Pennsylvania Department of Education

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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HARRISBURG, PA 17126-0333

Charter Annual Report

Monday, November 10, 2008

Charter School: Bucks County Montessori CS
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CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY DATA

Charter School Annual Report
Summary Data
2008 - 2009

Name of School: Bucks County Montessori CS

Date of Local Chartering School Board/PDE Approval: Initial Start>June 16, 2000-01 -- 1st Renewal>2004-05 -- 2nd Renewal Application>2008-09

Length of Charter: Current Charter>5 Years **Opening Date:** September 2000

Grade Level: Kindergarten to Grade 6 **Hours of Operation:** 8:30AM to 3:15PM

Percentage of Certified Staff: 82.4% **Total Instructional Staff:** 17

Student/ Teacher Ratio: 10:1 **Student Waiting List:** 88

Attendance Rate/Percentage: Kindergarten 96.51% Elementary 96.46%

Enrollment: 178 **Per Pupil Subsidy:** Pennsbury: $9,786.88 Reg & $22,543.79 SPED

Student Profile

American Indian/Alaskan Native: 0
Asian/Pacific Islander: 16
Black (Non-Hispanic): 2
Hispanic: 10
White (Non-Hispanic): 150
Multicultural: 0

Percentage of Students from Low Income Families Eligible for a Free or Reduced Lunch: 3.4%

Provide the Total Unduplicated Number of Students Receiving Special Services (Excluding Gifted) as of Previous December: 25

Number of:	K (AM)	K (PM)	K (FTIME)	ELEM	MIDDLE	SEC.	TOTAL
Instructional Days	0	0	169	169	0	0	169
Instructional Hours	0	0	971.75	971.75	0	0	971.75

SECTION I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Organization Description

The 2007-08 school year was the seventh successful year of operation for the Bucks County Montessori Charter School.

The chartering District, Pennsbury, is located in the southeastern corner of Pennsylvania, along the great bend of the Delaware River. There are 176 students attending BCMCS in grades K through 6 from the surrounding school districts of Pennsbury, Bristol, Bensalem, Centennial, Council Rock, Morrisville and Neshaminy. These districts include the surrounding communities of Lower Bucks County including Bristol, Langhorn, Lower Makefield, Tullytown and Yardley Borough. These communities comprise a broad range of ethnic, racial, and socio-economic households, and the region itself is a mix of small towns and suburban locations, having a variety of residential, commercial and light industrial sectors.

BCMCS has maintained full enrollment with a sizable waiting list since opening in 2000, and consistently meets Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals set by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, which demonstrates strength of the quality and integrity with the education being provided. Public confidence is affirmed through achievement of enrollment projections and the constant, continual expression of high satisfaction with the instructional effectiveness and student learning/achievement. In 2007-2008, there were 23 kindergarten students, 31 first graders, 21 second graders, 37 third graders, 35 fourth graders, 19 fifth graders and 12 sixth grade students.

Each year BCMCS conducts a lottery to select new students as there are continually more applicants than open spaces. Upholding to our school's philosophy, students are primarily chosen at the lowest possible grade level so as to best formulate Montessori responsiveness. For the 2007-08 school year, 24 kindergarten students were selected for admission, which left a kindergarten waiting list of 52 children. No spaces were available in any of the upper grades, of which a number of applicants were automatically placed on the wait list.

BCMCS admits students of any socio-economic, racial or ethnic heritage, religious belief and family structure. In order to be considered for the kindergarten class, a child must be 5 years of age by September 30th. Children who are between 6 and 9 by September 30th are considered for Lower Elementary program. Those children between the ages of 9 and 12 by September 30th are of an eligible age for the Upper Elementary program.

Each member of BCMCS family-staff; parent; student; and community endorses its mission. Primarily, our school makes an individualized educational experience consistent with Montessori principles available to elementary students within the Pennsbury School District and the surrounding districts.

Montessori principles are based on the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, a physician in Italy at the turn of the Twentieth Century, who believed that children learned best by doing. At Bucks County Montessori Charter School, the goal is accomplished through the active pursuit of many integrated learning experiences: physical, social, emotional, kinesthetic, as well as cognitive. The learning environment provided at BCMCS facilitates intellectual, emotional and social growth, thereby empowering the students to become responsible, confident and caring global citizens. A goal of the school is to enable students to become young adults possessing strong, independent and analytical thinking skills, as well as an enduring love and passion for learning.

Our Montessori program embellishes students to discover knowledge at an individualized pace utilizing hands-on manipulative in an environment which promotes collaborative learning. This concept is emphasized, reinforced and supported by a highly trained, committed Montessori staff that helps maintain high achievement levels by the students on all the Pennsylvania and other assessment standards.

BCMCS is truly a learning community, where children are encouraged to reason, explore, cooperate, collaborate, negotiate and understand. The teachers, administrators, students, parents and the surrounding community are all integral parts of its structure.

Core Purpose

Mission

SCHOOL:

The Mission of the Bucks County Montessori Charter School has always been and continues to be to make available to elementary age students within the Pennsbury School District and surrounding districts, an individualized educational experience consistent with Montessori principles. These principles are based on the philosophy and methodologies of Dr. Maria Montessori, who believed that children learned best by doing. At BCMCS, this goal is accomplished through active pursuit of many different, integrated learning experiences: physical, social emotional and cognitive. The nurturing and structured educational environment we provide facilitates intellectual, emotional and social growth, thereby empowering our students to become responsible, confident and caring global citizens. Our goal is to enable children to become young adults possessing strong independent and analytical thinking skills, as well as an enduring love and passion for learning.

We remain faithful to our mission by providing a quality Montessori program for all who attend BCMCS. Our program is centered around a continuim of developmental stages clearly observable in all our programs and activities, and respect for the child characterized by:

- A responsive environment prepared with multi-sensory sequential and self correcting materials to support self directed learning;
- Observant educators trained to assess learning styles, paces and trajectories;
- Purposeful activity as the engine of the whole person;
- Freedom of movement with peers and select activities;
- Uninterrupted time to finish each activity successfully, thus building self confidence;
- A personal best approach eliminating peer competition in favor of self-motivation and self esteem;
- Montessorians as lead teachers in all classrooms

Following are the key elements of our original charter, and the manner in which our school's programs and operations are faithful to those plans.

- Curriculum: We provide an enriching and prepared environment, which is structured to be child-centered, developmentally appropriate, and academically challenging at all levels, K-6. Students utilize Montessori materials to master concepts, moving from the concrete to abstract. Foreign language instruction is in place at all grade level

- Classroom Environment: We operate multi-aged classrooms at lower and upper elementary levels each year, since inception. We also operate a full-day kindergarten program.

- Teacher Student Ratio :We maintain a 1:11 teacher student ratio throughout the school. Students may stay with the same teacher for three years, or may move to an alternate teacher.

- Teacher Accountability :Teachers maintain comprehensive records for each student to document achievement through the Montessori curriculum. This cumulative file moves with students as they progress through each grade at BCMCS.

- School Year :BCMCS complies with PDE requirements of 900 minimum instructional hours.

- Orientation and Transition :We have instituted a summer weekend orientation for students and parents new to our school or entering a new level, along with monthly parent workshops to help parents and interested community members understand the Montessori method of education. We also stagger the entry of our kindergarten students into the classroom during the first week of school to help acclimate them to Montessori. Parents are also invited to visit at any time to observe their child at work in his/her classroom. This year we also implemented a summer tutorial program for qualifying students under Title I.

- Assessment of Students :We use the Terra Nova Test, since it is nationally normed and affords us a more accurate basis for comparison. It is given at grade levels 1, 2, and 4. The PSSA is administered in appropriate grades as per state requirements. We also administer Albanesi assessments, as well as classroom assessments on a regular basis throughout the school year.

- Parent Involvement :Parents are volunteer three hours per month in support of the school or in the classrooms.

- Board of Trustees :We have a Board of Trustees comprised of 5 volunteers that are accountable to the parents and to the community to produce a quality education for our children.

Our school community members are invited, encouraged and expected to take an active role in the school through many avenues, beginning with:

- Orientation of new students and parents
- Workshops for parents to learn Montessori methods first hand
- Observation of their children's class
- PTA meetings, activities, projects
- Fundraising events and activities
- BOT meetings held during the 4th Wednesday of each month and quarterly for Round Table Sessions on a variety of topics of interest to our school community
- Board committees
- Volunteer opportunities — library aides, pizza day, special events, trip chaperones, school work day
- Open house

As per the Charter, stakeholders are asked to fill out an expectation form at the beginning and an evaluation form at the end of each school year. The expectation form was designed to elicit parent input on anticipated outcomes for their children. This form has proven beneficial to teachers and administration in goal-setting and program enhancement. The student's record their expectations on anticipated academic outcomes

in their journals, allowing them access to revise and update their list as needed. The employee expectation form has become part of their individual Professional Development Plan and incorporated into the School Improvement Plan.

The community is invited regularly to attend PTA and Board of Trustee Meetings. Such meetings are advertised locally.

The evaluation survey was designed for feedback about key elements of the educational program. This form, too, has proven useful in determining effectiveness.

Communication about important information and school events is timely and provided with sufficient detail. Parents are aware of Friday being a regular communication day wherein they can expect to receive a Friday Flyer. Plans for a quarterly Administrative/Board News Letter and upgrades to the website will only enhance communications in the upcoming school year and beyond.

TECHNOLOGY:

The educational goal of Bucks County Montessori Charter School is to provide our students with an individualized educational experience consistent with Montessori pedagogies and principles which support 'learning' by 'doing.' In the technology sector, computer equipment and related skill based programs relate to our core principles and methodologies presenting various opportunities for our students to participate in activities in agreement to applied experiences in the classroom.

The technology lessons and activities at BCMCS foster the pursuit of abundant integrated learning experience. Our technology program's central purpose is to empower students to locate information that they can use for knowledge, comprehension, application, and analysis in order to synthesize and evaluate their learning and overall understanding.

To physically achieve this purpose, BCMCS we supplies, provides and makes available apparatus such as computers, networks, secured connectivity to the Internet, scanners, digital cameras, and appropriate software applications.

Vision

SCHOOL:

The vision of the founding coalition was that the Bucks County Montessori Charter School will be a model Montessori School, providing a superior learning environment for its students through implementation of individualized Montessori curricula. The BCMCS community is committed to this vision. The school functions as a learning community, where children are encouraged to reason, cooperate, collaborate, negotiate and understand. Our teachers, students, parents, board of trustees and surrounding community are collectively an integral part of the school's structure.

TECHNOLOGY:

BCMCS educators, administration, BOT, parents, students and community recognize that technology and improved learning are inseparable. Our school facility currently has a computer lab where computer classes take place and where students have access to the internet for research. There are also at least two computers in each classroom connecting to a robust infrastructure which enhances immediate learning needs.

