whole-school issues, including community building, collaborative teaching, student orientation, and the Guiding Questions.
- Team Leaders are teachers, most of whom carry a full teaching load, with additional responsibilities. Team Leaders meet once each week, and the Head of School, or the Assistant Head, attends all meetings. Team Leaders are responsible for providing support to other teachers at their grade levels and for addressing academic and behavioral issues within their grade levels.
- Curriculum Coordinators are assigned to all subject areas. According to the 2007-2008 *Staff Handbook*, the role of the Curriculum Coordinator is to "oversee the development of the curriculum and make sure that the curriculum follows the guidelines in the Massachusetts State Frameworks and New Standards." (As previously noted, the Head of School told the Team that the New Standards are being phased out.) In an interview, Curriculum Coordinators told the Team that they serve as a resource to classroom teachers, review test results, develop curriculum, and assist the Head of School with curriculum reviews.

Team Leaders and Curriculum Coordinators interviewed by the Team said teachers at Rising Tide feel consulted and empowered and that the lack of hierarchy at the school enables them to play an important role in the success of the school. They said that the Head of School delegates responsibility to their groups yet maintains communications with each team or committee; either the Head of School or the Assistant Head of School participates in many meetings, and their participation is welcomed and valued by the groups. The Team observed that Rising Tide's delegation of leadership responsibilities to administrators and teachers has created a committed school community and has fostered a shared sense of responsibility and accountability for the school's success.

5. Rising Tide reports that 100 percent of its core academic teachers are Highly Qualified and that the school's staff turnover rate has greatly diminished since 2003.

In the 2006-2007 school year, all Rising Tide teachers of core academic subjects were Highly Qualified under the No Child Left Behind Act and Massachusetts law, according to the Registrar of Rising Tide. According to the school's Application for Renewal, staff turnover was relatively high during the school's early years but has greatly diminished since 2003; the Application for Renewal lists the number of teachers who have left the school in each year of the current charter period as follows:

2002-2003 school year: 3
2003-2004 school year: 6
2004-2005 school year: 3
2005-2006 school year: 2
2006-2007 school year: 3

The Application for Renewal attributes the school's low teacher turnover rate to the fact that the school's independence from its former management company allowed the school to increase teacher salaries to competitive levels and to hire more qualified candidates as well as to school's sound benefit plan, teacher autonomy, and collaborative teaching and learning environment.

6. Rising Tide offers a range of professional development programs and activities; training is also provided through informal communications. The school has begun a year-long professional development effort in the area of inquiry-based instruction.

The Team reviewed Rising Tide's professional development program as reflected in documents provided to the Team. The documents show that the school's professional development program has several components:

- Individual professional development includes annual goal-setting for each staff member.
- Leadership development includes opportunities to lead activities, mentor other teachers; serve on committees; and, in some cases, carry a reduced teaching load in order to pursue other interests that the school may value.
- Whole staff professional development includes training in a variety of areas selected by the Head of School with input from the faculty steering committee. The Team's review of scheduled professional development during the current charter period showed that training was offered on a broad range of topics relating to curriculum development, Special Education issues, teaching and learning, and assessment.

The documents reviewed by the Team showed that teachers accrue points in connection with the above-listed professional development activities.

Most recently, Rising Tide has begun a year-long professional development series on inquiry-based learning; teachers work in groups to explore this topic through lesson study and reflection.

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The Head of School told the Team that the school's professional development work regarding inquiry-based instruction is "a work in progress"; the Team confirmed that the school has not yet developed inquiry-based instruction standards.

Teachers at Rising Tide are also trained informally, through communications with other teachers and administrators. Teachers interviewed by the Team told that the Team that they receive ongoing, undocumented instructional assistance and mentoring during the school year. Through these informal communications, teachers and administrators have reportedly worked to ensure the integration of the school's curriculum into classroom instruction.

