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RISING TIDE CHARTER SCHOOL
A Middle School Culturally Linked to the Town of Plymouth

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**ANNUAL REPORT
For the 2001-2002 School Year**

Rising Tide Charter School is a middle school serving students in grades 5-8. The school's curriculum combines strong skills and directed teaching methods with an inquiry-based approach. Students in all grades are involved with community service activities and curriculum work connected to the town of Plymouth and the surrounding region. The school opened in September 1998 with 162 students in grades 5-7; in September 1999, the population expanded to 216 students, adding an eighth grade. In September 2002, the school will expand to up to 228, adding approximately three students in each grade level. ChancellorBeacon Academies of Coral Gables, Florida provides management services to the school.

This fourth Annual Report includes a wide range of information about the school, its programs, students, governance, progress and results. It is intended both to inform the many groups and individuals that have an interest in the school and to meet the accountability requirements of the Massachusetts Department of Education. This report also provides us the opportunity to share our progress in meeting the needs of our students and the dictates of our Charter.

The Rising Tide Charter School Mission

"To become intimate with your home region, to know the territory as well as you can, to understand your life as woven into the local life does not prevent you from recognizing and honoring the diversity of other places, cultures, and ways. On the contrary, how can you value other places if you do not have your own. If you are not placed, then you wander the world like a sightseer, a collector of sensations, with no gauge for measuring what you see. Local knowledge is the grounding for global knowledge."

-Scott Russell Sanders

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.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Rising Tide Charter School's fourth year proved to be a time of growth and increasing stability for the school. The school's enrollment stabilized as the program became better known in the community; we look forward to welcoming 30 siblings of current students to our fifth grade class in the Fall. The staff stabilized, as well, becoming less transient and more committed, long term, to Rising Tide.

The staff worked together to create and consistently uphold Community Standards, resulting in students who felt comfortable in the school, creating a school climate of respect, trust, and comfort. Teachers worked together to gather curriculum materials and examples of student work for the school's renewal next year; teachers also began maintaining student portfolios and fine-tuned processes for student assessment. The Board worked cooperatively to address financial and management issues, and worked with the staff to create a strategic plan for the school's next five years, resulting in renewed Board commitment to the school.

As we enter our fifth, renewal, year, the Board and staff feel confident that they have learned many important lessons from the first four years. We look forward to renewal and beyond with renewed confidence and commitment to our Charter.

With great pleasure, I present to our constituents and interested parties this Fourth Annual Report.

Jill S. Crafts, Director

BOARD CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Rising Tide Charter School's mission can represent the firm seat of a stool, with each leg having equal influence in supporting that mission and thereby maintaining Charter privilege. As measures of accountability, in addition to being faithful to our mission, the Board examines whether we are successful academically, and financially viable as an organization.

Rising Tide Students represent one leg. Our enrollment has consistently improved, and our return rate is healthy. This year's graduating class was the first group of students who were enrolled for the entire four-year program. There were 29 "founding students" out of 44 graduating classmates. Our students are expressing academic and social success to both their parents and their siblings, as proven by the incoming 5th grade class. Sibling enrollment for our 2002 year is nearly 50% of the expected 57 students. Our students have shown consistent improvement in the MCAS scores as compared to the rest of the state, particularly in Language Arts.

Teachers and Administration represent the second leg upholding our school mission. Rising Tide teachers are vested in the success of Rising Tide. They are committed to providing a rigorous academic program to our students, and have spent many hours studying the State frameworks, and creating curriculum that provide our students opportunity for achievement and mastery. In addition, the rubric guidelines the teachers have created have been very instrumental in clarifying expectations for students and parents alike. Beyond academics, Rising Tide teachers are able to provide a safe, nurturing, and mentoring environment that adolescents this age so desperately need. Our directorship of Jill Crafts has been extraordinary. She is focused on excellence in and out of the classroom for both the students and the teachers. She fosters communication, accountability, and encourages evaluation of successes and often more importantly, failures, as our school evolves and matures.

Community represents the third leg of the stool. As a result of the tireless efforts of the students, parents, teachers, Director, and Board members, Rising Tide is establishing very strong community presence. You will read details in this report of student volunteer efforts, fund raising, local memberships and festival participation, sports teams, and associations with other charter schools, and the local Boys and Girls Club. Our Director spearheaded a consortium with six other Charter schools for the purpose of teacher education and growth, and further, Board relations. We have been able to have open communication with Plymouth Public Schools, and have welcomed local and state government representatives to meetings and events. Networking and developing relationships with those outside the school walls is imperative to our success.

The Governance of our school is the fourth leg that must provide a solid base for successful execution of our mission. Our Board of Trustees has evolved and continues to develop. Six of the founding board members remain active in school functions. Two founders are now teachers, and two other founders have moved to the Rising Tide Foundation, which functions to support the school financially, and was able to contribute over \$25,000 this year to the school budget. The board has established 6 committees for school development:

The Executive Committee acts as agent for the entire board between monthly board meetings, evaluates the sub committees, the school Director, and currently, the management company, Beacon Education Management.

The Nominating committee has been active in recruiting talented new experts to our board. Appointments and advisors include an attorney, accountant, nurse, a business manager, administrator, fund raising and development consultant, and an independent school director.

The Finance committee has been very careful in scrutinizing our finances, and evaluating our plans to become independent from our management company. They meet often to review the budget process, to assist in preparation of annual budget, exercise general oversight of purchasing, and to provide assistance to other committees regarding financial matters.

The Strategic Planning Committee addresses long range planning, such as facility, field, and vans. Interfaces with staff/administration on curriculum development, and develops external relationships or educational partnerships.

The Development Committee is the Board's bridge with Rising Tide Foundation that creates or oversees Board initiated fundraising, promotes fundraising initiatives. I.e.: endowments, grant writing, major donations, initiates and encourages media relations, and sustains the School's marketing efforts.

The Technology Committee has the job of reviewing and refining the technology plan, discussing pending IT issues, and assisting in planning future information technology solutions for the School.

The Board has sought guidance from several sources. Massachusetts Charter School Office, Massachusetts Department of Education and Beacon Education management have provided legal and financial advice, and support with timely compliance of state regulations. A strategic business consultant acts as an advisor to the Board. As the audit reports show, the school showed a deficit in the 2001 school year. The debt has been restructured for better management. The Board anticipates that funds generated from the increased enrollment, completion of various leases, and savings from greater in house financial management, and in the long term, purchase of the building, demonstrates sound strategic planning.

The Board provides staff information sessions, and welcomes input regularly at monthly Board meetings. Board policy amendments for this year include changes to our lottery date, and commitment for enrollment date; and increased enrollment with limited classroom impact.

Rising Tide Charter School is providing a valuable service to the community, and continues to evolve and learn from its successes and tribulations. The Board will continue to strive for excellence academically and financially as an organization. The stool is held steady with the continued efforts and support from our students, administration and staff, community, and our sound governance.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sue Tobin RN, Chairwoman
Board of Trustees
Rising Tide Charter School
Plymouth, Massachusetts
2001-2002

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2001-2002 school year proved to be a time when Rising Tide Charter School developed a feeling of permanency, in terms of staff, student population and curriculum development. It was also a year wherein the Board worked more closely together in order to overcome some challenges. As the academic year came to a close, the school felt like a more established and settled entity than in earlier years. With this new sense of stability, we look forward to our fifth year and welcome the charter renewal process to begin.

In early August 2001, teachers met for two days in order to make some decisions and set the course for the 2001-2002 school year. During those meetings, teachers decided on some Community Standards that they agreed to uniformly uphold; teachers also set consistent criteria for high academic standards for students. Upholding these standards during the course of the school year helped to draw the staff together in a common understanding and to create a positive school climate, based on consistency, trust and respect. In addition, the Community Service program was expanded and solidified this year, as each student was required to perform 25 hours of community service during the school year. The school's reading program also expanded, when teachers adopted a plan to allow reading time every day where students could Drop Everything and Read, and encouraged each student to read 25 books a year.

Teachers came together to work on curriculum gathering this year, in preparation for our renewal. Last summer, the staff agreed to spend an entire year gathering curriculum, rather than scrambling to gather materials right before renewal. Each teacher collected curriculum materials all year and kept them in an individual binder; each binder serves as a teacher's portfolio of teaching materials. A curriculum coordinator for each subject area is going to work, during the summer, on creating a brief overview of each subject area taught and how teachers are following the MA Curriculum Frameworks. Teachers also worked together to create a portfolio system of student assessment and to refine the rubric report card.

Rising Tide's Board of Trustees experienced an interesting and challenging year as well. Due to attrition, many Board seats became available and the Nominating Committee worked hard to fill empty seats with individuals who had expertise in areas critical for the school. The Board decided that they want to eventually separate from Beacon Education Management, and they have worked hard at exploring financing and other options for the school. The Rising Tide Foundation has stepped up its fundraising efforts on behalf of the school, and they intend to continue to expand and increase their efforts over the next year. In general, both the Board and the Foundation have become much more active this year in terms of their contributions to the development of the school.

