

Framingham Community



Charter School

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Framingham Community Charter School
Framingham, MA
2003-2004 Annual Report

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*“I like it when they make us reflect on what we did.
It makes you look back and say, “Oh, I can do this better next time.”*

Rory Murray, Sixth Grader, Rafeal Hernandez
Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound School,
Boston, MA, on Solitude and Reflection,
Reflections on Design Principles, ELOB

Dear Reader:

Framingham Community Charter School is pleased to share with you our second Annual Report, covering the 2003/2004 school year. Like the student quoted above, we believe that learning and growing requires time to explore our ideas and evaluate our impact. We appreciate the opportunity this report provided for reflection and believe that our commitment to being a learning organization is expressed in its pages. I invite you to review our progress.

As part of the accountability process required of all charter schools, the DOE Charter School Office completed its first annual site visit this past year. A draft of the site visit report from the DOE Charter School Office confirmed “the school’s accomplishments and the school wide commitment to the mission represent a strong foundation as Framingham Community Charter School moves forward.” The Charter School Office also noted that in the last year, “The board has successfully managed some key start-up tasks, including securing a facility and doing a thorough first year evaluation of the executive director.” Further progress was seen in the development of a strong board finance committee, expansion of the board from eight to 11 members, and growth of our student body by nearly 100%. The first return of student test scores bodes well, as 16% more of our students scored proficient or advanced compared to the district average on the MCAS.

I am confident of ongoing success and organizational development not because others have recognized our progress or honored our staff, but because an active board of trustees, a committed and vital parent community, and a devoted school staff have committed to a genuine dialogue and honest reflection about how best to meet the needs of our students. As the DOE Charter School Office noted in the draft of their site visit report, “administrators and faculty have clearly spent a great deal of time discussing the school’s needs and developing strategies to meet them.”

Over the next year the board will further develop fundraising, education, and governance committees, make additional improvements on our building, hire the best available teaching professionals, share our best practices with the community, and build substantive, lasting partnerships with other local school districts and non-profits to meet the needs of a growing student body. Once again we face immense challenges that we can only overcome with your help. With your input and the help and expertise of hundreds of dedicated staff and volunteers we will not only survive, but we and our students will thrive.

Mark Shobin, Ed.D.
Chairperson, Board of Trustees

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The mission of the Framingham Community Charter School is to cultivate within each member of a diverse student body, through the Expeditionary Learning design, an intense commitment to self and community, the courage and insight to set high standards for academic and personal success, and the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to achieve those standards.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Framingham Community Charter School is pleased to share with you our second Annual Report covering the 2003/2004 school year. This report will show high student achievement, recognition of our effort and contribution to middle school education, the energy and enthusiasm of our staff and students, and a commitment to being a learning organization. As a result, we are fulfilling the promise of our charter.

Framingham Community Charter School was founded on the premise that all children are powerful, self-directed learners who value their contribution to peers and community. Children need teachers and mentors who believe in them and help them set high standards for their personal and academic growth. Research has shown that qualified teachers can, through project-based learning, integrate multiple disciplines and service into in-depth investigations of authentic and relevant inquiries known as learning expeditions to engage and challenge students.

For example, one team of three teachers and 34 students organized their learning around defining the components of an adventure. Their expedition culminated in the construction of several elements for installation of an adventure course and negotiations with the school's landlord to install a permanent "high-elements" adventure course. Another team of 34 students built a garden at a house renovated by Habitat for Humanity as part of their pursuit of the question, "What is essential for a nourishing environment?" Among the remaining expeditions, students spent overnights at a farm to better understand the role of small farms in Massachusetts, put on a play called "Greek to Me" as part of their study of ancient civilizations, and studied how the earth has changed through a dog's eyes. Peace Studies and Adventure students went on an all-day urban expedition and seventh grade students enacted forms of conflict resolution to effect change in their community. Their work included producing a public service announcement for gun safety, demonstrating on the steps of Framingham Town Hall to raise awareness for homelessness, and moderating a panel discussion on the contentious issues of illegal and legal immigration.

Throughout the year, town and state government representatives, minority leaders, parents and prospective students were invited in to view and provide feedback on our program. Many provided affirmation that this school is set up for success, and our students and staff have indeed made a difference. Below are a few highlights from the year.

- 16% more FCCS students scored proficient or advanced compared to the district average on the MCAS.
- Teacher and Department Coordinator Sally Kent and the entire Science Department were awarded the *Certificate of Excellence* by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for excellence in environmental education.
- Michael Delman, Principal, was one of only 40 Massachusetts public school educators recognized by the Commonwealth as a *Distinguished Secondary Educator*.
- More than 15 local non-profit and governmental agencies and dozens of students took part in the first year of our community service program.

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- As part of a required six-year cycle, the DOE Program Quality Assurance Office audited our special education program and, among their findings, determined that “a school climate has been created which reinforces a sense of community, respect and responsibility that the students and administrative and teaching faculty have toward supporting each other in their mutual goals of reaching high standards in all facets of the school’s programs.”
- The DOE Charter School Office stated in a draft report of their first annual site visit that “administrators and faculty have clearly spent a great deal of time discussing the school’s needs and developing strategies to meet them... The school wide commitment to the mission represent(s) a strong foundation,” and “Framingham Community Charter School has made initial progress in the development of its academic program and of the organizational systems necessary for the operation of a charter school.”