We envision imaging devices such as a Smart Board, LCD projectors, digital video cams, and scanners designed for students to use for illustrating reports, projects and assignments in all components of the curriculum.

It is our intent that the BCMCS web site becomes an accurate resource for parents, students, staff and community, becoming an informational tool that shares our Montessori values and informs the school community of all pertinent, relevant and significant current administrative and classroom information. Vast upgrades to our current website will be in place for the start of the 08-09 school year.

Administratively, the objective is to branch all elements of the school's infrastructure into a programmed system that includes progress reports and purchase order forms, student and staff attendance records, alpha list directories, teacher lesson plans, calendars and behavioral reports through a centralized processing unit. We continue to make great strides in fulfilling our objectives.

Shared Values

The following are values shared by all constituent groups of Bucks County Montessori Charter School and its Board of Trustees:

- Children learn best by doing.
- Children learn through the pursuit of integrated learning experiences.
- Every child is an individual, who learns and grows at different rates and in different ways.
- Montessori principles promote a learning environment, which facilitates individualized intellectual, emotional and social growth.
- BCMCS functions as a learning community with a staff committed to high achievement and children who have a love of learning.
- BCMCS teachers, administrators, students, parents, and the community are all integral parts of of its structure
- Resources are available to assist in the achievement of the school's mission, goals and academic standards

In the technology sector, values shared by all constituent groups of BCMCS and its BOT relate to the facts that:

- computers and their technologies will be a vital part of each student's future educational setting
- word processing skills will be vital toward this endeavor
- understanding of technological communications, varied computer programs and their equipment will become more prevalent in all learning settings

Academic Standards

Montessori education arose from detailed observations of children at different stages of their development. Its essence is to create an environment that allows children to exercise to the fullest those strengths and interests most prominent at each particular stage of life.

The Kindergarten and Elementary program at the Bucks County Montessori Charter School (BCMCS), then, is based on developmental needs common to 5-12 year old children and is also highly individualized. Our goal is to help the child become an independent, inquiring, and confident person. We see each child as a whole person, not a vessel into which we pour measured amounts of knowledge, but rather a fire to be ignited. By working to understand and support the developmental characteristics of the age level and the unique personality of each child, we follow Dr. Maria Montessori's plea to "follow the child."

In the Montessori elementary classroom, the children are given opportunities to learn to set their own goals, budget their own time, and appraise their own results. They are "self-starters" who work because of interest and enthusiasm rather than external incentives and sanctions.

It is worth noting that while the division of the world into these separate "subjects" is perhaps a convenient way to write about our work at school, it is not the way Montessori children experience it. As noted above, we emphasize the interconnectedness of the many things we study. To take perhaps the simplest kind of example: a child's arithmetic problems will often deal with real questions arising in his own study of, say, history of geography, rather than some fairly irrelevant problem drawn from a text.

To this end, BCMCS encompasses a wealth of subject matter which far exceeds any of those noted **section 4.12 of 22 Pa. Code (relating to academic standards).** Accordingly, documentation and verification of each subject area will be taken into consideration:

(1) Reading, writing, grammar, speaking and listening

Reading, writing, speaking and listening skills flourish at BCMCS. Through activities and concepts related to each of these areas, work and interrelated learning is interwoven and thrives through all subjects areas.

Reading becomes the most important means to satisfy our students' interests. Witnessing older children reading and writing spontaneously, the younger ones are highly motivated to perfect those language skills which still need work. With carefully structured presentations and appealing follow-up work, the teacher and child work together to accomplish that goal. This basic skill-building in reading is done individually or in small groups. In general, early language work in Montessori is something exciting, not a chore or an opportunity for failure. The teacher carefully selects a treasury of special books for the classroom. The school combined Junior Great Books/Making Meaning program is developed, and the children learn to have very focused readings and discussions. Reading aloud to the children is a daily practice.

Writing develops in connection with exploration, research, and experimentation, as children want to share what they have discovered. Narrative, informational and persuasive formal writing for all audiences are primarily developed in the Upper Elementary grades, with finished drafts that stipulate appropriate spelling and editing skills. Informal and Creative writing allows all children to acquire very early in life a valuable tool for self-expression.

Grammar is made accessible to young children with the aid of colorful materials which employ symbols familiar from preschool work. In etymology, word study (synonyms, affixes, compound words, word families, etc.), analysis of sentence structure and of the parts of speech, the children find many activities in which to apply their vocabulary and their creativity with language. At the same time, they become more conscious of its structure. Discoveries in grammar, word study, and etymology quite naturally give rise to topical spelling lists; thus the children's spelling drill and dictation is assisted by their knowledge of the words' origins, meanings, and functions.

Once acquiring both the mechanics of language and a sense of its history and spirit, the student then experience poetry, prose, drama, dialogue, discussion, debate, and research, in true **speaking** and **listening** forums.

(2) Mathematics and Geometry

Maria Montessori described the "mathematical mind" as a universal human attribute. The materials and methods of the Montessori classroom reinforce the child's tendency to count, compare, compute, and measure. The child begins in Kindergarten a progression from concrete experience to abstraction. The concrete materials are appealing to children, ingeniously designed for revealing principles and concepts, and are made to be experienced and manipulated. Through both physical and mental activity with this material, the child acquires a profound basis for **mathematics**.

During the elementary years, a sequence of lessons brings the child naturally and gradually to the point of understanding abstract mathematical operations. The structure of the decimal system, the operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, and other key concepts follow this same pattern. Once they have a firm understanding of the concepts, children move toward memorization, keeping track of their own progress and work both in teams and individually. By using the Montessori math materials, most children experience many concepts traditionally taught much later, including fractions, squared and cubed numbers and roots, as well as the exploration of other base sets.

The Montessori **geometry** materials offer children an open-ended field of exploration. These materials and the lessons which accompany them permit children to discover important principles and relationships. A student may learn nomenclature for the types and parts of polygons, circles, angles, and lines. New knowledge is always applied to the environment (e.g., finding right triangles in the floor, walls, and furniture) and often extends to the creation of a piece of handwork as well. With the principles of geometric equivalence, the child acquires a key which unlocks a whole field of creative work and which prepares him for the study of area and volume.

(3)History

The **history** of life, both before and after the arrival of humankind, is inextricably linked to other subjects such as geology, geography, and biology. Thus it might be said that history is the framework for all fields of study in Montessori. Even in mathematics and language, we tell children stories of the great discoveries and inventions by which our predecessors built the

powerful tools of language and number. Children love stories of the past, and in Montessori elementary we use stories to spark the children's interest in all areas.

Natural history materials, such as an elaborate time line of life, show children the dramatic and colorful spectacle of life forms and their development. Human history is presented from a perspective of the basic human needs (food, shelter, protection, transport, spiritual expression, etc.) and the variety of ways in which different peoples have been able to meet them. This framework guides their research and reveals both the unique attributes of different cultures and the universality of all. The further study of U.S. and Pa. history reveals many fascinating connections and interdependencies, not only among various peoples, but between people and the changing physical environment.

(4)Geography

We begin with theories on the origin of the Universe, in which principles of physical science are revealed, and then proceed to examine the forces which have acted over the ages to shape the world we inhabit. Children explore volcanism, the work of water, wind and air, and the basic physical properties of matter. We employ demonstrations, field activities, and experiments the children learn to perform on their own.

The relationships of earth, sun, seasons, zones of climate, etc., are also studied along with economic and political geography. A basic principle here and throughout the Montessori elementary program is that we give first the "big picture"-- answers to the fundamental why's and how's-- and only then work toward the more particular parts.

(5)Biology

Children are fascinated by plants and animals. It is not unusual for our Kindergarten children to have learned the names of many of the flowers, trees, birds, and mammals that surround them in the world, as well as the parts of flowers and the very beginnings of biological classification.

In the elementary, the emphasis is on understanding plant and animal behavior and physiology. The basic needs of plants and animals (e.g. water, food, defense, reproduction) provide the framework for investigating the unique varieties from the point of view of adaptation, both to contemporary environments and throughout time. Children's observation and discussion of differences build up the stores of experience with which they further their understanding of biological classification.

(6)World Languages

Our students receive a program rich in the Spanish Language starting in Kindergarten. Children receive 45 minutes of instruction a week, dealing with the spoken, written and the application of Spanish and its juxtaposition to the English language.

(7)Music, Art, Computer Technology and Physical Education

Music is as much a part of the classroom environment as pictures on the wall. Most settings have classical music playing in the background, enabling the children to discover the aspects that music brings. The work with ear training with both the diatonic and chromatic scales begins in Kindergarten. In the elementary we build upon these experiences, taking children into the beginnings of reading and writing music. Instrumental lessons are also offered to any Upper Elementary student who wishes to enroll.

Rather than art projects, we teach techniques and media for artistic expression. Children use colored pencils, clay, paints, collage and other media to illustrate their work.

Drama is a very noticeable part of a Montessori classroom. It is a special love of many children this age, and serves a number of purposes. Making an original play or one taken from a Great Book lesson or skit about something they have recently learned are ways in which children truly make knowledge their own. Older students perform a large scale recital that combines character performances, stage crew, concessions workers, etc. so as to encompass the entire process of theatre.

Children are physically active continuously throughout the day. Nonetheless, there is a need for the aerobic activity and skill development that physical education provides. Always our emphasis is on skill-building, to develop consciousness and control of movement, to enhance personal confidence, and to teach the techniques and values of teamwork and cooperation.

Strengths and Challenges

Montessori education integrates the interaction between a child and an environment that is conducive to developing a resilient mind-set that encourages the child "...to come to an understanding of himself and the limits of his universe and thus achieve an integration of his personality" (Montessori, 1948).