Rising Tide's Accountability Plan includes the following measure related to professional development under the previously-cited goal, "Rising Tide staff and students will demonstrate increased acquisition and mastery of computer technology skills, consistent with the guidelines contained in the Massachusetts State Frameworks":

Measure 1: Between 2003 and 2008, all grade level team teachers will master an increasing number of computer technology skills to be included in their teaching.

The above-listed measure is not measurable: it does not provide a method of assessing teachers' mastery of an "increasing number" of computer technology skills. The school's Application for Renewal states that the school has met this measure. The Application for Renewal cites teachers' use of digital whiteboards, Discovery Education Video clips, teacher-created videos, Excel spreadsheets, and PowerPoint as examples of teachers' mastery of computer technology skills.

According to the school's Technology Director, the school assesses teachers' technology skills using the Massachusetts Technology Self-Assessment Tool (TSAT); 82 percent of Rising Tide teachers achieved mastery or better in the May 2007 test administration. The Team learned that the TSAT results are used to assist teachers in improving their computer technology skills. During the site visit, all Rising Tide teachers participated in training provided by the Technology Director in the use of video streaming in the classroom.

7. Rising Tide evaluates all teachers through a two-step process of annual goal-setting and classroom observations. Teacher observations are also conducted informally throughout the school year. The four completed teacher observations reviewed by the Team were informative and reflective; they did not reference standards for the inquiry-based instruction model adopted by the school or student assessment data.

The Team's review of school documents and interview with the Head of School showed that Rising Tide conducts annual evaluations of all teachers. In the fall of each year, each teacher provides written goals to the Head of School, who then meets with each teacher to discuss and, if appropriate, renegotiate the goals; the Head of School may also initiate training or other professional development measures related to the goals. Later in the year, an official teacher observation is conducted by the Head of School; the observation is recorded on an official form that is signed by the Head of School and filed in the teacher's personnel file.

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The Team reviewed goals submitted by six teachers in the fall of 2007. These goals fell into several categories. The goals set by entry-level teachers related to assimilation into the school culture, clarification of the teacher's understanding of the school's curriculum, and provision to the teacher of instructional or administrative support. Other teacher goals related to teacher mentoring, advanced training, advanced degrees, and participation in other school roles, such as the Team Leader role.

The standard teacher observation form used by Rising Tide, which was included in the school's 2007-2008 *Staff Handbook*, contained sections related to lesson preparation, the day's lesson, methodology, student involvement, and a summary. The standard form did not specify standards of effective inquiry-based instruction or student assessments.

The Team's review of four completed teacher observation forms showed that the teacher observation was recorded during a single class period designed for evaluation. Teachers interviewed by the Team confirmed that although the Head of School and the Assistant Head of School frequently observed their classes throughout the year, only one classroom observation was evaluated and recorded each year. The format of the written observations recorded on the forms reviewed by the Team was generally consistent: each form contained a brief history of the teacher's assignments and teaching experience; a write-up of the classroom observation, including a description of teacher and student behavior; and the Head of School's qualitative reflections regarding the observation, including comments on teacher-student interactions observed. In two cases, the observation forms discussed teacher goals, assignments, and successes during the year. Thus, the completed observations were informative and reflective. Consistent with the standard observation form, the completed observations did not reference standards for the inquiry-based instruction model adopted by the school or student assessment data.

8. Rising Tide teachers interviewed by the Team praised the school's supportive and collegial professional community. They cited the school's efforts to help students strengthen their ELA and mathematics skills in preparation for the MCAS exams. They also told the Team that they have access to the materials and resources they require and that they have positive relationships with their students. The teachers interviewed appeared knowledgeable about inquiry-based instruction.

The Team met with a focus group consisting of eight teachers representing grades 5 through 8. The subjects taught by the teachers interviewed included science, math, social studies, ELA, and Latin. The teachers interviewed by the Team were enthusiastic about the collegial and supportive professional community at Rising Tide. They said that they occasionally teach each other's classes and have ready access to assistance from administrators and office staff. They said that their classroom instruction was frequently observed by the Head of School and other administrators and that they received professional support through informal communications with others at the school. They also said that curriculum development at Rising Tide is a "bottom up" process and that vertical connections within curricular areas were continually discussed within departments. They told the Team that their requests for materials and other resources were consistently met by school administrators.