Once again, we finished the year with high energy, great effort from our students and staff, and a showcase of high-quality work. Nearly 400 people attended our second annual exhibition of student work. Guests were able to view student work from throughout the year, sample cuisine from around the world, and even try out a couple of the adventure course elements built by students.

These successes provide a strong foundation for further innovation. Next year we will implement flexible off-team grouping for math to better ensure that students receive appropriate math challenges without limiting their opportunity to receive appropriate class assignments in other courses. We have hired academic deans to promote rigorous academics and instructional expertise through vertical integration of curriculum, and active pedagogy through technical support to teachers. This will balance an already strong character development program that ensures social and emotional safety among our students through small classes and advisory groups known as “crews.” Crews will consist of students from the same grade level, allowing adult advisors and students to focus on age-specific social, emotional, academic challenges. A democratically elected leadership team representing all school staff will continue to evaluate our efficacy and guide future development.

This past year represents a dynamic period of growth, reflection and success. The coming year will be filled with challenges as great as the previous, and only an extraordinary response will ensure the success of our school and our students. The readiness of our administration to take up new challenges, the devotion of our teaching staff, the dedication of our volunteers, and the hard-work of our students presage that success.

Robert Kaufman
Executive Director

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**SCHOOL PERFORMANCE IN RELATION TO
ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN**

Framingham Community Charter School accepts as part of its responsibility to provide public education to middle school students an obligation to show evidence of its success. In consultation with staff, parents, Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, and the Massachusetts DOE Charter School Office, Framingham Community Charter School has identified measures of its success in an “Accountability Plan.” The Accountability Plan formally defines specific five-year performance objectives, goals, and measurements of our school’s progress and success in raising student achievement, establishing a viable organization, and fulfilling the terms of our charter.¹

ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Performance Objective #1: Students at Framingham Community Charter School will become proficient in the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics.²

Goal 1: Students at Framingham Community Charter School will become clear and effective writers of the English language and proficient in reading.

Measurement 1 – Value Added^{3,4}

Each cohort of students will increase their scores on the Terra Nova English / Language Arts test by two NCE points per year.

Method of Assessment: Terra Nova 2^d edition/CAT Basic Multiple Assessments for English /Language Arts.

Results

The school’s mean average increased by 1.8 NCE points. Students in grade six met the goal of 2 points with an increase of 2.2 points. Grade seven students, on average, increased by 1.3 points. Overall, we approached but did not quite meet our goal of 2.0 NCE points.

Comments: The highest increase was actually a two-teacher core team in grade seven, which increased their scores by 4.5 points. The four-teacher team actually had a 0.4 decrease. We have already decided to eliminate the four-teacher option because too many students were falling through the cracks.

In addition, next year, we have hired a Dean of Humanities who will supervise the reading and writing teachers. He has taught at our school for the past two years, and his scores were notably higher than any of the other teams’ scores. Under his leadership, the department has created clear expectations for writing for this coming year – both in quantity and in defining quality – and is in the process of creating portfolio requirements for each grade level.

¹ MA DOE Charter School Office, Guidelines for Writing Charter School Accountability Plans, June, 2004.

² Only students who have attended FCCS for the entire school year will be included.

³ The Terra Nova is administered in the fall of students’ incoming year and each spring.

⁴ Our first cohort of students, which entered in 2002, did not take the test. Therefore, they took the Terra Nova for the first time this fall as seventh graders.

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Finally, through his partnership with the Director of Special Education and the Principal, the school is creating a comprehensive and coherent approach focusing professional development on teaching writing across the curriculum.

Measurement 2 – Value Added

Each cohort of students will increase their scores on the Terra Nova reading test by two NCE points per year.

Method of Assessment: Terra Nova 2^d edition/CAT Basic Multiple Assessments for reading.

Results

The school's mean average increased by 2.6 NCE points. The seventh grade increased scores by 6.3 NCE points while the sixth grade decreased 1.2 NCE points. Overall, we exceeded our goal of 2.0 points.

Comments: The English department has come to consensus about expectations for the depth and breadth of reading, something that the seventh grade teachers did with one another throughout the year and with strong results. This level of clarity will assist teachers in all grades. Some teachers waited to assign novels until late in the year this past year. The Dean of Humanities will ensure that teachers are assigning and teaching reading throughout the year beginning this fall.

Measurement 3 - Absolute

The FCCS Proficiency Index for the *Grade 7 MCAS English /Language Arts* MCAS will be 85% during the first year and increase by 1% until reaching an Index score of 90%.

Method of Assessment: Grade 7 MCAS English/Language Arts test

Results

This past year was the first year our students have taken the grade 7 MCAS. No results are available at this time.

Measurement 4 - Comparative

Students at Framingham Community Charter School will achieve at least as high a Proficiency Index on the grade 7 English /Language Arts MCAS as the weighted average of the middle schools from the districts from which its students were drawn.

Method of Assessment: Grade 7 MCAS English/ Language Arts tests.

Results

See Measurement 3 above.

Goal 2: Framingham Community Charter School students will demonstrate proficiency in mathematical computation, problem solving, and application of key concepts.

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Measurement 1 – Value Added

Each cohort of students will increase their scores on the Terra Nova mathematics test by two NCE points per year.

Method of Assessment: Terra Nova 2^d edition/CAT Basic Multiple Assessments for mathematics.

Results

The mean average decreased by -0.2 of an NCE point. We did not meet our goal.

Comments: Unlike our first year of teaching when we met our MCAS goal, we did not split students into homogeneous math groups this past year. In addition, teachers needed more supervision than they received.

