



Massachusetts Department of  
**ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY  
EDUCATION**

## **Renewal Inspection Report**

Salem Academy Charter School  
Salem, MA

OCTOBER 1-3, 2013

**CLASS MEASURES, INC**  
**WOBURN, MA**



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# Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
The Renewal Inspection Team.....	1
School Setting.....	3
Renewal Inspection Methodology.....	4
Findings.....	7
Faithfulness to Charter	
<i>Charter School Performance Criteria: Faithfulness to Charter</i>	
<i>Progress towards Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures</i>	
Academic Program Success	
<i>Charter School Performance Criteria: Academic Program Success</i>	
<i>Progress towards Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures</i>	
Organizational Viability	
<i>Charter School Performance Criteria: Organizational Viability</i>	
<i>Progress towards Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures</i>	
Appendices .....	26
Appendix A	
<i>Renewal Inspection Site Visit Schedule</i>	
Appendix B	
<i>Accountability Plan Performance</i>	

## Introduction

### The Renewal Inspection Process and Site Visit Report

The charter renewal application process begins with the charter school's submission to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) an Application for Renewal of a Public School Charter (Application for Renewal). After the Department has reviewed the Application for Renewal and determined that it is clear and complete, the school is notified of the Application for Renewal's acceptance. The Department contracts with an independent organization to conduct a detailed review of the school's performance. The renewal inspection organization assigns a team of specialists to conduct a renewal inspection site visit and prepare a renewal inspection report summarizing the team's findings regarding the school's performance relative to its accountability plan and the *Charter School Performance Criteria*.

After the renewal inspection site visit, the team prepares a draft of the renewal inspection report and submits it to the Department for review and clarification if necessary. After a Department review the draft is provided to the school for review. The school is given approximately one week in which to make factual corrections to the report, if appropriate. After incorporating any factual corrections, the team submits the final report to the Department and the school, at which point the team's involvement in the charter renewal process ends. The school may provide the Department with a formal response to the renewal inspection report; this response becomes part of the school's permanent record. Other interested parties, including the superintendent in the district in which a charter school is located or the region from which the school draws students, also have the opportunity to submit written comments to the Department regarding the renewal of a school's charter. This report is the result of one such inspection.

### Overview of this Report

This renewal inspection report contains the following information:

- Professional biographies of the renewal inspection team members;
- A report setting that provides contextual information regarding the school;
- The methodology employed by the renewal inspection team in conducting the renewal inspection;
- The renewal inspection team's findings and supporting evidence concerning the school's performance relative to the Criteria, and a summary of the school's performance on its accountability plan as discussed in the Protocol;
- Appendix A of this report contains the detailed schedule of the renewal inspection site visit; and
- Appendix B of this report contains a detailed account of the school's performance in terms of its accountability plan measures.

### Renewal Inspection Team

**Helen Apostolides** is an independent education consultant. She was a school district examiner for the Massachusetts Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) and participated in numerous school district reviews, underperforming school reviews, and charter school renewal inspections. She has over 34 years of experience as a teacher, mentor, and administrator in public education. Before she retired in 2003, she was an elementary school principal for 11 years in Peabody, Massachusetts. She instituted the Skills for Life program at her school, which won national recognition. In addition, her school was the first to collaborate with the Lesley University Literacy Collaborative, restructuring the school's reading program to the Collaborative's standards. She also helped facilitate the development of full-day kindergarten throughout the district. She was an assistant principal for 14 years and a classroom teacher in numerous grade-levels. She has a Master of Education degree in elementary education from Boston State College and a Master of Teaching degree in history on the secondary level from Salem State College. She

received the Pride of Peabody award in 2003 and was a semi-finalist in Massachusetts in NASA's Teacher in Space Program.

**Dr. George Gearhart** has worked in education for over 40 years. He has a doctorate in mathematics education from Harvard University, and has taught mathematics in all grades from kindergarten through college in schools in Ohio, Alaska, Ghana, Oregon, and Massachusetts. He has been a teacher and administrator in Massachusetts since 1969, including 27 years in Marblehead as program administrator for mathematics, high school principal, and assistant superintendent. His duties have included teaching mathematics at all levels, developing and implementing mathematics curriculum, supervising teachers and other school personnel, staff development, school business administration, facilities design and management, and district leadership. Since 2005 he has been a consultant in K-12 education and an examiner for the EQA, for which he inspected 15 school districts and 95 schools.

**Dr. James McAuliffe**, *renewal inspection team leader*, has worked in public education for 36 years. Prior to his 19 years of service as student services director and elementary school principal in the Harvard Public Schools, he served as administrator of special education in the Wachusett Regional and Uxbridge school districts. He has broad experience in curriculum and staff development, grant writing, student assessment and program evaluation, facilities design and management, and planning and management of effective special education programs and services. He has been a practicum supervisor for administrative interns, taught graduate level courses in educational leadership, and consulted with vocational school districts on strategic planning. As a part-time examiner for the EQA, he participated in reviews of 50 Massachusetts schools and school districts, including charter schools and underperforming schools. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, a Master of Arts degree in counseling psychology from Boston College, and a Doctorate in human development from Harvard University.

**Dr. Frank Sambuceti** has 39 years of experience as a Massachusetts public school educator. During his professional career he served as a high school history teacher, department chairman, housemaster, and principal. He was principal of Lunenburg High School from 1990-1996 and Principal of Walpole High School from 1996 until his retirement in 2006. Since then, he has worked as a consultant to the ESE, where he has participated in numerous performance reviews of public school districts across the state. In addition, Dr. Sambuceti is an instructor for the Fitchburg State University Graduate School for which he teaches courses in the C.A.G.S. Program in Educational Leadership and supervises administrative interns during their school-based practicums. Dr. Sambuceti earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Merrimack College, a Master of Education degree from Boston State College, a C.A.G.S. in school administration from Bridgewater State University, and a Doctor of Education degree in public school leadership from Nova Southeastern University.

**F. Daniel Ahern, Jr. and Pamela Bloomfield**, principals of Clarus Group, provided technical assistance to Class Measures on specific issues related to the school governance and finance. Clarus Group also provided quality assurance and editorial advice regarding drafts of this report.

## Setting

<i>Salem Academy Charter School (Salem Academy)</i>			
<b>Type of Charter</b> (Commonwealth or Horace Mann)	Commonwealth	<b>Location</b>	Salem, MA
<b>Regional/Non-Regional</b>	Non-Regional	<b>Districts in Chartered Region</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Year Opened</b>	2004	<b>Maximum Enrollment</b>	372
<b>Year(s) Renewed</b>	2009	<b>Current Enrollment</b>	372
<b>Students on Waitlist</b>	350 (grades 6-9)	<b>Chartered Grade Span</b>	6-12
		<b>Current Grade Span</b>	6-12
<b>Mission Statement: Salem Academy is a commonwealth charter school serving the diverse population of Salem with a college preparatory program for students in grades six through twelve. Through a unique integration of college preparatory classes with service to the community, the school graduates informed, articulate and proactive individuals of strong character.</b>			

Salem Academy Charter School (Salem Academy) is in its tenth year of operation. The school received its charter in 2003 to serve a maximum of 308 students in grades 6 through 12. Salem Academy opened in September 2004 with 88 students in grades 6 and 7 and expanded to its full configuration of grades 6 through 12 in September 2008. The school's charter was renewed in February 2009 with the following condition: "By September 15, 2009 the school will establish and operate a program of English language learner education in a manner consistent with the requirements of General Laws Chapter 71A. The school will demonstrate meeting this condition by fully implementing all elements of the Corrective Action Plan as approved by the Department on October 10, 2008." In a memorandum dated December 2009, the Commissioner notified the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education that Salem Academy had met this condition.

In May 2011, Salem Academy submitted a charter amendment requesting an increase in enrollment from 308 to 331 students effective in September 2011 in order to address a shortfall resulting from a tuition adjustment at mid-year. According to the school, the shortfall was caused by "errors in financial calculations by the primary sending district (Salem) and subsequently in projections by the ESE finance department." The school petitioned the Department for an exception to the requirement that major amendments to the charter be submitted by August 1 of the year prior to the planned implementation. In a letter dated May 17, 2011, the Department responded that it could not allow an exception to the major amendment protocol. In addition, the Department's letter stated that the school was required under statute to notify each public school district by April 1 of the number of students from the district who would be attending the school on September 1 and that the Department lacked the authority to release the school from this obligation.

According to information included in the school's 2012 audit, the school subsequently applied for and was granted a charter amendment to increase its enrollment from 308 to 372 students in order to provide

greater curricular and extracurricular options, especially for high school students. The amendment was granted in November of 2011. The school reached its full enrollment of 372 students in September 2013.

Currently, students from Salem constitute approximately 84 percent of Salem Academy's enrollment; students from Lynn and Peabody constitute approximately 14 percent of the enrollment, and students from surrounding communities constitute approximately two percent of the enrollment. Salem Academy accepts applications for students in grades 6 through 9 and fills slots as needed from a wait list. Most students enter in grade 6 or grade 9. As of August 2013, 350 prospective students were on the wait list.

As shown in the table below, Salem Academy's enrollment during the current charter term has increased from 311 students in the 2010 school year to 372 students in the 2014 school year. In order to accommodate the planned enrollment increase of 64 students, the school added approximately 11,000 square feet to its facility in 2012 by annexing and renovating unused space in the former warehouse it occupies at **Shetland Park**. The school configured the space to provide five additional classrooms, five additional offices, a library/media center, and a new cafeteria. The addition also allowed the school to locate lower and upper school classes in separate wings to better differentiate the programs for the students at these grade spans.

