

March 19, 2008

Dorchester, Massachusetts

Codman Academy Charter Public School (Codman), a Commonwealth charter school, is located in the Codman Square area of Dorchester. The school opened in September of 2001. Codman is chartered to serve and is serving 120 students in grades 9 through 12. The school draws its students from the surrounding neighborhoods of Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan.

The mission of Codman is “to prepare students for full participation in the intellectual, economic, and civic life of society, by ensuring their preparation for and access to further education, the skills and vision to undertake a rewarding career, and the motivation and character needed to engage deeply and productively in community life. We view parents and community members as integral partners in this endeavor.”

The school reports the following racial and ethnic composition and percentages of selected populations of the student body for the 2008-09 school year.

**Table I: Racial and Ethnic Composition and Selected Populations, 2008-09**

	Number of Students	Percentage of Student Body
African American	100	83%
Asian	0	-
Hispanic	12	10%
Native American	0	-
Caucasian	1	.08%
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0	-
Multi-race, Non-Hispanic	7	5.8%
Special education	36	30%
Limited English Proficient	4	4%
Low Income	80	66%

The following participants conducted the site visit on March 19, 2009:

- Ibrahim Al-Qamari, history teacher and Dean of Citizenship, City on a Hill Charter Public School
- Alison Bagg, Accountability Specialist, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE), Charter School Office (CSO)
- Mary Harrison, Vice President of Programs, Nellie Mae Educational Foundation
- Emily Lichtenstein, Coordinator of Accountability, ESE, CSO
- Jed Lippard, Head of School, Prospect Hill Academy Charter School

Before the visit, the site team reviewed the school’s 2007-2008 annual report, the 2007-2008 Year Seven Site Visit Report, board materials, and recent internal and external assessment data. On site, the team reviewed curricular documents and other information provided by the school. The team conducted approximately 15 classroom observations and interviewed trustees (3) administrators (2), teachers (8), parents (2), and students (11).

The purpose of this visit was to corroborate and augment the information contained in the school's annual report, to investigate the school's progress relative to its accountability plan goals, and to collect information that will help the Commissioner and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education make a renewal recommendation for the school's charter. The focus of the visit is on three central areas of inquiry:

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

The team's findings in each of these areas are presented below.

### **I. Faithfulness to the Terms of the Charter**

**Are the school's mission, vision, educational philosophy, and pedagogical approach, as articulated in the charter and subsequent amendments, implemented in the day to day operations of the school?**

*Finding: Stakeholders expressed a fidelity to their mission of commitment to whole youth development.*

School administrators reported that the school is committed to academic growth in the context of whole child development. Because the school is housed within the Codman Square Health Center, the school is able to provide medical and emotional health services to students. Additionally, administrators and board members stated that Codman's partners allow students the opportunity to experience possible career paths and exposure to the arts community. Board members discussed the role of the health center in helping student's gain job experience and awareness of career fields through the school's two week internship program. A majority of Codman's seniors have completed their internships at the health center. Administrators reported that students develop deeper cultural appreciation and a connection to the Boston community through work with the Huntington Theatre and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project. Students can also develop a connection with the greater world through the school's exchange program with a sister school in South Africa (the LEAP School). Students reported that they have learned leadership skills, how to reflect on and improve their behavior, and how to help other students "do right" in class. Parents echoed student sentiments that the school teaches conflict resolution and leadership skills.

*Finding: Members of the board and administration expressed that college graduation is an explicit goal of the school.*

Codman board members reported that they see the mission of the school is to prepare students for college graduation, not just high school graduation. Indeed, board members pointed to the school's high academic standards and the school's willingness to retain, or not graduate, those students whose performance does not meet those standards as evidence that Codman takes this aspect of the mission very seriously. Members of the administrative team stated that when a student enters Codman in the ninth grade, the school makes a commitment to them for the next 8-10 years, through high school and college graduation. Last year, the school hired a dean of alumni to track, gather data on, and provide support for Codman alumni. Out of all the Codman graduates, the school reports that 100 percent were accepted into college, 75 percent of alumni

are presently attending college, 5 percent are in the military, and 20 percent are part of the workforce.

*Finding: Expeditionary Learning (EL) is incorporated into the academic program and into the pedagogical philosophy of the classroom. School administrators stated that they were a “hybrid school” and they incorporate a variety of best practices into the academic program in addition to Expeditionary Learning.*

As an Expeditionary Learning school, Codman draws much of its educational philosophy from the ten design principles of Expeditionary Learning which can be applied within a classroom setting, or used to bring students to experience the outside world for academic purposes. Site visitors noted that they saw or heard evidence of these ten design principles during classroom observations or through interviews with stakeholders. In particular, site visitors noted the principles of: responsibility for learning, empathy, success and failure, collaboration, diversity and inclusion, reflection, and service. In addition to the work that is done in the classroom, each Friday Codman students engage in out of school “field work” expeditions. Twice a month, students take part in full day humanities expeditions. Math and science “field work” expeditions occur once a month each on Friday afternoons. Teachers reported that the expeditions tie to the thematic goals developed for each course. While administrators and teachers are committed to the principles and practices of EL, administrators also reported that the school uses a hybrid of best practices within the classroom.

*Finding: The school is clearly embedded in the Codman Square community. The school is also committed to becoming a resource for the community.*

Within the Codman Square neighborhood, the school has developed strong relationships with the Codman Square Health Center and Citizen’s Bank. As the school’s founding partner, the Codman Square Health Center has provided a physical space for the school as well as many other services and supports for students, as mentioned above. This year, the school has forged a partnership with the local Citizen’s Bank and rents renovated basement space for two classrooms and a teacher’s office. Additionally, teachers reported that they take students out into the neighborhood as part of Friday “field work” expeditions and they also incorporate the local community in their lessons. A site visitor observed a class during which students used principles of trigonometry to measure a Codman Square church steeple. Additionally, as part of the school’s senior social action project students identify, research, and present a social justice action that addresses a community issue. While administrators reported that Codman benefits from community partnerships, they also see the school as becoming an asset for Codman Square residents. Currently, the school and health center plan to build an addition onto their shared facility (explained in further detail below). The executive director sees this new facility as a community resource and plans to share the planned theatre and other meeting spaces with community members.