Listed below are components of BCMCS's method of instruction that continue to propel our school's program strenghts encompassing our quality learning institution:

- **Opportunity for the Learner:** Each student is given an opportunity to express strengths in a prepared environment that is full of opportunities. The materials, the furniture, and the architecture are all designed to provide maximum opportunities to release potential. "Leave the child free to make use of his powers and he will show himself capable of success," Montessori wrote (1948). Montessori teachers look, through individualize observations, for unique strengths in students as a basis for further achievements.
- **Developing a sense of community:** Our specifically designed Montessori classrooms provide children with an inherent feeling of ownership. Order is maintained with everyone's cooperation. Each student plays an active role in keeping the classroom neat and presentable. Individual work spaces are often designated with the intention that each individual is responsible for its accessibility. Not only is this fostered in the classroom, but in our school community as well. Each month, the PTA offers an activity that brings the community together in a social setting.
- **Development of success:** Our students learn that not everyone succeeds in a universal fashion. They can see that some of their peers pick up new concepts with ease, while others struggle and may need follow-up lessons. In our Montessori classrooms, the pace at which a student completes a task is often irrelevant because the class is a heterogeneous mix of learning styles and age groups. Children's individual needs are carefully calculated in daily expectations orchestrated by the teacher. Collaboration between two or slightly more students is fostered. Throughout the day, students are encouraged to ask their peers for assistance in figuring out a problem. Classroom demands can be adjusted for children with learning differences without others noticing; and students will still meet the same objectives. Our students feel free to gravitate toward the activities with which they are most comfortable. Successive approximations to a larger goal can easily be built while encouraging a child to take the risks necessary for success. In teaching a child how to write a paragraph, for example, focus begins at the sentence level where attention is paid to the mechanics as well as to the content. Writing

sentences can begin at the most basic level with a minimal number of words and can be increased to include a more complex structure over time. As soon as the student demonstrates competence at the sentence level, the notion of building a paragraph can be introduced. Failure and humiliation are minimized in a classroom where children learn through peer collaboration or private tutorial and feel no different from anyone else.

- **Learning from mistakes:** Because our Montessori classrooms are set up to support the development of competence for students, it is easy for teachers to help them learn from their mistakes. Most lessons have a built in "control of error," brilliantly designed by Dr. Montessori to ". . . lead the child to apply his reasoning power to his work" (Montessori, 1948). Children who go to Montessori schools learn over time that mistakes are not to be feared; they are not criticized or ridiculed by others when they do something wrong. Mistakes may often go unnoticed by others or might even be corrected quietly by peers in collaborative engagement. Montessori saw the prepared environment as a key to reaching potential in children. With an abundance of opportunities available for students to pursue their interests, the path to competence is a broad one, accommodating different approaches.
- **Disciplining in ways that promote self-discipline:** Each classroom is seen as community where children are taught to respect others' needs. Circle time affords teachers opportunities to discuss conflicts and model problem-solving techniques. The development of a sense of ownership and responsibility for one's behavior is the ultimate goal. As each year progresses, children learn to reflect on their actions and foresee likely consequences of their behavior through group meetings and classroom discussions. Our Student Code of Conduct has detailed components that enable the children to develop independence toward problem solving. From peer mediation to teacher and parent arbitartion techniques, it is always the intend to enable the children to devolep mediation stratagies on their own.
- **Creating an alliance between home and school:** Because students in a Montessori classroom are actively engaged in different ways all day long, the teacher has an opportunity to witness growth in several areas. Often, students are asked to join in on a conference, which allows the parent-teacher team to demystify the alliance and send a message of consistency to the student. Armed with an abundance of information about students, coupled with an empathic response, our Montessori teachers are equipped to handle parental concerns in a proactive manner. It is exactly this positive, respectful relationship between parents and schools that sets the stage for success in developing a resilient mind-set.

Much of our school's strengths are directly tied to its method of instruction. However, due to the complexity of its pedagogical structure, and the progressive nature of our ideals, complexities related to staffing, student transitioning and educating our community continue to be areas in constant needs of address. Listed are these issues of concern and the approach that our school continues to make toward solutions:

- **Finding qualified Montessori Credentialed Teachers**: Finding Montessori trained teachers that also have valid PA Teaching Certificates continues to be difficult task. BCMCS remains steadfast in affording opportunities for our stuff to be sponsored for either Montessori Training or course work to acquire appropriate PA Certification/Montessori Credentials.
- **Transition for our students into local school districts**: Socially and academicly, our students trasition quite well in the local dicricts. However, Montessori methods of instruction differ in delivery and distribution. Students, therefore, who leave our program through promotion at 6th grade [or at other varying levels] adjust differently than typical transfer students. One of the main irregularities occurs at the level of instruction. The vast majority of our students typically are working and learning at levels beyond expected aims as those in the varying transitional settings. Because of this, past students from our school are placed in settings which are not as academically challenging, leading to

boredom and intellectual complacency. BCMCS continues to work with our families and local school districts, educating them to look into varying options offered [such as advanced placements] so as to ensure the most efficient transition possible. This area continues to show improvement as we have been able to collect more data and experience through the successes of our students.

- **Universal meaning of Montessori pedagogy:** One version or universal interpretation of Montessori ideology can be difficult to find, as its ideology has been and remains to be interpreted in a multitude of ways. We, as a school, continue to offer workshops for our parents that are intended to convey our school's elucidation of Montessori interpretation so that our entire school community is in accord. As well, workshops offered by the school, as well as those attended at the national level for the staff, are intended to further unify its interpretation and understanding

SECTION II. STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

Strategic Planning Process

In the Spring of 2005, it was determined that Bucks County Montessori Charter School would pursue accreditation through the Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools and the American Montessori Society. BCMCS made application to both organizations and was accepted into membership as a Candidate for Accreditation on December 19, 2005. All of the above was achieved in conjunction with an Accreditation Steering Committee composed of parents, administrators, board of trustee members and teachers.

In anticipation of acceptance, Bucks County Montessori Charter School began researching a variety of self-study options and settled on an on-line computer based program called the **O**n-line **S**chool **A**ssessment **S**chool **I**mprovement **P**rocess or **OSASIP.** This program was developed by Foundations INC, a non-profit organization providing support services to charter schools and matched very closely the standards developed by the Middle States Association.

Throughout the 2007-08 school year, selections of the **OSASIP** Building Blocks or standards were assessed, action plans created and timelines assigned. These were all standards that primarily addressed the educational program. The self-study process involved teachers, parents, board members and ancillary staff, who were divided into teams and assigned to Building Blocks.

The results of the above study have become the basis for the strategic plan included in this Annual Report.

Strategic Planning Committee

Name	Affiliation	Membership Category	Appointed By
Barbara Noble Psychologists	Psychological Services	Community Representative	CEO BOT
Brian Long	Ass't Principal	Administrator	CEO
Diane Darling	PTA Pres.	Parent	CEO and BOT
Jeff Fogal, Accreditation	BOT member	Board Member	BOT

Committee Chair			
Jen Graber	PTA	Parent	CEO and BOT
Jennifer Gage	PTA	Parent	CEO and BOT
John Funston	Principal/CEO	Administrator	CEO
John Noble	Educator	Community Representative	CEO and BOT
Judy Wolfram	PTA	Parent	BOT
Karl Weimer	PTA	Parent	BOT
Lori Carpenter	Literacy Coach	Elementary School Teacher	Teachers
Lori Triebley	Nurse	Ed Specialist - School Nurse	Ed Spec
Tony Stango	Operations Consultant	Business Representative	CEO and BOT

Goals, Strategies and Activities

Goal: **MATHEMATICS**
Description: At least 85% of 3rd grade students will be proficient in Mathematics, as measured by the annual state-wide PSSA assessments.

Strategy: **Improving 3rd Grade Math PSSA scores**
Description: To improve consistancy of instuctional techniques
Activities:

Activity	Description	
Improving PSSA Scores		
Person Responsible	**Timeline for Implementation**	**Resources**
John Funston	Ongoing	$0.00

Activity	Description	
Provide more opportunity for grade level planning	Teacher preparation time to be scheduled in back to back block sections in accordance with special area subject schedule	
Person Responsible	**Timeline for Implementation**	**Resources**
John Funston	Ongoing	$0.00

Goal: **MATHEMATICS**
Description: Student Problem solving skills

Strategy: **Students to improve problem solving skills**
Description: Develop staff awareness through training sessions to improve problem solving skils
Activities:

Activity	Description

Instructional Coach	Retain a highly qualified staff member to act as coach aiding and assisting teachers in the content area of mathematics	
Person Responsible	**Timeline for Implementation**	**Resources**
Brian Long	Ongoing	$4,000.00

Goal: **READING**
Description: At least 63% of all students will be proficient in Reading, as measured by the annual state-wide PSSA assessments.

Strategy: **Introducing higher level thinking skills into the lower elementary**
Description: Promote more use of the Junior Great Books program into the lower grades
Activities:

Activity	Description	
Workshop on Bloom's Taxonomy and its implications in the classroom		
Person Responsible	**Timeline for Implementation**	**Resources**
John Funston	Ongoing	$0.00

Goal: **READING**
Description: At least 85% of all students will be proficient in Reading, as measured by the annual state-wide PSSA assessments.

Strategy: **Phonetic skill based reading impovements**
Description: Reading coach to work individually with teachers, primarily in Lower Elementary grades, to better develop instructional skills in the area of work attact and phonemic awareness
Activities:

Activity	Description	
Improve phonemic awareness across all curriculum areas		
Person Responsible	**Timeline for Implementation**	**Resources**
John Funston	Ongoing	$0.00

Goal: **STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN STATE ASSESSMENTS**
Description: At least 95% of eligible students will participate in required state-wide assessments.

Strategy: **Maintain 100% participation**
Description: Continue to write IEP that include student participation in PSSA and other local standardized testing
Activities:

Activity	Description
Maintain status quo	

Person Responsible	Timeline for Implementation	Resources
John Funston	Ongoing	$0.00

Statement of Quality Assurance

Charter school has met AYP.

SECTION III. QUALITY OF SCHOOL DESIGN

Rigorous Instructional Program

"Education must be understood as a help to the unfolding of the child's inborn academic powers. This means that we cannot use the orthodox methods of teaching, which depends on talk. In brief, the teacher's principle duty in the school may be described as follows: She should explain the use of the material. She is the main connecting link between the materials, which are the objects, and the child. This is a simple, modest duty, and yet it is much more delicate than that found in traditional schools, where the learning simply helps the children to understand the mind of the teacher, who must pass on her own ideas to a child, who must in turn receive them. Therefore, coming from our own traditional backgrounds, we must be taught and we must be willing to accept guidance if we wish to become effective teachers." ~ Maria Montessori

The Bucks County Montessori Charter School adopted the principles developed by Maria Montessori as the essential distinctiveness of its set curriculum. In addition, BCMCS has aligned the set Montessori curriculum to the set PA State Standards, creating a combined curriculum that entails both ideologies. BCMCS has worked diligently to infuse Pennsylvania Standards into the Montessori Curriculum. This has been done systematically over the years since the school opened in 2000. Each teacher has a manual reflecting the infused standards. Attached are documents to the Original Rationale of the Bucks Co. Montessori Charter School's Curriculum Standards [i. and ii.] with a sample of the BCMCS Curriculum Standards 2.3, Mathematical Operations/Computations. There was also a BCMCS Curriculum Standards: 2nd Installment, with extended BCMCS Montessori 'Aims' infused with those set by the State Standards.