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The teachers told the Team that they receive MCAS data from their Team Leaders and noted that Rising Tide instituted a Math Lab and a Writer's Workshop in response to its analysis of student MCAS data. They said that MCAS preparation is sometimes offered during Focus Periods, which are extra classes that are used for interdisciplinary projects as well as skill-building and enrichment activities. One interdisciplinary project cited by the teachers focused on cranberry growing in the Plymouth area.

The teachers told the Team that their relationships with students were consistently positive and that the school provided many opportunities for connections with their students. They said that that in addition to learning about student needs through their classroom performance, they become familiar with students through the school's Advisory system and also interact with students through their oversight of community service activities and after-school clubs. According to the teachers, Rising Tide maintains an open-door policy encouraging student access to teachers.

When asked to explain inquiry-based instruction, the teachers described a process of questioning by the teacher in order to encourage students to generate their own questions. They said that they often base their lessons on questions posed by students and encourage students to use the lessons to conduct their own analyses. According to the teachers, high levels of inquiry are reached when students teach concepts and ideas to each other.

9. Rising Tide students interviewed by the Team expressed strong satisfaction with their school: they stated that they feel respected, academically challenged, and safe at Rising Tide. They reported that they are expected to take responsibility for their own learning, that their teachers are supportive, and that they appreciated the school's approach to discipline and sponsorship of after-school activities. The older students expressed the desire for changing rooms, showers, and lockers at the school.

The Team interviewed two separate groups of students: 10 fifth- and sixth-grade students, and 10 seventh- and eighth- grade students. All were respectful, well-spoken, and attentive to one another's comments. Both groups expressed high satisfaction with several aspects of the school: they told the Team that they felt respected, academically challenged, and safe at Rising Tide. The younger students reported that they had enrolled in the school because they had heard that it was academically strong, because their siblings had attended, because the teachers were nice, and because their parents had made the decision to enroll them. The older students frequently cited Rising Tide's small community atmosphere as a benefit of attending the school. All reported feeling welcomed and relieved that there was so much academic support; they also said that they liked the fact that students at Rising Tide are expected to take more responsibility for their own learning.

The students told the Team that their academic work was challenging and that their teachers made sure that they were challenged. Several students commented that their teachers knew the limits of their students and understood that students' learning abilities differed. One student also noted that at Rising Tide, students learned not only facts but also "why something happened." When asked how they knew whether their academic performance was satisfactory, students said that teachers gave them grades, correct answers, and other feedback on their progress. When

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asked directly about MCAS exams, a younger student reported knowing that Rising Tide students had performed well on the exams.

The students cited examples of the safe environment at Rising Tide. They said that they felt safe because “teachers are connected to kids” and because teachers quickly intervened when discipline problems arose. They pointed out that teachers monitored the entry doors and hallways. More broadly, the students praised the “good energy” at the school, the after-school activities, and the school-sponsored social events.

The seventh- and eighth-grade students expressed the desire for changing rooms and showers for the physical education program. They also said that the lack of lockers at the school requires them to “lug around heavy backpacks.”

Overall, students in both focus groups told the Team that they were glad to be students at Rising Tide rather than at other local middle schools. Although they said they felt somewhat disconnected from their friends because of Rising Tide’s longer school day, they appreciated the support they received from peers and teachers at Rising Tide.

10. The parents of Rising Tide students value the school’s challenging academic program, supportive staff, and emphasis on student responsibility for their own learning. They appreciate the school’s welcoming and safe environment: they said that their children were treated with respect, felt safe at the school, and were encouraged to excel.

The Team interviewed a focus group of seven parents of students in grades 5 through 8; two were parents of special needs children on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Overall, the parents expressed strong support for the school, its programs, and its staff; the only concerns they expressed related to the lack of changing rooms and showers for the physical education program.