*Finding: Codman holds Saturday school sessions on approximately 20 Saturdays each school year.*

In its charter, and in publications such as its annual report, Codman states that it offers a six-day a week academic program. However, due to difficulty finding adequate transportation during the winter months, the school has limited Saturday school to 20 sessions each year and does not hold Saturday classes for the months of December, January, and February. Saturday school lasts from 9am -12pm and most students are able to select from a list of different course offerings for the

fall and spring trimesters. Courses include sailing classes, cooking classes, leadership workshops, and other enrichment courses taught by Codman's Saturday school staff.

*Finding: Codman renewed its partnership contract with Expeditionary Learning Schools for the 2008-09 school year after letting the contract expire the previous school year.*

Characterizing last year as a transitional one in terms of their contract with Expeditionary Learning Schools (ELS), Codman's executive director stated that the school did not have a contract with ELS during the 2007-08 school year. This fall, Codman signed a contract with ELS, in which ELS promised to provide 23 direct service days of on-site professional development and technical assistance, slots for off-site professional development trainings at ELS national institutes, and memberships for Codman staff to the ELS network. The principal and the executive director were chosen to deliver the keynote speech at ELS's National Conference in Baltimore. Site visitors examined professional development schedules that included workshops delivered by ELS staff.

**Has the school met or is it making progress toward meeting the faithfulness to charter goals set out in its Accountability Plan?**

*Finding: Codman is making progress on meeting, or is meeting, a majority of measures related to its faithfulness to charter goals.*

Codman's accountability plan was approved by the Charter School Office in May 2008. The plan includes five goals related to faithfulness to charter. Each goal and its measures are discussed below.

*Goal 1: The academic program will reflect expeditionary learning design principles, philosophy and core practices.*

*Measure 1: Codman Academy will receive a positive annual implementation reviews by Expeditionary Learning Schools.*

**The school did not meet this measure.** Due to a staff transition at Expeditionary Learning Schools (ELS), and a transitional year in terms of Codman's contract with ELS, the school did not receive an annual implementation review during the 2007-08 school year. As Codman has now renewed its contract with ELS, the executive director stated that the school will have an annual implementation review this year.

*Measure 2: Codman Academy will post at least one learning expedition to its web site annually*

**The school met this measure.** Codman teachers post learning expeditions, large thematic curricular units, in the best practices section of the school's website. On the website, learning expeditions do not display post dates, so it is difficult for viewers to determine when expeditions were uploaded to the website. During the site visit, Codman's principal showed visitors the newly posted expeditions from the 2007-08 school year, which included: Invisible Universe (physics), Pharmacology (chemistry), Shakespeare (humanities), and Hip Hop Opera (multi-topic).

*Goal 2: Students and alumni will demonstrate character, leadership, service, and commitment to social justice.*

*Measure 1: Students shall meet graduation requirements for senior talk/apologia.*

**The school met this measure.** The school's 2007-08 annual report states that "all graduating seniors wrote their own student talk/apologia and delivered it in front of the entire student body."

*Measure 2: Students shall meet graduation requirements for the social justice project.*

**The school met this measure.** The school's 2007-08 annual report states that "all graduating seniors completed a social justice project."

*Measure 3: Average daily attendance will be 97 percent or higher.*

**The school nearly met this measure.** For the 2007-08 school year, daily average attendance was 95 percent in all four grades.

*Measure 4: Using a software program we built to reinforce positive behavior, citizenship status for each student is tracked daily. Over time, we aim to show improved citizenship status for individual students as well as improved citizenship averages for each grade.*

**The school is making progress towards meeting this measure.** Codman began using its citizenship software system and tracking data during the 2006-07 school year. Site visitors were able to view data that showed that the average number of exemplary students (those who earn more citizenship points) has increased in the 2008-09 school year when compared to 2007-08 averages. Additionally, the number of students who earn fewer citizenship points, thus earning consequences, has decreased from last year to this year. The school did not have data disaggregated for each grade nor for each individual student.

*Measure 5: During our annual school-wide trip in October, students shall successfully complete an annual American Youth Foundation leadership course on site at Camp Merrovista in New Hampshire.*

**The school has met this measure.** The school's 2007-08 annual report states that all students participated in the trip to Camp Merrovista and completed the American Youth Foundation leadership course.

*Goal 3: Students will demonstrate physical and mental health.*

*Measure 1: Students shall demonstrate increased physical fitness capabilities consistent with progress on meeting presidential standards of physical fitness. Height, weight, and BMI (body mass index) is measured annually. Individual plans shall be designed for students who struggle with obesity or other weight-related health issues.*

**This measure has not yet been assessed.** The school did not present data in its 2007-08 annual report to prove that Codman students were demonstrating increased physical fitness capabilities. As reported by Codman's executive director, all students took a physical education class last year as well as this year. Additionally, she reported that height, weight, and BMI data has been collected and the school will present that data in its 2008-09 annual report.

*Measure 2: Students shall demonstrate mastery of health promotion and nutrition, as shown by successfully reading food labels, purchasing and making nutritionally sound meals on a limited budget, and learning how to advocate for themselves within the health*

*care system. They shall demonstrate knowledge of preventable, chronic public health issues including AIDS, diabetes, hypertension, obesity and violence.*

**This measure has not yet been assessed.** The school did not present data in its 2007-08 annual report to prove that all students demonstrated mastery of health promotion and nutrition. The report stated that all 9<sup>th</sup> grade students completed a wellness course.