In summation, the BCMCS Curriculum has been aligned with the Pennsylvania Standards so as to ensure that, although Montessori ideals remain the strength of character to our school's curriculum, identifying and addressing related state standards will ensure the most functional curricular design--encompassing our school's unique identity as both a Montessori and PA public school. The most pressing problem was that the Montessori Standards, which Maria Montessori developed in 'aim' arrangements, were in age range formats. For example, the Montessori Standard for the understanding of the dynamic stamp game material ranged for ages from 5 to 71/2 years. It was necessary to realign the Montessori Standards to match a grade level format. Consequently, the BCMCS Curriculum Standards, therefore, can be thought as being baseline standards by which the school and state believe a student should be able to comprehend, understand and master. Montessori Standards containing vital linear and beginning stages not included in the PA standards were also incorporated in the BCMCS Curriculum.

Since BCMCS is a true Montessori environment, with a key component that students have the ability to move at their own rate and pace, created a quandary for the curriculum's functionality. This is true for both advanced and basic level children, as the program is completely individualized for each child. The standard criterion, therefore, are useful in that they enable students to achieve a particular goal. However, it is also likely that students will be working with materials and concepts two or more grade levels above their own. It is up to the teacher in each of the above circumstances to support each child with a program that meets each student's level of understanding.

As Maria Montessori stated, "We are to follow the child". Manipulatives and "hands on" instruction help students move from concrete to conceptual and are important components, which are used to help all students and those less able in particular.

Teachers in a Montessori environment tend to be more of a facilitator by which they guide, support, tutor, demonstrate and instruct their students. Montessorians have been using the latest instructional best-practices, relating to Differentiated Instruction, Understanding by Design, etc, whose ideals are inherent in Montessori pedagogy. Large group instruction, small group instruction, cooperative learning and independent study are other styles of that are intrinsic to Montessori methods of instruction.

Rigorous Instructional Program - Attachments

- Rigorous Instructional Program - Professional Development Approval Letter
- Rigorous Instructional Program - Teacher Induction Approval Letter

English Language Learners

There were no English Language Learner needs identified at Bucks County Montessori Charter School during the 2007-08 school year; however, BCMCS has developed a plan to evaluate potential students' language proficiency and provide services if needed. The administrative and teaching staff has been informed of the needed protocol and appropriate documentation for services if a student were to be identified by teacher concern or or other evaluation. In addition, a home survey is sent to the entire school population, yearly, as related below:

A Home Language Survey for parents of incoming students provides a means of identifying potential students.

- *What was the first language your child spoke?*
- *Does your child speak a language other than English? If so what is that language?*
- *What language is spoken in your home?*

If one of the three questions above is not answered as English, a language proficiency assessment is administered which follows all state regulations and is performed by the BCMCS SPED department. In the event that a student were identified as needing ELL, BCMCS would initiate a partnership with the Bucks County Intermediate Unit to provide instructional services.

As there is no ELL population, an ELL report is not applicable.

Graduation Requirements

BCMCS is an elementary school, therefore, graduation requirements are not applicable. As an elementary school, there is no graduation requirement for students exiting sixth grade.

The decision to promote a student to the next grade or level is based on a satisfactory level of progress in all academic and social areas. This progress is assessed through standardized test performance using both PSSA and Terra Nova results, performance on the Albanesi assessments, Montessori classroom work, the BCMCS Progress Report, student portfolios, and teacher and parent observations.

Students with special needs who recieve special education services are promoted to the next grade/level based on adequate yearly progress toward goals identified in and with their IEPs. While their instructional level may be below their chronological grade level, retention/promotion

decisions are based on individual levels of academic progress each year, meeting all state mandated guidelines related to retention.

A student may be retained at his/her present level of achievement that differs from the traditional pattern of retention. Since a Montessori curriculum is based on mastery at a level rather than in a grade, and if the teacher and parent feel that additional work is needed to master the curriculum and/or social skills needed, a student may be retained ***though*** remaining in the same classroom since BCMCS enplore multi-age classrooms in conjunction with Montessori best practice.
This form of in-class retention is available to 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th grade level students. If satisfactory progress is made, the child may move to the next designated level during the school year. Because of the multi-age classroom, and the Montessori philosophy of individualized instruction and planning lessons for each child at their own level, retention is being used less and less. Conversely, the significant progress a student can initiate an advanced grade level move from one grade level to the next, in compliance with any/all state regulations.

Special Education

The Special Education staff at Bucks County Montessori Charter School are extremely pro-active in identifying and supporting students who are at risk and require additional services.

During the 2007-08 school year, it was decided to continue a full inclusion program in one of the lower elementary classes. Montessori classes usually have a Lead Teacher and an Assistant Teacher. The Assistant Teacher in the class identified inclusion program was replaced with a dual certified teacher (PA Instructional Level I and Special Education). The results continued to show that inclusion is more effective, efficient and cost effective than a pull-out program. The children did not identify the Assistant Teacher as one who was there to help just the children with the IEP, but as another teacher to help everyone. Of course the IEP children were a priority and their IEP was addressed, fostered in a way that did not place a stigma on the child as it would have with a pull-out program. In addition, the support the IEP children needed was available the entire day and not just for the 30 minutes a day they would have received in a pull-out program.

We will continue this model for the lower elementary classes and expand this inclusion model to one class in the upper elementary classes (grades 4-6). The Special Education Coordinator will continue to service children who are in non-inclusion Montessori classrooms in the upper elementary and lower elementary settings.

Services will also be available in a pull-out program for a very small number of children who have more serious disabilities. Their level of inclusion will still be above 70%. Speech, Language, Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy will continue to be contracted through the Intermediate Unit on an as needed basis. Any additional time in the special education staff's schedule is used to address remediation for children needing temporary support. Evaluative services for the purpose of identifying children with disabilities are provided by a private contractor.

In addition to the above, the Montessori Curriculum is an excellent program for at-risk children. Individualized instruction, hands-on manipulatives, learning at one's own pace are all strategies used for all students in accord to our Montessori Pedagogy, all of which allows them to be successful in the regular education classes.

Special Education - Attachment

- Special Education Policy and Procedures

Special Education Program Profile - Chart I

Teacher	FTE	Type of class or support	Location	# of Students	Other Information
Cathryn Campbell	.5	Hearing Impaired	BCMCS	1	1:1 support for a deaf child
Anna Millili	1.00	Learning and Emotional Support	BCMCS	3	Inclusion Classroom Teacher
Sherry Walter	.5	Learning Support	BCMCS	10	Inclusion and pull out support
Jean Duffner	1.00	Learning and Emotional Support	BCMCS	3	Inclusion Classroom Teacher

Special Education Program Profile - Chart II

Organization	FTE	Type of class or support	Location	# of Students	Other Information
Bucks County IU 22	.2	Speech/PT/OT	BCMCS	21	Services are provided as a combined pull-out and in-class support based on child's needs
Barbara Nobel and Associates	as needed	Psychological Academic Evaluations	BCMCS	8	Evaluations and reevaluation services as needed

Special Education Program Profile - Chart III

Title	Location	FTE
Personal Health Care Assistant	BCMCS	1.0

Special Education Program Profile - Chart IV

IU, Public Agency, Organization, or Individual	Title/Service	Amount of Time Per Week
BCIU 22	Speech Therapy	7.5
BCIU 22	Occupational Therapy	10.0
BCIU 22	Physical Therapy	1.5
Barbara Noble Psychological Services	Psychologist	As needed

SECTION IV. ACCOUNTABILITY

Student Assessment - Primary

Test/Classification	K	1	2	3	4	5
Terra Nova	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
PSSA	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Albanesi Montessori	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Assessments						

Student Assessment - Secondary

Test/Classification	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
PSSA	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Albanesi	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No

Student Assessment

I. Student Assessment:

a. Overall Statement:

BCMCS has an exceptional system of student accountability that allows exclusive Montessori principles to work within the traditional testing requirements and assessments that the state and NCLB necessitate. Through a three-part structure, student accountability at BCMCS first and foremost identifies the individual student, and then focuses on the specific classrooms, finally centering on the school as a whole. Through this initiative, BCMCS students continue to make marked progress in nearly all measurable aspects.

First off, befitting the Montessori Philosophy to focus on the **individual** child, BCMCS evaluates each student's standardized results. Through this individualized study, the teachers, presenting to and for the administration, make an effort to identify students who score in a manner uncharacteristic of their performance in the classroom. Supporting documentation, such as Albanesi Montessori assessment scores, progress reporting grades, teacher observation notes, classroom assessments and/or portfolio works are used in this juxtaposed measure. Each teacher then monitors the progress of these identified students carefully and over a long period of time. In our program, it is not unusual, but rather typical, that students to remain with the same teacher for three consecutive years. Recognizing the need for a centralized school-wide system for tracking individual pupil progress from year to year, BCMCS began a longitudinal study of achievement with the early data input coming from the initial testing year. An internal record keeping system has also been developed to enable BCMCS to carefully monitor individual pupil achievement and provide information necessary for accountability issues and school improvement.

As well, this individualized approach has provided early diagnosis of BCMCS students who test at or below basic range levels, allowing us to monitor learning and development so as ensure growth. From this forum, individual students are screened and closely monitored so as to be tracked and possibly identified. Close attention has been placed on this individualized track in grades K through 2. Our goal is to identify 'at risk' student during these early years, when proposed and detailed learning strategies and interventions are most productive.

Additionally, through the use of a combination of multiple assessment measures (standardized tests, Albanesi tests, classroom participation and performance, writing activities, teacher observation, etc.), the staff identifies those students who consistent score below a proficient level in reading and math. Students who fall in this range in two or more of these measures begin to go through our school's Instructional Support (IS) process and are set to receive intervention services. There is a certified special education teacher on staff who provides services to classified students, and as well serves as the resource teacher for these identified students not making reasonable progress. Each identified child has an Instructional Support Team (IST) Plan developed using this set procedure:

1. The resource teacher observes the student in the classroom.
2. The resource teacher and classroom teacher confer to review all available formal and informal data.
3. A conference is held which includes the parent(s), resource teacher, classroom teacher, and/or Principal or Vice Principal.
4. All available data and assessment information gathered is studied and evaluated. Strategies for intervention and support are planned.
5. The classroom teacher and resource teachers or inclusion teachers are actively involved in remedial and support. The resource teacher provides lessons, either within or without of the regular classroom setting, one or more times a week, depending on the degree of remediation required.

Secondly, each **classroom** is evaluated using the same data. Individual teachers report their classroom scores with the administration noting classroom strengths and needs. From this forum, strengths are supported by the teachers & administration and information is utilized and shared with the rest of staff during Staff Learning Days. In addition, each teacher looks for trends by group or level, paying special attention to the concurrence of subsequent years. The classroom is then adjusted to give such areas the emphasis needed to improve student understanding and performance. Weaknesses are noted as well, and support is offered via material needs and/or instructive assistance. In cases where additional instructional materials is needed, it was subsequently purchased and implemented. In the case of instructive assistance, peer coaching, team leader modeling, and/or administrative monitoring is utilized.