Several steps have been taken to ensure a higher level of performance for the 2004/2005 school year. First, we have hired a full-time supervisor for the math and science teachers who is devoted exclusively to curriculum development and teacher supervision. Second, we are teaching much of the math in a separate, dedicated block rather than trying to integrate most of it into learning expeditions. Finally, math is being taught off-team by performance level. Students will receive an appropriate level of challenge and support.

Measurement 2 - Absolute

The FCCS Proficiency Index for the Grade 6 mathematics MCAS will be 75% during the first year and increase by 1% until reaching an Index score of 85%.

Method of Assessment: Grades 6 MCAS Mathematics test.

Results

Framingham Community Charter School's Proficiency Index was 75% for the first year of operation.

Comments: Math teachers partnered with English teachers to teach students how to answer open response questions. Also, one day per week for eight weeks, students met in leveled math groups for 50 minutes.

Measurement 3 - Absolute

The FCCS Proficiency Index for the Grade 8 mathematics MCAS will be 70% during the first year and increase by 1% until reaching an Index score of 85%.

Method of Assessment: Grades 8 MCAS Mathematics test.

Results

The school did not have eighth graders for this testing period.

Comments: Not applicable.

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Measurement 4 - Comparative

Students at Framingham Community Charter School will achieve at least as high a Proficiency Index on the grade 6 Mathematics MCAS as the weighted average of the middle schools from the districts from which its students were drawn.

Method of Assessment: Grade 6 Mathematics test.

Results

Our students outscored the sending district on the Proficiency Index in all categories supplied by the Department of Education: among regular education students 81.7% to 78.6%; among special education students 53.6% to 38.9%; and, overall, among students 74.8% to 65.7%.

Comments: All students were from Framingham this past year.

Measurement 5 - Comparative

Students at Framingham Community Charter School will achieve at least as high a Proficiency Index on the grade 8 Mathematics MCAS as the weighted average of the middle schools from the districts from which its students were drawn.

Method of Assessment: Grade 8 Mathematics test.

Results

See Measurement 3 above.

ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY

Performance Objective # 1 - Financial Transparency and Sound Financial Management

Goal 1: Framingham Community Charter School will demonstrate financial transparency and sound financial management.

Measurement 1 - An unqualified opinion will show no material findings and strong internal controls.

Method of Assessment: Annual audit filed with the state auditor.

Results

Independent auditors Daniel Dennis & Company LLP found the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Framingham Community Charter School (a governmental entity) and its aggregate discretely presented component unit, The Friends of Framingham Community Charter School (a non-profit).

Comments: Strong financial management is the result of well qualified staff, particularly the Business Manager, and an active board finance committee.

Measurement 2 - Monthly financial reports presented to the board will show positive monthly cash position.

Method of Assessment: Presentation of budget versus actual reports showing positive monthly cash flow documented in board meeting minutes.

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Results

Board meeting minutes show the chair of the board finance committee presented each month a Monthly Budget versus Actual Report showing positive monthly cash positions.

Comments: Although Framingham Community Charter School was able to manage cash to ensure a positive cash position each month, extensive use of a line of credit loan was required nearly every month. Framingham Community Charter School believes that an operating surplus of approximately \$100,000 will be necessary to manage cash flow in the future.

Measurement 3 - Financial statements will show a positive end of fiscal year fund balance.

Method of Assessment: Annual financial statements published in the Framingham Community Charter School annual report and audited financial statements on public record with state auditor.

Results

Board minutes show the chair of the board finance committee presented a draft End of Year Financial Report for FY04 showing a positive end of fiscal year fund balance (net assets) of \$308,297 (un-audited).

Comments: Framingham Community Charter School covered an operating deficit of \$139,910 with non-operating revenue, resulting in an annual surplus (change in net assets) of \$18,830 and total Net Assets of \$308,297. However, investment in capital assets has exceeded net assets resulting in zero operating surpluses. An operating surplus will be necessary in the future to sustain a positive monthly cash position.

Performance Objective # 2 - Strong Governance and Management

Goal 1: The board will establish systems of good governance and learning.

Measurement 1 - The board will disseminate to the public an evaluation of progress toward annual board goals each year.

Method of Assessment: Documented in board meeting minutes.

Results

The board mailed out nearly 1,000 copies of its annual report, including approximately 400 copies to elected and appointed town officials in Framingham, 75 leaders in the minority community, PTO officers throughout the MetroWest area, and hundreds of prospective and enrolled families.

Comments: Framingham Community Charter School published a user-friendly version of annual report that was used to disseminate yearly progress and educate the community about its program.

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Measurement 2 – The board fundraising committee will, in conjunction with school administrators, set and meet or exceed annual fundraising goals.

Method of Assessment: Goals and progress toward those goals will be available in board minutes.

Results

The board fundraising committee did not set and meet an annual fundraising goal.

Comments: The board fundraising committee began meeting regularly in the second half of last year. Once regular meetings began, the committee embarked on an ambitious plan to restructure the fundraising program. A development consultant was hired to facilitate goal setting, strategic planning and individual goal setting for each board member.

Measurement 3 - Each board member will attend at least 75% of board meetings.

Method of Assessment: Documented in board meeting meetings and board chair end of year report.

Results

Nine out of eleven board members regularly attended board meetings.

Comments: Attendance has steadily improved over the course of the last two years as the board continues to professionalize and mature. The board has agreed to reschedule several meetings to accommodate the two members that have had irregular attendance.