Enrollment appeared to stabilize this year, as the school maintained its optimum number of students for the entire school year. Thirty siblings are enrolled for next year's fifth grade class, leading the staff to conclude that our school population is generally satisfied with the educational program as they want younger siblings to attend the school. In order to better serve our local population, we have received permission to add 12 more students to the school in the Fall of 2002.

As a feeling of permanency begins to pervade the school climate, the staff and Board have felt more compelled to engage in strategic planning activities in order to plan for the school's future. This Spring, a Strategic Planning Committee met several times in order to set future goals in the areas of academic and non-academic programming, governance and faithfulness to the charter. The Committee's goals are being incorporated into the new Accountability Plan, which is included in the Renewal Application.

Once again this year, the entire staff will meet for two days in early August so that they can reflect on the past year and make plans for the 2002-2003 academic year. Teachers will decide together on goals for the coming year. Three broad areas from which they will draw in order to set goals are:

1. Providing challenging applications for learned skills so that students can develop critical thinking skills.
2. Developing a logical and developmental progression of skills, grades 5-8, in public speaking, expository writing and research.
3. Creating twice yearly opportunities for students to practice and synthesize learned skills from various subject areas.

We continue to feel grateful to our constituents who have believed in Rising Tide Charter School for its first four years. The Rising Tide staff and Board feel more optimistic now than they ever did concerning the school's future. We look forward to serving our students and families through our renewal year and into a bright future.

Jill S. Crafts
Director

PART I EDUCATION PROGRAM

Introduction

The Rising Tide Charter School, a grades 5-8 middle school, opened in September 1998, with students in grades 5-7. In September 1999, the school expanded to include grades 5-8, reflecting the current grade level population. Each year, the school year has consisted of 180 school days, reflecting the school calendar of the Plymouth, MA School District, who provide bus transportation for Rising Tide Plymouth students. There are 20 FTEs providing direct services to children. The ratio of professional staff to students is approximately 11 to 1.

Educational Philosophy Rising Tide Charter School

Rising Tide Charter School's Educational Philosophy is best summarized in our School Goals which appear at the beginning of our Student Handbook. These goals are as follows:

To foster in each student a love of learning and high achievement through encouragement to continuously improve in the acquisition of basic skills through work on integrated projects that reflect life's real challenges.

To create a safe, supportive environment where each person treats others with respect, and where a student can try new things and take risks without fearing teasing or failure.

To encourage each student to grow and take increasing responsibility, both academically and socially.

To create and develop in each student an awareness of the diversity both within and outside of the Rising Tide community and encourage tolerance, acceptance, and celebration of differences.

To create a close community of students, teachers, parents and community members who work together to encourage students to develop into successful students and, later, into successful members of their local communities.

Curriculum Design and Teaching Methods

The Rising Tide Charter School Charter states that the curriculum will be project-based with a strong skills component and that classes should be a mix of hands-on project work and individual skills sessions. Much of the project work is to center around aspects of the Plymouth community so that students will not only learn about their immediate surroundings, but will also develop ties to their community. The hope is for students to develop a sense of belonging to a local community before they embark into a larger, world community. Because of the staff's concern for meeting all requirements of the Massachusetts State Frameworks, teachers have expanded the concept of our Charter's statement that the curriculum will be "tied to Plymouth". Out of necessity, not every unit or lesson relates directly to Plymouth; however, our community service work is primarily focused on service to Plymouth and surrounding towns and we are attempting to create and develop relationships with Plymouth institutions, such as our new relationship with the Plymouth Boys and Girls Club.

Each grade level at Rising Tide has a team of three teachers, each of whom is trained in a specific subject area (Language Arts, History/Social Studies, Math, Science). Each of these teachers instructs classes in his/her discipline and works with the other two teachers to plan and implement multidisciplinary projects, some of which are centered around the town of Plymouth. In addition to these grade level teams, we also have a Latin teacher, an Art teacher, a Physical Education teacher and a part-time Health teacher.

Classes at Rising Tide are heterogeneously grouped and inquiry-based; we do cluster students based on their Math ability; whenever we can, we do not maintain the same Math groupings for the entire year;

rather, we cluster around particular skills units. Teachers, for the most part, act as coaches, facilitators and problem-posers rather than as experts. Our Charter states that students should be presented with real-life problems to solve and from which to learn rather than a "right answer" method. Wherever possible, teachers present students with hands-on learning opportunities and primary research options rather than a textbook driven approach. In addition, through the use of rubrics, student goals and, thus instruction, are individualized as much as possible.

Rising Tide also uses a full inclusion approach to Special Needs instruction. The inclusion model incorporates a learning approach that individually addresses the needs of our Special Education children within large and small group settings. Children are given special help within the context of the mainstream curriculum and also receive modifications in both workload and curriculum depth. They are asked to create goals and objectives to meet their specific weaknesses and are held accountable for these. Each child's work is evaluated through a variety of assessment procedures and they are able to express themselves in whatever manner best addresses both their strengths and weaknesses.

Teachers at Rising Tide work closely with parents in order to ensure student success and to establish good home/school communication and, thus, create a partnership among adults to support the child. During our second year, we created an advisor system in order to enhance this student/parent/school relationship. Each child has an advisor at school, a teacher who watches over every aspect of the child's school life. The advisor works individually with the child and is the parents' primary communication link to the school. Several times a year, the advisor has conferences with the student and his/her parents. If any difficulty should arise with the child at school, the advisor contacts the parents; likewise, if any difficulty should arise at home, the parents would contact the advisor. Over time, a relationship of trust develops among student, parents, and the advisor and all adults can join together in support of the child.

Fourth Year Accomplishments in the Academic and Non-Academic Programs

Rising Tide's fourth year has been one of growth and increasing stability in many areas. Most noteworthy is the faculty's combined efforts to both create and catalog a viable curriculum, based on the skills and content in the Massachusetts State Frameworks and the New Standards. During the course of the school year, each teacher gathered together and saved materials he/she created and used for curriculum units; by the end of the school year, each teacher had an individual portfolio of his/her curriculum. During the summer of 2002, Curriculum Coordinators representing each subject area will compile the information into an overview of the curriculum.

In addition to the teachers, the entire staff worked all during the fourth year to prepare for our upcoming renewal. As a result of this ongoing work, the school feels well prepared for the challenges of the renewal process.

Under the guidance of the faculty steering committee, the faculty worked this year on refining the rubric report cards, making them useful for teachers throughout the school, and on creating a portfolio assessment system for teachers to use with students. Teachers worked together, as well, on providing more uniformity in their rubrics used for individual assignments and projects.

Due to a generous gift from a Rising Tide family and the Rising Tide Foundation, the school was able to install a computer laboratory in the school library this year. Teachers and students used the lab extensively, making it possible for students and teachers to greatly improve their technical skills. Rising Tide still has work to do in order to meet state requirements in computer usage; however, installation of a computer lab has enabled the school to work more effectively and efficiently with students and teachers so that they can learn technological skills more effectively.

In the non-academic area, Rising Tide has also made great strides. During the school's fourth year, the community service program was expanded to include a wider variety of activities and the staff developed a requirement for students of 25 hours of community service each year. Teachers also voted to enact certain Community Standards for all students, creating more consistency in students responsibility and behavior and developing a school culture of respect and trust. An important aspect of the Community Standards is a

new schoolwide Homework Policy, wherein students, at each grade level, are expected, during the course of their four years at Rising Tide, to assume increasing responsibility for completing homework assignments. Teachers joined together to create a Homework Club, providing students the opportunity to choose to complete assignments at school rather than in homes that are sometimes not conducive to quiet study.

**Summary of educational performance relative to the school's accountability plan objectives
"Is the academic program a success?"**

During the Spring of 2002, the Rising Tide Charter School Director, members of the Board of Trustees, and some staff members undertook a strategic planning exercise in anticipation of the fifth year renewal process. This process resulted in the creation of new objectives for the school, which will be incorporated into a new accountability plan. For the purposes of this fourth year annual report, Rising Tide will utilize the goals and objectives of the original accountability plan, even though site visit participants and an independent evaluator identified problems with some of the student performance standards in the original accountability plan. Alterations to the accountability plan will be discussed in the school's Renewal Application.

In its original Accountability Plan, Rising Tide set the following Student Academic Objectives:

- Each student will demonstrate continuous improvement in their academic knowledge and skills relative to the national population.
- Each student will demonstrate continuous improvement in their ability to meet grade level academic standards (what students must know and be able to do).
- Each student will demonstrate continuous improvement in the academic areas identified as weaknesses in their IEC (omitted in 6/00 when Modern Red Schoolhouse was changed to New Standards).
- Each student will achieve the MA Learning Standards.
- Each student will demonstrate continuous improvement in their ability to apply their knowledge and skills to the solution of real-life problems.
- Each student will be a constructive member of the community of Plymouth.
- Each student will be a constructive member of the Rising Tide community.