School Year	Enrollment
2009-2010	311
2010-2011	309
2011-2012	308
2012-2013	344
2013-2014	372
<i>Data Source: Department and Salem Academy (2013-2014)</i>	

## Renewal Inspection Methodology

The three-day renewal inspection visit was conducted at Salem Academy from October 1-3, 2013. The renewal inspection team ("the team") conducted interviews with the executive director, head of school, head of lower school, special education coordinator, dean of students, and business manager. In addition the team conducted the following focus groups of school community representatives:

- A board of trustees focus group consisting of the chair, the vice chair, the treasurer, and two members. The chair was in his third year on the board, the vice chair was in his sixth year, the treasurer was in her fourth year, and both members were in their third year.
- A teacher focus group consisting of seven teachers representing the following grades, subjects, and specialty areas: one grade 6 English language arts (ELA) teacher, one grade 6 mathematics teacher, one grade 6 social studies teacher, one grade 7 mathematics teacher, two grades 9-12 ELA teachers, and one grades 9-12 mathematics and physics teacher. One teacher was in her second year at Salem Academy, two were in their sixth year, three were in their eighth year, and one was in his tenth year.
- A lower school student focus group consisting of eight students, including one student in grade 6, one student in grade 7, and six students in grade 8. One grade 6 student had been enrolled at Salem Academy for one year, one grade 7 student and one grade 8 student had been enrolled for two years, and five grade 8 students had been enrolled for three years.

- An upper school student focus group consisting of seven students, including one student in grade 9, three students in grade 10, two students in grade 11, and one student in grade 12. One grade 10 student had been enrolled at Salem Academy for two years, one grade 9 student had been enrolled for four years, two grade 10 students had been enrolled for five years, two grade 11 students had been enrolled for six years, and one grade 12 student had been enrolled for seven years.
- A parent focus group consisting of ten parents. One was the parent of twins in grade 6; two were the parents of children in grade 6 and grade 8; one was the parent of children in grade 6 and grade 9; two were the parents of children in grade 7; one was the parent of children in grade 9, grade 10, grade 11 and a graduate of Salem Academy who was attending college; one was the parent of children in grade 8 and grade 10; one was the parent of a child in grade 9; and one was the parent of a child in grade 11 and a graduate of Salem Academy who was attending college. The group included one parent who indicated during the focus group discussion that she had a child on an individualized education program (IEP) who received special education services
- A teacher focus group consisting of three special education teachers and one ELL teacher. Two teachers were in their first year at Salem Academy, one was in her second year, one was in her third year and one was in her fourth year.
- A student support and family services focus group consisting of the head of school, the head of the lower school, the special education coordinator, the lower school adjustment counselor, the upper school adjustment counselor, and the school nurse.

The team conducted 28 classroom observations in grades 6 through 12. Five were conducted in grade 6, four in grade 7, seven in grade 8, four in grade 9, five in grade 10, two in grade 11, and one in grade 12. Twenty-eight teachers were observed. The team's observations ranged between 20 and 30 minutes. Three observations were for the full period of 55 minutes. Team members kept running records of their observations using the Charter School Office (CSO) classroom observation form. The team observed four ELA lessons, six mathematics lessons, six science lessons, four social studies lessons, one Spanish lesson, one health lesson, and one mathematics lesson that was co-taught by a regular education teacher and a special education teacher, one mathematics lesson in a sheltered English immersion (SEI) class, one English language development (ESL) lesson, and three resource room lessons.

The documents and data reviewed by the team before, during, and after the renewal inspection site visit included the following:

- Assessment data
- Salem Academy accountability plan
- Salem Academy Application for Renewal
- Salem Academy annual reports
- Department site visit reports
- Salem Academy Items to Consider
- Salem Academy Federal Programs Renewal Inspection Site Visit 2008
- Special education Program Self-Evaluation
- English Language Learners (ELL) Program Self-Evaluation
- Teacher evaluation forms
- Personnel Policy Handbook
- Salem Academy Strategic Plan
- Board of Trustees Staff Workshop Agenda, April 2013
- The Achievement Network (ANet) results

- Curriculum documents, including maps, syllabi, unit plans, weekly plans, and binders
- Lesson plans
- Student enrollment, wait list, retention, and attrition data
- Current organization chart and staffing list
- Teacher and board turnover data
- Teacher licensure list
- Student handbook
- Faculty handbook
- Parent and staff survey results for 2013
- Salem Academy website program information
- Board of trustees meeting minutes for the period of September 26, 2012 to June 19, 2013
- Audited financial statements

The Appendix to this report contains a detailed schedule of the renewal inspection site visit. This renewal inspection has been conducted pursuant to the Department's *Charter School Renewal Inspection Protocol*.



## Findings

### Faithfulness to Charter

#### Charter School Performance Criteria: Faithfulness to Charter Topics

##### **Criterion 1: Mission and Key Design Elements**

The school is faithful to its mission, implements the key design elements outlined in its charter, and substantially meets its accountability plan goals.

**Finding: Salem Academy operates in a manner consistent with its mission statement and key design elements.**

The mission of Salem Academy is as follows:

Salem Academy is a commonwealth charter school serving the diverse population of Salem with a college preparatory program for students in grades six through twelve. Through a unique integration of college preparatory classes with service to the community, the school graduates informed, articulate and proactive individuals of strong character.

In focus groups, school leaders, parents, teachers, and students expressed a common understanding of the components of the school's mission statement. As discussed in the finding for Criterion 2, the team found that Salem Academy serves students enrolled in special education and English language learner (ELL) students in a manner that maximizes their meaningful inclusion in the school's mainstream regular education program.

The educational program at the lower school, which emphasizes fundamental skills, habits of mind, and formation of a learning disposition is intended to provide a strong foundation for the upper school program, which consists of rigorous college preparatory, honors level, and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. A full-time college counselor facilitates the transition from high school to college. The counselor helps students and parents select appropriate colleges and apply for admission and financial aid. The counselor also arranges field trips to college campuses and to fairs featuring college representatives. As demonstrated by the school's accountability plan results for the current charter term, beginning with the first graduating class of 2009, all graduates of Salem Academy had been admitted to at least one college or university and were matriculating at a college or university.

The school's service learning program is embedded in the academic program in carefully articulated stages intended to prepare students to carry out and evaluate the impact of an independently designed major project in grades 11 and 12. Grade 11 students research and write a proposal, or thesis, and a service plan to carry it out, and grade 12 students render services in fulfillment of the service plan and evaluate the results. Students' service hours are carefully documented. Students in a focus group told the team that service projects connect them to the community and provide leadership experience, especially in advocacy.

Salem Academy has developed an exit standard and benchmarks for each of the three attributes in its mission statement (informed, articulate, and proactive). The team found that these attributes were integrated into the school's academic curriculum by design. In focus groups, students and teachers

defined the three attributes and gave examples of how they are represented in academic subjects at various grade-levels.

The team found that Salem Academy's character-based norms, referred to as REACH (Responsible, Empathetic, Assertive, Cooperative and Honest), are endemic to school culture and student accountability. Students and parents in focus groups were familiar with these norms and gave specific examples of conforming and deviating behaviors. Salem Academy bases its behavior management system on the norms and reports to parents on character formation as well as academic progress. The school recognizes students for exemplifying the norms in community meetings; for example, during the site visit, the team saw seven fabric wall hangings covered with the handprints of students who had received recognition prominently displayed in the corridor along with two large posters, one depicting a bucket and the other a tree. The school was recognizing lower school students' empathic actions with drops in the bucket and leaves on the tree, personalized with their names.

In accordance with the key design element of effective leadership, the board of trustees is well informed and engages in appropriate oversight of the school. Salem Academy has a coherent and effective distributive model of school leadership. The executive director, head of school, head of lower school, dean of students, business manager, and special education coordinator constitute the leadership team which meets weekly to manage school operations. The leadership team delegates certain responsibilities to grade level team and curriculum team leaders as detailed in the Curriculum section of this report.

The school has acted to realize the focus on the whole child that is evident in the charter. In accordance with this key design element, Art, health, music and other classes are offered during Choice blocks scheduled during the school day. On Fridays from 2:00 to 4:00 during Extensions, students participate in athletics or activities such as art music and drama. Students may also receive tutoring or extra help during this time. During the daily Connections, or homeroom period students discuss social attitudes and behavior and form a trusting relationship with a caring teacher.

## **Criterion 2: Access and Equity**

The school ensures program access and equity for all students eligible to attend the school.

**Through open houses, targeted mailings and widely distributed informational flyers and brochures, Salem Academy informs parents about the services available to their children. The school provides full program access by accommodating and integrating diverse learners in the general education classroom.**

School leaders told the team that Salem Academy holds three open house programs during the school year to acquaint the parent of prospective students with the school's mission, programs, and services. The special education coordinator presents information about the school's provisions for students with disabilities as part of each open house program and invites parents to follow-up by contacting her personally. School leaders said that while the ELL coordinator does not participate in the annual open house meetings, the ELL program is described by other presenters, and parents are encouraged to contact the ELL coordinator with specific questions that the presenters could not answer.