Performance Objective #3 - Demand for School Services

Goal 1: Student demand will meet the expectations of the business plan.

Measurement 1 – The number of applicants will exceed student vacancies by year five.

Method of Assessment: Department of Education report on average daily enrollment.

Results

Framingham Community Charter School did not have a lottery for the 2004/2005 school year.

Comments: The greatest reason for under-enrollment is the lack of information and awareness of the charter school among area residents. Repeated appeals to meet with or disseminate information to public school parents through the Framingham Public District Schools, town offices, and area PTOs have been rebuffed. Consequently, residents remain uninformed, learning of the charter school only through mass media, direct mail to un-official lists, or word-of-mouth. The need for choice in public education and the Framingham Community Charter School in particular seems affirmed by the substantial number of families (approximately fifty) enrolling in the charter school from neighboring towns in spite of a lack of advertising or access to

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public school lists. Framingham Community Charter School will continue to spend time and money to educate area residents about charter public school choices.

Measurement 2 - At least 90% of incoming sixth graders, who do not move from their residence at the time of enrolling at Framingham Community Charter School, will remain enrolled at Framingham Community Charter School for three years.

Method of Assessment: Exit data recorded and reported in Framingham Community Charter School annual report.

Results

12.9% of students from the inaugural class of 2005 (116 total enrollees over two years) have left school for reasons other than a change of residence. 6.2% of students from the class of 2006 (96 total enrollees in one year) have left school for reasons other than a change of residence.

Comments: This data is consistent with expectations and shows that the inaugural class was, for reasons too numerous to explain here, most volatile. Framingham Community Charter School expects the percent of students who leave school for reasons other than a change of residence to remain around 10% but to drop slowly and steadily over the first few years.

FAITHFULNESS TO TERMS OF CHARTER

Goal 1: Framingham Community Charter School students will demonstrate a clear commitment to themselves, have the courage and insight necessary to set high standards for academic and personal success, and have the attitudes necessary to achieve the standards they have set for themselves.

Measurement1 – Beginning with the class of 2007⁵, each student who has been at the school for three years will complete at least one of the school’s multi-day Adventure Trips.

Results

To date, 30 sixth graders of our 189 returning students have completed a multi-day, overnight fieldwork experience. One full-day adventure trip white water rafting included roughly 100 seventh grade students.

Comments: The school has not yet had the funds or time to devote to ensuring overnight adventure trips. The school may focus more on overnight fieldwork as a way of ensuring experience.

Measurement 2 - Each year as part of their Individual Achievement Plans, students will establish clear goals for themselves and track their achievement toward meeting those goals at least once per semester.

⁵ This phrase was added in February 2004 after meetings and consultations with Rebecca Wolf, Director of Accountability, MA DOE Charter School Office.

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Results

Students participate in this process in their Crews (advisories). This goal was met by fewer than 20% of students this year.

Comments: Generally speaking, the Crew leaders (advisors) were the determining variable in whether or not students met this goal. Some followed through with monthly or even weekly checks; others never expected let alone ensured that students would set and assess meaningful goals.

Next year, the Crew structure has been reorganized. Rather than being primarily a vehicle for social and emotional development and building relationships across grade levels, Crews will be subsets of academic teams. In addition, Crews will have a focused one-hour block each week rather than 10-30 minute meetings each day. At least one of these blocks each month will be dedicated to goal setting and review/revision. Furthermore, all Crew leaders will be participating in a three-hour summer training/orientation. Finally, a staff committee created a Crew leaders' guide for this upcoming fall.

Measurement 3 – All students will participate in Exhibition Nights at least once per year.

Results

We estimate that 95% of students attended Exhibition Night this year, and all students produced work for their exhibits.

Comments: Exhibition Night was not put on the calendar until late this past year. More guidance must be given by administration to ensure quality and 100% attendance.

For this upcoming school year, two Exhibition Nights have already been scheduled on the school's master calendar. We have already begun planning and setting expectations for staff and students, including required attendance.

Measurement 4 – Parents believe the school has added significant value to their children's ability to take worthwhile risks and take personal responsibility.

Results⁶

Parents agreed that core teachers push the students to do their best, the core curriculum is rigorous and worthwhile, and the school provides valuable opportunities for character development. (Overall rating was 4.2 out of 5, with 3 being neutral and 5 being "strongly agree.")

Comments: Surveys next year will also include a question that more directly seeks parent response to students taking "worthwhile risks and personal responsibility."

⁶ One-third of parents responded to the survey.

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Goal 2: Framingham Community Charter School students will demonstrate a clear commitment to their community.

Measurement 1 - 90% of students who have been at the school for three years will perform at least 60 hours of community service or participation.⁷ Twenty of those hours can be embedded in the learning expeditions. At least 40 of those hours will be for work done outside of school and for the benefit of a community beyond the school.⁸

Results

Students have been at FCCS for a maximum of two years. At this point, some have completed service requirements for all three years; whereas, others have just begun.

Comments: A staff member will be the Service Liaison next year to ensure program development and close record-keeping.

Goal 3: Framingham Community Charter School students will implement the Expeditionary Learning model of education at an increasingly high level.

Measurement 1 - Scores from the Expeditionary Learning implementation review team will improve each year.