During its first four years, Rising Tide students and staff have made significant progress in meeting all of its educational goals. As noted by Dr. Fred Wetzel, in his 2001 independent evaluation of the school's academic program, the original Expectation/Performance Standards set by the school were unrealistic and need to be altered; nevertheless, the school has made progress in all areas.

Academic Progress

Since the school's inception, the staff has, at least annually, administered the Stanford 9 test in order to compile longitudinal data on nationally normed tests. Longitudinal data on internal, staff-created student assessment has been slow to materialize because a new staff has been creating a new curriculum at the same time that they have been working toward consistent, schoolwide assessment measures, understandable in a new school. Rising Tide administered its first MCAS to eighth grade students in May of the school's second year, May 2000; in subsequent years, portions of the MCAS have been administered to students in all four grades at Rising Tide. In order to meet the requirements set forth in the original charter, the staff has relied upon three areas of student assessment, to be reported here: Stanford 9's, MCAS, and Internal, staff-created assessment.

Student Progress Relative to the National Population – Stanford 9's

Since the inception of schoolwide MCAS testing, in May 2001, the Rising Tide staff has struggled with questions of when or if students should take the Stanford 9. The staff's primary concerns were: 1) that we might be overtesting our students, and 2) that so much testing would seriously interrupt the curriculum

delivery. The seemingly inconsistent manner in which the staff has administered the Stanford 9 reflects their uncertainty about these two questions. This year's Stanford 9 administration reflects that uncertainty.

In order to address the question posed by the 1999-2000 Site Visit Team and Fred Wetzel, the 2001 Independent Evaluator, that is - How do the Stanford 9's fit with the Rising Tide program?- teachers have studied the content and skills involved with both the Stanford 9 and the MCAS. Staff members have been trying to determine if any redundancy exists in the two tests and, conversely, if the Stanford 9 tests in any areas not included in the MCAS. The staff is still experimenting with the two tests, as is reflected in this year's administrations.

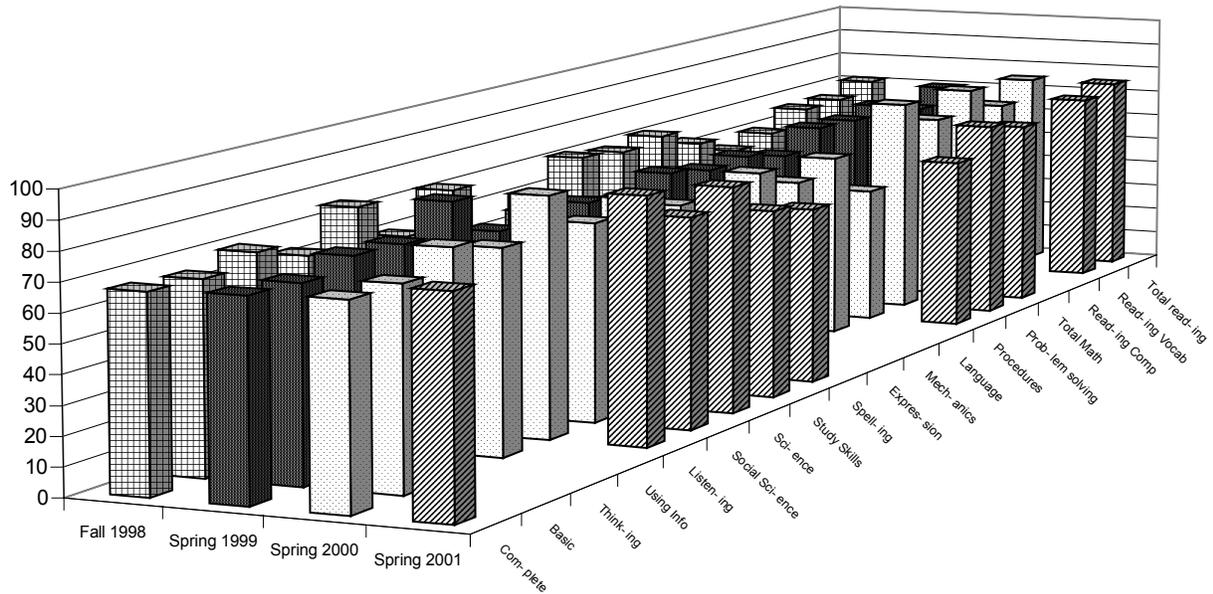
In the Spring of 2001, the staff decided to administer Stanford 9's in the Fall only and MCAS in the Spring. Student scores reflected in the accompanying charts demonstrate continual, and sometimes amazing, improvement in most areas for Rising Tide students through the Spring of 2001. The staff then administered the very same tests to students in the Fall of 2001, after deciding to switch Stanford 9 testing to the Fall for everyone. In general, student scores on multiple choice sections went down in Fall 2001, even though the tests administered were the exact same tests as those administered in Spring 2001; generally, open-ended scores and Listening scores went up. The Rising Tide staff was baffled concerning these results and searched for answers. Curiously, there had been very little teaching time between the May 2001 and October 2001 administrations; the majority of the time had been during summer vacation. With assistance from Harcourt-Brace psychometricians, all variables were checked in the testing environment and conditions, and the staff has been unable to decipher one reason for the decline, except that, as confirmed by Harcourt Brace, student scores tend to go down temporarily after a long non-instructional period. In order to test this data, the staff administered some portions of the Stanford 9 in the Spring of 2002; they chose the Math and multiple choice Reading sections. Although the staff cannot compare the Fall 2001 open-ended reading scores with the Spring 2002 multiple choice scores, they can see a steady, and sometimes stunning, improvement in Math scores from Spring 2001 to Spring 2002. Harcourt-Brace personnel suggest that, based on this most recent data, the October 2001 Stanford 9 administration was somehow flawed. As a result of this experience, the staff has decided, in the future, to administer Stanford 9's in the following manner:

- Incoming Grade 5 students will take the Stanford 9 multiple choice test when they enter Rising Tide, in the Fall.
- Students in grades 5-7 will take the Stanford 9 test in the Spring of each year, after they take their portion of the MCAS.
- Students in grade 8 will take only the MCAS in the Spring of their 8th grade year.

Stanford 9's

The following graph, "Class of 2002 Historical Stanford 9 Scores", reflects mixed progress in many areas that were tested; the scores used were the National Individual Percentile Ranks (National Individual PR-S) scores, provided by Harcourt-Brace. The Rising Tide Class of 2002 includes 30 students who attended Rising Tide for 4 years, grades 5 through 8. Given the fact that Rising Tide is such a new school and experienced so much student and staff turnover in the first 3 years, reliable longitudinal data is impossible to obtain. The largest measurable gain in scores, grades 5-8, is reflected in Mathematical Problem Solving, from a fifth grade 58% to an 8th grade 73%. Social Science Scores also greatly improved, from 61% to 74%. Total Reading scores improved from 71% to 74%. The Complete Scores also increased, from 67% to 74%. Overall, the scores increased during the four years; however, because of the inconsistency of student population and staff, conclusions are impossible to draw. As the population stabilizes, Rising Tide staff will continue to study both the Stanford 9 test and the test results in order to track and, hopefully, improve student performance relative to the national population.

Class of 2002 Historical Stanford 9 Scores



	Total read-ing	Read-ing Vocab	Read-ing Comp	Total Math	Prob-lem solving	Proced-ures	Langu-age	Mech-anics	Expres-sion	Spell-ing	Study Skills	Sci-ence	Social Sci-ence	Listen-ing	Using Info	Think-ing	Basic	Com-plete
Fall 1998	71	67	67	61	58	65	72	70	72	56	52	73	61	76	64	70	66	67
Spring 1999	70	65	70	68	69	62	66	65	68	55	66	73	65	80	70	71	67	68
Spring 2000	75	68	78	70	80	50	67	62	70	51	67	74	70	84	71	76	69	69
Spring 2001	75	72		69	73	63				63	67	80	74	86				74

Student Progress Relative to the Massachusetts State Learning Standards, MCAS

Rising Tide Charter School administered its first MCAS to eighth grade students in the Spring of 2000. The current Accountability plan states that "all students will achieve the Proficient or Advanced level in each subject area of the MCAS tests." This goal was created before any Massachusetts students had taken the test, and has proven to be overly ambitious, not only for Rising Tide students but also for students across Massachusetts; this goal will have to be revised, in order to reflect a desire to maintain high standards for all students, but not to be unrealistic.