The parents described Rising Tide’s academic program as very challenging, particularly in contrast to the programs offered by the local schools that their children had previously attended. All parents felt that Rising Tide had high academic expectations for their students. One parent recounted that her daughter had become bored and depressed in her previous school and was frequently absent. Once at Rising Tide, she became engaged and enthusiastic about her academic program and the supportive community environment, and she no longer had an attendance problem. Parents said that the school provided their children with the tools they needed, included self-confidence and a sense of responsibility, to succeed in larger, more impersonal high school settings. Rising Tide’s small class sizes were another positive attribute cited by the parents.

One parent who was enrolled in a graduate education program told the Team that she saw Rising Tide using concepts that she was learning in her coursework, including research-based instruction, differentiated instruction, and techniques for encouraging students to think. The parents told the Team that they liked the fact that their children were being taught to take responsibility for their own learning: for example, parents of students in grade 5 were expected to sign the student’s homework book, but parents of students in the higher grades were not. The

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parent of a child on an IEP noted that his child was included in all of the classes and learning what the other children were learning, while receiving significant academic support from the school.

When asked if they were aware of the latest MCAS test results, one parent said that he had read about the school's MCAS scores in the newspaper and that the scores showed that the school was performing well. Some parents told the Team that the other schools attended by their children were too focused on MCAS results and "taught to the test."

All of the parents interviewed agreed that Rising Tide's welcoming, nurturing, and safe environment was an important factor contributing to their high level of satisfaction with the school. All said their children were treated with respect, felt safe at the school, and were encouraged to excel. Parents gave examples of how their children had been guided, nurtured, and challenged by the staff. One parent said that his child's teacher helped his child "come out of his shell."

The parents said that the school's communications with parents were frequent and helpful. They said that the school maintains a website on which the information is updated weekly and also holds meetings on a variety of topics throughout the year. They also commented on the strength of the communications among Rising Tide teachers and staff: they noted that their children's advisors were well informed by other teachers regarding their children's academic progress.

Rising Tide's Accountability Plan includes the following measure relating to parent satisfaction under the previously cited goal, "The Rising Tide staff and Board members will attain strong organizational viability by maintaining strong parent support and commitment to the school":

Measure 2: In a yearly parent survey distributed to all Rising Tide charter school parents/guardians, 85% of all parents will report that the effectiveness of the school's academic program, communication and child's progress is good to excellent.

Rising Tide distributes a parent survey each year; the most recent survey, distributed in November 2006, yielded a participation rate of 82.2 percent. Rising Tide's Application for Renewal contains a chart showing the distribution of parent responses to four statements on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 signifying "strongly disagree" and 4 signifying "strongly agree." The four statements were as follows:

The academic program is challenging and age appropriate.

I would recommend this school to my friends who have school-age children.

Special accommodations are made for my child when necessary.

The SPED support staff is providing the appropriate services for my child.

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The chart provided in the Application for Renewal shows that the average ratings provided by parents of students in each grade ranged from 3.4 to 3.6 on the first statements. (The other statements did not relate directly to the above-listed measure.)

Rising Tide did not report out the data necessary to evaluate the school's progress relative to the above-listed measure. The school's Application for Renewal notes that the 82.5 percent survey participation rate fell just below the 85 percent reporting rate cited in the above-listed measure. In addition, the survey did not require parents to assign ratings of "good" or "excellent" to the questions. Although it solicited parent responses regarding the school's academic program, it did not measure parent satisfaction with respect to two of the three components of the measure.

11. Rising Tide's facility is clean and well maintained. The facility lacks lockers, changing rooms, showers, playing fields, and adequate convocation space. The entrance to the building is monitored, and students are supervised during outdoor activities. However, the Team observed that the school's use of the outdoor parking lot for physical education classes could pose safety issues for students.

Rising Tide is located on two floors of a leased building on a cul de sac near commercial and industrial buildings. The facility is clean, well maintained, and accessible. Three of the four doors to the building are locked, and one is unlocked. All doors open from the inside outwards. A receptionist is stationed at the unlocked door, and visitors are required to wear badges.

