

Sixth Year Site Visit Report

River Valley Charter School
Newburyport, MA

February 6, 2005

River Valley Charter School (RVCS) is located in Newburyport and enrolls 288 students in grades K-8. RVCS opened in 1999 serving children in grades 1-5, expanded by one grade each year until it reached a span of 1-8, and added a kindergarten in 2003-2004 to reach its current grade span. The school is divided into four multiage groupings: Kinderhaus for 5 and 6 year olds, Elementary I for 6-9 year olds, Elementary II for 9-12 year olds, and Middle for 13-14 year olds. The school enrolls students primarily at the Kinderhaus level, but also enrolls off its waiting list if spots open at other grade levels. RVCS gives preference in enrollment to students from a region including the towns of Newburyport, Newbury, Amesbury, Salisbury, and West Newbury. The school's mission is "to provide a rigorous academic program based on the Montessori philosophy and rooted in the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley. Students will reach their full potential as scholars and become self-reliant, productive members of society. They will be adept at critical thinking and creative problem solving and will be fully prepared in future schools, careers, and civic life." The school's educational philosophy, as reflected in the mission and explained in the original charter, is based on the Montessori philosophy. It calls for a challenging interdisciplinary curriculum that combines the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the Montessori Scope and Sequence, a student-driven educational program within the structure of the school's curriculum, and the integration of local cultural, historical, and natural resources.

As of October 21, 2004 the school reported that of its 288 students, 94% are Caucasian, 4.2% are Asian American, 1% are Hispanic, and less than 1% are African American. 2% of RVCS students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, and none are limited English proficient. 21% of students receive special education services. 49% of RVCS students come from Newburyport, 24% come from Amesbury, 17% come from the Triton regional school district, 9% come from the Pentucket regional school district, and 1% come from Haverill.

The following participants conducted the site visit on December 7, 2004:

- Tony Siddall, Assistant Coordinator of Accountability, MA DOE Charter School Office
- Erin Attfield, Assistant Director, Murdoch Middle Public Charter School, Chelmsford, MA
- Robin Coyne, Head of School, Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School, Franklin, MA
- Sharleen McCorrister, Teacher, Cambridge Montessori School, Cambridge, MA

Before the visit, the site team reviewed the 2003-2004 Annual Report for the charter school and its current accountability plan. On site, the team reviewed curricular information, a teacher roster, Board materials, and other information provided by the school. The team conducted group interviews with Trustees, administrators, teachers, parents, and students, and observed classes.

The purpose of this visit was to corroborate and augment the information contained in the school's Annual Report, to investigate the school's progress relative to its Accountability Plan goals, and to collect information that will help the Commonwealth decide whether to renew its charter. The focus of the visit is on three central areas of inquiry:

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

The team's findings and the evidence supporting these findings are detailed below.

1. Academic Success

Is the school's curriculum based on high academic standards, both in terms of content and implementation?

Finding: RVCS' curriculum is well documented, based on Montessori learning standards, and explicitly aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (MCF). As such, the curriculum is based on high academic standards. RVCS uses curricular documentation purchased from a Montessori publisher. This documentation clearly specifies the skills and content students must learn at each of the school's levels. The site visit team's review of these materials suggests that they are comprehensive, clear, and consistent with high academic standards. The curricular materials also include an explicit mapping between the Montessori standards and the MCF.

Finding: Teachers in all classrooms have access to a full array of instructional materials and resources that are aligned with the curriculum. RVCS has invested in extensive classroom materials to support the implementation of the Montessori curriculum. These materials correspond to specific lessons and are explicitly linked to the Montessori standards. They provide plans, manipulatives, and other resources to teachers. The site visit team observed teachers and students using these materials extensively in classrooms; these resources appear to be extremely valuable in supporting the implementation of the curriculum.

