

Renewal Inspection Report

Cocheco Arts and Technology Academy

December 4, 2008

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The Inspection Team

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School Description

Cocheco Arts and Technology Academy (CATA) was originally chartered in 2004. The school currently serves students in grades 9 through 12. The school's mission is as follows:

The mission of the Cocheco Arts and Technology Academy, a Public Charter School, is to provide excellence in secondary education in fundamental academics and performing arts, fine arts and technology related to the arts. CATA will be dedicated to creating an educational community where each student thrives, exploring personal interests in an atmosphere that encompasses different learning styles, individual learning opportunities, smaller class sizes and multiple methods of learning assessments.

CATA has maintained its focus on arts education throughout its charter. The school provides both separate arts classes as well as successfully merging arts into other subject area courses. Students engage in a wide variety of projects, both academic and arts related. Many innovative programs exist at CATA including a costume program and puppetry.

CATA began its charter in Dover, New Hampshire but was later relocated to Barrington where the school is currently housed. According to the outgoing director of CATA, the original decision to have the school in Dover was inspired by the active arts community in Dover and the urban environment with all of its cultural richness. In addition, the public transportation system was an advantage in transporting students from various neighborhoods to the school. After the move to Barrington, leaders at the school found that the relatively remote location was a disadvantage both in drawing in prospective students as well as limiting the activities and resources to which students had access to. For these reasons the school is currently in the process of moving back to Dover to a space in a renovated mill building. Leaders hope that with this change they will be able to draw in more students to the school.

Enrollment and funding are a problem for CATA now. Student enrollment is down for this year to 58 students in comparison with 67 students at the end of last year. The

resulting drop in funding has resulted in the school operating at a deficit of \$60,000 for this year with money scheduled to run out in March. The move to Dover is hoped to increase enrollment over time, however it is not a solution for the deficit. CATA is actively pursuing alternate forms of fund raising through several different fund raising paths including their association with the New Hampshire Public Charter School Association.

Inspection Methodology

The inspection visit to MTA was conducted on December 4, 2008. Inspectors collected data through parent, student and teacher interviews, classroom observations and the review of school documents. Inspectors also interviewed the outgoing and incoming directors of the school, board members and guidance staff. The inspection team observed 12 classes during the visit and used a common observation tool to gather evidence from the lessons.

Prior to and during the visit, inspectors reviewed numerous documents relating to the school's operations and performance. These included but are not limited to the following:

- Original Charter
- 2008 Charter Renewal Application
- Accountability Report
- Various curricular materials
- Financial audits and quarterly reports
- Policy manuals
- NECAP Data
- Teacher observation forms created by the school
- 2008-09 school calendar and schedules;
- Sample student report cards.

The body of this document is a response to the “Key and Subsidiary Questions” as outlined in The New Hampshire Charter School Accountability Process. This report answers and offers affirmative evidence to the four questions that define the Charter Renewal Application.

1) Is the school making progress towards achieving its mission?

a) What progress has the school made toward its academic goals as defined in its accountability plan?

The following Goals and Strategies are extracted from CATA’s Charter.

i) To promote excellence in education through innovative, engaging and challenging coursework:

The academic program at CATA was observed to be highly innovative with an arts program that is both effective and well integrated across the curriculum. This integration is perhaps best exemplified through the availability of innovative assessments in standard core subject areas to address varied student learning styles. For example, in science, students were allowed to choose an alternate assessment to create a visual arts representation of a unit on stars. Work was assessed on this project through the use of a rubric designed to ensure that students included rigorous coverage of the content material (e.g. types of stars, phase of life cycle of stars) in the unit in their visual display.

Student commitment to the arts was strongly evident both in the classrooms and in common areas. A group of students gathered about one student playing the piano in the common area. At another point, one student provided piano instruction to another at the same piano. Student artistic work was prominently displayed, however the informal presence of student artwork on student book covers, etc. and student excitement about the arts and their future

in arts related careers was more dramatic evidence of how the commitment to the arts has permeated the culture of the school.

Teachers in interviews reported that they regularly worked to develop units that crossed disciplines. Examples of this are the merger of an ELA unit on “The Crucible” and a history unit on the McCarthy Era and a math/science unit where students determined the age of a tree based on its circumference.

In all classes observed students were well engaged and interested in the course material. The students appeared to be very comfortable in the classroom environment and teacher-student and student-student rapport were very good. Students worked effectively in groups. Teachers were very competent at asking probing questions and students showed excellent participation while answering questions and while engaged in classroom activities. Student behavior was excellent.