*Measure 3: Students shall demonstrate mastery of conflict resolution skills and tools for reducing stress as shown by reduced number of suspensions.*

**The school is making progress on meeting this measure.** While the school's 2007-08 annual report did not clearly address this measure, the school's executive director stated that Codman has seen a reduction in the number of referrals given by teachers and a reduction in the number of suspensions from the 2007-08 school year to the current school year.

*Measure 4: Annually, each member of the Codman community, students and teachers alike, shall select and share a personal character intention as documented by annual publication.*

**The school is meeting this measure.** Codman's 2007-08 Annual Report states that all community members shared an intention. During the site visit, the school provided site visitors with an example of intentions. The annual publication of intentions is for school use only.

*Goal 4: The school will gather data on 100 percent of alumni each year to record their progress in college and the work force.*

*Measure 1: The school will collect data on 100 percent of alumni pertaining to college attendance and academic performance on an annual basis by allocating appropriate human and financial resources to support alumni as well as collect, store and analyze alumni data.*

**The school is meeting this measure.** Last year, Codman created an alumni support team comprised of the dean of alumni, the school's social worker, and the dean of enrichment. Last year the dean of alumni (a newly created position) began collecting data on Codman's 64 graduates. The school reports that it has contacted all alumni.

*Measure 2: At least 70 percent of alumni from all classes will graduate from college or be enrolled full time. Those not enrolled in college-level course work will be gainfully employed. Those students not enrolled in college and students home during summer breaks will find meaningful ways to be involved in their community, through volunteer work or part-time mentoring of current Codman students. Through monthly calls to alumni and in-person meetings on an ad-hoc basis, our Dean of Alumni tracks the status of each Codman alumnus/a.*

**The school is meeting this measure.** As of December, 2008 the school had collected data showing that approximately 75 percent of Codman alumni are currently enrolled in a two or four year college, 20 percent are employed, and five percent serving in the military. In terms of summer work, Codman reported in its 2007-08 annual report that 10 percent of alumni held internships at the school or at the Codman Square Health Center this past summer. The school did not report any further data showing what alumni did for summer work. The dean of alumni is currently tracking the status of each Codman alumnus/a.

*Goal 5: Parents, students, and community partners will continue to be satisfied with their experience at Codman.*

*Measure 1: 75 percent of parents will complete annual parent satisfaction survey with 90 percent or more rating Codman B or above. The survey will measure the level of satisfaction around academic program, extra-curricular program, school communication, school safety, and summer programming.*

**The school is nearly meeting this measure.** 95 percent of all parents completed the annual parent satisfaction survey and according to the school’s annual report, 80 percent of respondents gave the school an “A” or a “B”.

*Measure 2: 100 percent of families will participate once a year in student/teacher conferences.*

**The school is nearly meeting this measure.** According to the school’s 2007-08 annual report 98 percent of families participated in student/teacher conferences.

*Measure 3: Codman Academy’s core community partners (Codman Square Health Center, Huntington Theatre, American Youth Foundation and Boston Modern Orchestra Project) will complete an evaluation of the program indicating its effectiveness.*

**The school is making progress on meeting this measure.** According to the school’s executive director, Codman administrators met with each partner in June of 2008 to discuss the effectiveness of the partnership and possible changes for the next school year. The executive director noted that the school is “working towards” creating a written evaluation for partners to complete as well.

## **II. Academic Program Success**

### **A. Curriculum**

**What is included in the documentation of the curriculum and what form does it take?  
Does it articulate skills and concepts that each student should know?  
Is the school’s documented curriculum aligned with state standards?**

*Finding: Electronic documentation of the curriculum continues to be a work in progress.* Currently, the majority of the school’s documented curriculum is kept on Codman’s computer server. Codman has outlined a system for electronically documenting curriculum in the faculty handbook. According to administrators, and as demonstrated to site visitors, staff members are not following the handbook guidelines and as a result the organization of curriculum on the school server is not clear and it can be difficult to find documents. Teachers are expected to create and store curriculum maps, expedition plans, and lesson plans on the server, but site visitors were unable to determine if that is done by each teacher. The principal reported that over the summer the school aims to clean up the various folders and streamline the documentation of curriculum according to the guidelines. *Future site visitors should determine if electronic documentation of curriculum is complete and organized.*

*Finding: Generally, curriculum is organized into expeditions that serve as overarching themes, investigations that divide the theme into units, and daily lesson plans. Stakeholders did not use consistent terms when describing distinct curricular items.*

During the site visit, teachers explained that they teach the Massachusetts curricular frameworks (MCF) by creating thematic expeditions that link multiple standards and encompass several units. Teachers defined learning expeditions as a way to organize semester or year-long curricular goals under one or two themes. However, an examination of learning expeditions on Codman's website show that the posted expeditions ranged in time from one day to an entire year. According to school administrators, teachers are expected to create learning targets that serve as objectives for their instruction and create lesson plans based on those learning targets. Teachers described learning targets in a variety of ways. A learning target may be a daily lesson objective, it could refer to one of a set of cross-disciplinary academic skills, or the term was also used to describe the seven to ten essential standards that teachers expect students to master within a content area course. An examination of syllabi from across all grade levels and subject areas shows that teachers use different terms to describe the year long curriculum. Even within subject areas, teachers use different terms to describe curriculum to students. Site visitors were unable to determine if there is a consistent, school-wide understanding of expected curricular units and ways of presenting curriculum to students.