According to school leaders and the team's review of school documents, the provisions for students enrolled in special education and ELL students are fully described in the school's mailings to all city families with grade 5 and grade 8 children, brochures widely distributed to community agencies and churches and informational posters. All of the school's informational literature is translated into Spanish. Four staff members, including the head of school, are fluent in Spanish. School leaders stated and parents

interviewed by the team confirmed that the Salem Academy has a good reputation in the community for serving all students. Parents told the team that they were well informed about the school from a number of sources, including postings, brochures and the open house programs.

Salem Academy offers the full continuum of special education programs, including substantially separate programs. School leaders told the team that they inform parents of students requiring a substantially separate program that the school will provide it, but these parents usually choose not to enroll their children because of concerns that the students might lack a peer group and be socially isolated in such a small school. All special education students are fully enrolled in the regular education program classes and receive support in the learning center. The school's special education staff consists of six full-time teachers and three full-time paraeducators. According to school data the student-to-staff ratio is 5.7 to 1. In 2009, Salem Academy hired a full-time ELL teacher, who was also responsible for coordinating the program, and a full-time ELL paraeducator serving a caseload of approximately 11 ELL students.

School leaders told the team that approximately 25 percent of the students who enter Salem Academy from the Salem Public Schools under the provisions of IEPs are found not to require special education services when re-evaluated at Salem Academy. The team examined corroborating documentation of this statistic provided by the school for the 2012 and 2013 school years. According to school leaders, many students who enter the school from the Salem Public Schools with IEPs mandating supplemental instruction are fully accommodated in Salem Academy's regular education program. School leaders attributed this to regular education teachers basing their instruction on frequent assessments of students' strengths and needs, providing appropriate instruction in class, during daily before and after school tutorials and during Bonus Block, a rotating period during which students receive individualized instruction from content teachers three times each week.

As described in the Setting section of this report, in 2009 Salem Academy was cited by the Department for failure to provide an ELL program that satisfied all requirements, and its charter was renewed subject to conditions. The conditions were subsequently met through implementation of a Corrective Action Plan. The school's provisions and accommodations for ELL students are discussed in the Curriculum section of this report. School leaders told the team that while the school has increased its capacity to serve ELL students, it is unable to give preference to ELL students in the lottery. Because of the length of the wait list, ELL students not admitted in grade 6 have little chance of entering the school until grade 9; however, most ELL eligible students are in the lower grades.

**Criterion 4: Dissemination**

The school provides innovative models for replication and best practices to other public schools in the district where the charter school is located.

**Finding: In the 2012-13 school year, Salem Academy collaborated and shared best practices with the Salem Public Schools and surrounding districts.**

According to the Application for Renewal and interviews with the school leaders, Salem Academy conducted a Mathematics Learning Community workshop for middle school mathematics teachers, including teachers from the Salem Public Schools, under a 2013 Title I Commendation Schools Grant. The participating teachers jointly examined student work, discussed instructional strategies, and learned the protocols for implementing a Mathematics Learning Community in their own schools.

In 2013, Salem Academy facilitated adoption of the Achievement Network (ANet) assessments by the Salem Public Schools. The school invited representatives of the Salem Public Schools to its ANet workshops and attended the informational presentations made by ANet representatives to Salem Public Schools administrators. At the invitation of Salem Academy, Salem Public Schools mathematics teachers

attended a joint presentation during which Salem Academy staff described how they used student performance data to inform instruction, and ANet representatives described administration and interpretation of the results of their formative mathematics assessments. The head of school met with the chair of the Salem school committee, the superintendent of schools, and the mayor of Salem to discuss the benefits of the ANet assessments and make plans for continuing collaboration. Salem Academy invited the Salem Public Schools mathematics teachers to attend ANet meetings and workshops and to observe Salem Academy mathematics classes.

Salem Academy teachers of Advanced Placement ELA, mathematics and science classes participated in an Advanced Placement Training and Rewards program with their counterparts from Salem, Beverly, Peabody, and Methuen. The collaborating teachers met regularly during the program to share practices, strategies and to brainstorm solutions to common problems.

### **Progress Toward Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures**

**Salem Academy has met all of the measures in its accountability plan related to faithfulness to charter.**

A charter school creates an accountability plan to set objectives for the charter term and to show growth through time. Salem Academy has reported against an accountability plan that was approved in 2009. The accountability plan includes two objectives and six measures related to faithfulness to charter. The school has met all six of these measures. A summary of the school's success in meeting the objectives and measures contained in its accountability plan can be found in Appendix B of this report.

## Academic Program Success

### **Charter School Performance Criteria: Academic Program Success Topics**

#### **Criterion 6: Program Delivery**

The school delivers an academic program that provides improved academic outcomes and educational success for all students.

#### **Key Indicator: Curriculum**

The school's curriculum is aligned to state curriculum frameworks and the Common Core standards; is aligned vertically between grades and horizontally across classrooms at the same grade-level; and supports opportunities for all students to master these skills and concepts.

**Finding: Salem Academy offers a documented curriculum that is aligned to the state curriculum frameworks and the Common Core standards and that is vertically and horizontally aligned. The team found that the school is in the beginning stages of implementing the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment standards. The school's curriculum is continually updated and supports the needs of all learners.**

The team found that Salem Academy's documented curricula for the core subjects of ELA, history, mathematics, science, and Spanish were aligned with the state curriculum frameworks and the Common Core standards; were vertically and horizontally aligned; and contained clear, high expectations for all

students. The team examined the online contents of the shared school drive containing the curriculum folders and the curriculum binders provided by the head of school. The binders and online folders included maps, syllabi, and unit plans. The curriculum maps consisted of a time line, objectives, understandings, essential questions, major assessments, benchmarks, texts and resources, cross-curricular connections, and references to the standards. In addition to the core subjects, there were also curriculum maps for physical education, health, music, art, and senior college class, SAT, an SAT preparation class.

According to ELL administrators and staff interviewed by the team, the school is in the beginning stages of implementing the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) standards; they said that a few teachers have received the SEI teacher endorsement training and know how to use the WIDA standards. Since ELL students encounter and develop language throughout the day, implementing the WIDA standards will require greater collaboration between ESL and content teachers, according to ELL administrators and staff. The team's review of the curriculum map for the ESL class showed that this map cited WIDA ESL standards 1 and 2

According to an ELL teacher and special education teachers interviewed by the team, students have full access to the curriculum. Teachers collaborate through emails and grade-level meetings. General education teachers provide ELL teachers and special education teachers with their lesson plans and assessments one week in advance so that they can decide what accommodations or modifications will be made for students. They may arrange meetings as needed to discuss the modifications that will be made according to the needs of each student.

According to school leaders, Salem Academy staff refines the curriculum continuously to ensure that it meets the needs of the students and that it is vertically and horizontally aligned. Vertical and horizontal alignment is achieved through the curriculum and grade-level meetings held throughout the year and in the summer. Grade-level leaders and curriculum team leaders conduct these meetings with teachers. Teachers and school leaders provided examples of vertical alignment: the mathematics team has focused on vertically aligning SAT-related skills and question types in grades 6 through 12, and the ELA curriculum team has worked to ensure vertical alignment in the progression of skills in writing. A rubric was developed to assess writing in grades 6 through 12, based on student results on the MCAS open response items.

Teachers told the team that they consistently collaborate with the heads of school to update the curriculum. There are five curriculum leaders, one for each core subject. The curriculum leaders meet with the heads of school on Fridays to monitor curriculum timelines. In addition to the curriculum meetings, teachers meet by grade level to continually assess, review, and modify the school's internal benchmarks throughout the school year. (These benchmarks are described under the assessment and program development section of this report.) Teachers enter student assessment results into the Veracross system, and the resulting data guide the modifications of the curriculum and instruction.

General education teachers provided the following examples of curricular modifications for students with disabilities and ELL students that they had made, such as adjusting the reading level of content, creating shorter reading assignments, changing the format and content of quizzes, developing assessments based on the student's reading level, using graphic organizers and study guides, and rewriting benchmarks or reducing the number of benchmarks assessed.

**Key Indicator: Instruction**

The school staff has a common understanding of high quality instruction for all students. Instructional practices are consistently aligned to this common understanding and foster student engagement. Classroom environments are conducive to learning.