Academic instruction was competent with teachers showing solid content knowledge in their area of instruction. Lesson pacing and structure were good with teachers presenting logical and well-timed lessons. Instruction was effectively guided through questioning. Content of the lessons was aligned to the state frameworks.

Although teachers held moderate expectations for student learning in all observed classrooms, high expectations for student achievement in the classroom were not observed. For example, students engaged in a weather experiment where they used homemade barometers and equipment to measure changes in air pressure and dew point over a number of days. The lesson was engaging and students appeared competent at taking measurements but, despite having been engaged in this activity for part of each class period for number of days, students did not have knowledge of what “air pressure” is, what causes changes in air pressure or how their homemade equipment works. In a geometry class, the lesson was on triangles. The primary concept covered was how the sum of the interior angles of any triangle sum of 180 degrees.

This is a fundamental concept in geometry but is usually presented at an earlier grade level and students would be expected to secure in this concept prior to high school. In addition, course selection is limited by the small school size. For example, students engage in either a school based independent study in calculus or attend outside colleges to obtain high school credit in courses not offered by CATA. Teachers in interviews reported that students who attended CATA often were focused primarily on the art curriculum and had less interest in the core subject areas. This may be a factor in the somewhat lowered expectations for achievement observed in the core academic classrooms.

Although learning expectations were not “high,” they also were not low. The school has created a strong foundational base in school culture, solid instruction, teacher quality and behavior management and can now begin to increase expectations for student performance. The school creates a sense of responsibility in students for their own learning, however expectations for achievement in math and science in particular can now begin to be more rigorous.

- ii) *To promote increased skills for future choices such as admittance to arts-based and/or liberal arts colleges using a professional representation of their arts and technology-based skills, i.e. portfolio, resume, audition, power-point presentation, etc.:*

The student portfolio is an important part of the day to day academic program at CATA. Guidance counselors reported that the portfolio process begins in the student’s freshman year and continues through graduation. The portfolios are aligned with the state standards and the students provide narrative responses describing how they have met each standard. Class work is also included to document compliance with some standards. Between the narratives and the examples provided, each state standard is addressed by each

student. Student compliance with the portfolio requirement appears to be very strong. In addition, portfolios are utilized as an assessment tool.

Portions of the portfolio are devoted to the college application process with students receiving instruction in the interviewing and application process. Student work in this area is included in the portfolios. Students are also encouraged to personalize portfolios by “adding their own touches.”

When interviewed, both students and teachers were very familiar with the portfolios and students were aware of what standards they had met and what work they had yet to accomplish to complete the year. The portfolios provide documentation of student progress academically, a record of their artistic achievements and an effective way of encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning process. Teachers reported utilizing portfolios as a method to ensure that every student has mastered all of the standards and are used to guide instruction in the classroom.

Student portfolios consisted of lists of standards with areas for the student to state when and/or how they had met each standard. Student portfolios are reviewed by teachers or guidance counselors periodically for quality and compliance with the school requirements. Student responses, however, were inconsistent and ranged in quality with a number of observed responses being general and without strong evidentiary value. Responses of this type might refer to the student having been exposed to a standard in, for example, geometry class without the student referencing specific lessons or projects where the standard was presented. In other cases, students gave strong examples in narrative form of work they had participated in or provided proof of mastery of a standard through included class work.

The school actively works with students to prepare them for admission to arts-based or liberal arts colleges through the guidance department. In the junior year, the guidance staff presents an overview of colleges and the college admissions process as a unit in the ELA class. Students engage in work to

refine their interviewing skills and are guided in completing college applications and essays by the guidance counselors.

iii) *To encourage and guide students to take responsibility for their education:*

In addition to the requirement that students document their academic progress through the portfolio program, students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own education and to engage in a number of learning activities outside of CATA. Students participate in Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) that are student driven projects that extend students learning. ELO projects may be online courses, internships or in-school mentoring as well as other endeavors. These projects are frequently related to their artistic interests and represent a more comprehensive and personalized project than that available through the regular curriculum. Students receive course credit for ELO activities. Students are encouraged and supported by teachers and guidance staff to take online and local college courses. These courses are selected by the students and reflect their interests in going beyond the offerings in their high school.

iv) *To provide a curriculum that integrates arts and technology into the classroom rather than being a supplement to learning:*

Teachers at CATA, in interviews, reported that they try to bring arts and technology into the classroom on a regular, but variable basis and expressed both commitment and enthusiasm for this endeavor. The teachers reported that they routinely worked together to produce cross disciplinary projects. Although the team only observed a couple of examples of the integration of art into the lessons, it was apparent from objects on display in the classroom and common areas that it is a common practice at CATA. Objects observed included intricate student created theatrical costumes and examples of alternative assessment projects.