Finally, data that relates specific and identifiable **school-wide** areas of strengths, common standards and needs are created and discussed during Staff Learning Days. As the Montessori classroom consists of multi-age levels, student data is places into grade levels, as is consistent with traditional forms and the NCLB model that now exist. Below lists each grade level, with standardized results (when necessary) and summaries offered. The grade levels will be further broken into two parts that related to the respective standardized administered test.

1. K— First — Second Grade Standardized Scores: [Terra Nova]

For grades K thru 2nd, each grade has been broken down to relate grade equivalency scores in all tested areas. Results of the Terra Nova Tests have been reviewed and studied by the staff and shared with parents each year. The breakdown is as follows:

a. Terra Nova Scores — Kindergarten

*****This past year marked the first that testing data warranted action planning, since we now had a subsequent year for which to measure. The majority of the preparation and evaluation dealt with individual students and other classroom needs. Below is a summary of the standardized grade equivalency scores collected from the Terra Nova tests in all testable areas:

Kindergarten	Reading	Language	Math	TOTAL SCORE
2007-08	0.9	N/A	1.1	1.0
2006-07	1.3	1.6	1.3	1.4
2005-06	1.1	1.5	1.3	1.3

b. Terra Nova —First Grade

*This past year marks the sixth consecutive year of testing results. Changes this year continued to include a more comprehensive administered testing battery, with the intention of identifying

more measurable data. The outline is as follows:

First Grade	Reading	Vocabulary	Reading Composite	Language	Math	Math Computation	Math Composite	Total Score
2007-08	2.6	2.7	2.7	N/A	2.5	2.2	2.3	2.5
2006-07	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.8	3.0	2.2	2.5	2.9
2005-06	1.9	2.3	2.2	2.4	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.1
2004-05			2.7	2.7			2.1	2.4
2003-04			2.4	2.0			2.4	2.6
2002-03			2.4	2.2			1.9	2.0
2001-02			2.5	2.2			1.8	2.2

c. <u>Terra Nova —Second Grade</u>

*Again, this marks the sixth year of testing results. As was done in grade 1, a more comprehensive testing battery was administered. The results are as follows:

Second Grade	Reading	Vocabulary	Reading Composite	Language	Language Mechanics	Language Composition	Math	Math Computation	Math Composite	Spelling
2007-08	4.8	4.9	4.8	No Longer Available	4.7	No Longer Available	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.9
2006-07	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.6	3.0	3.3	2.9	3.1	3.0	3.7
2005-06	4.5	4.1	4.4	4.2	3.3	3.7	3.3	3.1	3.2	3.4
2004-05			3.6	3.2					3.0	2.9
2003-04			3.6	3.5					3.0	
2002-03			4.6	3.6					3.2	
2001-02			4.2	4.0					3.0	

d. Summary

As these results indicate, grades K - 2 Terra Nova scores continue to be at or above grade level at the time that tests were administered. The grade mean equivalent scores above represent an average of the performance of students in each grade in the sixth month of school. For example, students taking the test in March of their first grade year would be expected to be achieving at a 1.6 grade level in each subject area to be considered "on grade level."

Overall, the total grade equivalent scores for each grade level indicate that BCMCS students, on average, are performing at grade level or above their current grade in all academic areas measured on this test. Results from each year are consistent for each grade tested.

Reading scores showed the greatest rate of improvement at the 2nd grade level performances. Math and language scores showed less dramatic rates of above grade level performance, but averages still indicate above grade level achievement in all grades tested. Noted improvements were made in the 1st grade math areas from last year to this year.

Most of these scores show that results of instructional methods remain consistent from year to year, with the exception of a slight decline in Kindergarten ratings from the 2006-07 school year to this. Possible reasons for the decline were explored by the curriculum committee, with a more strict teacher accountability system [primarily peer and administrative coaching] being initiated, with a slight staff reshuffling for next year to be implemented.

In this manner, scores continue to be used to adjust or augment curriculum for upcoming school year in areas that suggested improvement. Past examples of occasions of implemented change include:

1. First year students scoring lower than expected in subtraction in 2005-06--- solution: teachers adjusted the sequence of Montessori instruction in which students learn multiplication after addition, and introduced subtraction earlier in the year to provide students with sufficient exposure to this concept prior to testing with noted positive results.
2. Second year students scored lower than expected on the spelling portion of the test in 2004-05—solution: Lower elementary teachers implemented a new spelling program and designed a process to more effectively monitor student progress. To date, two years of continued increased scoring.

2. Third — Fourth — Fifth — Sixth Grade Standardized Scores: PSSA

Since PSSA testing began, BCMCS has annually met the state mandated AYP requirements. The following grade levels have been broken into *subject* compartmentalized sections and are formulated to relate to the NCLB baseline standards. For grades 3rd thru 6th, subcategories of Reading and Math will be abridged to the data that reflects any/all improved academic performances, and will be followed with summaries that relate features of school-wide student achievement plans as well as indicate significant improvement and/or continued strong student performances.

a. PSSA Third Grade Reading

The data in the 3rd Grade Reading shows improvement made in each year since the PSSA testing began. With the current NCLB proficiency scale of 54%, BCMCS is currently 23 percentage points above the baseline target. To date, our school continues to meet its internal

yearly baseline objective goals [i.e. those corresponding to our long range planning] in order to reach 100% Proficiency in 2014.

Subsequent to the 2003-04 Assessment year, the school identified an area of need in the Reading sort. It was thus determined that a multifaceted reading program, which encompassed individual, small and large group learning settings, be created within the school's Reading program. This three year transitional project has just recently concluded, with improved score that show early indications of success.

Being that enhancement needs in *Learning to Read Independently* (developing purposes for reading, increasing word recognition skills, vocabulary and comprehension) and *Reading Critically in all Content Areas* (reading to relate details, recount inferences, differentiating fact from opinion) were identified, the school piloted a program intended to manage all comprised basic reading elements. Since our Montessori curriculum had already integrated areas with a direct focus on lower level receptors [i.e., to arrange, define, duplicate, label, list, memorize, name, order, recognize, relate, recall, and repeat]; and the comprehension section [i.e., to classify, describe, discuss, explain, express, identify, indicate, locate, recognize, report, restate, review, select, translate] had as well been supported by our basic reader and SRA Individualized Reading Programs, a new reading program, *Making Meaning* (of which the school received through a grant) was initiated to extend and enhance the Reading program in the lower grades.

b. PSSA Third Grade Math

After the 2003-04 Assessments, the school continued in a more robust manner to employ the formed BCMCS Curriculum which juxtaposed and matched benchmarks to that of the set PA Standards. The newly developed Curriculum enabled the teaching staff to address certain content areas that were either not present in the Montessori curricula, or were addressed at such an earlier age/grade level that elapsed time had created a difficulty making the material readily accessible for the student. The BCMCS Curriculum aligned its benchmarks in accordance to how the state had established its standards.

In keeping in line with the Montessori philosophy, the BCMCS Curriculum embodied the standards to the/a specific manipulative [or material] needed in order to complete a particular benchmark, as manipulative materials are the core component of a true Montessori learning environment. In 2005, this developed curriculum also had placed an emphasis on the newly revised State Anchors, which has further enabled the teaching staff to identify key testable material(s). The decline from the 2004-05 to 2005-06 levels were studied and assumed to be caused by a larger number of students identified as requiring special education services.

c. PSSA Fourth and Sixth Grades—Math and Reading

These results are indicative and consistent with achievements compatible with marks from the 3rd and 5th AYP scores. Being that these scores do not apply to AYP goals, they have been viewed as benchmarks for future assessments.

d. PSSA 5th Grade Reading

As the gains indicate, improvement has been made from last year to this year's scores in Reading. After the decline in scores from the 2004-2005 assessment, the Curriculum Committee, a collaboration of staff, board, parent and administrative personal, identified that the decline was due to major needs in *Analyzing Literature*, and minor needs in *Critical Reading.* The major needs in *Analyzing Literature* related to the inability to recount literary elements and devices in poetry, drama, and within fictitious stories connected to details, inferences, comparisons, as well as differentiating fact from opinion and evaluating written work. It was proposed that the Upper

Elementary grades utilize a system that encompassed more of an emphasis on the critical and analytical components of literature, something the current Making Meaning program was not able to accurately address. The intent was to create students who were efficient in the *Analytical* [analyze, appraise, calculate, categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test] *Synthetic* (arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, manage, organize, plan, prepare, propose, set up, write) and *Evaluative* [appraise, argue, assess, attach, choose compare, defend estimate, judge, predict, rate, core, select, support, value, evaluate) aspects of true Literature.

The proposed and adopted program, which was set on a three year full integration schedule, was The Great Books series, which is touted to boast at its core a course outline that incorporates those identifiable areas related to our needs. The goal was to allow students to test ideas for clarity, coherence, and support from the text, involving themselves in a 'shared inquiry' which discusses, establishes, and develops individual perspectives. These were the identified factors which were in direct relation to the Analytical, Synthetic and Evaluative components for which our needs were identified.

Presently, the school has viewed this project in relation to the reading program school wide. With the needs identified, the Curriculum Committee utilized and related Bloom's Taxonomy, in relation to reading, as the framework for the entire Reading Curriculum. Concepts from the primary grades [1st-3rd] that relate to lower receptive components were to have the most emphasis on those lesser echelon receptors--reading receptors with a higher level of thinking were to play a subsidiary role, but a role nonetheless. In direct contrast, the upper grades were to place a stronger emphasis on the higher level thinking receptors, with a subsidiary emphasis on the lesser echelon receptors. Thus, it was the proposed goal that the Making Meaning/Great Books program and series currently be incorporated at each grade, utilizing each program's emphasized strengths next to the differentiating grade levels. The current system has the majority of the lower elementary grades utilizing the Making Meaning program, with each subsequent year placing more of an emphasis on the Great Books series. Models suggest a relative 90/10 split in favor of Making Meaning in Kindergarten, with moderate transitions that converts into a 75/25 split in favor of the Great Books series by the end of the 2007-08 school year.

Preliminary results show the new curricular initiatives have led to an early success, with a 15% increase in the Proficient or above category in its first year. Currently, the 5th Grade Reading scores are 26 percentage points greater than the NCLB target scores.

e. PSSA 5th Grade Math

PSSA testing has shown steady accomplishments the past three years, displaying continued strong student performances. Our 5th grade students have maintained consistent strong student performance marks in the Mathematics area. This, the committee has attributed, is the direct result to the well-formed and highly comprehensive Montessori math curriculum for which we instill. Our students learn mathematics by doing, with hands-on matipulatives and materials. This enables math to be conceptualized rather than memorized, which creates true understanding. Formulas related to math are discovered as opposed to being memorized by rote, allowing the students to perceive math as truly didactic in manner as well as approach.