**Finding: The instruction observed by the team in upper and lower school classes at Salem Academy was fully consistent with the school's description of lesson design, expectations for student behavior, and student support practices. The level of student engagement and participation was high in most observed classes, and the classroom climate was observed to be cordial, respectful and welcoming. The team found consistent evidence of rigorous expectations and higher- order thinking in many of the upper school classes observed.**

The team found that instruction at Salem Academy was fully consistent with the school's description. According to school leaders interviewed by the team, the team would observe lessons consisting of an introduction, followed by direct instruction, guided practice, independent application and a conclusion, usually including the assignment of homework. They added that teachers would begin class by greeting students at the door and directing them to their seats to work on a Do Now or similar exercise while the teacher checked homework and ensured that students were prepared for class. Behavioral expectations would be conveyed and assessed by reference to REACH, the school's character-based norms, and additionally by SLANT (Sit up, Listen, Ask questions, Nod yes or no, and Talk to the teacher) at the lower school, which was intended to help younger students form a learning disposition. School leaders added that the team would observe teachers making accommodations for students with disabilities and ELL students. The team's observations regarding these characteristics are summarized below:

- *Greeting and Do Now.* In all 12 lessons observed from the beginning, the teacher greeted the students at the door, sometimes shaking hands with each of them. As the students proceeded to their seats to complete a brief written task related to the lesson, the teacher circulated among them and checked on homework completion and preparedness for class, especially to determine that students had remembered to bring all required materials.
- *Lesson Design.* The team found evidence of teachers implementing the lesson components described by school leaders in all 28 of the classes observed. The team saw all of these components in the three classes observed for the full period length. In the classes observed for a segment of the period, the team saw all of the expected components such as guided practice during the middle of the lesson and independent work and the assignment of homework at the end.
- *Behavioral expectations.* Teachers had occasion to reference the norms (REACH) to characterize conforming and deviating behavior in 13 of the 28 classes observed. Middle school teachers had occasion to make explicit reference to SLANT in 11 of the 16 middle school classes observed by the team. In two of the observed lower school classes, when students were off-task chatting with each other during instruction the teachers did not make reference to SLANT to redirect them and instead ignored the disruptions.
- *Accommodations for students with disabilities and ELL students.* The team observed accommodations for students in nine of the observed classes. The team found evidence of modified assessments, modified time limits, and modified homework expectations. General education teachers made accommodations smoothly and routinely without making students conspicuously different. One student had an FM transmitter/receiver system that amplified the teacher's voice and reduced ambient sound. ELL specialists and special educators assisted in five of the observed classes. In three of these classes they worked only with one or two students and were sometimes inactive. In two of the classes, they worked with many students and participated in the instruction, primarily by clarifying the teachers' directions or defining academic vocabulary.

In 24 of the 28 classes observed, 75 percent or more of the students were observed to be on task during the lesson. In 20 of the 28 classes observed, almost all students were observed to be actively participating. For example, in one lower school ELA class, students eagerly contributed ideas about the meaning of images in a poem and built upon each other's responses. In an upper school class, students had spirited but respectful exchanges about a controversy in the news, challenging each other's thinking and bringing the discussion to a higher level.

In four of the lower school classes and three of the upper school classes observed, students were passive but compliant as the teachers presented information, demonstrated skills, or lectured. There was little opportunity for students to activate their understanding in these classes, with such an imbalance between teacher and student talk.

The team saw consistent evidence of higher-order thinking in seven of the 12 upper school classes observed. For example, in one class students analyzed passages from primary sources in order to identify misleading and missing information that could lead the reader to an erroneous conclusion. In another, students analyzed and categorized arrays of scientific data following an experiment. In a third class, groups of students presented and explained linear programming examples using Smart Board technology and answered thoughtful questions posed by their classmates and the teacher.

Almost all of the teachers observed used classroom time efficiently and created a sense of urgency. For example, teachers counted backwards from 10 to pace routine activities, such as distribution of materials. Many teachers prefaced their directions with statements such as, "This should not take much time, so let's do it quickly." Students readily complied with classroom rules and expectations and were observed to be productive as well as making meaning from and apparently enjoying their learning experiences. Some teachers were diligent about checking for understanding in many ways such as having students signal their degree of understanding by positioning of their thumbs (up, down, or sideways) to reflect the degree of certainty, monitoring students' accountable talk with partners, and scanning their written products. However, half of the (14 out of 28) teachers observed did not check for understanding in a systematic manner. Interactions between students and students and between students and teachers were observed to be respectful and courteous in all of the classes.

**Key Indicator: Assessment and Program Evaluation**

The school uses a balanced system of formative and benchmark assessments. The school regularly and systematically analyzes the quality and effectiveness of the program in serving all students using qualitative and quantitative evidence and modifies the program accordingly.

**Finding: Salem Academy has developed an internal system of formative and benchmark assessments to measure the attainment of interim and exit standards. The school uses internal and external student performance data systematically to improve teaching and learning and to modify programs and services for all students, including students enrolled in special education and ELL students.**

Salem Academy's exit standards are aligned to the Common Core and state what students should know and be able to do in each academic core subject (ELA, mathematics, science social studies, and Spanish) by the end of grade 12. The benchmarks in each course are used to measure the expected incremental gains in content knowledge and skill acquisition toward mastery of these standards. Administrators and teachers described a systematic process for determining students' strengths and needs through a battery of formative and summative assessments. Teachers use baseline assessments to identify what students already know and are able to do prior to instruction; formative assessments such as quizzes and tests to plan and evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction; and summative assessments such as unit tests, reports, and presentations to determine student mastery.

Salem Academy's teacher-made tests are composed of a variety of item types, including multiple choice, short answer, and open response. These tests are intended to identify the learners at both the lower and upper ends of the performance continuum. Teachers said that they learned about test construction in the school's professional development program. Special educators and ELL specialists modify the content, format, and language of these tests according to the needs of the students in their caseloads. The team examined a number of teacher-made tests, which were composed of a variety of item types at multiple levels of difficulty. Teachers said that they refined and modified their tests each year and stored them on the school's shared drive.

The school rates student performance on an incremental four-point scale labeled as follows: *Performing as a Novice*, *Progressing*, *Knowledgeable*, and *Accomplished*. Teachers enter their benchmark assessment results into the Veracross school data management system, which reports on performance levels for individual students and classes using a growth metric that weights later assessments more heavily in the calculation of performance levels. A student must be rated *Knowledgeable* or *Accomplished* in 70 percent of the course benchmarks in order to pass the course.

Teachers told the team that they use assessment results to plan and evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction. They analyze these data in form (grade-level) groups in order to adjust the content and rate of instruction and provide for individual differences. The benchmarks are based on the content of each course, and student achievement is assessed relative to these benchmarks. The results are used to identify students who are not achieving the benchmarks. Teachers told the team that they have a variety of options available to them to help all students: for example, they may change lessons to target weak areas, form tutoring groups, create action plans for groups or individual students, or require that students attend after school tutoring or summer school.

The team saw no evidence of fluid grouping of students by common needs during the team's classroom observations; the expectations and content were the same for all of the students in almost every class observed. Administrators explained to the team that teachers assign individual students to mandatory tutorials held before and after school at which their skill deficiencies and background weaknesses are specifically addressed. The team saw students working individually and in small groups with teachers during these sessions before and after school. Students interviewed by the team confirmed that they received targeted instruction during these time periods and stated that these sessions were helpful. Students also receive individualized instruction from content teachers on Tuesday, Wednesdays, and Thursdays during a rotating period known as Bonus Block.

Salem Academy has administered the ANet formative assessments since 2005. School leaders and teachers told the team that ANet is based on the state curriculum frameworks and the Common Core standards. ANet is closely correlated with the MCAS tests and is highly predictive of MCAS tests results. The school administers ANet assessments in ELA and mathematics four times per year in grades 6 through 8. The school is planning to administer ANet science and social studies assessments in these grades in the 2015 school year, according to school leaders.

Teachers reported that they analyze the ANet results and plan differentiated instruction for struggling and accelerated students in grade-level and curriculum meetings by identifying students' strengths and weaknesses, developing plans for addressing the underlying concepts and skills required to answer frequently missed questions, and developing plans for at-risk students. Teachers are able to determine the effectiveness of their instruction following the next administration of the ANet. ELA and mathematics teachers meet with the heads of school weekly on Fridays to monitor the effectiveness of the curricula based on student performance data. Modifications and revisions are made informally during this time and more formally during annual summer curriculum development workshops.



Salem Academy also reviews the results of external assessments such as the MCAS, AP, and PSAT tests. The MCAS test analysis procedure begins during the summer with receipt of the preliminary results by the heads of school, who review them to identify overall patterns and trends. Once the full results are available in the early fall, teachers meet with curriculum and grade-level leaders to review them. Curriculum leaders in ELA, mathematics, and science meet with the teachers to examine student responses. According to teachers interviewed by the team, teachers identify the test items that fewer than 70 percent of the students answered correctly, determine the likely reasons, and develop appropriate corrective actions. For example, when it was evident that student had not fully answered open response questions in ELA, mathematics, and science, the ELA, mathematics, science, special education, and history teacher teams designed and included strategies for answering open response questions in course content. The ELA teachers developed a rubric that students and teachers in all grades use to assess the adequacy of open responses. Based on the PSAT results, the mathematics teacher team integrated SAT-type questions and skills into the mathematics curriculum for grades 6 through 12. This work will continue in the 2014 school year with the design of performance tasks in mathematics that require written language, according to school leaders.

Salem Academy has used the results of self-evaluations of its special education and ELL programs to improve the provisions for these populations. For example, as a result of the special education self-evaluation conducted in the 2013 school year, the special education coordinator and heads of school worked jointly to re-institute a co-teaching model in the school. This model is being piloted in a grade 8 mathematics class in the 2013-2014 school year. Under the co-teaching model, a regular education mathematics teacher and a special education generalist plan the instruction and evaluate student performance collaboratively and take turns instructing the entire class and assisting individual students. According to school leaders, all students are benefiting from this model, and the school is considering extending the model to other disciplines in the 2015 school year, beginning with ELA. In addition, Salem Academy is developing a formal system for monitoring the progress of former ELL students based on the 2013 school year ELL program self-evaluation, according to school leaders.

**Key Indicator: Supports for Diverse Learners**

The school provides supports to meet the academic needs for all students, including but not limited to students with disabilities and English language learners.