The building contains 18 dedicated classrooms, two computer labs, a multipurpose room used as an indoor gymnasium and cafeteria, a library, and offices for faculty and administrators. As previously noted, the building lacks lockers, changing rooms, showers, playing fields, and adequate convocation space. Folding tables line the corridors on the first floor until lunchtime, when they are set up in the multipurpose room. Lunches are made off site and are delivered daily in large insulated containers for the noon meal. Rising Tide offers a breakfast program two days per week.

The building has four staircases and a working elevator. Corridors on the first floor are adequate; however, when the corridor is used to store the folded lunch tables, students pass through that portion of the corridor more slowly. A corridor on the second floor is narrow.

Some physical education classes are held in the multipurpose room, some are held outdoors in the school parking lot, and some are held across the road at the Boys and Girls Club of Plymouth. Students are always accompanied by an adult when crossing the road. Because the changing rooms and showers at the latter building are not available to Rising Tide students, the students must change their clothing in the toilet areas of the school's building, a process that is reportedly uncomfortable and embarrassing for some students.

No cars were observed parked in the area where recess and physical education classes take place. The Team observed several dismissal events; they were orderly and uneventful. However, it appeared to the Team that the outdoor physical education classes may pose some safety issues, despite the fact that these classes are supervised by experienced teachers. One student was observed leaving the building alone to join an ongoing physical education class in the rear

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parking lot; there was no obvious supervision by Rising Tide staff until the student joined the class. The Team observed one physical education class during which students were being taught to punt a football; a football was kicked over the fence close to a working fork lift in an adjoining building construction yard. The Team observed a man on a forklift very near the unsupervised student who recovered the football; the student quickly returned to the class.

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

- 1. Rising Tide's challenging academic program, supportive school community, emphasis on community service, and involvement with Plymouth cultural organizations are consistent with the school's mission. The school has met several of the mission-related measures in its Accountability Plan. The school has drafted a revised mission statement for the next charter period.**

Rising Tide's mission statement is as follows:

The Rising Tide Charter School will provide a strong academic program rooted in the history of Plymouth, Massachusetts. Our students will harvest opportunity from the practice of language, the reasoning of mathematics, the analysis of science and the reflection of history. We want children to hone skills through rigorous studies, but skills alone do not make a whole education. The Rising Tide Charter School will also cultivate within its students a sense of belonging to our community, a tie with those who have come before them and a seed of continuity between the Plymouth of today and the Plymouth of tomorrow. The Rising Tide Charter School will graduate capable and prepared young adults who have already sown within themselves a sense of place and belonging that will be the bounty of the future, whether they remain among us or venture from our harbor.

As discussed in the previous findings of this report, Rising Tide offers a challenging academic program. The Team's interviews with Rising Tide's Board of Trustees, school administrators, teachers, students, and parents revealed that the school community is close-knit and supportive. The school's Accountability Plan contains a number of measures relating to the school's connections to the external community. The Academic Program section of the Accountability Plan contains the following goal, cited earlier in this report: "Community leaders and organizations will recognize the Rising Tide Charter School and its students as a resource for community activism and volunteerism." Listed under this goal are two measures pertaining to community service, discussed below.

Measure 1: Each year, between 2003 and 2008, the number of organizations that the Rising Tide community services will increase and broaden in diversity, up to 20 organizations.

According to Rising Tide's Application for Renewal, the school has already exceeded this measure, which is to be achieved by 2008. The Application for Renewal lists 22 organizations, in the Plymouth community and beyond, that have been served by the school; these include the Plymouth Coalition for the Homeless, Rosie's Place, Toys for Tots, Boston Walk for Hunger, and a local food pantry.

Measure 2: By 2008, 100% of Rising Tide students will perform community service hours as appropriate by grade level.