These results, again, support a steady strong student performance, with the scores 43% greater than current NCLB targeted marks.

Highlights of the PSSA 2006 Results:

- **To a great extent, the AYP measurable gains that have been touted show improved scores from the 2004-05 marks in 3 out of 4 testing areas. Taken as a whole, goal improvement has shown an overall 12% increase from 2004-05 to 2005-06.**
- **In the most recent 4th, 5th and 6th grade areas, not a single student tested in the Below Basic level in Mathematics. As well, not a single student tested in the Below Basic area in Reading in the 4th and 5th grades.**
- **Math outcomes continue to display astonishing results, with the 3rd — 6th grade students testing in the 'Advanced' level at a 55%, 59%, 56%, and 67% rate respectively.**

3. <u>District to District to State Accountability Results:</u>

Not only have basic NCLB and AYP requirements been met, but testing scores are quite competitive, if not greater than our host and other local districts for which we serve. Below is listed a desegregated juxtaposition of our scores in relation to the state, our host district, and our surrounding servicing districts. The highest and lowest district scores have been taken from local serving districts which include our host district, Pennsbury, as well as other serving districts, including Bristol Township, Bensalem, Bristol Borough, Centennial, Council Rock, Morrisville and Neshaminy. High and low scores were the solitary score that corresponded to any of the listed districts. Highlights are as follows:

- **¾ of the last two scoring years have surpassed '05 state averages**
- **all '05 and current Math scores yield average marks of 10% to 24% points greater than that of the '05 State average**
- **'05 year scores are consistently within 5% percentage points in ¾ of the grading areas in relation to the highest local serving district score. Scores were consistently much greater than that of the lowest scoring district in all areas.**
- **Current test year scores indicate strong increases, with the high score [5th Grade Math] surpassing all '05 local district scores, being over 20% points greater than that of the last year's state average.**

4. <u>The Albanesi Testing Program:</u>

The Albanesi testing program is yet another testing tool utilized by BCMCS for all students. This testing system is purely performance based, specialized on specific content areas. Each test is broken into three subject areas; Language Arts, Geometry and Mathematics. Within each of these subsets is a segmented and categorized set of problems, questions, fill-ins, etc. that are non-subjective in nature. All testable material is non-ambiguous, in that answers are direct. A typical segment would relate division of whole numbers, parts of speech, percentages, etc. Each set is hand scored and recorded with the scores being related to the parents at each of the four marking periods. The tests are categorized in a related fashion that enables the school to use the scores as benchmarks, with the perfected model to show student progress throughout the school year by measuring the each compartmentalized sections. Not only can these scores help the teacher identify specific needs related to a particular content area, but can assess this process throughout the year. Similar assessments are used in the beginning and the end of the school year to demonstrate progress.

5. <u>Achievement Plans & Other Local Measuring Instruments</u>:

1. Development of combined PA State Anchor and Montessori Progress Report in a computerized system, which denotes not only academic achievements and progress, but social and emotional developmental growth rankings. As well, classroom behaviors and observations are noted in the annotated section of the progress report that is completed 4 times a year.

Teacher observations are denoted in the anecdotal section, as these elucidations have been and will remain a vital tool in our Montessori learning environment.

2. Portfolio works, which include but are not limited to, math/geometry procedures, science projects, art works, cultural area dealings, etc., are held in reserve throughout the school year. These are carefully monitored and compiled in a fashion to denote progress, development, advancement and growth in many academic areas. As a bonus, Student-led conferences, involving the student, parent(s) and teacher(s) alike, allow the child to utilize his/her yearly portfolio [works] in a presentation fashion for the selected group.

3. Yearly surveys are conducted and relate to applied evaluation marks for teachers and administrators alike. As well, changes in school policy (rules and regulations), differentiated documentation (new report card system), or adoptions of new programs are given *primary*, *working* and *post* surveys, with the results discussed at Principal's breakfast, PTA and BOT meetings to validate, tweak and refine any and all changes which the school community identifies.

Student Assessment - Attachments

- Aggregate Scores from Local Test Data -- Grade 1
- Aggregate Scores from Local Test Data -- Grade 2
- Aggregate Scores from Local Test Data -- Kindergarten

Teacher Evaluation

BCMCS displayed a multidimensional evaluative process for its teachers, administrators, and staff during the 2007-08 school year. Teacher performance and evaluation was collected by an administrator for and during formative and informative classroom observations, abiding by all set guidelines in accordance to state regulations. The teacher performance evaluation portion, adopted by the BCMCS Board of Trustees, was designed as a teacher evaluation system meant to serve the following purposes:

- To provide constructive feedback to individual educators
- To recognize and help reinforce outstanding service
- To provide direction for staff development practices To unite teachers and administrators in collective efforts to educate students

As such, two (2) formal observations were conducted by the principal. The performance appraisal included Performance Evaluation [PDE 426] of professional practice based on the Classroom Performance Assessments criteria developed by Educational Testing Service and aligned with teaching standards. The critical components of professional practice are organized into four general domains: Planning and Preparation, The Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities. Each of the four domains of the framework refers to a distinct aspect of teaching.Each category has teacher performance indicators that support the category's evaluation as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The Teacher's Performance Demonstration indicators are the criteria for the evaluation. The categories presented on the PDE 426 provide knowledge to both the evaluator and the teacher of performance expectations and the required levels of proficiency for each category. The category's results, either satisfactory or unsatisfactory, are evaluated over time through the review of defined Teacher's Performances that demonstrates indicators in each of the four categories. PDE 426 is discussed at a pre-evaluation conference attended by the evaluator and the teacher.It is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure the availability of evidence required for each of the categories evaluated. The evaluator and teacher share the sources at the post-evaluation conference. The 'Overall

Justification for Evaluation' section specifies any key areas for improvement and provides the teacher with a clear understanding of the evaluator's overall judgment of the teacher's performance. The 'Recommendations for Professional Development' section is based on information gathered over time to make a recommendation for the teacher's continuing needs for professional development and growth. The evaluator and teacher were then to agree on professional development goals at an end of year conference. A locally developed Summative Evaluation form is used as a basis for discussion of the professionals to cover and document all annual performance goals and objectives. A Professional Improvement Plan is then created for the staff member based on the summative evaluation review. If a specific goal is determined, the evaluator must include such at this time.If a previous professional development plan were required from a past evaluation, the completion of that is noted. The evaluator includes in writing the recommendation for professional development, intended outcome of participating in the professional development and the timeline for completion.

Support personnel at BCMCS receive annual performance appraisals. Customer service, awareness of children's needs, program competencies, and professional growth are important features. Successes, needs, and interpersonal relationships with children, parents, and peers are some of the areas addressed at the pre-evaluation conference. In addition, the employee survey discussed in the Charter has been enhanced to include a pre-observation conference and a post-observation conference.

In addition to the administrative teacher evaluation process, a collaborative supervision model was positioned in a 'peer structured' format,' where the teachers participated through self analysis, setting goal oriented growths that were self observed and conducted in a collegial format. An Evaluation Check List for Montessori was developed by the school's Montessori Team Leader, who is a highly trained teacher and Montessori Instructor. The check list was used as a guide by the evaluator during the supervision process aiding the evaluation process.

Teacher Evaluation - Attachment

- Teacher Evaluation Plan

SECTION V. GOVERNANCE REQUIREMENTS

Leadership Changes

Since our last annual report, the following changes have taken place on the board:

After serving two three-year terms on the board, our BOT President's tenure expired and he was replaced by Albert Tenaglia. Mr. Tenaglis recently served as Vice President for the past two years. Filling Mr. Tenaglia's role as Vice President was Raymond Snyder, an original founder who has served on the board since November of 2004. Our Secretary/Treasurer was Debbie denofa, a founder who has held this position since June of 2006, remained in that position. Other board members included Chip Darling and Jeff Fogel who have served as trustees since November 2004 and July 2005, respectively.

John Funston served as Principal/CEO during the 2007-08 school year. Brian Long, who has taught at BCMCS since it's opening in 2000, served as Vice Principal. During the school year, Mr. Funston expressed his desire to retire at the end of the school year. Brian Long has been named the successor to John Funston, who will remain at the school on an advisory capacity. Mr. Long has completed his administrative training and has attained his Administrative Certification. Mr. Long is well respected and received by both the teaching faculty and the parent community.

The Board of Trustees will remain intact for the 2008-09 school year. Level Head Coordinators

from the teaching ranks will also hold important positions of leadership and responsibility within the school in the areas of curriculum/program planning and development, and resource management. Also serving on the Leadership Team for the 2008-09 school year will be the existing Business Manager and Operations Manager. The Principal will attend to the educational needs of the school while the Business Manager will oversee all facility and financial needs. The Operations Manager will serve the Principal, Business Manager and Board of Trustees so that communication, organization, planning, and professional personnel management are effectively carried out.

Board of Trustees

Name of Trustee	Office (if any)
Albert Tenaglia	President
Raymond Snyder	Vice-President
Debbie DeNofa	Secretary/Treasurer
Chip Darling	Trustee
Jeff Fogel	Trustee

Professional Development (Governance)

All Board members have served the school for at least three years and have a full understanding of the school's charter application and by-laws. All members of the board have also been provided with a School Documentation Guide that includes a copy of the Sunshine Act, Right to Know Law, Act 22 Charter School Law, and the school's Policies and Procedures, Bylaws, Crisis Prevention Plan and Technology Plan. The Principal/CEO for the 2007-2008 school year was a retired superintendent of schools with over 40 years experience in education who also served as a consultant for Foundations, Inc., specializing in school governance and board training. His experience as a resource was utilized on a regular basis. The school's legal counsel has also made himself available to the board to consult on all relevant sections of the school's charter and public school code.

For the upcoming school year the board will take part in a strategic planning retreat geared toward effective goal setting, policy development, communication and needs assessment.

Coordination of the Governance and Management of the School

BCMCS does not utilize an external management organization to oversee and manage the day to day operations of the school or provide a curriculum for our program. All such functions are the responsibility of the Board, staff and other professionals retained for specific functions, (e.g.… legal services). This internal management system has been in place and operational since the inception of our school. Periodically, BCMCS may engage outside temporary support services on an as needed basis, to assist in certain school functions; however, the support is limited and any costs associated with it is accounted for in our operations budget. When such services are engaged, the Board assigns certain specific tasks for completion and monitors the personnel through on site observation and/or the completed work products.