**Finding: Salem Academy has demonstrated the capacity to identify, assess, and provide interventions that support all learners.**

According to school leaders and documentation reviewed by the team, students making unsatisfactory progress are identified through the Veracross system and teacher referrals. The Veracross system allows school leaders and teachers to monitor every student's attendance, behavior, academic progress, class assignments, and homework assignments. The system has triggers that include thresholds for the number of days absent, used to flag students at risk. Students are referred to the Teacher Assistance Team (TAT), which includes teachers, the grade-level special educator, the grade-level team leader, and student services staff. The TAT develops an action plan to support the student in the least restrictive environment. If the student's achievement does not improve within four to six weeks, the student is referred for an evaluation under the special education law.

The TAT also develops Section 504 plans for students requiring extended testing time, assistive devices, and other accommodations. Parents interviewed by the team commented on the timeliness and appropriateness of 504 plans. One parent said that Salem Academy was proactive and vigilant in fulfilling the requirements of her child's Section 504 plan and that, unlike her experience with her child's prior school, she had never had to insist upon compliance with the plan at Salem Academy.

School leaders and teachers told the team that almost all special education students are fully included in the regular education program. The team observed special educators providing support to students within their regular education classes. The team also observed special educators rendering specially designed instruction and support to the same students in the learning centers.

Salem Academy identifies ELL student in two ways: by routinely requesting records of any assessments of entering students from the ELL offices of their sending school districts and by administering the Home Language Survey to identify students whose parents indicate a first language other than English on the survey. Students who have not been previously identified are assessed with the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT), an English language proficiency screening test. The results of the language proficiency assessment are used to place students in ESL classes with the appropriate hours of service required. According to school leaders, two full-time, licensed ELL teachers provide ESL instruction and content tutoring to the school's 11 ELL students.

In regular education content classes, one of the ELL teachers provides push-in support if the classroom teacher is not SEI-trained. According to the ELL coordinator, three teachers have received SEI teacher endorsement training. Teachers interviewed by the team reported that the ELL teachers meet with the grade-level teams to help classroom teachers develop language objectives and modify learning activities and tasks to meet the needs of ELL students. They are the first point of contact for disciplinary, academic, and social concerns regarding ELL students.

According to school leaders and documentation reviewed by the team, Salem Academy has a District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) that outlines strategies and ways to help diverse learners master the school's learning goals. Although most teachers interviewed by the team appeared to be unfamiliar with the DCAP, the team found evidence of implementation of the interventions and support services articulated in the DCAP. For example, teachers gave the following examples of accommodations referenced in the DCAP: collaboration with the special education teachers and ELL teachers in planning lessons, diverse assessments, connections block, common planning time, after school help, tutoring, and homework assistance.

Salem Academy has a tiered system of interventions. School leaders and teachers described a number of developmentally appropriate structured support programs intended to prevent student failure or referral for an evaluation under the special education law. For example, teachers provide homework assistance and individual tutoring before and after school daily. Some students are required to attend these sessions based on weak academic performance or difficulty with homework completion. In addition, students receive individualized support on three days during Bonus Block.

#### **Criterion 7: Culture and Family Engagement**

The school supports students' social and emotional health in a safe and respectful learning environment that engages families.

#### **Key Indicator: Social, Emotional, and Health Needs**

The school creates a safe school environment and addresses the physical, social, emotional, and health needs of its students.

**Finding: The school has established an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for all students and staff.**

The team found that Salem Academy is physically safe. Access to the facility is through a glass-walled entry vestibule. The entrance is locked, and visitors must ring a doorbell, be buzzed into the building, and wear nametags. The school has several entry points, and school leaders reported that the staff has been directed to remain vigilant in keeping them locked. A security camera system is in place.

The school has a lockdown policy and procedures. After the Connecticut school shootings in December 2012, Salem Academy installed new locks on all doors so they can be locked from the inside of the classroom as well as shades to block viewing of the classroom from any window or door. An internal intercom system was built into the phone system, which was upgraded to ensure that all speakers were working. The school conducts lockdown drills and fire drills with appropriate authorities, including Salem Police and Fire Departments. During the site visit, the team observed that the learning environment was orderly; the team saw no disruptive behavior.

The team's review of the Salem Academy Student Handbook showed that the handbook contained numerous policies related to safety and discipline, such as policies governing discipline, harassment, threats, hazing, and bullying intervention and prevention. Prior to the start of school, the entire staff participates in a civil rights training session and a review of emergency protocols for school safety, according to school leaders.

Students told the team that they felt safe. They said that the school had high expectations for good conduct, that the school is small, and that there are teachers everywhere. Students also said that they are supervised and held accountable for their actions. Parents interviewed by the team reported that the school provides a physically and emotionally safe environment. They said that teachers call or email them with any concerns about their children and that teachers return their calls or emails within the same day, sometimes even late in the evening.

The team found that the school community is based on mutual respect. Students are encouraged to practice the school norms known as REACH; teachers, school counselors, the nurse, the dean of students, and the heads of school work together in supporting the REACH norms. The team observed that the REACH norms were displayed throughout the school. According to the student handbook and teachers interviewed by the team, lower school teachers prepare "REACH reviews" on their students. These reviews are issued to the students to help them understand how their behavior corresponds with REACH standards. REACH rewards are given at school community meetings in both the lower and upper schools. Upper school teachers counsel students on REACH-related issues as they arise. The dean of students maintains detailed records of students' conforming and deviating behavior on the Veracross, and this information is shared with students and parents.

Students interviewed by the team were aware of the school's discipline policy and able to give examples of the REACH norms. They described a progression of consequences for misbehavior, including warnings, demerits, and detention. Students and parents interviewed by the team indicated that they felt that the school's disciplinary system was fair.

**Finding: Salem Academy provides support proportionate to students' needs and helps families navigate the resources that are available to them at school and in the community.**

The dean of students, nurse, special education coordinator, two adjustment counselors and the heads of school comprise the student services team (SST), which provides for the emotional and social needs of students. The SST meets weekly to discuss how to help students overcome socio-emotional and behavioral challenges through early interventions and intensive services. The Salem Police Department's school liaison officer works with school leaders, staff, and families as well as court, probation, and state agencies providing social services.

The SST members told the team that they try to understand the factors contributing to a student's lack of motivation or desire to drop out of school. They try to ease the student's anxiety, assist with peer conflict if the student feels he/she does not fit in, and connect the student to a teacher mentor, peer mentor or

adjustment counselor. They discuss the GED process with students who intend to drop out. They told the team that two students dropped out during the 2012- 2013 school year; although SST team members encouraged them to participate in a credit recovery program, the students did not follow through.

In addition to the consequences for misbehavior outlined in the student handbook, the school notifies parents of the misbehavior. When the standard interventions are not successful, the head of school holds a meeting with the student and the student's parents, teachers, and counselor to develop a behavior contract that targets the student's behavioral challenges and academic needs. For example, a contract for a student with poor impulse control may call for built-in sensory breaks, exercise with the physical education teacher, work to understand the student's emotional triggers, and counseling provided by one of the school's adjustment counselors. The discipline code may be modified for students on IEPs, and families in need may be directed to external counseling agencies.

The SST members told the team that they aid students and families in many ways. For example, the adjustment counselor assists the school's homeless families, assures compliance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act, and contacts families to address transportation issues. She also informs the family about help available in the community, such as the state Department of Transitional Assistance office in Salem. The school collects clothing donations to distribute to needy families and directs them to food pantries and agencies such as North Shore Corps Community Center, Children's Friends and Family Services, South Bay Mental Health Network, Safe Project, and North Shore Medical Center. In addition, Salem Academy pays for a Boys or Girls Club membership for every student.

The school nurse assists students with health concerns, advises families on how to access a doctor or emergency room care when the need arises and dispenses prescribed medication when students have chronic health conditions that require management by a nurse during the school day. As a support team member, she assists staff in providing preventive services, enabling early identification of problems, and fostering health and wellness for families.

**Key Indicator: Family Engagement**

The school develops strong working relationships with families/guardians in order to support students' academic progress and social and emotional well-being.

**Finding: Salem Academy forms relationships with families through orientation meetings, workshops and conferences. The school issues progress reports and report cards to parents regularly and maintains an accessible data base with information on homework, attendance and daily performance. The school has an active parent teacher organization and an active parent advisory council. Parents interviewed by the team expressed satisfaction with the school and the results of a recent parent survey were positive, although the return rate was low.**

According to school leaders and school support staff, Salem Academy reaches out and involves parents in the life of the school. In the summer, prior to the start of each school year, school staff conduct intake interviews with the families of new students and invite them to a meeting with a small team of teachers and a counselor for a "get to know you" conversation. The first parent event at the beginning of the year is a potluck supper for all families followed by a run-through of the daily class schedule with ten-minute classes. Classroom teachers introduce themselves and give a brief overview of their courses.

The School Family Community (SFC) team meets monthly. Parents and staff help organize events such as picnics, sporting events and a relay race; parents also chaperone events and raise money for the school. The school also has a Parent Advisory Council (PAC) consisting of parents of students with disabilities. The PAC meets monthly. According to documentation, the topics for PAC meetings have included services for students following graduation and understanding the provisions of your child's IEP.

School leaders stated that they are offering a series of family workshops, facilitated by Families First, an agency founded by Wheelock College and Boston Children's Museum to help parents with child rearing through parenting education. A needs assessment survey was sent home in the Friday Folder for parents to fill out and return to the school. This was described as a new endeavor in the 2014 school year and an attempt to further engage families with parenting programs of interest to them.