The charts provided here serve as a reference for conclusions drawn concerning students MCAS performance. The baseline year of MCAS, 2000, accurately demonstrated strengths and weaknesses in the academic program that school staff had already identified. The Language Arts program is strong and sound, as reflected in 8th grade MCAS scores for both 2000 and 2001, and 7th grade scores for 2001. The Mathematics program was weak during the first two years of the school, but has become much stronger. We attribute this change to hiring a part-time Mathematics Coordinator, hiring a MINT (Massachusetts Institute for New Teachers) program graduate, with strong Math and Science backgrounds, and, before the fourth year, hiring another MINT candidate to teach 8th grade Math. Early weaknesses can be attributed, in large part, to a systemic weakness in the school's structure, which has been in existence since the school's founding. That is, grade level teams were made up of three teachers rather than four, so that four major subject areas - English, Math, Science, Social Studies - were taught by three teachers. As students reach 7th grade, they should be taught each of the four subject areas by a teacher specifically trained in that particular field. The school is still trying to find ways to overcome this systemic weakness without further straining the budget. Science was only administered and scored in 2000, so there is little data to analyze. Students' scores in History/Social Science reflect steady progress; again, this subject is difficult to analyze because the State Frameworks in these subjects are going through changes.

Reflecting on the information provided in the following charts, the following conclusions, from two years of MCAS scores, may be drawn:

- 1) 2000 8th grade ELA scores were quite high, and were at least 10% higher than the State and District scores. Scores went down slightly in 2001; the 2001 8th grade class was a weaker class, academically, than the class of 2000. 2001 7th grade ELA scores were very strong, higher than State and District scores.
- 2) 8th grade Math scores dramatically improved from 2000-2001; in fact, they rose 50% in the Advanced and Proficient categories, and the Advanced category went from 0% to 7%. This improvement can be attributed to concerted efforts to improve the entire Math program. 6th grade 2001 scores were very strong compared to the State and the District.
- 3) 2000 History/Social Science scores ran behind the State and District; students showed improvement in 2001, especially in the Failing category, coming out about even with the State and stronger than Plymouth.

In general, school staff is pleased with the steady progress our students are making in each subject area, but not complacent. With only two years of MCAS results, longitudinal data is limited and conclusions are difficult to draw; however, teachers continue to make every effort to analyze program and alter curriculum to reflect improvements in weak areas.

Individual Student Success: In general, aggregate scores on national or state tests do not accurately reflect individual progress or success. Since opening in 1998, some students, who had not thrived in other school environments, experienced great success at Rising Tide. A few of these students are worth mentioning in some detail because their stories demonstrate the difference that a small, community school can make in individual students' lives and achievement.

Two of these special students graduated from Rising Tide's 8th grade this Spring. One of them had never thrived in school, although educational testing reflected a high IQ and, outside of school, he exhibited an eager intellectual curiosity. Standardized testing, from elementary schools, indicated that this child had a learning disability in Math, and he came to us on a Math IEP. This student started at Rising Tide in 7th grade. He responded so positively to the small, nurturing environment at Rising Tide that, by the end of his 7th grade year he was able to be removed from his IEP. In every subject, his academic performance and test scores increased. Both this child and his parents have been so pleased with Rising Tide that they have brought many other families to the school. These parents and their son have told the Rising Tide staff, on numerous occasions, that the boy's attendance at Rising Tide changed his life; he now has much more self confidence and this self assurance has resulted in academic and social successes.

The other student, who graduated this year, also entered Rising Tide as a seventh grader. When he arrived at the school, his parents and he were extremely worried about his lack of success in Mathematics. Teachers at previous schools said that he could not learn Math, he was achieving significantly below grade level and, according to his parents, teachers had given up on him. When this boy was in 7th grade at Rising Tide, his Math teacher made a concerted effort to assist him. The teacher had the boy stay after school for help on a regular basis, so the teacher could give the boy individual attention. By the end of his 7th grade year, this boy had significantly raised his scores in Math, both on internal assessments and on standardized tests. In 8th grade, this student continued to work hard; by the end of 8th grade, he had reached his grade level for performance in Math. These stories are just two of many students who have found success at Rising Tide.

Student Progress Relative to Internal Standards

Under the leadership of our faculty steering committee, the Thursday Committee, teachers worked together, during the 2001-2002 school year, to create a portfolio analysis system and to refine the rubric/grade/comment report card. By the end of the school year, the staff felt comfortable with the changes and will begin to utilize the updated report card in the Fall of 2002. Because of ongoing reconsiderations and changes in the internal student assessment system, the school has no meaningful longitudinal data that demonstrates individual student progress on internal assessments. The staff has been working hard to create assessment instruments, both for individual assignments and for report cards, that are more objective and, thus, meaningful to track.

In our original accountability plan, one of the benchmarks for student progress was that each student should complete at least one project during the school year. Although each student at Rising Tide certainly does complete at least one multidisciplinary project per year, assessments for projects are often reflected in the assessment for individual subjects, as they should be, meaning that, once again, the staff has not created any longitudinal data to show progress on projects.

In future annual reports, the report on student progress on schoolwide objectives will be included in the non-academic area because these objectives report on a student's habits of mind and behavior rather than on academic progress. Beginning in the Fall of 2002, the school will track students' academic progress according to academic progress, using the Fall report as a baseline for student progress in individual academic areas. The rubric section of the report card shows a student's progress on meeting the schoolwide objectives; the grade and comment reflect a student's individual academic performance in each subject area.

The four Rising Tide Charter School Schoolwide Objectives are:

1. Self-Directed Learner
2. Investigator
3. Communicator
4. Community Steward

The Rising Tide Report Card is included in the Appendix. The rubric section of the report card demonstrates the criteria for each of the schoolwide objectives. Advisors, along with their advisees, chart each student's progress on the schoolwide objectives during the school year, setting goals relative to these objectives in the Fall and following them during the school year.

Non-Academic Program

The original Rising Tide Accountability Plan sites two criteria for judging whether or not Rising Tide students meet success in non-academic areas of school life:

1. Each student will be a constructive member of the community of Plymouth.
2. Each student will be a constructive member of the Rising Tide community.

In order to assess each of these areas, the staff looks at student participation in Community Service Programs, and student Discipline Records and Attendance.

Community Service Programs

Rising Tide currently requires that each student perform 25 hours of community service per year; students keep track of their community service hours and activities as part of their portfolios, newly developed this year. The Director formed a Community Service Board, whose job it is to research and plan community service activities; this Board is made up of student volunteers from each advisor group, and the Board meets weekly with the Director. Students are responsible for finding viable community service projects, both in Plymouth and beyond, and are also responsible, with support from the adult coordinator, for making contact with organizations and planning community service activities. This community service program is designed to both develop, in all students, a sense of service and responsibility to the wider community, and also to encourage students to develop organization and communication skills. Students are encouraged to research community service activities and, in the process, learn how to plan and organize events and communicate with peers and organizations.

Rising Tide Community Service Board members spent time researching opportunities for community service projects in the Plymouth area - making telephone calls, asking questions, writing and e-mailing various organizations. These students established ongoing relationships with various organizations - the Plymouth Area Coalition for the Homeless, Salvation Army, South Shore Women's Center, Cranberry Hospice, Rosie's Place in Roxbury, Pennies for Patients - and students complete annual activities for these organizations. These ongoing relationships teach students that community service is not based on one-time acts; rather, community needs are ongoing and continual. This year, 2001-2002, is the first year that the school has required 25 hours of community service from each student, and staff are still evaluating the success of this program. All students completed some volunteer work for the school - assisting with setting up and cleaning up after lunch, cleaning areas of the school, recycling paper and cans - as well as projects in the larger community, Plymouth and beyond. The following list includes some of the activities in which students have participated. Each year we try to add to our list of organizations that we serve; the asterisks following the listed items below indicate programs that are new this year. The school is particularly proud of the Cranberry Hospice program, entitled the "Festival of Lights" that is held each year at Plimoth Plantation because we are able to join portions of our Arts curriculum with a community service project.

- 1) South Shore Women's Center
- 2) Plymouth area Salvation Army *
- 3) Plymouth area nursing homes *
- 4) Recycling paper and cans
- 5) Cranberry Hospice

- 6) Pennies for Patients
- 7) Rosie's Place
- 8) Hedge School Clean-Up
- 9) Ecology Club
- 10) Read to kindergarten students
- 11) Easter Seals Shoot-Out
- 12) Rising Tide teacher appreciation *
- 13) Social Event to raise money for community service activities *
- 14) Write "Schoolyard Scenes" articles for local newspaper

Attendance and Discipline

Rising Tide's second non-academic objective states that each student will be a constructive member of the Rising Tide community. Evidence of these criteria are to be found in the average daily attendance and in the number and seriousness of discipline issues at the school.

In terms of school attendance, daily attendance rate continues to be high. This year our average daily attendance was 94.5%. The staff continues to work on how to address unexcused absences at Rising Tide. Even though a strict policy is in place for unexcused absence, the school still struggles with issues of family vacations taken at times other than school vacations.

During the 2001-2002 school year, 33 students received an in-school or out-of-school suspension. This represents 15% of our population. 85% of our students received no suspensions. No students were expelled. Data on student discipline appears in the next section.