The BCMCS Board of Trustees meets once a month for their scheduled public meeting, which is on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Additional round table meetings are also held on a quarterly basis to review specific topics that are relevant to the school. The Board President

meets with the Principal/CEO on a bi-weekly. Board Committees for curriculum, finance, fundraising, human resources and facilities meet regularly and the Executive Committee meets on an as needed basis. Financial accounts are reviewed monthly by the Business Manager and Board Treasurer. Day to day management is handled by the Principal/CEO. The board members are aware of their role and are very professional and conscientious as they carry out their responsibility.

Since our charter was renewed by Pennsbury in 2004, communications between BCMCS and our our host district have mainly been handled by the schools' respective administrators. Our relationship continues to be positive.

Coordination of the Governance and Management of the School - Attachment

- BOT Meeting Schedule

Community and Parent Engagement

The BCMCS Board of Trustees is composed of parents, and founders from the community. At the beginning of each year teachers are directed to have the parents of their students fill out an expectation form to elicit input on anticipated outcomes for their child. At the end of each school year parent evaluation forms are provided to parents to elicit responses regarding the perceived success or lack thereof of key elements of the educational program, communication, and overall experience at the school.

During regularly held monthly Board meetings the Principal provides updates concerning any special happenings that have taken place at the school or that are planned for the near future, committee chairs provide pertinent updates regarding committee activities, and an open floor forum is reserved for the public to raise questions and/or suggest topics for inclusion in the agenda of future board meetings. Quarterly Round Table Meetings are also held at which announced presentations on relevant topics are made. Teachers and parents are invited to attend and discussion is encouraged.

At the beginning of each year, BCMCS also holds a back-to-school night to introduce parents to the administrator, staff, and member of the Board of Trustees, all of whom are available to address questions about all aspects of the school and its operation. Parents learn where their required volunteer efforts could best be utilized and receive information about the various service committees they might want to join.

Open House opportunities, Community Days, and Montessori workshops are also offered throughout the school year. These events attract members of the community, encourage them to come to the school and experience what is going on in the classrooms and make them aware of the many ways they might be able to assume a role as an active member and partner of the school.

BCMCS has a very active and successful PTA ,which meets monthly. It publicizes school events, ensures ongoing communication among all stakeholders, facilitates discussion of educational programs and school policies and procedures, acts in a service capacity, and is another opportunity for parents to partner with the school in their children’s education. There is an open forum at the end of every meeting during which parents are able to raise concerns and ask questions. The Principal/CEO attends all meetings.

BCMCS actively seeks opportunities to participate in community service activities. Some examples are: sponsoring food and clothing drives, the Peace Study Program, and participation in the local St. Patrick's Day parade.

The Bucks County Montessori Charter School requires that every parent/family volunteer at least three (3) hours per month for the school. Fund raising, school maintenance, assisting the teachers with non-instructional tasks, administrative support tasks (i.e. mailings/copying), setting up/maintaining the library, serving hot lunches, participation in the Parent Teacher Association and accompanying classes on field trips are some of the services performed by parents.

SECTION VI. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Major fund-raising activities

Numerous fundraisers were held this year, including t-shirt sales, book fairs, clothing sales, box tops for education, ink cartridge recycling, year book coupon book sales, Longaberger Basket Bingo and our Family Raffle Basket Extravaganza. Student led fundraisers included a flower sale and a community play. Fundraising during the upcoming school year will be the same as last year, with possible additional fundraising events that are still in the planning stages.

Fiscal Solvency Policies

The School Law of Pennsylvania requires that public school districts provide an annual operations budget prior to the start of the fiscal year (July 1). BCMCS makes this budget available to the public for review and comment before adopting same by June 30th for the fiscal year beginning July 1 and ending June 30th of the subsequent year. The board is committed to adopting a budget each year which projects an operating surplus of at least $100,000. The budget also contains contingencies which more than adequately provide for fiscal solvency. The school maintains more than sufficient fund balances and adequate resources are available to assist in the achievement of the school's mission, goals and academic standards.

All budgets and financial records are audited by an independent Certified Public Accountant firm in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and a report provided to Pennsbury and PDE accordingly.

Accounting System

The accounting system used at BCMCS is a Quick Books Pro accounting system loaded with the State Chart of Accounts. All budget and financial reporting requirements are completed in a timely fashion and delivered to the appropriate state departments. Additionally, the school has an outside independent accounting firm perform a full financial audit on an annual basis. The audit also includes a review of policy and procedures. Checks are presented monthly to the Board of Trustees. The BOT approves all checks written on behalf of the school. The school has always maintained a policy prohibitting school issued credit cards. Bank accounts reconciled on a monthly basis. The school is solvent.

Preliminary Statements of Revenues, Expenditures & Fund Balances - Attachment

- Preliminary Statements of Revenues, Expenditures & Fund Balances

Audit Firm, Date of Last Audit, Auditor's Opinion, and Any Findings Resulting From the Audit

Siegal & Drossner, PC., Certified Public Accountants served as the school's audit firm. They audited the financial statements, each major und and the aggregate fund information of the Bucks County Montessori Charter School, as of and for the school year ended June 30, 2007.

The audit was conducted in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

Attached is a copy of the audit for the 2006-2007 school year. The 2007-2008 audit is in the process of being scheduled and results of same will be forwarded to the host district once completed.

Audit Firm, Date of Last Audit, Auditor's Opinion, and Any Findings Resulting From the Audit - Attachment

- Auditor's Annual Report

Citations and follow-up actions for any State Audit Report

No deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting considered to be amaterial weakness was identified in the audit and the school has not received any citations.

SECTION VII. FACILITY RESPONSIBILITIES

Acquisition of Facilities, Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment During the Last Fiscal Year

During the 2007-08 school year BCMCS leased space located at 219 Tyburn Road in Fairless Hills, Pennsylvania. This facility located at the site provides spacious grounds, as well large interior classrooms, more than adequate lighting, administrative offices, library, multi-purpose room and nurse's office. This facility also allows for flexible scheduling and creative science

programs, and provides opportunities for the school to host school and fundraising activities on site. It also impacts favorably towards our pursuit of Middle States & Montessori Accreditation.

Furniture and equipment needs are identified and acquired through compliance with any bidding requirements and the established purchasing procedures.

Future Facility Plans and Other Capital Needs

It is the intent of the school to continue to lease space located at 219 Tyburn Road in Fallsington, Pa. The spacious grounds can house a playground which the school is exploring and it offers the possibility for further expansion should we need it. Capital needs that have been identified and integrated into our short term strategic plan include upgrades to our communication and security systems.
A strategic planning session of the board is also being planned for the upcoming school year to identify future facility and capital plan needs

SECTION VIII. HEALTH AND SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES

Compliance With Health and Safety Requirements and Maintenance of Health and Immunizations Records for Students

Student Health and Wellness:

Bucks County Montessori Charter School employs a full-time nurse who is on site during school hours. She is responsible for oversight of the health and immunization records for students and staff, which are copied and maintained in the school office. The nurse's responsibilities also include maintaining all health records, dispensing appropriate and documented medications, conducting health screenings and provision of first aid treatment. A doctor is under contract to approve standing orders, sign off on reports, provide physicals and write prescriptions for allergy antidotes. BCMCS receives reimbursement through the PA Dept. of Health for school health services--this infirmation is provided to the state via the SHARRS Annual reporting service.

Since BCMCS does not provide lunch and/or breakfast programs, a wellness policy is not applicable. However, the school does provide a litany of health services that educate and foster proper nutrition, hygiene and safety through programs such as DARE, Human Growth and Development seminars, and various medical and dental/fluoride workshops. Internally, the school's curriculum and 'snack' program has portions that address proper nutrition as well as listed benefits from physical exercise and activity.

Safety Standards:

The Bucks County Montessori Charter School has a fire inspection certificate on site. A complete listing of the year’s fire drills are maintained in the school office and sent to PDE upon completion of the school term. BCMCS is required to maintain this record of monthly fire drills, which also lists observed dates, evacuation times, safety routes and gathering points.

The Safety Plan/Emergency Handbook is designed to provide a "best practice" response to any number of potential crises. The plan will assist in making the best decisions and take the most important steps for safety and security until administration, emergency staff, and/or local

authorities arrive. Copies will be kept in an accessible location in all instructional areas, offices and large group areas. The Bucks County Montessori Charter School Safety Committee should review the document thoroughly and familiarize themselves with the procedures to be followed in each of the scenarios.

Depending on the specific nature of the crisis, specialists within the school community and outside the building can be utilized. A built in safety team, consisting of administrative personnel, is operational and prepared to make the necessary and appropriate contacts. Our key personnel will carry cell phones, making instant communication possible. In case of an emergency, teachers will use the telephones in their classrooms to contact the main office. A two-way VHF radio, which broadcast's on the same channel as the Pennsbury School District has been purchased to provide communication during emergencies and/or when telephone communication is interrupted. The Falls Township Police will also monitor the Pennsbury channel, and depending on the specific nature of the emergency, additional personnel will be mobilized and the appropriate interventions will be made.

Compliance With Health and Safety Requirements and Maintenance of Health and Immunizations Records for Students - Attachment

- School Health Service Report

Current School Insurance Coverage Policies and Programs

- **Health and Disability**
- **Workmen's Compensation**
- **Unemployment Compensation**
- **Property/Contents ($250,000 replacement cost)**
- **Commercial General Liability ($1,000,000 Occurrence Limit)**
- **Educator's Legal Liability (Errors and Omissions, $1,000,000 Each Wrongful Act Limit)**

Current School Insurance Coverage Policies and Programs - Attachment

- Insurance Declaration Pages

SECTION IX. ADMINISTRATIVE NEEDS

Quality of Teaching and Other Staff

The staff retention patterns have been very positive since Bucks County Montessori Charter school opened in 2000. Each year the staff retention rate improved and more staff were added as the enrollment increased in response to the realization of established goals for the addition of new grades. Staff were also added to meet the needs of the school in the area of special education.

The following are examples of staffing patterns for 2007 -08:

- The majority of the original staff employed in 2000 when BCMCS opended are still functioning as lead teachers.
- The part time art teacher who started in September 2007 was the only person not to complete the entire year. He left to accept full time employment in January.
- A shift in the student population has increased the size of the upper elementary classes. Since BCMCS has an enrollment cap of 176 students, the number of kindergartens was reduced from two to one and the Upper Elementary increased from two to three classes. A change in the special education program to a full inclusion classroom in our lower elementary resulted in replacing an assistant teacher with one who was qualified to teach special education.
- Two of the staff from 2006-07 were not offered contracts for the 2007-08 school year.
- There was one resignation, because of family relocation to Arizona.
- Two of the returning staff with emergency certificates in the fall of 2007 became certified in the spring of 2008. Two other staff with out of state certification are in the process of taking the PRAXIS and/or having their credentials evaluated.