Parents interviewed by the team expressed positive views of the communication between home and school. In the first week of school, Connections (homeroom) teachers call their students' families and introduce themselves. Every parent is given a password for the Veracross system; parents told the team that the Veracross system provides them with current information regarding their children's assignments, schedule, academic performance and conduct. If needed, parents may use the computers in the school's computer lab to access the Veracross system. The school also sends personal, automated phone calls and emails to parents. Parents stated that they receive real-time information without having to "interrogate" their children. The school also provides parents with access to staff through Back to School Night, parent/teacher meetings and parent/teacher telephone calls.

According to parents and school leaders, parent conferences are held at the mid-point of each trimester at the lower school and in November, February and May at the upper school. Lower school parents receive report cards at the end of each trimester and upper school parents receive report cards at the end of each quarter. Parents may arrange to meet with teachers and administrators via telephone or email. Parents told the team that teachers and administrators were highly accessible and responded within a day to requests to meet.

Salem Academy sends home a Friday Folder containing notices, forms, reports and the weekly newsletter. The team's review of five newsletters showed that they contained listings of important dates, news and notes, stories about school events, and other pertinent information about the school.

The school conducts a parent survey every year. In 2013, parents consistently gave Salem Academy high scores in all categories; however, only 29 parents (22 percent) responded to the 2013 survey. On a five-point scale, the school averaged 4.7 across all categories. The lowest average score (4.1) was for the variety and appropriateness of extracurricular activities including art, athletics and enrichment. The highest average scores (4.7) were for the professionalism and competence of faculty and staff members and their belief in students' ability to succeed; the appropriateness of the organizational structure, school day, year, and support services for serving all students; and general satisfaction with the school.

### **Progress Toward Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures**

**Salem Academy Charter School has met a majority of the measures in its accountability plan related to academic program success.**

The school's accountability plan includes three objectives and eight measures related to academic program success. The school has met six of the eight measures. The school did not meet the measure requiring all grade 11 students to exceed the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally on the PSAT critical reading section and requiring all grade 12 students to exceed the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally on the SAT critical reading section. In addition, the school did not meet the measure requiring all grade 11 students to exceed the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally on the PSAT mathematics section and requiring all grade 12 students to exceed the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally on the SAT mathematics section. A summary of the school's success in meeting the objectives and measures contained in its accountability plan can be found in Appendix B of this report.

## Organizational Viability

### Charter School Performance Criteria: Organizational Viability Topics

#### **Criterion 8: Capacity**

The school sustains a well-functioning organizational structure, and clearly delineates roles for staff, administration, and board members.

#### **Key Indicator: School Leadership**

The school and board of trustees take action to attract, develop and retain an effective school leadership team that obtains staff commitment to improving student learning and implements a clearly defined mission and set of goals.

**Finding: The school has a stable leadership team that has communicated the school's mission to all stakeholders. The board of trustees evaluates the executive director's performance annually. School leaders provide academic and operational information to the board of trustees on a regular basis.**

According to the Application for Renewal and confirmed on site, the school's leadership team consists of the executive director, the head of school, head of lower school, the special education coordinator, the dean of students, and (since March 2013) the business manager. Four of the six administrators have been with the school throughout the current charter term, and two administrators – both deans of students – left the school during the current charter term.

During the site visit, the team noted that the school's mission and REACH norms were prominently displayed in hallways and classrooms throughout the school building and that staff members, parents, students, and board members were thoroughly familiar with the mission and norms.

According to board meeting minutes and evaluations reviewed by the team, the board evaluates the executive director annually based on goals, such as closing the year with a surplus and completing the school expansion, and input from parents, students, and staff. The executive director evaluates the head of school, and the head of school evaluates the other school leaders. School leaders reported that the annual evaluation process related to their performance is being revised in the 2014 school year to include specific, measurable goals.

The board meeting minutes reviewed by the team indicate that the board regularly receives information from school leaders regarding the school's academic performance and programs, its operations and finances, and facility needs. The executive director and the heads of schools present information regarding academic programs, initiatives, and performance to the board on a monthly basis.

#### **Key Indicator: Professional Climate**

The school has structures for regular, frequent collaboration and professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum and instructional practice. A system is in place for monitoring instructional practice for consistency, which includes a formal process of teacher evaluation.

**Finding: Salem Academy has adapted and begun to implement the new Massachusetts Model System for Education Evaluation.**

According to the heads of school, in 2012- 2013 Salem Academy adopted the Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation with one minor revision. Salem Academy's Instructional Development Program (IDP) as outlined in the 2013-2014 Faculty Handbook is the same as the Department framework for instructional development and evaluation. There are five components: Self-Assessment and Analysis, Goal Setting and Plan Development; Implementation of the Plan; Formative Assessment; and Summative Evaluation. Teachers confirmed that they are using the Department's performance rubrics. A teacher evaluation and compensation (TEACH) task force comprised of school leaders, teachers, and outside experts as well as board members, was formed in the 2013-2014 school year to link teacher compensation to student achievement. Teachers interviewed by the team were aware that they will be held responsible for student progress on benchmarks and assessments in observations and evaluations conducted in the 2013-2014 school year.

Teachers interviewed by the team reported that they receive regular supervision and feedback from school leaders and that they had begun the formal process of a self-assessment and the development of smart goals. They reported that the heads of school observe instruction in their classrooms from five to 15 minutes at a time and provide teachers with feedback in person or through notes and emails. In addition, teachers meet with the head of their school every two weeks to discuss progress, goals, and the sources of evidence for their evidence binders. Teachers told the team that they could ask for specific observation of a lesson of their choice and receive feedback on their practice based on Salem Academy's instructional priorities.

**Finding: Salem Academy provides teachers with opportunities for collaboration and professional development. Teachers interviewed by the team expressed the desire for additional, targeted professional development to improve their instructional practice.**

School leaders and staff told the team that Salem Academy provides time for teachers to meet weekly. Teachers said there were two team structures: the curriculum team is comprised of teachers from grades 6 through 12 by curriculum area, and the grade level team is comprised of teachers from grades 6 through 12 by grade-level. The grade-level team leaders meet weekly with the head of school and the head of lower school, the curriculum team leaders meet every other week on Fridays, and the entire faculty meets on Fridays. Teachers also stated that they collaborate via email and use the shared drive to work with each other on lesson plans, content, reference sheets, and modifications.

According to the school's *2012-2013 Annual Report* and interviews conducted by the team, Salem Academy provided grant-funded professional development for general and special education teachers to expand their skills in the areas of teaching, reading, and writing across the curriculum during the year. Twelve teachers representing the ELA, history, science, and special education departments as well as the special education coordinator attended one or more workshops presented through the Keys to Literacy organization. Workshop courses were one to two days in length and included the following: The Key to Comprehension Routine, The Key Vocabulary Routine, The Key to Reading and Responding to Open Response Questions, and the Key Writing Routine. According to the *2012-13 Annual Report*, the workshops presented an explicit model for framing and teaching skills and strategies with practical methods and examples for differentiation and scaffolding for diverse learners.

Another area of professional development described by the *2012-13 Annual Report* and those interviewed related to the school's two co-teaching mathematics teams. The professional development consisted of a three-part webinar, Leadership in Co-Teaching Strategies to Enhance Team Outcomes, in which grades 8 and 9 mathematics teachers and special education teachers participated.

According to the special education coordinator and the 2012-13 *Annual Report*, two teachers attended a workshop on executive functioning and shared strategies for accommodating students with the entire faculty. The ELL coordinator provided professional development on using language objectives to improve instruction. Special educators also participated in training on the MCAS-ALT and administration of the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement.

Teachers interviewed by the team were not enthusiastic about the school's professional development program. They said that the curriculum and grade-level team meetings could be more efficient and purposeful and that the school focused too much on curriculum development and not enough on improving instructional practices. Teachers said they wanted to refine their teaching practices, deepen their content knowledge, improve student learning, and challenge the highest-achieving students. They were also eager for opportunities to observe good teaching practices.

The heads of school told the team that they were well aware of these teacher concerns from the results of the 2013 TELL Mass survey. They said that they had given priority in professional development to alignment of the curriculum with the Common Core and WIDA standards, and to implementation of the new model evaluation system, because these were requirements. They told the team that in response to teacher concerns, they began to implement professional learning communities (PLCs) as a venue for developing professional skills and improve student learning. In August, the staff was provided with professional development on establishing PLCs. School leaders told the team that professional development would be specifically related to teachers' collaborative efforts to improve teaching and learning in the PLCs and their self-evaluations under the new educator evaluation model.

**Key Indicator: Organizational Effectiveness**

The school defines and delineates clear roles and responsibilities among leaders, staff, management and board members, reflecting a culture of shared accountability. The school has clear and well-understood systems for decision-making and communication processes among all members of the school community.

**Finding: The roles and responsibilities of Salem Academy board members, leaders, and staff are clear and well understood. Decision-making is a shared process using board subcommittees, task forces, and administrative and teacher teams. Parents participate in the School Family Community (SFC) meetings, their input is sought through annual surveys, and their representatives communicate regularly with the board.**

Board members interviewed by the team articulated an understanding of their role to oversee the school's academic programs and financial condition while not involving themselves in the school's day-to-day operations, and they oversee the executive director. The school's Application for Renewal includes an organization chart that shows clear reporting relationships and responsibilities for the board, administrators, and staff, and the school has detailed job descriptions for employees. Administrators noted that the executive director oversees the administrative team (described below) and the day to day operations of the school, and the heads of school supervise the faculty and oversee grade level and curriculum teams of teachers.