Although the number of students who were suspended might seem high, each year fewer and fewer students are responsible for major discipline infractions. Teachers are very pleased with the progress in this area as all teachers have come together to create Community Standards and uniformly uphold the standards with all students. After touring Rising Tide, many visitors now comment on the high level of respect in the school, among students and teachers, and the calm atmosphere that permeates the building. During its first year, Rising Tide gained a reputation in the Plymouth community for having an "out of control" student body, many of whom were directed to Rising Tide by school administrators and disgruntled parents. Through the concerted efforts of the staff, Rising Tide has now altered that image in the community, and is continually gaining a more positive reputation. During the first summer after the school opened, the new Director, along with teachers and Board members, created discipline standards and codes that were articulated in a Student Handbook. Each student, along with their parents and advisor, was asked to read the handbook and then sign a Conduct Policy, in which the student and parents agreed to uphold the school's Community Standards. Initially, this process caused some parents to withdraw their children from the school and enrollment dropped; however, Rising Tide then began to attract students and parents who chose Rising Tide for its high standards and clear conduct expectations. Our reputation has improved and is continuing in this direction; now, many applicants state that they were attracted to consider Rising Tide because of its strong reputation, articulated by present and former students and their parents. We are becoming known as a "safe and nurturing" community and school.

The Rising Tide discipline code is based on honesty, respect, and trust and, at the end of the fourth year, this philosophy has gained acceptance. The Student Handbook states that the staff acknowledges that middle school students can make mistakes, and students are encouraged to take academic risks and try new things. If a student makes a mistake, the best course of action is to admit the mistake, serve a penalty, learn from the incident, and move on. The school is finding success with this model. This philosophy is good for middle school students because they can learn from mistakes and, hopefully, not repeat them.

For any offense that could result in suspension or expulsion, the Director convenes a Discipline Committee, also based on a code of honesty. The Discipline Committee is made up of the student's advisor, the school's Director and two teachers, usually the teachers who instruct the grade level in which the student functions. The Discipline Committee is not a "court"; rather, the Discipline Committee serves as more of a questioning and counseling team who work with the student. Before the Discipline Committee convenes,

teachers and the Director thoroughly investigate the matter under consideration; they get to the core or truth of the situation. The offending student, before facing a Discipline Committee, has already written a statement in which he/she admits to making a mistake. All fact-finding takes place before the Committee is convened and parents of the student(s) involved are contacted. Before the student joins the Discipline Committee, all members of the Committee have read the student's statement and any accompanying materials, such as notes, reports from staff, etc. When the student joins the Committee, he/she is asked to explain what occurred. After the student describes what happened, members of the Committee ask the student questions, such as what could the student have done to make the situation turn out differently, what they can do to assist the student so this type of incident will not occur again, etc. The goal of the Committee is to assist the student who made the mistake, to suggest strategies the student can utilize so that this type of incident will not be repeated. After this discussion with the student takes place, the student waits outside the room while the committee decides upon an appropriate response to the incident. Then, the Director talks to the student, explains the response to the action and the Director then calls the child's parents to explain the school's response. The atmosphere of the Discipline Committee is very supportive and nurturing, as adults assist the child with behavior issues and join together to support the child. Parents are brought into the process right away, helping them to see that the school is genuinely trying to help the child, rather than doling out random punishments, and that the response is appropriate to the action. This system of discipline has assisted Rising Tide in encouraging parents to join together with staff members for the benefit of the child, rather than pitting parents against "the school".

**PART II
ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILES AND VIABILITY**

Introduction

This section will follow the format outlined in the DOE’s “General Guidelines for the 2001-2002 School Year”, including a Governance Profile, Student Profile, Staff Profile, Financial Profile, Dissemination Practices, and the Recommended but not required elements. After these sections, this report will specifically address any issues from the school’s accountability plan not already covered.

Governance Profile

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees normally consists of 10 members with terms expiring at various times throughout the year. The following people served on the Board of Trustees at various times through the year:

Jane Blanchard	Heidi Mayo
Nick Calvino	Peter McMahon
Bonnie Conant	David Peck
Michael Dunn	Christine Phillips
Georgiana Gladdys	Sue Tobin
Joseph Macuch	Jonathan White

Board committees and members

Executive:	Joe Macuch Sue Tobin Jonathan White School Director Jill Crafts, per invitation
Nominating:	Joe Macuch
Finance:	Peter McMahon Michael Dunn
Strategic Planning:	Sue Tobin Jim Morrison Jill Crafts
Development:	Bonnie Conant David Peck Joe Macuch Nick Calvino Steve Parrish
Technology:	Mark Rheault Steve Parrish

Summary of major policy decisions established by the Board of Trustees in 2001-2002

- 1) June 11, 2001 – the RT Board adopted the Internet Monitoring and Content Filtering Policy. They also approved the updated Rising Tide Internet Safety and Computer Acceptable Use Policy.
- 2) August 13, 2001 – the RT Board voted to send certified letters to families who have not provided transcript information for children entering the school. The letter will say that the information is needed at least five days before the Fall opening of school. If information is not received, the spot may be offered to another student.
- 3) January 28, 2002 – the RT Board voted to ask the Director to write a letter to the MA DOE, asking to increase enrollment by 12 students, from 216 to 228.
- 4) March 11, 2002 – the RT Board voted to adjust the enrollment lottery date from March to mid-February.
- 5) May 13, 2002 – the Rising Tide Board voted to accept a Home School Compact.

Summary of official complaints received by the Board of Trustees.

During the 2001-2002 academic year, the Rising Tide Charter School Board of Trustees received no official complaints from constituents.

Student Profile

Student Demographics

These figures are based on 221 students who were enrolled at some point during the school year.

Total number of students	221
White	214
Black	5
American Indian	2
Male	115
Female	106
Free/Reduced lunch	28
502.1	14
502.2	16
502.3	2
504	2
LEP	None
Linguistic minorities	None

Total number of student applications received, and students on waiting list.

City	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Totals
Bourne	1				1
Carver		1	4		5
Duxbury	3		1	2	6
Falmouth	1				1
Halifax	1		3	1	5
Kingston	8	2	4	1	15
Marshfield	2	1	2		5
Middleboro	3	2	3	1	9
Pembroke	2		2	1	5
Plymouth	53	19	12	2	86
Plympton	2	1	1		4
Sandwich	1			1	2
Wareham		2	1		3
Totals	77	28	33	9	147

In grade 5 there were 1.35 applications per opening.

In grade 6 there were 2.33 applications per opening.

In grade 7 there were 3.66 applications per opening.

In grade 8 there were 1.8 applications per opening.

Student Discipline Report

The chart below outlines the number of Rising Tide students who received either in-school or out-of-school suspensions during the 2001-2002 school year. As in the past few years, the number of students who received suspensions was relatively low in grades 5 and 6 and higher in grades 7 and 8, following a pattern not unusual for the grades and ages served at Rising Tide. The number of students suspended in our upper two grades remains higher than we would like it to be; however, teachers felt good, this past year, that our Community Standards are being more consistently upheld than in earlier years, and offenses, except for two fights, are relatively minor.

Grade 5			
Suspension	Total No. of Days	Total No. of Students	Reasons
ISS	4	4	Hitting another student, sexual harassment
OSS	2	1	Threatening a teacher
Grade 6			
ISS	5	2	Failing to complete homework, bringing a toy gun to school
OSS	1	1	Lying to a teacher
Grade 7			
ISS	14.5	9	Sexual harassment, defiance, rudeness, cheating,
OSS	44.5	9	Disrespect, threatening behavior, throwing a rock at a teacher, fighting, stealing
Grade 8			
ISS	19	13	Sexual harassment, obscene note
OSS	7	2	Threatening a student, biting a student

One class at Rising Tide, this past year's 7th grade class, poses a particular challenge for all staff members. The vast majority of out-of-school suspensions were in the 7th grade; in fact, three students in that class were responsible for the majority of the suspensions. All three of those students will be attending different schools in the Fall. The staff feels confident that, without those three students, the entire class will feel more settled.

The Rising Tide staff is particularly pleased to report that there were no incidents at the school involving illegal drugs and there were no incidents of cigarette smoking; one student was found to be carrying cigarettes, but did not smoke on school grounds. There were also no weapons violations; there were two fights, both involving the same student. We still have work to do on student discipline, but we are pleased with our progress in this area.