*Finding: The school's uses both a numeric and rubric based assessment system.*

When asked about assessment at Codman, school administrators stated that the school struggled to work with a hybrid of assessment systems: numeric grades and leveled rubrics. Codman students earn numeric grades for academic classes, yet the school assesses the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade portfolios with a standards-based rubric, and creates standards-based learning targets for lessons, expeditions, and cross-curricular habits of work. School leaders stated that some teachers have created ways to link the two assessment systems by assigning numeric grades to rubric levels, but this was not a school-wide practice. School leaders stated that the school discusses the correlation between the two assessment systems. During grade level meetings, teachers discuss their learning target assessments and whether numeric grades accurately reflect student achievement. *Future site visitors should monitor any changes made to the school's assessment practices.*

## **B. Instruction and Learning**

### **Is the observed instructional practice aligned with what is described either verbally or in writing?**

*Finding: For the most part, site visitors saw the use of a consistent board configuration and school-wide classroom procedures.*

As shown in Codman's faculty handbook, and stated by school leaders on the day of the visit, Codman teachers are expected to use a consistent board configuration that includes a do now, an agenda for the class, learning targets (objectives) for the class, and homework. Students are expected to spend the first part of class working silently on a do now activity. Class closings are also meant to be uniform, with students recording homework assignments, cleaning the classroom, and giving each other commendations or suggestions for improvement, known as kudos and deltas. Site visitors observed a consistent board configuration in all classrooms except for the learning institute classroom which is Codman's special education classroom. During the



four instances where site visitors were present for class closings, they did not see consistent closings. The use of kudos and deltas was only observed once.

*Finding: Learning targets were in student friendly language and seen throughout the school. The level of precision and degree to which learning targets linked to standards varied across classroom.*

As told by school leaders, all the observed learning targets were written in language that was clear and “kid friendly”. In nine classrooms (out of a total of 15 observed), the learning targets were written as classroom objectives and illustrated clear outcomes that linked to the Massachusetts curricular frameworks (MCF). In six classrooms, the learning targets outlined activities rather than objectives and were not as clearly linked to the MCF. Site visitors determined that the classrooms without clearly defined learning targets put little cognitive demand on students and were seen as less rigorous than classes with clearly defined learning targets. As stated above, learning targets are sometimes used to outline daily objective, long term objectives, or to illustrate habits of mind. In some classes, site visitors saw that multiple learning targets were written on the board, but it was unclear to observers if the stated learning targets were lesson specific, long term, or skill based. Additionally, not every teacher posted multiple learning targets and it was not clear if the use of long term or skill based learning targets was a school wide practice.

*Finding: As stated by school leaders, site visitors observed that a majority of teachers used a variety of instructional techniques during a single class period.*

During an orientation to the school’s instructional practices, school leaders stated that site visitors would see a variety of instructional styles both across and within classrooms. Across classrooms, site visitors observed approximately a third of classes engaged in project based learning, about half during which students worked independently or in pairs, and a few that were primarily teacher led. However, in most classes, teachers did not devote the entire instructional block to one teaching method. In the majority of observations teachers structured classes to incorporate independent work, direct instruction, and group or paired work. Site visitors also observed that many of the classes were inquiry based, with the teacher posing a question, or problem, for students to investigate during the class period.

### **Is the classroom and school environment orderly, and does it support student learning?**

*Finding: Site visitors observed an orderly but casual atmosphere in classrooms. Site visitors saw fewer instances of student misbehavior this year than last.*

Codman does not require teachers to manage classroom behavior in a single way, instead teachers use their own management systems. However, all teachers are expected to use the citizenship software program to reward points for good behavior, or deduct them for misbehavior. In four instances, site visitors saw classrooms in which teachers had implemented systems to create very structured routines and expectations for student behavior. These classrooms tended to be 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms. In 12<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms, site visitors observed that teachers had to do very little classroom management and students engaged in the lesson tasks without redirection. In a majority of classrooms, site visitors observed a casual atmosphere in which students clearly felt comfortable. For the most part, students were able to be comfortable, yet productive. In three instances, the casual classroom atmosphere led to some off-task behavior, or a lack of classroom rigor. In one instance student behavior was so

disruptive that the teacher was not able to effectively deliver the lesson. However, compared to last year's site visit during which team members viewed a range of student behavior, for the most part student behavior did not distract from instruction. Site visitors did not see teachers overtly assigning points or deducting points for behavior.

### **Is instruction effectively delivered and are students engaged in meaningful learning?**

*Finding: Site visitors viewed a range of instructional quality within classrooms.*

Approximately two-thirds of the instruction viewed by site visitors was effective during which students engaged in their learning and the classroom activities were connected to the learning targets. In the remaining third of observations site visitors determined that instruction was ineffective, owing to teacher inexperience with defining learning objectives, delivering a lesson to meet those objectives, or in one instance due to disruptive behavior. Site visitors had concerns about the level of rigor viewed in Codman's separate special education classroom and while the classroom environment was nurturing, viewed instruction that contained erroneous information about science.

*Finding: The school has placed an emphasis on fostering students' autonomous learning abilities. The success of scaffolding of student autonomy varied from classroom to classroom.* Both board members and administrators reported that the mission of the school was to prepare students to succeed in college. Members of each group identified the ability of students to develop necessary habits of work and take responsibility for their own learning as essential skills that the school aims to impart to students. Teachers reported that this year, expectations for the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade portfolio projects (discussed further below) have been revised such that students will have to take more responsibility in choosing items to include in the portfolios that best demonstrates their own learning.

Site visitors observed that individual teachers pursue the goal of fostering autonomous student learning to a greater or lesser level of success. In some classes, site visitors observed that teachers were able to assign projects or pose questions that students were able work on productively. In these cases, students were observed to be productive because they either had learned necessary background knowledge, or had been given a highly scaffolded introduction to the assignment. Site visitors noted that in these cases, the level of rigor and cognitive demand placed on students was high and students were able to rise to the challenge. In other classes, site visitors found that students were assigned tasks or projects that seemed to lack a clear structure or had little scaffolding to help students begin the task. As students attempted to work on these projects they struggled because they lacked the background knowledge or skills required to complete the tasks successfully. Overall, site visitors determined that where students had been given the supports and structure to develop work habits and content knowledge they were able to apply those skills on their own, thus fulfilling the school's goal of fostering student autonomy.