Finding: Teachers appear to faithfully implement the curriculum according to the Montessori philosophy. Classroom observations, review of curriculum tracking sheets, and interviews with teachers and administrators suggest that teachers implement individualized educational programs for each student according to the Montessori philosophy. Each student has an Individual Learning Plan (ILP), which is developed by the teacher (for younger students) or by teachers and students together (for older students). These ILPs specify lessons and Montessori concepts that students must master, and guide students in their daily academic work. Teachers monitor which Montessori standards each student has been exposed to and mastered on "curriculum progress tracking sheets," which contain all of the Montessori standards for each level. The ILPs and the curriculum progress tracking sheets together represent a well-developed structure for supporting the individualized educational programs of each child and monitoring each child's mastery of the Montessori curriculum.

Finding: Students were highly engaged in individualized learning activities and displayed a consistent understanding of complex classroom routines. The tone in each classroom was positive and the interactions between teachers and students were respectful. The site visit team

observed students engaged in self-directed individual work, small group learning, and whole-class instruction. All students appeared quite familiar with classroom routines and comfortable with working individually. For the most part students were highly engaged in their learning activities, even younger students working independently. Teachers were skilled in redirecting students who were off task, and all interactions between teachers and students were highly respectful and focused on learning. RVCS appears to have created classroom environments in which teachers support students in highly individualized—yet structured and standards-based—learning activities.

Has student performance improved or been persistently strong on internal and external assessments?

Internal Assessments

Finding: RVCS has an extensive internal assessment system based primarily on teacher evaluation of student work. Teachers track and record student mastery level on specific learning standards. Teachers assess student learning primarily through daily observation and recording of student progress. The curriculum progress tracking sheet and ILPs allow teachers to monitor which Montessori concepts each student has mastered. Teachers record students’ level of mastery of essential concepts in progress reports three times per year. To determine whether a student has mastered a concept, teachers evaluate student work collected in portfolios, administer tests and quizzes, and observe students in their daily learning activities. Teachers are allowed to design their own systems for daily observation and recording, and are required to regularly update the curriculum progress tracking sheets for each student. Administrators reported that this system, called the “assessment toolset” has recently been fully implemented. The assessment toolset appears to be a well-developed, thorough system for internally tracking each student’s progress toward a clearly defined set of standards.

Finding: RVCS students performed well on internal assessments in 2004. As shown in Table I, a high percentage of students met or exceeded learning objectives in each of the assessed categories. These results exceed the school’s accountability plan objective of having 80% of students meet or exceed learning objectives each year.

**Table I: 2004 Internal assessment results:
Percentage of students who meet or exceed learning objectives**

	Kinderhaus	Elementary 1	Elementary 2	Middle School
Mathematics	94	87	100	97
Language Arts	94	97	100	100
Science and Humanities	97	97	97	100
Critical Thinking	97	97	97	100
Creative Problem Solving	97	97	100	100
Self motivation	88	94	97	95
Self reliance	97	94	100	100
Respect for the prepared environment	97	100	100	95
Community service	n/a	100	100	97

External Assessments

Finding: RVCS students have demonstrated strong performance on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and TerraNova exams. Results from these two exams are presented below.

Table II: MCAS Results by Performance Category, 2002-2004

Subject	Students Tested	% Advanced	% Proficient	% Needs Improvement	% Warning/Failed
Reading- Grade 3					
2004	33	N/A	64	30	6
2003	32	N/A	75	25	0
2002	34	N/A	68	26	6
ELA- Grade 4					
2004	30	13	50	33	3
2003	34	9	62	29	0
2002	32	6	34	50	9
Math- Grade 4					
2004	30	7	37	53	3
2003	34	6	35	41	18
2002	32	9	34	34	22
Math- Grade 6					
2004	36	28	22	39	11
2003	20	0	45	35	20
2002	41	17	34	34	15
ELA- Grade 7					
2004	20	5	75	20	0
2003	41	24	63	12	0
2002	29	52	41	7	0
Math- Grade 8					
2004	38	16	34	39	11
2003	24	8	50	33	8

Table II suggests the following conclusions about RVCS' performance over the previous three years. Because the school has relatively few children in each grade, year-to-year fluctuations in scores due to differing student groups are to be expected.