Student turnover data

Grade	Number of applications	Students registered	Students withdrawn	Admitted during year	Remaining wait list
5	77	57	2	2	18
6	28	9	1	3	16
7	33	5	6	3	25
8	9	5	1		4

There were 10 students withdrawn during the school year for various reasons:

- Parent choice 2
- Discipline reasons 4
- Social reasons 3
- Moved 1

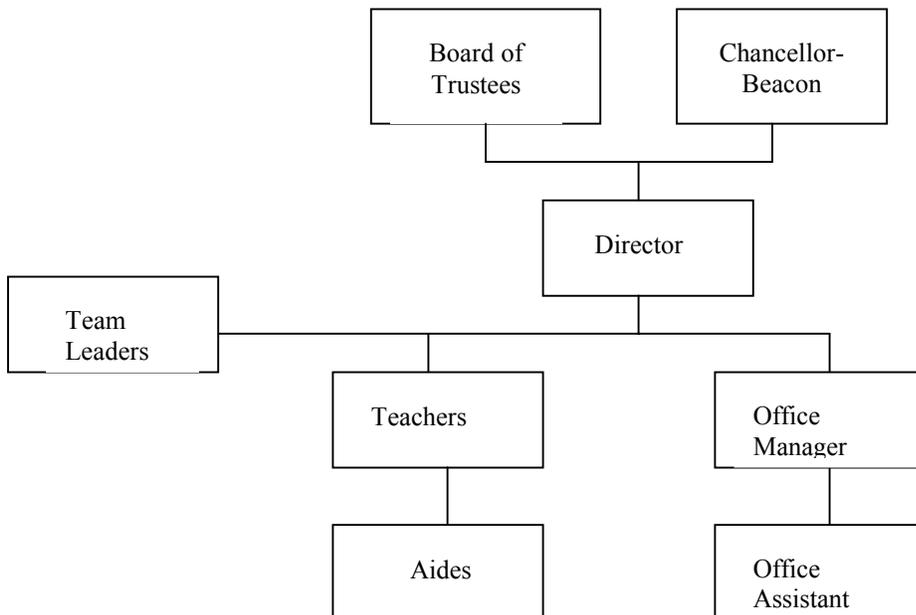
9 students will not be returning in the fall, also for various reasons:

- Parent choice 3
- Moved 2
- Program needs 3
- Private school 1

This is by far the best year we have had for student retention rates. We attribute this to our ability to attract families who are committed to our educational philosophies. The percentage of students who left the school has steadily declined in the past 3 years. This year fewer than 5% of our students withdrew during the school year.

Staff Profile

1. Organizational Chart



Name of Headmaster/principal and any similar positions

Jill Crafts is the School Director and, except for the Office Manager, there are no other administrative personnel at the school.

Number of FTE teachers and aids by subject area responsibility.

RISING TIDE FACULTY AND STAFF

<u>NAME</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>EXP.</u>	<u>FTE</u>	<u>CERTIFICATION</u>	<u>DEGREES</u>
Robert Baker	Band Director, Teacher	31 yrs.	.2		
Briggett Bisbee	SPED Teacher	1 yrs.	1.0	PreK-3	B.S., M.Ed.
Ken Blanchard	Social Studies	8 yrs.	1.0	El. Ed. 1-6	B.S., M.Ed.
Ben Brewster	Math		1.0	General Sci. 5-9, 9-12	B.S.
Patricia Brissette	Lang. Arts/Reading/Math	6 yrs.	1.0	El. Ed 1-6	B.S.
Kay Coldiron	Math Coordinator	21 yrs.	.2		B.S.
Jill Crafts	Director	28 yrs.	1.0		B.A., M.A.
Nancy Doyon	Science/Math	4 yrs.	1.0	El. Ed. 1-6	B.A., M.Ed.
Lynda Earl	Lunch Coord/Office Asst	14yrs.	0.8		
Warriner Gould	Science	3 yrs.	1.0	El. Ed. 1-6	B.A., M.Ed.
Nancy Connolly	Art	19 yrs.	1.0	Took test	B.F.A.
Kerry Herr	Physical Education		1.0	Took test	B.S.
AnneMarie Holloway	SPED Teacher	2 yrs.	.4		
Matthew Jones	Latin Teacher	1 yr.	1.0		B.A.
Marianne Kirby	Social Studies	11 yrs.	1.0	K-8	B.S.
Beth Lanoue	SPED aide	6 yrs.	1.0		
Jane LeSanto	Nurse/Health Teacher	21 yrs.	1.0		B.S.N.
Darby Lewis	6 th Grade	2 yrs.	1.0	El. Ed. 1-6	B.A., M.Ed.
Jill Marciello	School Counselor		1.0	School Social Worker	B.S., M.S.W.
Chris Messier	Social Studies		1.0		B.A., M.Ed.
Beth Nickles	Science	2 yrs.	1.0	Gen. Sci. M.S.	B.S.
William O'Brien	Language Arts	2 yrs.	1.0		B.A.
Robin Ozelius	Language Arts, Math	2 yrs.	1.0	El. Ed. 1-6	B.S.
Peter Sampou	Math, Science	1 yr.	1.0	Biology, Chemistry 7-12	B.S., Ph.D.
Marion Thayer	Librarian		.2		B.A., M.L.S.
Ellie Waal	Office Manager	16 yrs.	1.0		B.A.
Susan Wallis	SPED Coordinator	2 yrs.	.2	SPED PreK-9, M.S. 5-9	B.S., M.Ed.
Total Staff FTE			23.0		

Staff Turnover

Rising Tide’s administrative staff is delighted to report that the Rising Tide staff had a lower turnover rate this year than ever before in the school’s history. Only two full-time classroom teachers left at the end of the school year, one to return to graduate school and the other to change careers. This stability is so important to curriculum development, developing consistency in school policies, and building credibility for the school as a viable organization.

The only area of the school that remains unstable is the Special Needs Department; the school continues to experience high turnover rates in this area. The reasons that Special Needs staff have left are varied - changes in family situations, feelings that the job carries too much responsibility, desire to change teaching careers from Special Needs to regular education, frustration with changing Special Needs laws and regulations – all of these reasons have contributed to the instability of the Special Needs staff. Because of budget constraints, the Director hired a part-time Special Needs Director this past year, who left mid-way through the year. Her credibility was seriously questioned by staff members because she was at the school so seldom and, thus, was not involved in the day-to-day life of the school. In addition to these reasons but contributing to all of them is the fact that certified Special Needs teachers are so difficult to find that the Director frequently finds herself feeling forced to hire candidates, who are not highly qualified, for positions, because laws require that services be uninterrupted. Rising Tide continues to search for viable candidates for Special Needs who are interested in remaining in the field and living in the Plymouth area.

Applicants for 2000-2001 Teaching Positions

Thirty applications were received for 6 openings in the 2001-2002 school year.

Financial Profile

1. Financial statement for the fiscal year 2002

A non-audited financial statement for 2001-2002 is included in the Appendix.

Foundation Report 2001-2002 (Preliminary)

The Plymouth Rising Tide Foundation is just completing its most successful year in support of the Rising Tide Charter School. In this our third year, we have provided \$25,000 of support for the general operation of the school, as well as providing a projector for PowerPoint presentations and other incidental contributions. During the school year 1999-2000, the Foundation provided an \$8,000 contribution; and last year, 2000-2001, the Foundation funded the computer lab for a value of \$10,220. **Thus, this past year represents support for the school which far exceed the totals of prior years.**

Details of the report can be found in the Appendix.

2. Balance sheet setting forth the charter school's assets, liabilities, and fund balances or equities.

3. State and federal grants

a. Title I	\$12,807.00
b. Drug Free Schools, #331	756.00
c. SPED Grant, #240	21,420.00
d. Title VI, #302	849.00
e. Eisenhower, #303	852.00
f. Health Protection, #346	12,120.00
g. SPED Curriculum Frameworks, #274	7,500.00
h. Dissemination Grant	75,000.00
i. Academic Support, #632	1,620.00
j. Class Size Reduction, #653	3,367.00
k. Facilities Program, #533	44,280.00
l. MCAS Remediation Assistance	7,928.00

4. Approved school budget for fiscal year 2003

The Rising Tide Charter School Board of Trustees, on June 10, 2002, approved a level-funded budget for academic year 2002-2003. A copy of this approved budget is included in the Appendix.

Dissemination

For the past two years, Rising Tide Charter School staff, Board members and students have been involved with developing and identifying best practices, professional development activities, and dissemination activities through two separate Dissemination Grants. With monies from the grants, Rising Tide has become a member of the Southeastern Massachusetts Consortium of Charter Schools.

During the 2000-2001 school year, Rising Tide became involved with this Consortium of Charter Schools, under the leadership of the Cape Cod Lighthouse School, when Pat Anthony, their school's Director, was awarded grant money. During that year, Rising Tide Science teachers joined with Science teachers from other Consortium schools, to create a Marine Biology curriculum, to be shared by Consortium Schools. Also during that year, Rising Tide's Director met frequently with other Consortium School Directors to identify each school's best practices. Consortium Schools were then responsible for documenting their best

practices; this documentation became part of a book, prepared by the Lighthouse School, that was distributed among charter schools. Rising Tide's Director was then part of a group of Consortium participants who made a presentation to other charter school personnel at the Spring 2002 Massachusetts Charter School Association Convention.