### **Do the school's instructional practices include the implementation of strategies that address the needs of diverse learners, including special education students?**

*Finding: This year, Codman has separated the ninth grade students into two single sex classes for all academic courses.*

Because of disruptive behavior from the ninth grade students last year, Codman administrators decided to try splitting the incoming class of freshman into two single sex classes. The system is being piloted this year. Staff members have been provided with some professional development in terms of teaching single sex classes, but school leaders would like to provide more. School leaders reported that they have seen varying levels of success, with the all male class being the “toughest” class, but also showing the highest retention rates in the history of the school. Students stated that the single sex classes were “good and bad”, but that they are able to focus and get their work done. *Future site visitors should determine if single sex classes have been continued and if they are deemed successful.*

### **How and from whom do teachers receive feedback, guidance, supervision and evaluation to improve instructional practice and student achievement?**

*Finding: Based on feedback received from staff last year, there is a new emphasis on providing teachers with more frequent, shorter observations and evaluation.*

Codman’s principal is responsible for teacher observation and evaluation. He reported that this year, the school has created a brand new classroom observation tool meant to assess shorter, informal visits to classrooms. Site visitors examined the tool and found that it assesses classroom board configuration, the teacher’s instructional methods, assessment of students, classroom culture, student engagement, critical thinking, and the kinds of questions asked of students. There is also a section for the principal to list the teacher’s goals, strengths, and things to work on. The principal reported that his goal is to be in each teacher’s classroom at least twice a month for a short observation. The form is given to the teacher immediately, and the principal and teacher discuss the observation. The principal reported that the other elements of teacher assessment are still in place such as a formal evaluation once a year. Additionally, the principal and newer teachers meet once a week and use a collaborative log to document what is working in the classroom, the new teacher’s current focus, and next steps for both teacher and principal. The principal reported that the school is still defining precise standards for excellent instruction at Codman. The school does provide teachers with an instructional standards rubric created by the New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

*Finding: Codman has altered the academic schedule to provide teachers with more staff meeting time.*

Based on feedback received from teachers last year, Codman administrators altered the schedule for staff meetings. Because the school provides student support services, such as tutoring, in the afternoon and early evening, it was difficult for teachers to meet and work collaboratively during those times. This year teacher meetings happen on Fridays when students are working with Codman’s partner organizations (the Huntington Theatre or the Boston Modern Orchestra Project) or are off campus on expeditions. Accompanied by teachers, students have two humanities, one math, and one science off campus expedition each month. This schedule allows teachers to meet as an entire faculty, or in departments, for part of the day each Friday.

## **C. Student Achievement**

### **Are students reaching Proficiency on state standards, as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)?**

*Finding: English language arts (ELA) for Codman students have shown improvement over the past two years. Mathematics scores for Codman students have improved each year for the past five years.*

All MCAS results for ELA and mathematics that are available from the last five years are presented below in Tables II and III. Table IV shows MCAS results for science from 2007 and 2008. These tables include the Composite Performance Index (CPI), which reflects the distribution of student scores over the four MCAS performance categories. The CPI is a 100-point index that measures the extent to which students are progressing towards proficiency.

**Table II: Codman Academy ELA MCAS Test Results, 2004-2008**

ELA	Students Included	% Advanced/ Above Prof.	% Proficient	% Needs Improv.	% Warning/ Failed	CPI
<b>Grade 10</b>						
2004	20	10	65	25	0	92.5
2005	28	18	36	46	0	83.9
2006	20	0	45	50	5	78.8
2007	33	0	61	33	6	84.1
<b>2008</b>	29	3	59	34	3	86.2

In 2008, Codman's ELA MCAS score improved from the previous year. A majority of students are reaching proficiency on the ELA exam.

**Table III: Codman Academy Mathematics MCAS Test Results, 2004-2008**

Math	Students Included	% Advanced/ Above Prof.	% Proficient	% Needs Improv.	% Warning/ Failed	CPI
<b>Grade 10</b>						
2004	21	10	10	62	19	61.9
2005	28	7	32	36	25	65.2
2006	20	5	30	50	15	71.3
2007	33	15	30	42	12	73.5
<b>2008</b>	30	30	43	17	10	85.8

In 2008, Codman's mathematics MCAS scores showed marked improvement. For the first time in 2008 a majority of students are reaching proficiency, or above proficiency, in mathematics. Each year since 2004, Codman has shown an increase in their mathematics CPI.

**Table IV: Codman Academy Science MCAS Test Results, 2007-2008**

Science	Students Included	% Advanced/ Above Prof.	% Proficient	% Needs Improv.	% Warning/ Failed	CPI
<b>Grade 9/10 Physics</b>						
2007	35	0	26	37	37	55.0
<b>2008</b>	33	6	48	36	9	81.1

In 2008, Codman student scores showed a notable improvement in physics scores, with a majority of test takers reaching proficiency.

**Is the school making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the aggregate and in all statistically significant subgroups?**

*Finding: Codman Academy made AYP in the aggregate in 2008.*

The aggregate composite performance index (CPI) in ELA at Codman rose from 84.2 in 2007 to 86.2 in 2008. Due to small cohort size, data is not available for subgroups. The school's CPI in mathematics rose from 73.5 in 2007 to 85.8 in 2008. Because Codman has made AYP in ELA and mathematics in the aggregate for the past six years, it currently has the status of *No Status* for both ELA and mathematics. Codman's performance ratings were "On Target" for ELA and "Above Target" for mathematics.

**Has the school met or is it making progress toward meeting the academic success goals set out in its Accountability Plan?**

*Finding: Codman has met all three of its measures relating to its academic success goals.*

Codman's accountability plan includes two goals related to academic success. Each goal and its measures are discussed below.