- In each grade level/subject exam, the percentage of students scoring Proficient and Advanced has been relatively stable over the past three years, but the distribution of students between Proficient and Advanced has varied substantially from year to year.
- RVCS students have tended to perform better in ELA than in math. RVCS has had 50% or less of its students achieve proficiency on most administrations of the grade 4, 6, and 8 math MCAS exams. On the grade 4 and 7 ELA exam, RVCS has tended to have 60% or

more of its students achieve proficiency, with an average of 87% of students over the last three administrations reaching proficiency on the Grade 7 ELA exam.

- RVCS appears to have made progress reducing the percentage of students scoring Warning on the grades 4 and 6 math exams. In grade 4, 97% of students scored above Warning in 2004, as compared with 78% in 2002. In grade 6, 89% scored above Warning, as opposed to 80% in 2003 and 85% in 2002.

Table III compares RVCS' MCAS scores to the State average and to its primary sending district, Newburyport, in terms of Composite Performance Index¹ (CPI).

Table III: MCAS Performance comparison, Composite Performance Index

Grade 3 reading	RVCS		Newburyport		State
	n	CPI	n	CPI	CPI
2004	33	84.1	176	90.1	85.4
2003	32	89.8	162	91.2	85.4
2002	34	87.5	188	91.6	85.3

Grade 4 ELA	RVCS		Newburyport		State
	n	CPI	n	CPI	CPI
2004	30	85.8	164	86.7	81.1
2003	34	89.7	180	83.8	80.4
2002	32	71.9	164	83.7	77.9

Grade 4 Math	RVCS		Newburyport		State
	n	CPI	n	CPI	CPI
2004	30	75.8	163	77.2	74.2
2003	34	72.1	181	72.8	72.3
2002	32	68.8	165	75.9	68.9

Grade 6 math	RVCS		Newburyport		State
	n	CPI	n	CPI	CPI
2004	36	75.7	169	70.0	68.6
2003	24	72.5	171	84.2	68.3
2002	41	76.8	177	70.9	64.9

Grade 7 ELA	RVCS		Newburyport		State
	n	CPI	n	CPI	CPI
2004	20	93.8	174	93.5	86.5
2003	41	95.1	182	92.9	85.5
2002	29	98.3	191	92.3	82.6

¹ The Composite Performance Index is calculated for all schools by the Department of Education. It reflects the distribution of student scores among the four MCAS performance categories (Advanced, Proficient, Needs Improvement, Warning/Failing)

Grade 8 math	RVCS		Newburyport		State
	n	CPI	n	CPI	CPI
2004	38	77.0	197	69.5	64.5
2003	24	79.2	193	78.1	63.7

Table IV shows RVCS' history of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determinations for the previous five years².

Table IV: AYP Determination History

		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
ELA	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	All subgroups	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes
MATH	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	All subgroups	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes

Finding: RVCS has made AYP in the aggregate for both subjects in each of the last five years. The school has also made AYP for subgroups in both years that the state has calculated AYP for subgroups. The school has consistently made AYP, as shown in Table IV.

Terra Nova exam results for 2004 are presented below, in Table V.

Table V: Fall 2004 Terra Nova results, in National Percentile Rank of NCE

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Reading	77	83	82	79	86	82	84	82
Language	71	73	74	82	80	87	79	80
Mathematics	59	78	78	72	81	79	82	78

The results in Table V show that students in each grade level performed well above the national average on each subject area exam. These results suggest strong student performance.

2. Organizational Viability

Are the school's purposes and objectives clear and thoroughly understood by those connected with the school – governing body, professional staff, students, and parents?

Finding: RVCS' key constituencies (trustees, administrators, teachers, parents, and students) share a clear and common understanding of and commitment to the school's mission. All stakeholders described the core purpose of the school as helping each child achieve academic success through an educational program based on the Montessori philosophy and methods. Stakeholders shared a common understanding of the core elements of this philosophy: a highly individualized educational program for each child within the structure provided by Montessori curricular materials, and a focus on the social and emotional needs of children in addition to

² The Department of Education determines whether each school has made Adequate Yearly Progress based on MCAS results, in accordance with the federal No Child Left Behind Act. This determination is based on whether the school is on track to have all students score Proficient or Advanced by 2014.

academic needs. Finally, most members of the school community that were interviewed agreed that a core purpose of the school is to integrate the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack Valley into the school's educational program.