In the summer of 2001, Rising Tide's Director, Jill Crafts, in collaboration with other Consortium School personnel, successfully wrote a Dissemination Grant and was awarded \$75,000 for her proposed dissemination project. The basic theme of this project was Communication; the theme was based on the concept that communication, or better understanding another's culture or viewpoint, can break down barriers among people so that they can understand one another and successfully collaborate. Teachers from Consortium schools were invited to come together and participate in professional development activities, including workshops in public speaking skills, writing skills, and rubric creation skills. Teachers then disseminated these skills to their students at the separate schools, and applied these communication skills to their own curricula and students. In May, Rising Tide hosted a Communication Festival, where students and teachers from various schools came together at Rising Tide for a day and shared communication skills and curriculum. Teachers involved in the project are now writing a curriculum that reflects the groups' work; this curriculum will be disseminated to other schools at various teacher gatherings throughout the coming school year. This program was highly successful in promoting collegiality and cooperation among teachers and students at various charter schools. The only disappointing aspect of this program was the unwillingness of any district school teachers to participate in the program, despite the charter schools' best efforts to include them.

Another aspect of this program that has been very successful, thus far, is Board of Trustees Development. In April 2002, the Consortium hosted a meeting of teachers and Board members. The purpose of the Board members' gathering was to determine whether or not Board members from the various schools would be interested in working and learning together, if they had enough issues in common that they could learn and grow together. The answer to this question was a resounding YES! In August, the Consortium is planning a Board Development Day, where consultants will work with Board members from the various schools in areas such as Board development, fundraising, effective Board functioning, and Board responsibilities.

Rising Tide has been highly successful in identifying and disseminating best practices to other charter schools. The school made efforts but has not been as successful in disseminating best practices to district schools.

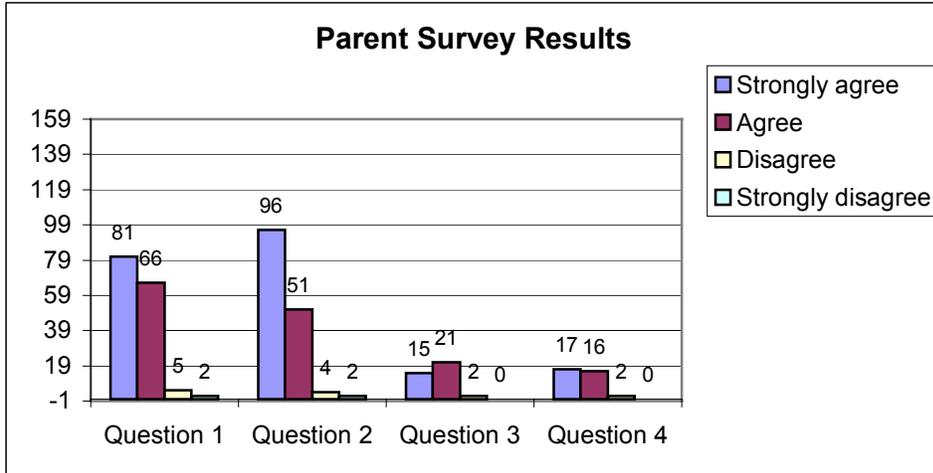
Recommended but not required

1. Parent Survey results

Rising Tide sends out two parent surveys each year. In the Fall, staff send to parents a parent survey that was created by the school staff. This year, 159 surveys were returned. The following chart shows parent response to 4 questions on the school survey.

In the Spring, staff send out a parent survey created by our management company. Eighty-eight surveys were returned. We are gratified by the results of these surveys, and seek to improve upon any areas that receive less than 95% favorable ratings.

Copies of these surveys are included in the Appendix.



- Question 1: I feel confident that the staff is providing a solid education for my child based on skills.
- Question 2: I would recommend this school to my friends who have school-age children.
- Question 3: Special accommodations are made for my child when necessary.
- Question 4: The Special Ed staff is providing the appropriate services for my child.

2. Graduate placements

The majority of Rising Tide students leave Rising Tide and attend their local high schools; however, each year, we have noticed that more of our 8th grade students are applying to independent high schools and, this year, more have been accepted and are planning to attend independent schools. This year we graduated 44 students. Student placement for 9th grade is as follows:

Archbishop Williams	1	Plymouth North H.S.	13
Bourne High School	1	Plymouth South H.S.	11
Bridgewater/Raynham H.S.	1	Sacred Heart	1
Cape Cod Academy	1	Silver Lake H.S.	2
Carver H.S.	2	South Shore Votech H.S.	2
Fontbonne	1	Sturgis Charter School	1
Marshfield H.S.	1	Tabor Academy	2
Middleboro H.S.	1	Moving to France	1
Notre Dame	1	Moving to Maine	1

3. Staff Evaluation procedures were included in last year’s Annual Report as were Extracurricular Activities.

4. Summary of Strategic Plan

In March 2002, a Strategic Planning Committee, comprised of Board members, staff and parents was formed in order to consider the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing Rising Tide in the next five years, and to create a strategic plan for the school. This strategic plan will become the basis for a new accountability plan for the school’s next five years. A copy of the committee’s work, placed in an outline that will become a new strategic plan, is included in the Appendix.

5. Graduation and Promotion Requirements

Under the leadership and guidance of the school's Director and the faculty steering committee, the Rising Tide staff together created new guidelines for graduation and promotion of students. A copy of these new requirements is included in the Appendix.

6. Explanation of Parent Organizations

(Taken from the Student Handbook)

Parent Teacher School Association

The PTSA includes all Rising Tide Charter School parents and works to bring parents into closer contact with the school. The PTSA provides channels of communication among parents and also helps to raise funds to support school programs. The PTSA meets once a month.

Parent Volunteer Opportunities

The Rising Tide Charter School was founded as a three-way partnership of students, parents, and teachers, joining together to create learning and enrichment opportunities for students as part of their community. We welcome parent involvement in our community and would like to hear from you if you can help in any way.

7. Home/School Compact

Beginning in the 2002-2003 school year, the Rising Tide staff will send home, to be signed by parents, students, and teachers a Home/School compact. This document is designed to create a partnership for student success between Rising Tide and its families. A copy of this document is included in the Appendix.

Summary of organizational viability relative to Rising Tide's accountability plan objectives "Is the school a viable organization?"

Rising Tide's original accountability plan included four areas of organizational viability: 1. Fiscal management; 2. Student enrollment and daily attendance; 3. School governance and management; 4. Staff competency and development. Many of these areas have already been covered in the preceding section; however, in order to ensure a thorough explanation of each item, all objectives will be listed.

1. Fiscal Management

Four objectives are included in this area:

- a. The Board and administration will secure and manage resources to adequately sustain the school program.
- b. The Board and administration will develop and implement an operational budget.
- c. The Board and administration will follow appropriate accounting procedures and produce financial reports required by the State.
- d. The Board and administration will ensure that appropriate management and accountability procedures are implemented.

Yearly audited statements recorded with the State demonstrate that the Rising Tide Charter School Board and administration, under the guidance of Beacon Education Management, have followed accounting procedures and have worked diligently to maintain a balanced budget that adequately supports the academic program. The year-end financial report and the projected 2002-2003 budget are included in the Appendix. Extraordinarily high facilities' costs and management fees have made maintaining a balanced budget particularly challenging for Rising Tide. The Board has been taking a more active role, during the fourth year, in attempting to find ways to decrease unnecessary costs so that the school can spend a larger

percentage of revenue on the academic program. This procedure of considering other options is ongoing and, to date, has not been resolved; however, many Board members are spending a great deal of time on this complex matter.

2. Student enrollment and daily attendance

Three objectives are included in this area:

- a. Rising Tide's viability and importance to the community will result in full enrollment each year.
- b. All students will demonstrate their interest in and commitment to Rising Tide by attending school regularly.
- c. Once enrolled, students will remain at Rising Tide through grade 8.

Enrollment data is included in a previous section of this report. The staff and Board are very pleased that, during the 2001-2002 school year, Rising Tide maintained full enrollment, 216 students, for the entire year. The Board requested of the State and was granted permission to add up to 12 students for the 2002-2003 school year.

Attendance data is also included in the previous section. Although student attendance is good at Rising Tide, the staff remains concerned, as they were last year, about a few parents who insist on taking their children out of school for family vacations, even though our Student Handbook states that the school discourages such action. The staff is going to be discussing, in their summer meetings in August, how to rewrite the school policy so that parents will be encouraged to stop this practice.

In June 2002, Rising Tide graduated 30 students who had started at the school in the 5th grade and remained at the school for four years. The staff is very pleased with this large percentage of students who remained at the school through its early, growing years. Parents, students and staff felt both nostalgic and pleased to witness such a strong group of young people graduating from Rising Tide after four years.

3. School governance and management

Four objectives are included in this area:

- a. The Board will set policies for the organization.
- b. The administration will implement Board policies.
- c. The Board will ensure compliance with State Accountability requirements.
- d. The Board will ensure compliance with State Financial requirements.

Rising Tide Charter School has been in compliance with all documents and reports due to the State of Massachusetts. The Board of Trustees has met on a regular basis, once a month on the second Monday evening of the month; minutes of these meetings were kept and approved by the Board on a monthly basis. The Board follows open meeting laws and approves all major policy decisions. An Annual Report has been prepared by the school's Director each year and submitted in a timely manner to the state; the Director is in the process of preparing the Renewal Application for the Charter which is due on August 1, 2002.