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Rising Tide's Application for Renewal reports that in 2006, 100 percent of Rising Tide students participated in community service activities and received credits for their community service hours. Thus, in 2006 the school met the above-listed measure, which is to be achieved by 2008.

In the "Faithfulness to Terms of Charter" section, Rising Tide's Accountability Plan contains the following mission-related goal: "To develop visible and positive relationships with the Plymouth area community." Listed under this goal are two measures, discussed below.

Measure 1: Between 2003 and 2008, Rising Tide will maintain or improve the relationships it holds with an increasing number of local business organizations.

- a. The School will foster positive and lasting community business relationships it holds with an increasing number of local business organizations.

The above-listed measure, which is to be achieved by 2008, is not quantifiable; "positive," "lasting," and "increased" are undefined in the measure. According to the school's Application for Renewal, Rising Tide has met this measure. The Application for Renewal cites several examples of the school's efforts to foster positive relationships with local business organizations, such as the school's participation in the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce's Junior Achievement Program and the school's hosting of an after-hours event at the school to which local businesspeople were invited in order to learn more about Rising Tide.

Measure 2: Rising Tide will foster positive relationships with organizations for curriculum and academic development, such as local colleges, museums, libraries and cultural organizations.

- b. By 2007, RTCS will establish a relationship with a local college or university so that the school can support a student teaching program.
- c. By 2008, RTCS will establish ongoing relationships with local cultural organizations so that local history can become an integral part of the Rising Tide curriculum.

According to Rising Tide's Application for Renewal, the school has not yet succeeded in establishing a relationship with a local college or university, as required by part (b) of the above-listed measure. The Application for Renewal cited the school's geographical location, which is distant from most colleges and universities in the region, as the principal obstacle to meeting this measure. The Application for Renewal states that many Rising Tide teachers are working with local historical and cultural organizations; students have visited Plimoth Plantation on occasion, and the school's three bands perform each year at the Plymouth Student Arts Festival sponsored by the Plymouth Cultural Arts Council. Thus, the school appears to have established ongoing relationships with local cultural organizations, as required by part (c) of the above-listed measure, which is to be achieved by 2008.

The second goal in the Faithfulness to Terms of Charter section of the school's Accountability Plan is as follows: "The Board will maintain the integrity of the original charter by preserving a small school and small class size." Two measures are listed under this goal:

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Measure 1: The average class size will not be larger than 21 students per classroom

Rising Tide's Application for Renewal reports that, although average class sizes in grades 7 and 8 have not exceeded 21 students, average class sizes in grades 5 and 6 have at times reached 23 students in order for the school to maintain full enrollment. However, according to the school, the schoolwide average class size has not exceeded 21 students. Thus, Rising Tide has met the above-listed measure.

Measure 2: The student population will not exceed 350 students.

As previously discussed, Rising Tide's enrollment of 305 students for the 2007-2008 school year was higher than in any previous year. Thus, the school has met the above-listed measure.

Rising Tide's Accountability Plan contains a third goal, for which no measures are listed, in the Faithfulness to Terms of Charter section: "The Board and school staff will alter the school's mission in order to keep pace with a changing community." According to the school's Application for Renewal, a small group of teachers and trustees revised the school's mission statement in 2004, but the revised statement was not approved by the Board of Trustees and the DOE. The school intends to seek approval for the change in the next charter period. The revised mission statement is as follows:

The Rising Tide Charter School will provide a strong academic program, grounded in a safe atmosphere of respect, trust, and community involvement, that allows for high academic achievement for all of its students.

2. Rising Tide has met 19 of the 31 measures listed in the school's Accountability Plan that were to be achieved during the current charter period and has already met more than half of the Accountability Plan measures that are to be achieved by 2008. Three Accountability Plan measures are not measurable, and the school did not report out data on one measure.

Rising Tide's Accountability Plan contains 12 goals with 42 related measures. The Team found that Rising Tide has met 19 of the 31 measures in the school's Accountability Plan that were to be achieved in the current charter period; the school has not met nine. Of the remaining three measures, two are not measurable, and the school did not report out the data required to determine whether or not the school met the third.