The team found that the school's decision-making process is collaborative. The board uses subcommittees to do much of their work, as described below, and these subcommittees involve staff as well as board members. They and the executive director reported formation of the TEACH task force linking teachers' evaluations to compensation. Board members attend school events and SLC meetings to be better informed about the school and to communicate with members of the school community. Board members reported that they met jointly with the staff in April 2013 to discuss the school's future, including issues such as teacher retention and facilities. According to administrators, the administrative team is led by the director and consists of the heads of school, the dean of students, the special education coordinator, and



the business manager; the team meets weekly with an agenda and action items for each meeting. Administrators and teachers reported that curriculum teams and grade-level teams consisting of teachers and school leaders have done much of the work in curriculum development and instruction. The board's evaluation of the executive director noted that he had worked well in groups and had been collaborative, and he is always present, available, and approachable.

The Application for Renewal and the school's annual reports indicate that the school communicates with parents and annually surveys them in order to obtain their input into school programs and issues. Although only 22 percent responded in 2013, parents were overwhelmingly satisfied (91 percent) with the school, and their response to the item regarding school communications with families averaged 4.7 out of 5. Board members reported that a parent representative regularly attends their meetings.

#### **Criterion 9: Governance**

The board of trustees acts as public agents authorized by the state and provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school while maintaining policies, establishing and monitoring progress toward performance goals, and implementing governance systems to ensure the success and sustainability of the school.

**Finding: The members of the Salem Academy board of trustees are active, possess a variety of relevant skills, are well informed, and are engaged in appropriate oversight of the school and support of its programs. They are studying options for expansion and have developed a long-range strategic plan that is monitored through subcommittees. They have not formally evaluated their own performance, but they regularly seek input from stakeholders and reflect informally upon their decisions and the progress of the school.**

Salem Academy is governed by an 11-member board of trustees who actively oversee the school. In September 2012, the board voted to amend its bylaws to increase the maximum number of board members from 11 to 15 with a minimum of seven members in order to improve development and fundraising. (The executive director expects to apply for a charter amendment for this change.) A majority of the trustees then in office constitutes a quorum, and the Application for Renewal states that a quorum has been present for all board meetings; this is confirmed in the minutes. During the current charter term, the board has functioned with an average of 11 members from 2009 through 2013. Board turnover has been low, with an average of one board member departing the board and one joining the board each year. The board officers include a chair, a vice-chair, a secretary, and a treasurer.

The Application for Renewal and the school website list ten members of the board of trustees with backgrounds in development, construction, law, finance, interior design, public and college education, health, business, and technology. Board members reported that they have deliberately recruited members for the board who bring useful skills to the board.

The board is well informed and engages in appropriate oversight of the school. Members reported that early in the school's history, the board was dominated by parents. In 2013, there are few parents of current students on the board, and the board's focus has broadened beyond typical parental concerns. The board has the following six standing committees: education, development, facilities, finance, human relations, and trusteeship; the subcommittees do much of the detailed information gathering and discussion of school issues, and they report to the full board monthly. During the current charter term, the board also instituted the following ad hoc task forces: wellness policy, strategic planning, and teacher evaluation and compensation habits. The board meeting minutes reviewed by the team indicate that the board regularly engages in discussions of the school's academic performance and programs, its operations and finances, and facility needs. The minutes show that the executive director and the heads of schools as well as the board's subcommittees have presented information on the school's operations and finances, enrollment, teacher attrition and salaries, the food service program, activities funded by Race to the Top

funds, the need for a business manager, development and fundraising activities (initiatives, grants, and major gifts), and options for expanding the school's facility. Board members interviewed by the team indicated that they understand the school's mission, programs, and needs.

The board meeting minutes also show that the board has developed a comprehensive policy manual and a manual of financial policies and procedures, and minutes include references to discussions of policies regarding technology, retention and promotion, wellness, and educator evaluation. The minutes also reference board approval of budgets and audits, short-term loans, plans for expansion and for the facility, and proposed charter amendments. In an interview with the team, board members explained that based on a lack of alternative sites within range of the city center and in recognition of the strong correlation between small school size and educational results for the target population, the board has determined that the best plan for the immediate future is a modest enrollment increase in grades 6 through 12 to be accommodated by renovating surplus space in current building.

In 2010, the board prepared a long-range strategic plan for the school containing goals and specific objectives in the areas of the educational program, human resources, school culture, governance and administration, communications and development, facilities, and finances. The board meeting minutes reviewed by the team indicate the board has assigned the responsibility for monitoring the plan to committees that report monthly to the full board, and board members and administrators confirmed this and went on to give examples of goals that have been accomplished; there is no indication in their minutes that the board has conducted a formal evaluation or summary report of its progress toward the plan goals; however, as noted above board committees report on strategic plan goal progress.

There are no references in minutes to a formal self-evaluation by the board; how board members interviewed by the team stated they receive regular feedback from parents and staff. The board has held joint meetings with the staff, as noted previously, to elicit feedback on the vision and needs of the school, and board members reported they regularly attend SFC meetings and school events and seek input from parents. They also receive input from students for the board's evaluation of the executive director and in the school's survey of student opinions on service learning, required by one of the school's accountability plan measures.

#### **Criterion 10: Finance**

The school maintains a sound and stable financial condition and operates in a financially sound and publicly accountable manner.

**Finding: Salem Academy received less revenue than expected from Salem Public Schools in fiscal year 2011; although it subsequently reduced its expenditures in fiscal years 2011 and 2012, the school saw a significant decline in its net assets. The school achieved a surplus in fiscal year 2013 and is now financially sound. It operates in a financially sound and publicly accountable manner.**

According to the executive director, a reporting error by the Salem Public Schools resulted in lower than expected tuition revenue in 2011. He reported that the school became aware of the reduced tuition revenues in the winter of 2011 and took immediate steps to reduce expenditures for the remainder of the academic year and for the subsequent year to address the problem while protecting the educational program to the extent possible.

The team's review of Salem Academy's audited financial statements shows that the combined net assets of the school and the Salem Academy Charter School Foundation, Inc., declined from \$574,398 in fiscal year 2010 to \$3,854 in fiscal year 2011 and to (\$68,180) in fiscal year 2012; in fiscal year 2013 their combined net assets increased to \$137,509.

The school manages its financial resources in a responsible manner with appropriate oversight by the board of trustees, its treasurer and finance subcommittee, and school leaders. The school has a clear, complete manual of fiscal procedures and policies. A review of documents showed that a number of fiscal policies are outlined in the staff handbook, including sections on payroll, overtime, and travel reimbursement. A review of comments by the auditor in the 2012 audit indicate the school has understands and has implemented appropriate fiscal control procedures.

The team's review of board meeting minutes shows that the board receives a monthly report from its finance subcommittee and the executive director regarding the current and projected financial condition of the school; in June of each year, the board receives from its finance subcommittee and the executive director a proposed budget for the following year, which the board then approves. In March 2013, the school hired a certified business manager.

According to information provided by the board during an interview and confirmed by information in board minutes, the executive director prepares a draft budget for the Finance Committee discussion; the Finance Committee then recommends a budget to the full board for approval in June. Changes are made to the budget are made by the Finance Committee and full board.

### **Progress Toward Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures**

**Salem Academy has met a majority of measures in its accountability plan related to organizational viability.**

The school's accountability plan includes five objectives and 11 measures related to organizational viability. The school has met three of the five objectives. The school did not meet the objective related to the board of trustees' strategic plan because the board has not formally assessed its accomplishment of the plan goals, although the board has a plan and regularly monitors and reviews it. The school did not meet the objective related to parent satisfaction because of the low response rate to the most recent parent survey. The school did not meet the objective related to the diversity of the student population because the percentage of Salem Academy students in the low income category is more than 10 percentage points lower than the percentage of Salem Public Schools students in the low income category. A summary of the school's success in meeting the objectives and measures contained in its accountability plan can be found in Appendix B of this report.