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

Finding: The school provides an environment that is both physically and emotionally safe for students. Parent and student comments, as well as classroom observations and building walkthroughs, confirm that the school provides a very safe environment for learning. RVCS faculty and administrators are clearly very attentive to the social and emotional needs of students.

Finding: RVCS has an excellent facility, which is secured for the remainder of the term of its charter. RVCS directed the interior design of its facility, which provides a comfortable learning environment and sufficient space to arrange classrooms to support Montessori instruction. The school is in the first year of its second five-year lease, which will carry RVCS through the end of its current charter. While the building does have certain space limitations, RVCS is in a strong position regarding its facility.

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

Finding: RVCS has an experienced faculty. Most teachers are relatively new to the school. A summary of the years of teaching experience and years taught at RVCS of the faculty is presented below in Tables VI and VII.

Table VI: Teaching Experience of RVCS faculty

Years teaching	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-20	21+
# of teachers	1	6	5	3	0

Table VII: Year spent at school of RVCS faculty

Years at RVCS	1	2-3	4-6
# of teachers	3	9	3

A majority of teachers at RVCS have six or more years of teaching experience, and only one teacher is in his/her first or second year of teaching. Most teachers have been at the school for either two or three years. The school reports that all teachers but one are "highly qualified" according to the standards of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, meaning that they have earned at least a Bachelor's degree and have demonstrated competence in the subject area(s) they teach.

Finding: Several teachers have full Montessori certification, and all but one head teachers are Montessori trained. The school has made a major investment training its teachers. RVCS reimburses teachers for the cost of Montessori training, and all teachers but one are Montessori trained or certified (the one teacher who has not participated in formal Montessori training has been scheduled for training in the summer of 2005). In discussions with the site visit team,

teachers were very committed to the Montessori method. Classroom observations, in addition to independent reviews commissioned by school leaders, suggest that teachers are effective in implementing this methodology.

Finding: RVCS benefits from an extremely qualified group of assistant teachers.

Several of the school's assistant teachers have Masters degrees and/or Montessori certification; most have at least five years' teaching experience, and some have as many as fifteen years' experience. Based on interviews with teachers and administrators, and on classroom observations, the assistant teachers play a crucial instructional role. The site visit team observed assistant teachers working closely with individual students and providing whole-class instruction. Several members of the school community reported that in most cases assistant teachers serve more as "co-teachers" than as simply assistants.

Does the school have an effective governance structure and management system for carrying out the purposes and objectives of the school?

Finding: RVCS' Board of Trustees has 19 members, most of whom are parents, and several of whom are founders. Trustees are highly knowledgeable about and engaged with the school. RVCS has a large Board that includes several parents of children at the school, four members who have served since the school's first year, the school director and assistant director as *ex officio* members, and an annually elected faculty trustee. Trustees have various areas of expertise that are relevant to the governance of a charter school, including small business management, human resources, financial management, fundraising, and K-12 education. During the focus group discussion trustees displayed a thorough understanding of the elements of the school's academic program.

Finding: Trustees are aware of the challenges inherent in the makeup of the Board, and have taken steps to ensure that these challenges do not interfere with the effective governance of the school. Because several trustees—as parents and founders—have a strong personal stake in the school in addition to their investment as trustees, there is an inherent danger that the Board will cross the line between governance and management. The RVCS board, however, appears to be aware of this inherent challenge and to have taken specific steps to ensure that the board maintains an appropriate governing role. Several members of the board referred to ongoing informal discussions about the importance of being a "policy board" and making decisions from the perspective of a trustee rather than a parent. In addition to this informal "self-policing," the board's committee on trustees provides formal training to new trustees to clarify their role as board members. This training is based on presenting hypothetical scenarios to trustees and discussing the appropriate response to these scenarios. Additionally, a review of the terms of individual trustees shows that the Board has consistently recruited new members and appears to respect terms and term limits. During the focus group discussion, Trustees noted that the founders who are on the board will reach their term limits in June of 2005, and were aware that this is an important transition for the Board to manage effectively.