The measures in the Academic Program section of Rising Tide's Accountability Plan that the school did not meet related to the school's performance on MCAS and on nationally normed reading and math achievement tests and to the school's development of grade-level benchmarks. The unmet measures in the Organizational Viability section of the school's Accountability Plan related to the Board's participation in continuing education and preparation of a draft strategic plan. The unmet measure in the Faithfulness to Terms of Charter section of the school's Accountability Plan related to the school's establishment of a relationship with a local college or university.

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Of the 42 measures in the school's Accountability Plan, 11 are to be achieved by 2008. The school has already met six of these measures and has not yet met four; one is not measurable.

3. Rising Tide has undertaken dissemination efforts during the current charter period.

The charter school law, M.G.L. c. 71, §89(II), requires commonwealth charter schools 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.” The school's Application for Renewal cites seven cases in which Rising Tide has disseminated information regarding the school's best practices to the public. These examples, which do not reference other public schools in the Plymouth school district, include the following:

- In March 2006, four Rising Tide staff members delivered a presentation on “Philosophy and Practice: Creating a Supportive School Environment Through Effective Discipline” at the Massachusetts Charter School Association's best practices workshop.
- School leaders from the South Shore, Cape and the Islands Consortium of Charter Schools meet four times per year in order to share best practices and ways to address common issues.
- From 2002 to 2005, Rising Tide was a leader and participant in dissemination activities, funded by a charter school dissemination grant, that included collaborating with other regional charter schools to disseminate best practices and to share board of trustees training and 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 Rising Tide contains an unmanageable number of goals and measures, many of which are unquantifiable. Several Board-related measures are problematic.**

The DOE's *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. However, Rising Tide's proposed Accountability Plan lists 15 goals and 44 measures. The task of monitoring progress against and reporting on 44 measures is likely to prove cumbersome, unmanageable, and ultimately unproductive for Rising Tide.

Several of the measures are not measurable, including the following:

- The RTCS Science staff will continue to lead the school in incorporating ecologically sound practices and procedures into the curriculum and school habits of mind.
- By 2011, the majority of RTCS students, who attend the school for four years, will be adequately prepared, by the end of eighth grade, to enter Latin 2 in high school.
- By 2009, the Board of Trustees will become active advocates for Rising Tide and charter schools in the community, region and state.

In addition, many of the unquantifiable measures contained in the proposed Accountability Plan are statements of the school's plans for implementing systems and procedures, rather than statements of measurable outcomes to be achieved, during the next charter period. The following are examples:

- Between 2008 and 2013, the Rising Tide staff, under the leadership of the Curriculum Coordinators, will continue to identify, teach and document appropriate skills for introduction and mastery at each grade level.
- By 2010, rising Tide will create, staff and document an academic management team capable of handling all matters pertaining to academic program development and oversight.
- By 2010, the academic management team will assist teachers, through effective professional development programs, to grow in their ability to become increasingly effective learners and teachers.

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- Under the leadership of the Curriculum Coordinators, Team Leaders, the Head of School and Assistant Head of School, Rising Tide faculty will continue to develop the skills necessary to teach in an inquiry-based manner and to center grade level curriculum around already established Guiding Questions.

Finally, one Board-related measure, “By 2011, the Board of Trustees will complete a procedures manual for board members to follow,” is identical to a measure contained in the current Accountability Plan discussed in this report, other than the deadline for completion of this task; the deadline stated in the current Accountability Plan is 2008. It is unclear why the proposed Accountability Plan allocates three years for the completion of a document that is regarded as sufficiently important to include in the current and proposed Accountability Plans.

2. Rising Tide is well positioned for the next charter term in several important respects. However, the school has more work to do in the areas of data analysis, curriculum alignment, and inquiry-based instruction. Rising Tide is also considering expansion to include a high school, and how to address facility needs.