The board of trustees values highly qualified teachers and has made it clear that a teaching certificate for all staff is a priority for BCMCS. In addition the board of trustees has developed a policy and a salary matrix rewarding highly qualified staff and longevity.

Quality of Teaching and Other Staff - Attachments

- Quality of Teaching and Other Staff - Evidence of Submission for Professional Personnel Report
- Quality of Teaching and Other Staff - PDE-414

Student Enrollment

Enrollment Process:

Bucks County Montessori Charter School follows all of the set guidelines to enrollment as noted in SECTION 1723a of PA Act 22 related to charter school law. To begin the procedure, BCMCS conducts an Open House for the community which is intended to set all the criteria and guidelines of set enrollment procedures. The processes, thereafter, are as follows:

- Development of Application packets
- Advertisement/Legal ad noting dates and notification for/of founder status
- Distribution of application packets and open enrollment period
- Lottery
- Issuance of admission letters and confirmation of enrollment

There are two requirements for admission in to kindergarten: (1) The child must be 5 years of age by September 30th for kindergarten, 6 years for grade 1, etc. and (2) all required immunizations must be current. For the 2007-08 school year, the admission process was conducted as followed:

1. The children of the families listed as founders of BCMCS were afforded preferential admission to the charter school in accordance with Act 22. Notification was made through the placed legal ad. There were no students who qualified for this status.

2. Siblings of students currently enrolled at BCMCS were given the next preferential admission. Letters were sent to families for intent to return as well as notification of sibling's intent for which we made our collection. There was room for all siblings, leaving one (1) opening.

3. Children of families who reside in BCMCS's host school district, Pennsbury, were next selected via a lottery process conducted in April. The lottery was conducted in an open setting, whereas all of the applicant names were placed on cards and set in a box to be randomly selected. A list was then compiled and place in a numerical fashion. The first selection was made, and then a list of students within the district was assembled.

4. Next, children outside of the host district were selected using the same process.

Ending Enrollment history for 2007-2008:

Kindergarten	>	23 Students*
1st Grade	>	31
2nd	>	21
3	>	37
4	>	35
5	>	19
6	>	12

The total number of students for the 2007-08 school year remained consistent at 178. Our school typically implores a policy to over enroll by two (2) students so as to cover any drop in student population that would affect billing from the local districts.

*During the course of the school year, one (1) student officially dropped from Kindergarten and returned to the Pennsbury District.

Current Student Enrollment

BCMCS continues to maintain full enrollment with a waiting list of at least 83 students for the upcoming school year. Over the years the parents, some families withdrew their child from the school stating differing learning structures related to the school's open organizational and curricular arrangement. The majority of student withdraws, however, usually occur after the kindergarten year, as many parents enroll at BCMCS primary for the full day kindergarten program. Also, some parents choose to withdraw their child(ren) after 5th Grade in order that the student(s) can start middle school from its onset in the local school district.

Sources (self-studies, surveys, discussions, meetings, conferences, etc,) demonstrate strengths of the quality and integrity of education at BCMCS as its most appealing aspect. Public confidence is affirmed through achievement of enrollment projections and the constant, continual expression of high satisfaction with institutional effectiveness and student learning/achievement. Any changes during the instructional year were mainly due to family relocation, philosophical differences, or a need for a more restrictive or tightly structured classroom setting.

Conferences are held with parents who are considering withdrawing their child. Some parents are unable to attend a conference and opt to fill our an exit survey requesting the reasons for the

transfer. It is important to note that parents' decisions to choose a traditional, charter, Montessori, or other type of setting are driven by what they believe is best suited to the particular needs and temperament of their own child.

Waiting List Data:

2001-2002 104
2002-2003 52
2003-2004 55
2004-2005 100
2005-2006 72
2006-2007 78
2007-2008 83

Transportation

Our host district, Pennsbury School District, provides bus transportation in accordance with their regular policy for private and secular schools. Students from other outside districts are provided bus transportation service by their home district as well, provided that their home district offers bus transportation. Currently, Morrisville School District is the only surrounding district that does not provide bus transportation for their students; therefore, Morrisville parents are responsible for 'to and from' school transportation.

There were no identified student(s) in need of special accommodations during the 2007-08 school year. If a student were in need of such services or accommodations, BCMCS would contract and provide a/this set transportation through the Bucks County Intermediate Unit.

Bucks County Montessori Charter School's responsibility for transportation involves providing the necessary student data to the local districts and assuring acceptable student behavior on the school bus. Appropriate and applied bus safety issues are detailed in the BCMCS Student Code of Conduct, which states that the bus driver is responsible for discipline on the school bus. Misconduct by the student must be reported to the principal, or designated school offical, who is then to take the appropriate disciplinary action. Level 1 disciplinary guidelines, as listed in the BCMCS Student Code of Conduct, would

provide further information on appropriated disciplinary steps for bus incidences or misconduct. Servicing district codes and rules may supersede any/all BCMCS guidelines.

Food Service Program

Bucks County Montessori Charter School does not operate a food service program -- lunches are brought to school by the students. The lunches are kept in a section of the classroom that is set aside solely for that purpose. The lunches are eaten in the classrooms or, when weather permits, outside in designated and appropriate areas.

The school PTA implements a Milk Program that is offered to the entire student body. From a questionnaire that is sent home at the beginning of the school year, low income families are identified and offered reduced/free milk and/or juice. In addition, the PTA sponsors several selections of hot lunches on Fridays that are funded by families who select this as an option.

Student Conduct

At Bucks County Montessori Charter School, it is important that the students clearly understand the policy set forth by BCMCS and possible consequences for violating rules within our policy. We, at the school, adhere to the fact that our children are our most precious gifts. Through nurturing and sensitivity, we hope to prepare them to attain the highest levels of personal and social achievement so that they will become constructive contributors in our community and in future communities for which they will belong.

With this in mind, it is essential that our ultimate objective is reflected in the methods of discipline used at BCMCS. Our approach is to lead children towards self-discipline—and our intention is to avoid spending unnecessary time responding and reacting to behavior problems; but rather, to focus the attention on prevention and prepare independence in the children to handle circumstances themselves.

The Montessori Method addresses the need of change toward positive behavior through peer influences, lesson planning or instruction whenever possible—it is integrated within the Montessori philosophy. Maria Montessori stated that *Discipline*, therefore, needs to be more of a learning condition and less a punitive experience. The child is more interested in the process whereas the adults are typically more interested in the product. Montessori warned that if we judge children by our own measure, we will frustrate their efforts at self-development. If we recognize that the children's purpose is self-development and we respect their efforts, children will develop self-discipline through their work and, thus, obedience will follow.

In the Montessori class, the child's opinion is asked for and respected and the child is invited to share his/her view. Montessori students want to follow the rules when the rules are clearly defined. When prepared for in this manner, it invites the child to assume responsibility for his/her behavior. Assuming responsibility for behavior is to understand and accept the consequences for violating rules. In that instant, *as discipline being seen as a learning experience*, it will be executed by the staff and personnel of BCMCS in the above mentioned manner.

Extracted from the BOT approved BCMCS Student Code of Conduct is the following which denotes the compliancy with regard to Chapter 12 Public School Code related to due process:

1. *A Board decision is required to expel a student.*
2. *Expulsion is permanent exclusion from the school.*
3. *All expulsions will require a formal hearing.*
4. *Any student recommended by the administration for expulsion will be given notice of the hearing, an opportunity to hear the evidence against him/her, and present witnesses on his/her own behalf.*
5. *During the period prior to the hearing and decision of the Board of Trustees in an expulsion case, the student, unless on suspension, shall be placed in his normal class except:*
    1. *If it is determined after an informal hearing that a student's presence in his normal class would constitute a threat to the health, safety, morals or welfare of others; and*
    2. *If it is possible to hold a formal hearing within the period of a suspension, the student may be excluded from school for no more than 10 school days, if the formal hearing is not unreasonably delayed.*

The complete and unbridged BCMCS Code of Conduct is an attached document that can be reviewed to further relate any/all compliance with Chapter 12 guidelines.

During 2007-2008 school year, one(1) student was involved in one (1) suspension and there were no expulsions.

Student Conduct - Attachment

- Discipline Policy

ASSURANCE FOR THE OPERATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

School Year: 2008

The Bucks County Montessori CS within Bucks County IU 22 assures that the charter school will comply with the requirements of 22 PA Code Chapter 711 and with the policies and procedures of Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). PDE will specify, in writing, policies and procedures to be followed. Requests for any deviations from these regulations, policies, and procedures must be made in writing to PDE. The charter school assures:

1. There are a full range of services, programs and alternative placements available for placement and implementation of the special education programs in the charter school.
2. The charter school has adopted a "child find" system to locate, identify and evaluate children who are thought to be a child with a disability eligible for special education residing within the charter school's jurisdiction. "Child find" data is collected, maintained, and used in decision-making. Child find process and procedures are evaluated for effectiveness. The charter school implements mechanisms to disseminate child find information to the public, organizations, agencies, and individuals on at least an annual basis.
3. The charter school has adopted policies and procedures that assure that students with disabilities are included in general education programs and extracurricular and non-academic programs and activities to the maximum extent appropriate in accordance with an Individualized Education Program.
4. The charter school will comply with the PA Department of Education annual report requirements including special education information.
5. The charter school follows the state and federal guidelines for participation of students with disabilities in state and charter school-wide assessments including the determination of participation, the need for accommodations, and the methods of assessing students for whom regular assessment is not appropriate.
6. The charter school assures the Pennsylvania Department of Education that funds received through participation in the medical assistance reimbursement program, ACCESS, will be used to enhance or expand the current level of services and programs provided to students with disabilities in this local education agency.

This assurance must be signed by the Board President and the Chief Executive Officer for the charter school to operate services and programs.

_____ _____

Board President **Date**

_____ _____

Chief Executive Officer **Date**

2008 - 2009 Annual Report for Pennsylvania Charter Schools

Verify that all DATA reports to PDE are complete **YES** _____ **NO** _____

SIGNATURE PAGE

Identify the charter school's Chief Executive Officer.
Name Brian P. Long
Title Principal/CEO
Phone 215-428-6700 **Fax** 215-428-6701
E-mail blong@bcmcs.com

_____ _____
Signature of the Chief Executive Officer and Date

Identify the charter school's President of the Board of Trustees.
Name Al Tanaglia
Title President
Phone 215-431-7671 **Fax** 215-428-6701
E-mail avtena1@verizon.net

_____ _____
Signature of the President of the Board of Trustees and Date

Identify the charter school's Special Education Contact Person.
Name Sherry Walter
Title Coordinator of SPED
Phone 215-428-6700 **Fax** 215-428-6701
E-mail swalter@bcmcs.com

_____ _____
Signature of the Special Education Contact Person and Date

Signature Page

Signature Page - Attachment

- Signature Page