Results

Framingham Community Charter School scored in the second category in 8 of 10 categories. The report noted that “Structures and Professional Learning Community stand out as strengths. With sound structures to support expeditionary learning and a professional community dedicated to teaching and learning, Framingham Community Charter School is prepared to maintain a path of continuous improvement.”

Comments: This year is the first year that Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound has used this new tool, so it sets a baseline for measuring improvement of our performance for future years.

⁷ Attending Town Meeting, School Committee Meetings, and participating in Framingham’s Flag Day are examples of service.

⁸ Students will not be punished for failure to do so but will receive “Graduation with Distinction” notation on their report cards for successfully completing this community service provision.

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SUMMARY OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

“Children must be taught how to think, not what to think.”

Margaret Mead

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

For students to be fully present at school and to be committed to long-term success, they must see the value in their educational experience. Effective middle schools meet three conditions to make this happen. First, the school must not only be equally committed to the academic success and the personal development of each child; it must see the two as inextricably linked and make the connection clear for each staff member, student and parent. Second, members of the staff must model the values that they teach. Academic excellence and personal growth must be hallmarks of all the adults that students encounter. Finally, the school must embrace in philosophy and practice a set of core practices and a curriculum that guides its decisions so that the learning experience is coherent.

While the first two conditions are fairly self-evident and would be fairly consistent in most successful schools, the third – that set of core practices that guides a school – varies more from school to school. As a Massachusetts public school partnered with Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, Framingham Community Charter School has created a curriculum organized around the Massachusetts Frameworks and teaching methods consistent with Expeditionary Learning’s Core Practice Benchmarks.

The essence of Expeditionary Learning is that learning is a rich, somewhat organic process that emphasizes students becoming experts in how to be active, effective learners, rather than trying to ingest and remember information. Through in-depth explorations called learning expeditions and through a series of teaching practices collectively known as active pedagogy, students gain skills and knowledge from the state’s Frameworks in a way that broadens how they see themselves, the topic they are studying, and, ultimately, the nature of learning itself. Through their successes and failures and by taking responsibility for their learning (two of Expeditionary Learning’s ten Design Principles), students gain confidence, learn research and revision skills, gain in-depth understanding of meaningful content, and gradually learn the value of creating quality work. Because learning expeditions result in creating products for external audiences, participating in fieldwork outside the classroom, and performing service with tangible results, students know why they are working so hard.

CURRICULUM DESIGN

Expeditionary Learning schools, such as Framingham Community Charter School, achieve breadth through depth in order to both cover and make sense of the content in the Massachusetts Frameworks. Our curriculum is coordinated both horizontally across teams to ensure consistency and vertically through the grades to ensure adequate coverage and a coherent learning experience.

When teachers create learning expeditions, they use a planning template that begins with learning goals. They determine the most important ideas they want students to remember ten years later, what essential content will be learned, and what skills will be mastered. Then, they plan assessments that will show how well students are doing, and, finally, they plan the sequence of activities that will give form to the work. As a school and as part of the Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound network, we are working cooperatively to develop signature expeditions that we can revise each year but that, by and large, remain intact. By doing so, we are able to ensure delivery of the most important content.

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TEACHING METHODS

Framingham Community Charter School emphasizes learning expeditions and active pedagogy, which are two of the five core practices of the Expeditionary Learning model. Expeditions engage students in high-stakes investigations that culminate in the creation of products that an audience beyond the classroom will value. Students participate in fieldwork, a more involved proposition than field trips, and meet with experts to learn more about the topics they are studying. They also frequently do work that is of service to either the school community or a group outside of school, such as low-income families, as part of their learning expeditions.

Through learning expeditions, teachers ensure that students master critical content and skills. For example, in science, grade six students must have an understanding of the nature of cycles and of particular cycles, such as nitrogen and water. They also must learn about world geography in social studies. Math skills include analyzing and presenting data in various formats as well as learning how fractions, decimals, percents, ratios, and proportions are multiple presentations of the same value. Writing skills include proper grammar, usage and mechanics in the service of cogent, well-organized prose.

Students on one sixth grade team this past year asked, “Do small farms in Massachusetts matter?” They answered this question by creating an eighty-page booklet titled “Farming Digest.” To acquire the knowledge they needed and make sense of it, students worked at farms, interviewed farmers, analyzed articles about the relative merits of different types of farms, and even lived on and worked at a farm for three days. They honed their interviewing and writing skills and presented results of their data using charts and graphs. They also discussed crops and farming in other parts of the world, such as how farmers in South America can create a sustainable agricultural economy. Another team, by contrast, pursuing the same content and skill objectives, chose to create a World’s Fair that looked at biodiversity and other statistical issues in other countries. The teaching methods allowed for differences among teams as long as the standards were covered.

Teachers cover some content outside of the learning expedition. For example, although data analysis and measurement can be easily integrated into most expeditions, some strands, such as algebra and geometry, may or may not have plausible connections to a given expedition. For this reason, beginning this year, we have a dedicated time for off-team math, which will focus on those skills. In this class, as well as in a skills-based English/Language Arts class, active pedagogy will promote student engagement and mastery of content and skills. Active pedagogy allow students to ground new knowledge and skills through discovery and probing. It is guided inquiry that balances teacher-led protocols with self-discovery. Active pedagogy includes practices such as Socratic seminars, reflection journals, use of manipulatives, science labs, and promotes deeper understanding and retention of content.

The combination of learning expeditions as the primary vehicle supplemented by active pedagogy motivates students and provides them with rich experiences that allow them to become writers, scientists, mathematicians, and social scientists rather than merely being in school to take in information. The active, experiential approach will not only cultivate skill development and content knowledge in the short run. Students will be resourceful learners who take initiative and value their education.