Finding: The Board has developed a strong system for monitoring the school's performance, based on the school's accountability plan. The board has an accountability committee whose charge is to formally monitor RVCS' performance relative to accountability plan objectives. This

committee supervised the writing of the school's accountability plan, and has now developed an annual calendar that specifies several "checkpoints" throughout the year when specific accountability plan indicators should be presented to the Board. This process, if the board continues to implement it, will be a valuable and systematic method for the board to monitor and evaluate the school's performance.

Finding: The Board has an active committee structure. Trustees described multiple active committees, including those for accountability, finance, and trustees. The board also has committees for development, grievances, community building, and human resources policies. While the site visit team did not gather information about the activities of the second group of committees, the board appears to have an active core of committees. Particularly given the size of the board, this committee structure appears to help the board function efficiently.

Finding: The Board has identified appropriate priorities for the future, and is in the early stages of creating a strategic plan to address these priorities. The Board has created a committee to begin the process of strategic planning. Trustees reported that they have identified securing a permanent site for the school as a leading priority for strategic planning. Taking these first steps toward long range planning reflects well on the board, and future site visit teams should evaluate the school's progress in developing the plan.

Finding: The administration has been effective in supporting the implementation of a rigorous academic program. Administrators have also taken steps to refine the academic program by focusing attention on clearly identified, mission-specific priorities. RVCS has developed a thorough, rigorous curriculum and internal assessment system, and has ensured—through training and hiring—that teachers are well versed in Montessori philosophy and methods. These accomplishments reflect well on the effectiveness of administrative team. In addition to implementing these core elements of the academic program, the school leaders have taken steps to develop other elements of the academic program that are directly related to the mission. For example, the school director reported that he has led the faculty in identifying specific focus areas based on an analysis of student performance on specific MCAS items. Due to the time constraints of the site visit, the site visit team did not thoroughly investigate this process. The use of student performance data to inform instruction, however, can be a valuable strategy to improve student performance on the MCAS. This should be an area of inquiry for future site visit teams.

Another area of program development has been the integration of the resources into the Merrimack Valley into the academic program. Because this element is not explicitly included in the school's instructional materials, the site visit team had questions about how fully this aspect of the educational program has been implemented. In response to these questions, the school director reported that teachers are expected to develop partnerships individually to take advantage of local resources. To institutionalize this expectation, the school leaders now include the goal of developing one community partnership per year in each teacher's evaluation. Again, this represents an important step in developing the academic program, and it should be an area of continuing inquiry for future site visit teams.

Finding: The role of each administrator is clearly understood and appreciated throughout the school, and the composition of the administration reflects the school's motto, "Montessori made public." Teachers and administrators share a clear understanding of the roles of the administrators. The school director is responsible for the overall management of the school with a focus on the school's vision, operations, and external relations. The assistant director and middle school director are more directly responsible for the academic program. This division of responsibilities appears to be effective in supporting the academic program while maintaining the smooth operation of the school. Additionally, the makeup of the administration reflects the school's commitment to "Montessori made public." The school director, whose background is in traditional public schools, has experience with the legal requirements of public schools. The assistant director and middle school director bring expertise in Montessori methods and philosophy.

Are families satisfied with the performance of the school?

Finding: Families are highly satisfied with the school's programs. The parents and family members with whom the site visit team spoke were highly satisfied with RVCS. Parents appreciate the Montessori philosophy and its focus on each child's individual needs. Parents also praised teachers' frequent communication about each child's academic progress, especially the specificity of the school's progress reports. RVCS also administers an annual parent satisfaction survey, which suggests high levels of parent satisfaction as well. The school's January 2004 survey found high levels of parental satisfaction with virtually all areas of RVCS' program. The only areas where satisfaction was relatively low were physical education, the music program, and playground space. These issues are most likely due to space limitations that many charter schools face. Additionally, the survey found that fewer than 30% of parents in the Elementary I and II programs agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Special education services are satisfactory." This may be because parents of regular education students did not answer this question. Overall, the school has presented strong evidence of parental satisfaction.

Is enrollment stable?

Finding: Enrollment has been stable and there is strong demand for the school. RVCS maintains full enrollment, and reported that last year it had 2.5 applications per available opening. The school has a large waitlist—183 at the time of the visit, and 316 as of this report's issue date—that is ample to fill any open spots. The high number of applications and large waitlist demonstrates strong demand for RVCS.