*Goal 1: Students will achieve proficiency, as defined by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, in English, mathematics and physics.*

*Measure 1: The school will achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets as set by the Commonwealth for all subjects and student subgroups each year of the charter period.*

**The school met this measure.** As shown in the tables above, Codman has achieved adequate yearly progress for all subjects in the aggregate.

*Goal 2: Students will be provided access to, qualify for, and be ready to succeed in an institution of higher education which best meets their goals and needs.*

*Measure 1: 100% of graduating seniors will be accepted into a four year college.*

**The school met this measure.** According to the school's 2007-08 annual report, all graduating seniors were accepted into a four year college.

*Measure 2: Graduating seniors will have proven mastery, scoring a 70% or above in all core academic classes prior to graduating as well as meeting all other graduation requirements.*

**The school has met this measure.** At the end of the 2007-08 academic year, Codman graduated seniors who had met all graduation requirements. Those who did not meet graduation requirements were able to complete the work over the summer to gain a diploma, or were offered the chance to repeat their senior year.

**III. Organizational Viability**

**Does the school have systems and structures in place to review the effectiveness of the academic program and guide its improvement?**

*Finding: In the past year, the school has experienced student attrition. This year, the school has created more supports to aid students in satisfying Codman's high standards for promotion and graduation.*

In recent years, Codman has experienced significant student attrition. For example, the school's four-year graduation rate decreased from 75 percent for the 2007 cohort to 37.5 percent for the 2008 cohort. In addition, in fall 2008, the school changed its enrollment practices and opened enrollment to 10<sup>th</sup> graders to replace an unusually high number of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who did not return. Fourteen of the original 39 ninth graders did not reenroll for the 2008-09 school year. School leaders, teachers, and board members all reported that there are many reasons that the school has experienced high rates of student turnover. Primarily, all stakeholders reported that Codman has very high academic expectations for students, and when those students who do not meet yearly standards are retained, many of them choose to transfer to Boston Public Schools where they will be promoted to the next grade level. Additionally, students acknowledged that the standards for success at Codman are higher than they have experienced in traditional public school settings. Board members stated that the graduation rate was so low for the class of 2008 because the school "took at stand" last year and enforced the high standards for senior portfolio work. The board fully supported the administration's decision and feels that now all students at the school are aware of school expectations and the consequences for not meeting those academic standards.

In addition to enforcing high academic expectations, the school also recognized the need to provide additional supports to lessen attrition and student retention rates. This year the school has implemented many additional programs to address this need. Developed last year, and fully integrated this year, each 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade student has a tutor through the school's "tutors for all" program started by Codman's tutoring coordinator. These one-to-one, or two-to-one, tutorials are led by college students and focus on remedial skill building for ninth graders and MCAS prep for tenth graders. Ninth grade students meet two to four times a week with their tutor during the last period of the school day and work on building baseline academic skills such as reading or math. Tenth grade students receive tutoring during Codman's Saturday school from Simmons College students, at the college campus. Each student in the program is assessed monthly to track their progress. Codman still provides an after-school study hall time which was reported to be more structured this year with ten students required to attend, and about five to ten additional students who participate voluntarily. Additionally, the school has created teacher office hours from 4:15-5 during which students can receive help and has a new administrative position responsible for sending regular academic and behavioral reports to parents (also described below). *Future site visitors should determine to what degree the school's student attrition and graduation rates are affected by these additional supports.*

*Finding: The school has implemented a systematic approach for supporting students who have been retained.*

Codman's promotion policy requires students to pass all academic classes with at least a 70 percent average. Additionally, tenth and twelfth graders must receive at least an 80 percent on their portfolios to earn promotion, or a diploma. This year, the school has created a support program for those students who did not meet promotion standards and have been retained. One of Codman's tutors was hired to coordinate the program and she meets weekly with each repeating student to check on grades, set goals, and set up any supports that the student may need such as study hall or additional tutoring. Codman has created protocols for the coordinator of the

program to follow and clearly outlined duties for the job. Twelve “repeaters” began the school year and the school currently lists nine “repeaters” on its second trimester tracking chart. *Future site visitors should assess the impact of the repeater supports on overall student retention.*

*Finding: Currently, the school is in the process of refining the requirements and the system of assessing student portfolios.*

When asked about the tenth grade passage portfolio and the twelfth grade senior portfolio, teachers stated that they were modifying the requirements of both portfolios this year. Last year, tenth grade students had to select one piece of work from each subject area class, revise that work, and present the three pieces to a panel of teachers, families, and other students who assessed the presentation with a school-created rubric. Seniors had to choose three items per subject area to include in their portfolios. This year, teachers stated that they want to more clearly tie portfolios to Codman’s standards by requiring students to choose work samples that demonstrate a subset of learning targets. Teachers also stated that students will also have to demonstrate that they have met all cross-discipline learning targets through a reflective writing piece and through the public presentation of their portfolio. At this point, teachers could not state how many pieces of work students will have to choose from each subject area, but stated that the school would soon decide and it would be a greater number than last year. Additionally, teachers reported that they hoped to change portfolios such that they reflected students’ work over a two year period. When asked about portfolios, ninth grade students did not know about them. It was unclear if other students knew that the portfolio requirements were currently in flux.