- v) *To develop methods that identify, sustain and incorporate multiple learning styles and assessment enabling all students to attain their educational goals:*

CATA teachers showed commitment to the incorporation of multiple learning styles in their lessons. Several methods of support for multiple learning styles were observed during the visit in addition to the flexible assessment program. During observations, teachers were observed to be adept at facilitating multiple types of grouping strategies during academic activities. Most classes observed included group work of some type. Structures were put in place (e.g. assigning tasks to individual team members) to promote successful group work and allow students to work and learn in their own way on projects and problems. Students worked together to understand different types of triangles and their definitions.

Teachers guided lessons through the use of probing questions. These questions promoted higher level student thinking, for example, students struggled to understand through discussion how condensation nuclei work in the water cycle or made suggestions as to why their data collection on dew points was not effective.

- vi) *To nurture creative thinkers, independent learners, and active citizens:*

CATA has a well rounded educational program for its students. CATA students engage in creative activities throughout their day, in both academic subjects and the arts. The Personal Education Plan (PEP) is a foundational and guiding document for whole student development at CATA. Topics included in the PEP are Academic, Behavioral, Creative, Social (community service), Portfolio and Career goals. Goals are developed through student reflection in response to several questions for each topic and students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and development. Students set realistic goals and guidance staff work with students to ensure they are pursuing their goals in an effective way and monitor students to ensure they achieve their goals. As identified in the PEP guiding document; creative goals

might include ways to incorporate creativity into core curricular courses, behavioral goals may be related to organization or interpersonal interactions with friends or family, academic goals may be related to improving performance in core academics and electives and social goals are often related to volunteer activities.

CATA's Five Year Strategic Vision from 2007 identified both short and long term goals for the school.

Short Term Goals as identified in CATA's Five year – One to Three Years

Revise and Submit New Charter

Although the Board has been in discussion over revisions to the charter, because of the upcoming move to Dover, there has been little progress in this area over the past few months. The Board, in conjunction with the new school director, will be working on this again once the move is complete.

Increase Community Involvement

Newsletter- CATA continues to publish a Friday newsletter. The director plans to begin having the students take over publication of the newspaper as it will be very compatible with their graphic arts program. In addition, she has initiated two community emails a week and has received positive responses from families about improved communication.

Monthly Spotlights- CATA has been conducting monthly spotlights for approximately four to five months. These spotlights are run largely by parent volunteers. Outside guests such as prospective families, local business people and politicians are invited in for a one hour visit to the school. Members of the school community talk about their goals and hopes for the school and parents describe why it has been a good experience for their children. There is also usually a student performance (musical or perhaps puppetry) and a tour of the building included. These spotlights are intended to build community and awareness and create a fundraising base.

Parent Involvement- CATA maintains a very committed school community with active parent involvement. The new director stated that they have a stronger than usual commitment to the school by parents. The school has a volunteer program where parent and students volunteer approximately 20 hours in the school and in the community. Parents play a strong role in the day to day functioning of the school with parents playing a part in running the office and in providing support for special programs. Most remarkably for the current move, the school is being relocated completely by parent efforts. Parents are volunteering both resources such as trucks and food as well as labor to move furniture and materials. These efforts on the part of parents means the school will have no financial outlay for moving of the school beyond those related to the facility such as utility fees, etc.

Community Relationships- New community relationships are being planned for the new Dover location. The school plans to join the Dover Chamber of Commerce as well as form connections with artists whose studios occupy the same building complex as the school. The school hopes to enlist local artists to serve as artists in residence at the school. The Children's Museum in Dover is nearby and the new director hopes to place examples of student science projects on display there.

Better IT Infrastructure- The current website is not well maintained and is not up to date. The new director of the school plans to restyle the website to make it more user friendly and useful. The director has recently had a few new donations of computers made to the school and hopes to have sufficient technology in house to apply to be an "Apple School." One board member and parent has an IT business and will be setting up the new website at no cost in conjunction with the Tech Club. He will be mentoring students in this work. Plans are for the development of two networks, one for school communication and another for school business requiring a higher level of security.

Personnel

Development Director- The school hired a development director who was employed at CATA for approximately one semester. Because of the high cost of maintaining this position, the school has at least temporarily eliminated the position and is instead

engaging the services of New Hampshire Public Charter School Association (NHPCSA) for fundraising services.