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SCHOOL PROFILE

SUMMARY OF EXTERNAL STANDARDIZED TEST RESULTS

For 2002/2003, the first year of MCAS testing, Framingham Community Charter School student scores are listed along with the Framingham Public District Schools⁹. Framingham Community Charter School also collected baseline and evaluative external test data through the *Terra Nova 2nd edition/CAT Basic Multiple Assessments* for English /Language Arts, Reading and Mathematics.

MCAS Data 2002/2003 Proficiency Index, All Students

Grade Level	Math		English/LA	Reading	Science	History
	FCCS	District				
6	74.8%	65.7%	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-	-	-

Proficiency Index, Regular Education

Grade Level	Math		English/LA	Reading	Science	History
	FCCS	District				
6	81.7%	78.6%	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-	-	-

Proficiency Index, Students with Disabilities

Grade Level	Math		English/LA	Reading	Science	History
	FCCS	District				
6	53.6%	38.9%	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-	-	-

Percentage of Proficient and Advanced, All Students

Grade Level	Math		English/LA	Reading	Science	History
	FCCS	District				
6	53%	38%	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-	-	-

⁹ For the first year of testing, the only sending district was Framingham Public Schools. The only test results are for grade 6 mathematics.

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Percentage of Proficient and Advanced, Regular Education

Grade Level	Math		English/LA	Reading	Science	History
	FCCS	District				
6	61%	53%	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-	-	-

Percentage of Proficient and Advanced, Students with Disabilities

Grade Level	Math		English/LA	Reading	Science	History
	FCCS	District				
6	29%	5%	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-	-	-

Percentage of Warning, All Students

Grade Level	Math		English/LA	Reading	Science	History
	FCCS	District				
6	21%	29%	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-	-	-

Percentage of Warning, Regular Education

Grade Level	Math		English/LA	Reading	Science	History
	FCCS	District				
6	12%	11%	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-	-	-

Percentage of Warning, Students with Disabilities

Grade Level	Math		English/LA	Reading	Science	History
	FCCS	District				
6	48%	66%	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-	-	-

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**Terra Nova Results 2003/2004
 Median and Mean Change from Fall to Spring Testing¹⁰**

	Reading		Language		Mathematics	
	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean
Grade 6	-1	-1.2	2	2.2	-2	-2.2
Grade 7	8	6.3	0	1.3	1.5	1.8
School Average	3.5	2.6	1.0	1.8	-0.3	-0.2

SUMMARY OF INTERNAL ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Although both our ongoing assessments and narrative report cards provide valuable information for teachers, students, and parents, Framingham Community Charter School does not currently use an internal assessment system for external purposes. We are developing for use this year a portfolio system that will help determine the readiness of students to be promoted to the next grade level or to graduate.

NUMBER OF INSTRUCTION DAYS FOR THE 2003/2004 SCHOOL YEAR

Framingham Community Charter School students completed 180 school days beginning on September 3, 2003 and ending June 21, 2004. The school was opened from 8:30 am – 3:30 pm Monday through Wednesday and Friday, and from 8:30 am – 1:30 pm on Thursday.

GRADES AND AGE LEVELS SERVED

In its second year of operation, Framingham Community Charter School served grades six and seven. The students ranged in age from 10 – 14 years old. Grade eight will be added in 2004. The students will range in age from 10-15.

¹⁰ Based on Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) scores.

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GOVERNANCE PROFILE

LIST OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES, AS OF JULY 22, 2004

Name	Affiliations	Position on Board	Term of Appointment	Committees
Cagnetta, Steve	Company Counsel, LLC	Member	10/03 - 09/06	Development
Kahn, John	-	Member	09/03 - 08/06	
Foster Grant, Janice	-	Member	11/01 - 11/04	Finance
Foster, Walter*	WAF Associates	Member	07/03 - 06/06	Governance
Freeman, Doug	Numerous Framingham civic groups	Secretary	09/02 - 09/05	Finance
Harris, Tom	Framingham Historical Society and Museum	Member	07/03 - 06/06	Development
Johnson, Andrea	REI, Inc.	Member ¹¹		
Perry, Betsy	Classic Elite Yarns	Treasurer	12/02 - 12/05	Finance, Chair
Rosenthal, Mark*	Sakon, LLC	Member	07/03 - 06/06	Finance
Shobin, Mark	Huntington Learning Center	Chairperson	09/02 - 09/05	Governance
Smith, Edna	New Vision Foundation, MW Healthcare Foundation	Member ¹²	09/04 - 08/07	Governance
Vale, Larry	Keane, Inc.	Vice Chairperson	03/03 - 03/06	Development, Chair

* *Original board members currently serving their second term. The term of office of a Trustee shall be three (3) years or until a successor is elected and qualified. A Trustee may serve for two consecutive terms.*

SUMMARY OF MAJOR POLICY DECISIONS MADE BY BOARD OF TRUSTEES IN PAST YEAR

Framingham Community Charter School's Board of Trustees met on a monthly basis to make policy, establish committees, and oversee the school. The following table shows major policy decisions taken by the board between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004.

Board Meeting	Policy Decision Made	Comment/Explanation
July	FCCS will perform semi-annual budget revisions	As part of the Accountability Plan, FCCS will review monthly budget versus actual reports and demonstrate sound financial management through a formal mid-year budget review and revision.
July	Approval of the Accountability Plan	The board adopted an Accountability Plan as a formal and strategic measure of its success over

¹¹ Resigned from board in June 2004.