One major area of concern that arose during the 2000-2001 school year, but which intensified in 2001-2002, is the Board's concerns about the management company, ChancellorBeacon Academies, formerly Beacon Education Management. Board members have become increasingly concerned about Beacon's apparent lack of accountability to the Board, bills that have not been paid by Beacon in a timely fashion, overcharges by some vendors, and mischarges to Rising Tide. Currently, the Board is negotiating a contract revision with Beacon and hopes to be able to become independent by June 2003. The Board would prefer to employ all of the school staff and hire an on-site business manager to handle Rising Tide's financial matters, rather than rely on Beacon personnel, who are far from the school. In dealing with these issues, the Rising Tide Board of trustees has learned a great deal and has grown noticeably stronger, recruiting new members who bring knowledge and expertise to the Board. As a sign of growth, this problem has pushed the Board to work together more actively and effectively.

4. Staff competency and development

Four objectives are included in this area:

- a. Rising Tide will be staffed by trained professionals.
- b. Rising Tide will maintain stability in its professional staff.
- c. A system and associated resources for professional development will be in place.
- d. Professional development will be focused on school Improvement Goals.

Charts in the previous section, summary of teacher qualifications and percent staff turnover, attest to the high quality of Rising Tide's staff of professionals. Since the school first opened, through attrition, the school has been able to hire academically stronger teachers with a wide variety of background and experience. The charts also reflect an increasingly more stable staff, as the Director has made efforts to hire teachers who already live in the Plymouth area, rather than teachers who move to the area to teach at the school.

A copy of 2001-2002 Professional Development activities, with Professional Development Points (PDP's) is included with this report. Because Rising Tide teachers create their own curriculum and many do not use textbooks, our professional development for the 2001-2002 school year was focused on curriculum gathering, aligning with the MA State Frameworks and New Standards, and developing multi-disciplinary projects. In addition, teachers worked with Special Needs' personnel on learning to meet individual student needs, changes in SPED regulations, and working effectively in an inclusion setting. Teachers also worked with Rising Tide's Technology Coordinator and Librarian in order to learn computer access skills as well as presentation skills, with Powerpoint. All of these activities are consistent with stated School Improvement Goals, expressed in last year's Annual Report:

- 1) To record the Rising Tide curriculum in a unified and cohesive manner.
- 2) To fold the curriculum into the MA State Frameworks and New Standards.

Through use of funds from a Dissemination Grant, Rising Tide teachers, in addition to the professional development activities listed above, also participated in workshops for writing, public speaking and rubric creation skills. Staff then taught students these skills and, in May, students and teachers participated in the May Communication Festival, with Consortium School members. Beginning in the 2002-2003 school year, Rising Tide teachers are going to begin developing a progressive, grades 5-8, curriculum in writing and public speaking, culminating in a required 8th grade "Speaking" for each student who graduates from Rising Tide. Through grant funds, almost all of the Rising Tide staff was able to receive professional development training in these areas; skills from these activities will be utilized to create a unique writing and public speaking curriculum for all Rising Tide students.

PART III FAITHFULNESS TO CHARTER

Is the school faithful to the terms of its Charter?

In the Spring of 2002, as Rising Tide staff and Board members prepared for charter renewal, the Strategic Planning Committee identified various aspects of the school's program that are faithful to the Charter, those areas where the school has not been faithful to the Charter, and elements of the original Charter that have required or will require change or alteration. This section has been taken from the Rising Tide Charter School Renewal Application.

Faithful to the Charter:

- Educational and cultural philosophy
- Academic program
- Connections to Plymouth

Not Faithful to the Charter:

- A curriculum that is not totally Plymouth based

Elements of the Charter that have or will require alteration:

- Mentor program
- Adherence to Modern Red School House standards
- Completely Plymouth-based curriculum

The original Accountability Plan included four goals for the school's academic program that would reflect adherence to the Rising Tide Charter. These goals are:

1. The school's approach is a hybrid between a skills-based and a project-based education.
2. Through project-based learning students will be able to integrate and manipulate performance skills and content knowledge into complex situations.
3. The academic standards that drive instruction are applied individually to each student.
4. As the school matures, projects will be customized for specific students.

As the Director and Faculty Steering Committee have guided the staff in the process of developing school academic and non-academic programs, they have consistently begun each discussion with a full faculty review of the Charter, in order to both keep the charter goals at the forefront of any discussions and to keep reminding the staff of the charter philosophy and requirements.

Educational and Cultural Philosophy

Rising Tide's educational and cultural philosophies have remained in strict adherence to the spirit of the mission as stated in the school's charter. The school's founders wanted to create a school consisting of a small community of student and adult learners, committed to high academic standards and community development. Evidence of these aspirations can be found in the consistently small class size, the advisor system, the focus on meeting the individual child's academic and social/emotional needs, the democratic approach to decision-making, the Community Standards, and the school's conduct code of honesty, respect and trust, all discussed in other areas of this application. Teachers worked together to create the school's four schoolwide objectives – Self-Directed Learner, Investigator, Communicator, Community Steward – all based directly on a close reading of the charter. The advisor system provides for a great deal of frequent and open communication between the school and home. Students and parents are encouraged to contact the advisor if a student is experiencing any difficulty, academic or social/emotional. A full-time school counselor is always available to assist students and their parents with various adolescent and family issues,

enhancing the atmosphere of respect and trust. The Director maintains an open door policy, where she is accessible to hear concerns and facilitate solutions to concerns and problems.

Academic Program

Under the leadership of the School Director and the Faculty Steering Committee, teachers have developed an academic program that is faithful to the school's charter. The program is a hybrid of single and multidisciplinary projects and strong skills, academic standards are high, geared toward development of higher order thinking skills and tailored to individual needs, with a full inclusion program, and parents are welcome as integral partners in their child's education. The atmosphere for learning is safe, where students can take risks without risking embarrassment or failure, and the school offers a challenging yet nurturing and supportive environment.

The staff has also worked diligently to create an internal student assessment system that is clear, tied to the charter and inclusive. The staff went to the charter in order to name the school's four schoolwide objectives, which are included in every rubric. These objectives are Self-Directed Learner, Investigator, Communicator, Community Steward. Parents are included in the assessment process through regular, required parent conferences.

The only area of the academic program in the charter to which the school has not remained totally faithful is in making every project Plymouth-based. During the first year of the school, all student projects were based on aspects of Plymouth history, culture, financing, etc. Not only did this heavy emphasis on Plymouth prove to be rather tedious for students, but it also made compliance with the State Frameworks impossible. The school has been able to diversify in other ways to tie students to Plymouth at the same time that we have varied the topics and frequency of projects, in order to be in compliance with Frameworks and adequately prepare students for the MCAS.

Connections to Plymouth

As mentioned in the Academic Program section above, the project ties to Plymouth, as expressed in the charter, have not been fully realized at Rising Tide; however, the school has been able to create and develop other ties to the community so that the spirit of the charter, creating meaningful ties to the community for students, has been upheld and enhanced. This area of the program is still very much in the developing stages; however, we have made a great deal of progress in this area.

The originally conceived mentor program has been expanded to include schoolwide community service. A student Community Service Board, under the guidance of the Director, oversees community service activities. Twenty-five hours of community service are required for all students.

Rising Tide is in the process of developing lasting relationships with a number of community organizations. We are particularly excited about the soon-to-be-built Boys and Girls Club facility across the street from the school and the potential for cooperation between the club and the school. The school has a good relationship with the Plymouth Area Chamber of Commerce and hosts a Junior Achievement Program for 7th grade students. The school also has a relationship with the local cable TV station and Rising Tide students create and produce a regular program carried by the station. Through our community service program, we have a relationship with many area charitable organizations. Last year, 7th grade students and staff were involved with a project with Plimoth Plantation, funded by a grant, and the program is going to continue next year without the grant money. The school's Board is also trying to develop relationships with local financial institutions in order to provide future funding for school growth.

As teachers and staff have left Rising Tide, the school's Director has tried to hire faculty and staff who live in the Plymouth area, rather than hire people who would have to move to the area in order to work at the school. Staff members who already live in the area have offered more stability and rootedness to the school culture. In addition, the school now employs three teachers who formerly worked as colonial interpreters at

Plimoth Plantation. These teachers have brought with them a wonderful sense of Plymouth history and stability to the school culture.

Long-Term Goals to Ensure Faithfulness to the Charter

The Strategic Planning Committee of 2002 set the following goals for the school:

- I. To continue to develop meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships with the Plymouth area community.
- II. To better utilize the Plymouth area waterfront and town sites to enhance Rising Tide's educational program.
- III. As the school grows, to build by increments so that the integrity of class size and school culture can be maintained.
- IV. To increase opportunities for students to experience real-life problem solving situations.