3. Faithfulness to the Terms of the Charter

Do the school's curriculum, program and activities seem consistent with essential legal and regulatory requirements?

RVCS will receive a mid-cycle follow-up Coordinated Program Review (CPR) from the Program Quality Assurance (PQA) unit of the Department of Education in 2005. This review will evaluate the school's compliance with a variety of requirements for special education,

limited English proficient students, Title I, civil rights, and other areas. The site visit team did not gather in-depth information regarding the school's compliance in these areas.

Has the school made efforts to disseminate models for replication and best practices to the public?

Finding: RVCS has made extensive efforts to disseminate best practices. As noted in its annual report, the school has hosted two workshops for local educators in Montessori methods and principles. RVCS also produced a twenty minute video, in partnership with two other public Montessori schools, with best practices in Montessori education. These activities, in addition to other smaller-scale efforts, demonstrate a commitment to the dissemination of models for replication and best practices.

Is the school achieving or making progress toward its accountability plan goals?

Finding: RVCS has made excellent progress toward achieving all accountability plan objectives. RVCS has set rigorous, measurable objectives for organizational viability and faithfulness to charter in its accountability plan. The school sets clear objectives for internal assessments, but sets only a vague objective for external, standardized assessments. The school reports on its accountability plan objectives in its annual report. RVCS' success in meeting accountability plan goals is summarized below.

Academic achievement

*80% of students will meet or exceed the documented learning objectives for each of the four levels in each of six defined curriculum areas. **Objective met.*** As stated above under the *Academic Success* section of this report, over 80% of students in each grade level met or exceeded documented learning objectives in each curriculum area.

*RVCS students will achieve significantly above state and national averages on standardized tests. **Objective met.*** Although the objective does not specify what level of performance is necessary to perform "significantly" above, RVCS students have performed above state averages on the MCAS exams, and well above national averages on the TerraNova exam.

Organizational viability

RVCS met all its accountability plan objectives for organizational viability (including objectives for finance, staffing, enrollment, governance, and dissemination of best practices), with one exception: the school met two out of three objectives for family participation. While the school met its objective of having 80% of families perform community service with the school, it did not meet the objective of having 60% contribute forty hours or more of service (21% of families met this goal). This second objective is quite rigorous, and the school has demonstrated substantial parent participation overall. In its annual report, RVCS states that increasing parent involvement will be a focus in the future.

Faithfulness to charter

RVCS has met its objectives for faithfulness to the terms of its charter. The school set objectives for 1) a majority of positive findings in an annual audit by an independent auditor, 2)

maintaining membership affiliation with the American Montessori Society, and 3) involvement of the school in community service, the development of curriculum partners, and the quality of the partnerships. The school provided evidence that it has met each of these objectives in its annual report. It is important to note, however, that the third objective (regarding community service and partnerships) does not clearly specify how the school defines the quality of its curriculum partnerships. This should be an area of inquiry for the Year 7 site visit team, and possibly an issue for the school to clarify in future annual reports.

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

As demonstrated by its success in meeting accountability plan objectives for faithfulness to charter, the school is realizing the promises of its original charter application. RVCS is offering students a high quality academic program based on Montessori methods and principles, and has developed curriculum partnerships with local organizations. While further clarity in the school's definition of "quality" for these partnerships would be valuable in evaluating their success, RVCS has made clear, strong progress overall in becoming the school it promised to become in its charter.

Conclusion

River Valley Charter School has created a rigorous, highly individualized academic program designed to help students master Montessori concepts and the standards of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The board of trustees and administration appear to provide strong leadership in developing, supporting, and monitoring the academic program. Classroom observations suggest that teachers create an engaging and supportive classroom environment that lends itself to the high levels of academic achievement RVCS students have demonstrated. The school continues to develop its academic program through the analysis of MCAS results to inform instruction and the ongoing development of curriculum partnerships with local organizations. Improvement in MCAS scores and further development of curricular partnerships will augment the school's already strong case that it is an academic success, a viable organization, and faithful to the terms of its charter.