¹² Subject to Massachusetts DOE Charter School Office approval.

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		the first five years of the school's charter.
February	The Executive Director is encouraged to express opinions, in his name and using the name of the school for identification purposes only.	This policy established an expectation that the Executive Director should take an active role in social, economic or political issues relevant to public education and the school's stakeholders.
February	Each member of the board will make a financial contribution to the school.	As part of a renewed development program, the board established a policy of 100% board participation in financial giving.
May	The name of the school to be changed to "Framingham Community Charter Public School"	To correct a misperception within the public that charter schools are not public schools, the board made a decision to change the name of the school to include the word "public." The board provided more time for the Exec. Director to research other name changes and implications.

SUMMARY OF OFFICIAL COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

No complaints were received.

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STUDENT PROFILE

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Framingham Community Charter School's student body consisted of 186, 10-14 year-old students. Below are details of the student body:

Male	125 (67.2%)
Female	61 (32.8%)
 African American	 6 (3.2%)
Anglo American	164 (88.2%)
Asian American	6 (3.2%)
Hispanic American	10 (5.4%)
 Linguistic Minority (bilingual)	 6 (3.2%)
Limited English Proficiency	N/A
Special Education Needs and/or Individual Education Plans	48 (25.8%)
Title 1 (Free/Reduced Lunch Program)	21 (11.3%)

Ten students were tested for limited English proficiency; however as of the date of this report we have not received the test results from the Department of Education.

Students are selected by random lottery. Grade eight will be added in 2004. At full capacity, enrollment will range from 306-324 students.

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENT APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

Framingham Community Charter School received 112 applications for the 2003/2004 school year. Ninety-six applications were for the sixth grade and the applicants were from the following towns: Framingham 92, Natick 3, and Upton 1. There were 102 openings for the sixth grade, resulting in a demand ration of 9.4:10. Sixteen applications were received for the seventh grade and these applicants were from the following towns: Natick 8, Framingham 4, and 1 applicant each from Maynard, Marlboro, Milford and Holliston. There were 21 openings for the seventh grade resulting in a demand ration of 7.6:10.

STUDENT TURNOVER DATA

Framingham Community Charter School experienced the following student turnover during the 2003-2004 school year:

Total Number of Students That Left During the School Year	21 students
Total Number of Students Not Returning	9 students
<i>Reason for Leaving</i>	
Family Move	3 students
Preferred a Traditional Learning Environment	17 students
Social Issues	6 students
Transportation Issues	4 students

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NUMBER OF STUDENTS PLACED ON IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION, OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION, OR EXPELLED

Infraction¹³	In-house Suspension	Out-of-house Suspensions
Threatening another student	2 students (one student with two infractions)	1 student
Physical contact or fighting	13 students (two with two infractions)	1 student (with two infractions)
Involvement with controlled or illegal substances	1 student	4 students
Refusing to follow teacher orders or lying to staff	8 students (1 with two infractions, 1 with three infractions)	1 student
Vandalism/stealing	4 students	-
Leaving campus without permission	-	1 student
Ethnic slur	1 student	-
Sexual harassment of another student	5 students	1 student (with two infractions)
Sexual harassment of a staff member	1 student	-
Possessing a dangerous item (matches)	2 students	-

ATTENDANCE RATE

The aggregate number of membership days for Framingham Community Charter School during the 2003/2004 school year was 33,891. The aggregate number of actual attended days was 32,414 resulting in an attendance rate of 95.6%. The attendance rate for the sixth grade was 96.1% and 95.2% for the seventh grade.

¹³ Framingham Community Charter School had no expulsions for the 2003/2004 academic year.

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STAFF PROFILE

NAME OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND PRINCIPAL

Robert Kaufman serves as Framingham Community Charter School's Executive Director. Michael Delman serves as Framingham Community Charter School's Principal.

SUMMARY OF TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

During the 2003/2004 school, the school had 21 full time teachers and 2 part time teachers/assistants on staff. Seventy percent¹⁴ of the teaching staff are highly qualified; the average years of teaching experience is 5 years; and the average time with the charter school is 15 years. (The school just completed its second academic year.)

TEACHER TURNOVER

Six of Framingham Community Charter School teachers are not returning for the 2004/2005 school year. The reasons are as followed:

Primary Reason for Leaving	Number of Staff
Age group of students (middle school)	1
Commute	1
Demands of new school	1
Family commitment	1
Move out-of-state	1
Pregnancy	1
TOTAL	6/23 = 26%

¹⁴ Eight teachers of 17 were highly qualified in one of the two subjects they taught this past year. Framingham Community Charter School counted those teachers at a rate of 50%.