Over the past charter period, Rising Tide’s Board and administration have succeeded in terminating its relationship with its private management company and assuming full responsibility for school operations. Currently, Rising Tide is well positioned for the next charter period in several important respects: the school’s academic program is challenging, the school environment is supportive and committed to learning, the teaching staff is committed to the school, enrollment levels are high, and the school’s financial condition is sound with a growing net asset balance, a portion of which has been designated by the Board to meet facility needs.

However, Rising Tide also confronts several significant challenges. Substantial percentages of Rising Tide students have not reached proficiency on the MCAS exams: in particular, 50 percent of grade 8 students, 58 percent of grade 7 students, 56 percent of grade 6 students, and 39 percent of grade 5 students did not score in the Proficient or Advanced category on the 2007 MCAS Mathematics exam. However, the Team found that Rising Tide has not instituted systematic procedures for using refined data analysis to track student growth over time. The school’s curriculum is not yet fully aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, and the school’s inquiry-based instruction model is still being implemented. The Board is also confronted with decisions about whether the school should expand to include a high school, and how to address its current and future facility needs. By systematically addressing these challenges Rising Tide would strengthen its capacity to meet the needs of its students over the next charter period.

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APPENDIX
SCHEDULE OF THE
RIISING TIDE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL
RENEWAL INSPECTION VISIT

Tuesday, October 16, 2007 - Day 1

Time	Team Member A	Team Member B	Team Member C	Team Member D
7:30	Initial Team Meeting & Breakfast, in Staff Lounge (designated work space)			
7:45-8:45	Board of Trustees Meeting in Staff Lounge			
8:45-9:40	Business Team Meeting in Staff Lounge			
9:40	Orientation/Tour of School			
10:00-11:20	Classroom Observations (except 5th grade due to field trip)			
11:20-12:20	Team Regroup & Lunch in Staff Lounge			
12:30	Meet with Head of School and Assistant Head of School in Staff Lounge			
1:15-3:10	Classroom, Advisory, Discover, and 7-8 grade Band Observations			
3:10	Break			
3:30	Meeting with Faculty Leaders in 2nd floor Study Center			
4:30	Process Feedback to Head of School			
5:00	Team Departure			

Wednesday, October 17, 2007 - Day 2, Early Release

Time	Team Member A	Team Member B	Team Member C
7:30-8:00	Team arrival, breakfast, and preparation		
8:00-8:30	Meeting with Technology Coordinator in Staff Lounge		
8:35-11:40	Classroom Observations		
11:40-12:00	Break		
12:00-1:00	Teacher Focus Group and Team/School Lunch in Staff Lounge		
1:00 – 3:30	Follow up with Program Leaders		Observe Professional Development
3:30	Document Review in Staff Lounge		
5:00	Team Departure		

Thursday, October 18, 2007 - Day 3

Time	Team Member A	Team Member B	Team Member C
7:30-8:00	Team arrival, breakfast, and preparation		
8:00-9:00		Learning specialists & SPED teachers in Learning Center	
8:30 – 9:30	Parent Focus Group in 2 nd floor Study Center		
9:40-11:20	Classroom Observations (exc. Grades 6 & 8 Latin)		
11:20-11:50	Student Focus Group, Grades 7-8 in 2 nd Floor Study Center		
11:50-12:20	Student Focus Group, Grades 5-6 in 2 nd Floor Study Center		
12:30-1:10	Team Lunch in Staff Lounge		
1:10-3:10	Classroom and Gr 5-6 Band Observations	Team Debrief, Document Review	
3:10	Follow up with Program Leaders		
3:30	Thursday Committee meeting in 2 nd floor Study Center		
5:00	Team Departure		

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Friday, October 19, 2007 - Day 4

Time	Team Member A	Team Member B	Team Member C	Team Member D	Team Member E
7:30	Team arrival & breakfast				
7:45	Schoolwide Morning Meeting – Multipurpose room				
8:00-12:00	Team Deliberations, Follow-up Interviews & Observations, and Lunch				
12:00	Meeting w. Head of School in Staff Lounge Team Departure				