In terms of portfolio assessment, teachers stated that all work that students select for their portfolio must earn at least an 80 percent to pass, which they also defined as “accomplished” according to the portfolio assessment rubric. However, teachers also stated that this year, they want to shift the assessment of portfolios to focus more on the degree to which students demonstrate mastery of the learning target skills in each chosen assignment. *Future site visitors should determine the new requirements for passage and senior portfolios and how those are communicated for students.*

*Finding: This year, the administrative team has further clarified their roles. The principal has made it a priority and created systems and structures to play a more prominent role as the school’s instructional leader.*

This is Codman’s second full academic year with its current leadership model of executive director and principal as the core administrative team. The board stated that the role of principal was added as a way to divide up the school leadership responsibilities. Board members and administrators also stated that this year both the executive director and the principal have further defined their respective roles. The executive director reported that she is responsible for overseeing organizational viability of the school, working on school dissemination efforts, working with the school’s board, and overseeing “extracurricular” school efforts, such as the student trip to South Africa. This year, the school principal reported that he is better able to fulfill the role of instructional leader. With the addition of the student support coordinator position (described below), the principal reported that he is able to spend less time with student discipline and more time providing academic leadership, evaluating and giving support for teachers, and overseeing the academic support team. The principal has created new teacher evaluation forms and processes (described earlier) to further facilitate this role. The executive

director and principal stated that at times, their jobs overlap, but they meet regularly to communicate about the school and delegate tasks between the two of them.

**How does the board of trustees provide oversight and leadership in key areas of the school, including academic achievement and fiscal planning?**

*Finding: The board of trustees uses the school's strategic vision as a guiding document during their yearly retreats.*

In 2006 Codman board members and the executive director worked together to create a strategic vision that listed school goals to accomplish by 2010. The board of trustees stated that they see the strategic vision as a work in progress, or living document, that sets their yearly agenda. Primarily, the board reported that they use the document as a way to evaluate the executive director and as a guide for their yearly retreats. At those retreats, the board assesses the mission of the school and their own progress in terms of the strategic vision. This year, the board highlighted two aspects of the vision as priorities: expansion of the current facility and fundraising the resources necessary for expansion.

*Finding: The school is exploring possibilities for financing a major facility expansion.*

As stated by school leaders and board members during last year's site visit and shared again this year, the school is currently pursuing a 30,000 square foot facility expansion. Currently, both the board and the executive director reported that they are working together with the Codman Square Health Center to secure financing for the joint expansion project. The executive director reported that the school and health center are looking into acquiring federal stimulus money, new market credits, or obtaining a line of credit to make the expansion possible. Additionally, the school plans to go ahead with a capital campaign and would like to break ground by September. The school has already had an architect draw up plans for the facility.

**Is the school environment physically safe and free from harassment and discrimination?**

*Finding: There is a new staff position, the student support coordinator, who is responsible for tracking student discipline and the tutoring program. Staff report that behavior has improved and more students are honoring consequences given to them.*

This year, Codman has created the position of student support coordinator who now oversees student discipline, a duty that was once the purview of the principal. The individual serving in this position was the tutoring coordinator last year, and still oversees the tutoring programs offered by the school. Site visitors viewed documents created by the student support coordinator that outlined expectations for student behavior, protocols for student reflection on misbehavior, protocols for staff communication with families about discipline, and an outline for the creation of a positive discipline system that rewards good behavior. Codman's citizenship system allows staff members to record points earned for good citizenship and behavior, or deduct points for misbehavior on the school's server. Students are able to check their point totals through the school's PowerSchool site.

Teachers and administrators reported that the student support coordinator has been able to increase the amount of disciplinary follow-through this year with regular communication with parents about student behavior and more consistent enforcement of consequences assigned to students for misbehavior. The student support coordinator reported that this year a greater



percentage of students who have been assigned to detention actually serve that detention. In years past, students had not taken the consequence seriously. Additionally, the student support coordinator reported that more students were earning rewards through the school's behavior system and were motivated to do well because of the system. Students reported that last year the school lacked a clear strategy around rules and student behavior, leading to "horrible" behavior on the part of some students. However, this year, students commented on the positive shift in school culture as a function of clearer adult expectations and that administrators and teachers have followed through with consequences and rewards. Teachers also stated that student behavior had improved this year.

*Finding: The school creates a safe environment for students both within the school and, to the best of their ability, in the Codman Square area.*

As stated earlier in this report, the school clearly invests its resources in the well-being of each student, inclusive of but not limited to academic success. Integral to the school's operation are such programs as small advisory groups called crews, single sex counseling groups called talking circles for 9<sup>th</sup> graders, additional counseling services from the school's social worker, and extended school hours during which students can receive tutoring or complete homework with adult supervision. Due to these programs, and the small size of the school, each student is well known by adults in the building. Parents reported to site visitors that Codman provided a safe space for their children. Additionally, the parents stated that in the past the school responded to an increase in gang activity in the neighborhood by moving dismissal later in the afternoon and working with a community taskforce on gangs. Now that Codman uses additional classroom space in the renovated basement of Codman Square's Citizen Bank, the school has had to think of safety as 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students walk to and from the main campus. School administrators stated that they have set expectations for student travel between campuses and have spoken with business owners in the neighborhood about those expectations.

### **Are the physical facilities adequate for the program of the school?**

*Finding: The physical facility seems adequate, clean, and orderly. However it is too small for its population and classrooms are spread between three facilities.*

The main impetus for Codman's proposed facility expansion is a great need for more space. Currently, the school holds classes in three separate facilities: in part of Codman Square Health Center's main building, in the "Great Hall" across the street, and in the renovated basement of the local Citizen's Bank. While students, teachers, and administrators make do with the current configuration, it is not ideal. Site visitors determined that the current facility adequately serves the needs of the academic program, but many rooms are too small, or oddly shaped, for the number of students in the class.

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

*Finding: A majority of teachers at Codman are new to the school. However, a majority of Codman's teachers are not new to the teaching profession.*

As shown in the table below, more than half of Codman's teachers are in their first year at the school. However, a majority of the teachers have more than three years of teaching experience. This table includes data for core academic teachers who instruct humanities, math, science, or

French courses, a total of eleven teachers. Teachers and administrators expect that about a third of the teaching staff will turnover next year, as four teachers will be out on maternity leave. The administration reports that they have a plan to accommodate the maternity leaves.

