

Marblehead Community Charter Public School

Year Eighteen Check-In Visit Observations

February 14, 2013
Marblehead, MA

School Profile

<i>Marblehead Community Charter Public School (MCCPS)</i>			
Type of Charter	Commonwealth	Location	Marblehead
Regional/Non-Regional	Non-Regional	Districts in Region	NA
Year Opened	1995	Year(s) Renewed	2000, 2005, 2010
Maximum Enrollment	230	Current Enrollment	230
Students on Waitlist	162	Chartered Grade Span	4-8

Mission Statement

“MCCPS fosters a community that empowers children to become capable, self-determining, fully engaged individuals who are critical and creative thinkers committed to achieving their highest intellectual, artistic, social, emotional, and physical potential. We are dedicated to involving, learning from, participating in, and serving our school community and community at large.”

School Setting

MCCPS is in its 18th year. The school opened in 1995, serving students in grades 5-7. MCCPS added the eighth grade in 1996-1997. The fourth grade was added in 2004-2005 and, since that time, the school has served students in grades 4–8. Students predominantly come from Marblehead, Swampscott, and Salem. The school is housed in a one-story converted Elk’s lodge which includes a gym, a music room, an art room, and a large community room that also serves as a cafeteria.

The following participants conducted the site visit on February 14, 2013:

- Alison Bagg, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE), Charter School Office (CSO)
- Jane Haltiwanger, ESE, CSO
- Claire Smithney, ESE, CSO

Before the visit, the site visit team reviewed the school’s 2011-12 annual report, the school’s accountability plan, board materials, and recent internal and external assessment data. On site, the team reviewed lesson plans, student CUE report cards, student My Achievement Plans (MAPs) and other information provided by the school. The team conducted approximately 23 classroom observations and interviewed trustees (4), administrators (4), and teachers (11). The purposes of the check-in visit were to corroborate and augment the information contained in the school’s annual report and collect information that will help the Commissioner and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education make a renewal recommendation for the school’s charter.

Site visits focus on the three central areas of charter school accountability: faithfulness to the terms of the school’s charter, academic program success, and organizational viability. The team’s findings in each of these areas are presented below.

Summary of Observations

Faithfulness to Charter

The school is fully committed to its mission and all stakeholders were able to articulate strengths and areas for growth in line with the promises of the mission. The team saw evidence that the school has fostered a community in which children learn to be capable, self-determining, fully engaged, and critical creative thinkers. Examples of this evidence included: daily community meetings; students taking a role in school clean up; students serving as mentors to younger students; high degrees of engagement in classrooms; cooperative group work; creation of MAPS; and individualization of goal setting.

The team saw evidence of teacher self-determination in terms of the revision of curriculum, input into professional development topics, and the establishment of a professional learning community.

The school is working on revitalizing the community service aspect of the mission and dissemination of best practices to the sending district.

Academic Success

Visitors were told that they would observe the following instructional practices: student-centered work; a variety of performance assessments; a variety of instruction; problem-solving cooperative and collaborative work; co-teaching; project-based learning; and thematic learning.

- ◆ A half to a majority of observed class time was devoted to student work.
- ◆ Visitors saw students engaged in authentic tasks that assessed their knowledge in a majority of classrooms.
- ◆ Visitors observed teachers using a variety of instructional techniques and modalities, including text-based work, problem-solving, the use of technology, projects, read-a-loud, and collaborative cooperative learning.
- ◆ Visitors observed the grade-based learning themes posted in all classrooms.
- ◆ In instances where co-teaching was happening in classrooms, site visitors observed teachers using the “one teach, one support” model of co-teaching in all cases. It does not appear that inclusion teachers are given parity in the classroom. Inclusion teachers played a supportive role but did not lead lessons or have their names listed on walls or assignments.

Teachers make creative and productive use of classroom space. Time is maximized for learning with orderly transitions. Classrooms are neat with ample materials and resources. Visitors noted that the method of storing backpacks in classrooms could potentially present a safety issue.

The majority of instruction observed was of high quality and students were highly engaged, regardless of whether the work was teacher-centered, group-based, or independent learning.

The evaluation system of the school is in flux and the school is beginning to incorporate elements of the Massachusetts Model Educator Evaluation Framework. Teachers currently establish goals, complete a self-evaluation, and receive a peer and a summative evaluation. Administrators reported that they are constantly observing classrooms, however, not all teachers reported that they have been formally observed this year. Administrators were observed doing informal walkthroughs.

All stakeholders reported a continuous method of improvement and self-examination. Given that the school is driven through performance assessments, the use of data appears more qualitative than

quantitative. Examples of this included: the weekly teacher meetings where teachers bring samples of student work to discuss; preparation for student work exhibitions; and the creation of a common writing assessment with the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE).

Organizational Viability

The head of school delivers reports to the board of trustees during every board meeting. These reports include sections on MCCPS's faithfulness to the charter, academic success, and organizational viability. There are near daily meetings in which teachers can reflect on effectiveness of the curriculum and work together to improve the academic program either with their grade level team or subject area team. There is a high level of inclusion of special educators, teaching assistants, and interns through the planning process.

Board members and administrators reported that the switch from a bifurcated to a single head of school administrative model has been effective and makes sense for the school.

The board has an effective committee structure in the areas of finance, governance and personnel. Committees meet regularly. The board chair meets weekly with the head of school. There is evidence that the board has spent time discussing each of these areas. Visitors did not find ample evidence that the board is regularly overseeing the academic program.

Visitors observed a safe and respectful environment.

The school makes good and creative use of the space provided, but a few classrooms have challenging configurations and all parties noted that a facilities search is ongoing.

Other

Teachers reported that low teacher salaries have led to teacher turnover.

Administration is responsive to teacher feedback. For example, the school recently had professional development on teacher empowerment in response to the teacher survey results.

The school has a strong professional, collaborative and inclusive culture. Teachers indicated that they are satisfied and engaged with the professional learning community and with the level of quality and collaboration with their peers.

Teachers noted that parent teacher communication is a strength of the school. Visitors observed parents attending the morning community meeting and being introduced by their children to the school community. The school revived the PTO this year.

Student voice is valued and encouraged at the school. Administrators reported and visitors observed that students run the daily community meeting.

The school's emphasis on self-determination is evidenced through peer mentoring, student contribution to school maintenance and clean up, and cross-grade interactions.

The school provides supports through guidance counselors, wellness classes, healthy food, homework support, frequent contact with families, and advisory.