## Appendix A

### Renewal Inspection Site Visit Schedule

<i>Day 1: October 1</i> <i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Day 2: October 2</i> <i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Day 3: October 3</i> <i>Thursday</i>
Team meeting 7:30 – 8:00	Team meeting 7:30-8:00	Team meeting 7:30-8:00
Meeting with Heads of School and Tour of School 8:00- 8:30	Parent Focus Group 8:00- 9:00  Classroom Observations 8:30-9:00	Board of Trustees Focus Group 8:00-9:00  Classroom Observations 8:30-9:00
Team Review of documents 8:30-9:30	Teacher Focus Group: Special Education and ELL 9:00-9:30	Administrative Team Focus Group Follow-Up 9:00-10:00
Administrative Team Focus Group 9:30-10:30	Teacher Focus Group General Education 10:00-11:00	Classroom Observations 10:00 – 11:30
Team Review of documents Classroom Observations 10:30-11:30	Classroom Observations 9:00-11:30	
Team working lunch 11:30-12:30	Team working lunch 11:30-12:30	Exit Discussion with Heads of School 11:30-12:00
Special Education and ELL Administrator Interview 12:30-1:00  Classroom Observations 12:44-4:00 <u>Student Focus Groups</u> 12:30–1:00 Grades 6-8 1:10-1:50 Grades 9-12	Student Support and Family Services Focus Group 2:00 – 3:00  Classroom Observations 12:44-4:00	

## Appendix B

### Accountability Plan Performance

#### Faithfulness to Charter

	Performance (Met/Not Met)	Evidence
<b>Objective: Salem Academy Students will demonstrate academic proficiency while providing service to the community.</b>		
<b>Measure:</b> Salem Academy Charter School students on average will demonstrate 90 percent proficiency on service learning benchmarks each year.	<b>Met</b>	According to the team’s review of grade reports for 2009-2013, students have demonstrated 93 percent proficiency on average each year.
<b>Measure:</b> 100 percent of students in grade 12 will complete a service learning thesis, demonstrating their ability to apply academic skills to meet a community need by meeting defined expectations.	<b>Met</b>	According to the team’s review of graduation records for 2009-2013, all graduates have met this requirement
<b>Measure:</b> 80 percent of students will agree in an annual survey that their service learning projects benefited the community.	<b>Met</b>	According to the team’s review of survey results from 2010-2013, 84 percent of students on average agreed that their service learning projects benefitted the community each year.
<b>Objective: Salem Academy students will demonstrate that they are prepared to succeed in college.</b>		
<b>Measure:</b> 90 percent of students will be accepted to at least one college or university.	<b>Met</b>	According to the team’s review of school records, for 2009-2013, all graduates have been accepted at least one college or university.
<b>Measure:</b> 90 percent of students will matriculate to a college or university within a year of graduate from Salem Academy Charter School	<b>Met</b>	According to the team’s review of alumni surveys and telephone call records for 2009-2013, 90 percent of graduates (78) have matriculated at a college or university within a year of graduation from Salem Academy.
<b>Measure:</b> 100 percent of students graduating from Salem Academy Charter School will have taken and passed classes which fulfill average entry requirement for four year colleges.	<b>Met</b>	According to the team’s review of transcripts for 2009-2013, 100 percent of students have taken and passed classes which fulfill average college entry requirements as defined by Salem Academy.

**Academic Program Success**

	<b>Performance (Met/Not Met)</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
<b>Objective: Salem Academy students will demonstrate that they are informed and articulate through measurable academic achievement in English language arts.</b>		
<b>Measure:</b> Salem Academy Charter School students will demonstrate adequate yearly progress, or will meet growth targets, as established by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in English language arts in aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups.	<b>Met</b>	According Department data for 2013, Salem Academy is a Level 1 school and has exceeded the ELA gap narrowing goals in the aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups.
<b>Measure:</b> 90 percent of students will meet internal grade-level proficiency requirements in English language arts classes.	<b>Met</b>	According to the team’s review of grade reports from 2009-2012, 93 percent of students on average have met internal grade-level proficiency requirements each year.
<b>Measure:</b> The average score of Salem Academy Charter School students in grade 11 on the PSAT, and students in grade 12 on the Critical Reading sections of the SAT will be above the 50 <sup>th</sup> percentile nationally.	<b>Not Met</b>	According school records, grade 11 students did not score above the 50 <sup>th</sup> percentile on the critical reading section of the PSAT. The classes of 2010, 2011, and 2014 scored above the 50 <sup>th</sup> percentile in critical reading on the SAT; however, the classes of 2012 and 2013 scored below the 50 <sup>th</sup> percentile in critical reading on the SAT.
<b>Objective: Salem Academy students will demonstrate that they are informed and articulate through measurable academic achievement in mathematics.</b>		
<b>Measure:</b> Salem Academy Charter School students will demonstrate adequate yearly progress or will meet growth targets, as established by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in mathematics in aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups.	<b>Met</b>	According to Department data for 2013, Salem Academy is a Level 1 school and has exceeded the mathematics gap narrowing goals in the aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups.
<b>Measure:</b> 90 percent of students will meet internal grade-level proficiency requirements in mathematics classes.	<b>Met</b>	According to the team’s review of grade reports from 2009-2012, 90 percent of students on average have met internal grade-level proficiency requirement each year.
<b>Measure:</b> The average score of Salem Academy Charter School students in grade 11 on the PSAT, and students in grade 12 on the SAT mathematics sections will be above the 50 <sup>th</sup> percentile nationally.	<b>Not Met</b>	According to the team’s review of school records, only the 2013 grade 11 class scored above the 50 <sup>th</sup> percentile in mathematics on the PSAT. Only the class of 2014 scored above the 50 <sup>th</sup> percentile in mathematics on the SAT.
<b>Objective: Salem Academy Students will demonstrate that they are informed and articulate through measurable academic achievement across academic core subjects.</b>		

<b>Measure:</b> Salem Academy students will average 80 percent proficiency on academic benchmarks across all core subjects.	<b>Met</b>	According to the team’s review of grade reports from 2009-2012, students have averaged 83 percent proficiency on academic benchmarks each year.
<b>Measure:</b> 100 percent of Salem Academy Charter School students will earn a passing score on one high school science, technology and engineering assessment as defined by the DESE and measured by the MCAS	<b>Met</b>	According to the team’s review of school records from 2009-2012, every student has earned a passing score, proficient or higher, on one high school science, technology and engineering assessment each year.

**Organizational Viability**

	2012-2013 Performance (Met/Not Met)	Evidence
<b>Objective: Salem Academy will demonstrate stability and sustainability through the responsible use of financial resources.</b>		
<b>Measure:</b> The school will operate on a balanced budget as evidenced by year end income statements	<b>Met</b>	During the fourth year of the current charter term, the school had positive net assets of \$137,509, based on the fiscal year 2013 audit, and was financially sound.
<b>Measure:</b> The school will maintain positive net assets and adequate sources of funds to meet all payments as evidenced on year-end balance statements.	<b>Met</b>	See above.
<b>Measure:</b> The school’s independent annual audits will result in unqualified opinions and will show no material findings.	<b>Met</b>	The draft 2013 audit approved by the board at the October 2013 meeting has unqualified opinions and no material findings.
<b>Objective: The Salem Academy Board of Trustees will demonstrate effective leadership and governance.</b>		
<b>Measure:</b> The Board will have a quorum present at 100% of its monthly meetings; adhere to focused and relevant agendas at each meeting; reflect an effective committee structure as evidenced by reports at meetings; and maintain accurate records as evidenced by approved minutes of all meetings.	<b>Met</b>	Minutes of board meetings reviewed by the team indicate a quorum present for all monthly meetings, include agendas and subcommittee reports, are approved by the board, and are occasionally amended to be accurate.
<b>Measure:</b> The Board will engage in an ongoing strategic planning process that sets specific, realistic goals and timelines each year, that is responsive to the inevitability of change, and that results in achievement of 90% of the agreed upon goals.	<b>Not Met</b>	Board meeting minutes show that the board created and approved a strategic plan in 2010. The plan is monitored by subcommittees that report on progress regularly, but no summary of achievement of the goals is evident in minutes.
<b>Measure:</b> The Board will establish an effective organizational structure for the school. At least 50% of parents will respond to an annual family satisfaction survey. At least 80% of respondents will express satisfaction with	<b>Not Met</b>	According to school records reviewed by the team, the survey response rate in 2013 was only 22 percent, although the satisfaction rate was 91

the school.		percent.
<b>Objective:</b> Salem Academy will employ highly qualified, competent, and talented instructional staff whose collective professionalism will support a purposeful learning environment.		
<b>Measure:</b> By the end of their first year at Salem Academy, all teachers who are retained will have met NCLB Highly Qualified standards and be proficient in 80% of instructional standards as measured by the school's standards-based evaluation system.	<b>Met</b>	Based on personnel data provided by the school and the Application for Renewal, all teachers are highly qualified and proficient in 80 percent of the school's instructional standards.
<b>Measure:</b> Salem Academy will retain 80% of teachers who have demonstrated proficiency in the school's instructional standards.	<b>Met</b>	Data provided in the Application for Renewal and most recent annual report indicate that six of 34 teachers who demonstrated proficiency left the school in the 2013 school year; thus, the retention rate for that year was 82 percent.
<b>Objective:</b> Salem Academy will recruit and retain a student population that reflects the diversity of Salem and the surrounding communities.		
<b>Measure:</b> Salem Academy's student population will match on a percentage basis within 10% the sending district's statistically significant populations with respect to ethnicity, language proficiency, economic status, and special education designation as evidenced by Mass DESE published statistics.	<b>Not Met</b>	Student data from the 2013 annual report show that Salem Academy's student profile matched within 10 percent that of Salem Public School published on the Department website for all categories except the low income category: 44.7 percent of Salem Academy students were low income, versus 55.9 percent of Salem Public Schools students.
<b>Measure:</b> Salem Academy will retain at least 90% of students within its middle school and 90% of students within its high school.	<b>Met</b>	According to school records reviewed by the team, the student retention rate within the middle school has averaged 96 percent and the student retention rate within the high school rose to 93 percent in 2012.
<b>Objective:</b> Salem Academy will document and share information on its school model including innovative practices.		
<b>Measure:</b> Salem Academy will present at least one model of its mission based best practices at an educational conference, in a journal, or at a collaborative workshop each year and will seek inclusion in the MASS DESE Best Practices Guide as evidence of its value to the larger educational community.	<b>Met</b>	According to the Application for Renewal, Salem Academy has shared best practices with the Salem Public Schools through its Commendation School grant and in other venues, and will seek inclusion in the current ESE Best Practices Guide.