**Table V: Years of Teaching Experience for Core Subject Teachers 2008-2009**

	1 Year	2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-20 Years
Teachers with this number of years teaching	0	2 (18%)	3 (27%)	5 (45%)	1 (9%)
Teachers with this number of years teaching at Codman	6 (55%)	1 (9%)	3 (27%)	1 (9%)	N/A

### **Are school community members satisfied with the performance of the school?**

*Finding: All community members speak with pride about the school and characterized the program as being in progress and showing improvement.*

All school constituents expressed satisfaction with the performance of the school. The two parents who were interviewed reported a substantial sense of trust in the Codman staff and were satisfied with the academic rigor and citizenship focus of the school. Students stated that the school engages them in interesting learning opportunities and provides supports to help them succeed. Board members stated that they fully supported the school's high academic standards as the only way to best prepare students for college completion.

Through interviews with various stakeholders, site visitors determined that staff members and students view the school as making many alterations, or refinements, that improve the school's program. Students and staff members pointed to the improvements made to and a new consistency in applying the school's discipline system. Additionally, in order to address concerns about student attrition, the school has focused their tutoring program to provide remedial skill building, added teacher office hours, improved study hall help, and provided a support system for students who are repeating a grade.

### **Has the school met the organizational viability goals set out in its Accountability Plan?**

*Finding: Codman has met five out of eight of its measures relating to its organizational viability goals.*

Codman's accountability plan includes two goals related to organizational viability. Each goal and its measures are discussed below.

*Goal 1: The school will continue to be a viable organization.*

*Measure 1: The school will be fiscally sound. It will receive an unqualified opinion on its annual financial statements from its auditor.*

**The school met this measure.** In Codman's fiscal year 2008 and fiscal year 2007 audits, it received an unqualified opinion on its annual financial statements.

*Measure 2: The board will evaluate the Executive Director on a bi-annual basis in accordance with outlined goals and review protocols.*

**The school met this measure.** Members of Codman’s board and the executive director reported that the board conducted an evaluation of the executive director that was completed in fall 2008. The board reported that it used a 360 degree review and incorporated feedback from teachers, parents, and administrators at the school about the executive director’s performance. The board also evaluated the executive director according to her yearly goals and the strategic vision for the school. The board stated that they will evaluate the executive director again in two years.

*Measure 3: At each September board meeting, the Board of Trustees will establish a set of board objectives aligned with the school’s strategic vision and will accomplish 75% by the end of each fiscal year.*

**The school has not met this measure.** According to the school’s 2007-08 annual report, the board was going to start setting board objectives that aligned to the school’s strategic vision in September 2008. A study of the board’s meeting notes from the fall of 2008 show that the board has not explicitly set yearly objectives. Additionally, while interviewed, the board stated that they use the strategic vision during their yearly retreat to refocus on the school’s mission. The board did not discuss setting yearly objectives as stated in the above measure.

*Measure 4: At least 85 percent of students who are enrolled at Codman on October 1 of each year will re-enroll and be in attendance of October 1 of the subsequent school year, exclusive of those students who move out of the city of Boston or graduate.*

**The school has not met this measure.** According to data supplied by the school, approximately 27 percent of Codman students who were enrolled as of October 1, 2007 did not re-enroll as of October 1, 2008. The school did not disaggregate the data to show if some students moved out of the city of Boston.

*Goal 2: The school will demonstrate a strong commitment to dissemination of best practices.*

*Measure 1: The school website: [www.codmanacademy.org](http://www.codmanacademy.org) will have at least 65,000 visits to per year.*

**The school has not met this measure.** According to the school’s 2007-08 annual report, the school’s website received 55,000 visits.

*Measure 2: Positive feedback received from 100% of visitors to school.*

**The school met this measure.** The school collects feedback from all visitors. The school’s 2007-08 annual report states that all of the feedback received was positive.

*Measure 3: At least one major news story about our work annually.*

**The school met this measure.** During the 2007-08 school year, there were three news stories about Codman. All news stories are posted on the school’s website.

*Measure 4: Each faculty member of subject matter (i.e. Math, Humanities, Science or student support) shall publish at least one learning expedition or article to our public web site. We will send at least one faculty member or team to present their work at the annual Expeditionary Learning conference.*

**The school partially met this measure.** As stated previously, teachers post learning expeditions to the website. Site visitors were shown new expeditions from science and humanities, no new math expeditions were posted for the 2007-08 school year. Additionally, the school reports that it sent two teachers to present their work at the National Expeditionary Learning conference last year.

**Conclusion: Is the school becoming the school it promised to be in its charter?**

Codman Academy has set forth an ambitious mission: to incorporate expeditionary learning in an urban context, prepare high school students for college completion, establish a thematic academic curriculum that meets state standards, and provide the kinds of academic and social-emotional supports needed by its student population. In many ways, the school is making great strides towards accommodating the varied requirements and aspirations of its own academic program. Academically, all of those seniors who complete graduation requirements are accepted into four year colleges, the school has made AYP for the past six years, and students are held to high academic standards. In terms of expeditionary learning, students go on weekly “field work” trips and much of the curriculum reflects the principles of ELS. Additionally, the school has created a safe place for students and provides the supports needed for healthy adolescent development. The school aims to deepen their capacity to provide for students, academically and socio-emotionally, through the planned facility expansion.

However, Codman is still in the process of implementing consistent systems and structures to fulfill the various aspects of their mission. Documentation of curriculum, use of a consistent curricular terminology, the establishment of new portfolio standards, methods of student assessment, the creation of additional academic supports, and the creation of Codman specific standards for instruction were all seen as on-going projects by school constituents. In its eighth year, the school is still in the process of defining many of its own unique characteristics. Additionally, the school faces the challenge of reversing the recent trend in student attrition and lower graduation rates. In order to face these challenges the school has made some significant changes this year in their approach to discipline, to remedial support for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and teacher evaluation. Future site visitors will determine how the school has progressed in defining and implementing school structures and if the new supports are helping more students succeed.