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FINANCIAL PROFILE

**Framingham Community Charter School
 Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Changes in Net Assets
 For the Year Ended June 30, 2004**

(Unaudited)

Operating Revenues:

Tuition	\$ 1,818,153
Federal Grants	327,185
Food Service Revenue	16,821
Total Operating Revenue	2,162,159

Operating Expenses:

Payroll	1,242,793
Fringe Benefits and P/R Taxes	159,026
Facility Costs	333,256
Direct Materials and Supplies	128,485
Indirect Services and Costs	191,541
Other Operating Costs	85,870
Depreciation	161,098
Total Operating Expenses	2,302,069

Operating Profit (139,910)

Non-operating Revenues:

Private Grants and Contributions	12,131
Capital Federal Grants	146,609
Total Non-operating Rev	158,740

Change in Net Assets

<i>Net Assets, Beginning of year</i>	18,830
	289,467
<i>Net Assets, End of year</i>	\$ 308,297

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**Framingham Community Charter School
 Balance Sheet
 For the Year Ended June 30, 2004**

(Unaudited)

Current Assets:

Cash	\$	50,292
Prepaid Expenses		6,028

Fixed Assets:

Computer Network		18,394
Computers and Printers		13,865
Furniture		2,846
Leasehold Improvements		1,045,525
Telephone Equipment		10,394
Total Fixed Assets		1,091,024

Accumulated Depreciation

(178,992)

Total Assets

\$ 968,352

Current Liabilities:

Accounts Payable	\$	14,598
Accrued Expenses		18,436
Due to Friend's Of		296,092
Deferred Revenue		-
Total Current Liabilities		329,126

NFF Term Loan

330,929

Total Net Assets

308,297

Total Liabilities and Net Assets

\$ 968,352

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Framingham Community Charter School

**Board of Trustees Approved
 FY2005 Budget**

	FY05 Budget	%
Revenue		
Tuition	3,069,635	95.4%
State Grants	71,000	2.2%
Food Revenue	51,300	1.6%
Individuals	25,000	0.8%
Total Revenues	3,216,935	100.0%
Expenditures		
Payroll	1,948,667	60.6%
Fringe Benefits and P/R Taxes	292,164	9.1%
Facility Costs	316,152	9.8%
Direct Materials and Supplies	161,400	5.0%
Indirect Services and Costs	164,150	5.1%
Other Operating Costs	76,100	2.4%
Contingency	7,500	0.2%
Total Operating Expenditures	2,966,134	92.2%
Revenue over Expenses	250,801	7.8%
Capital Expenditures	120,000	3.7%
Excess Cash Requirement to Lending Institution	120,000	3.7%
Net Surplus	10,801	0.3%

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DISSEMINATION

The role and responsibility of a Massachusetts charter school is to disseminate best practices and education or education-administration models for replication. Framingham Community Charter School has taken this commitment seriously, and reached out to community and professional groups locally and in New England to share its lessons learned and participate in a dynamic discussion about public middle school education.

Open Houses: Framingham Community Charter School mailed formal invitations to nearly 1,000 individuals to open houses, exhibitions, and a forum on minority achievement. Invited guests included every elected or appointed official in Framingham and key community leaders in government, education, business, and nonprofit organizations.

During the open houses guests heard presentations from students, saw displays of student work and had a question-and-answer period with school leaders. A forum for minority leaders in November 2003 included a structured discussion on the most effective educational strategies to meet the needs of minority students. An Open House designed specifically for Framingham town officials emphasized explanations of the administrative structures, including scheduling, hiring, and supervision, financing and educational philosophy, including Expeditionary Learning.

Public Invitation to Weekly Friday Assembly: Framingham Community Charter School continued its policy of holding weekly Friday assemblies open to the public. At various times, and particularly from December through March, Framingham Community Charter School advertised a public invitation to these assemblies on our web site, through inserts in community newspapers, and newspaper ads in the *MetroWest Daily News*.

During weekly public assemblies students, staff, many parents, and others from the community gathered in the gymnasium to recognize students that exemplified our core values and to see students present their work.

Parent Information Meetings: Beginning in December, 2003 and continuing through the end of the year, Framingham Community Charter School held half a dozen public parent information meetings. These meetings were advertised on our web site and through direct mailings when possible, inserts in community newspapers in Framingham and surrounding towns, flyers in local businesses and community organizations, and newspaper ads in the *MetroWest Daily News*.

Guests at parent information meetings saw student work and heard explanations of our educational philosophy, including Expeditionary Learning, expectations of students, grading, discipline, homework, etc. Guests had a chance to tour the Framingham Community Charter School facility and ask questions of school leaders.

Identification and Dissemination of Best Practices: Framingham Community Charter School mailed out nearly 1,000 copies of its annual report to local town officials, school committee members, legislators, PTO officers in the MetroWest area, local non-profits, minority leaders, and interested parents. The Executive Director and the Minority Outreach Coordinator both are members of local non-profit boards and attended gatherings at church functions to speak with parents about middle school education and the charter school. The annual report, as well as open houses, forums, etc., emphasized lessons learned by

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the charter school and questions we are still asking of ourselves, as well as the parent and education communities.

Media, Events and Television: Framingham Community Charter School received considerable media attention in its second year of operation, affording it many opportunities to share with the public its lessons learned. Articles on Framingham Community Charter School's educational program or administration appeared in the *Boston Globe*, *MetroWest Daily News*, *Natick Tab*, and *Framingham Tab*. The Executive Director and a board member participated in a locally televised discussion on charter schools with Senator Magnani, and students made a presentation to the Framingham Human Rights Commission that was shown repeatedly on local cable television. As part of our peace studies curriculum students disseminated messages by producing a public service announcement for gun safety, demonstrating on the steps of Framingham Town Hall to raise awareness for homelessness, and moderating a panel discussion on the contentious issues of illegal and legal immigration. Framingham Community Charter School maintained a web site that published important information about charter schools and a weekly update from the Principal that often addressed Framingham Community Charter School's response to the most salient issues in middle school education today.

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