Volunteer Coordinator- This position is held by a parent volunteer who coordinates a variety of school activities. They coordinate set-up, food and cleanup for events such as the monthly spotlights.

Board Recruitment- One board member has the responsibility of recruiting for the CATA board. According to the new director, recruiting has been mostly by word of mouth. Currently the school has an IT professional, an educator, two community members (one who is in business) and three parents as members. The new director would like to see the addition of an attorney, an artist educator and an educator with substantial experience, perhaps a retired principal.

Other Needs- The new director would like to add a full time music teacher, an instructor (part-time) so the previously eliminated American Sign Language program can be re-implemented. An artist in residence has just been chosen and will write the original score for a production of Dracula, which will incorporate the sculpture and arts program to create a set from found objects and the school's puppetry program.

Development

Planning for Future School Growth- Board members and the school directors, both outgoing and new, all report that the move to Dover will provide a needed boost to enrollment. The proposed final location will provide ample room for growth, beginning with a 10,000 square foot facility with room for the school to expand to other floors in the building.

Relationships with School Districts- The existing relationship with the Barrington School District is somewhat unusual since Barrington does not have a high school. CATA is one of only three high school options for Barrington students- CATA, Dover Public High Schools or the Coe-Brown Academy. The new director states that the relationship with

Barrington is good. She would like to see CATA cooperate with Dover and would like to use CATA as an integrated arts laboratory developing ideas for both CATA and for dissemination to Dover Public Schools..

Legislative Relationships- According to the new head of school, lobbying representation for all state charter schools at the New Hampshire legislature is funded through the financial support of a private and anonymous donor.

Financial- The budget for 2008-2009 is currently operating at a deficit of \$60,000. Monies will be depleted in March if outside funding is not identified. Sources of additional funds currently being pursued are an auction, possible contributions by private donors and fundraising activities through NHPCSA, including a charter school cook-off. In addition, the new director stated that a legacy program is being planned that will name various areas of the school (e.g. a gym or theater) after a donor who pays for it's renovation.

Medium Range Goals –Three to Five Years

Progress towards medium range goals is not as evident as the progress toward the short range goals. This is in some part because the goals are long range, however several of the School Development goals are dependent upon financial stability for implementation. Because of limited funding, CATA has not moved forward in these areas- increasing full-time staff, improving pay, hiring a technical developer/coordinator and decreasing class sizes. The goal of adding students has not been achieved to date, however the move to Dover is in part being made to access the larger population as a source from which to draw students.

The Relationships Goals are progressing. CATA has developed a symbiotic relationship with the owner of the renovated mill where the school is relocating to. The owner will match funding to complete \$120,000 in renovations if the school can raise half, or \$60,000. The new director is also meeting with Dover selectmen to develop community relationships and foster support. They will also be reaching out to the local arts

community. The school also has an ongoing relationship with the New Hampshire Theater Project and most recently designed costumes for their repertory program.

Permanent Location

CATA has identified a permanent new site for the school in Dover. The site consists of a smaller site of 5000 square feet which will be used as a temporary location for the school until renovations can be made to a larger, 10,000 square foot in an adjacent building which will be the permanent site for the school. The site offers room beyond this space for expansion at a later time. The school is in the process of moving to the temporary site and the move is expected to be complete by the end of January. The owner of the building will match \$60,000 for the school to complete the renovations necessary to move to the permanent site, however, according to board minutes, CATA approached a bank for a loan for the \$60,000 and was turned down. They are currently seeking a co-signer for the loan.

2) Is the school responsibly using public funds?

a) Has the school provided quarterly financial reports that comply with accepted standards of public school accounting?

The inspection team did not receive copies of quarterly financial reports. The head of the school stated that they do exist, however.

b) Do the school's purchasing and billing practices meet acceptable standards for public school accounting?

The new director reported that the school's billing and purchasing practices are standard with purchase orders being submitted through the business manager who issues the check to the vendor. Records are kept on file for each vendor and are made available to the auditor as required. Any expenses not previously budgeted for must be voted on by the board.

c) Has the school provided an annual external audit with no material defects?

CATA provided the inspection team with an audit report from the fiscal year ending in June 2007. No report was made available for 2008. The audit appears in order with no material defects.

d) Do the school's quarterly financial reports demonstrate reasonable and prudent planning?

Please see the comments for 2a.

e) Do the Board's minutes indicate clear communication of accurate information about the school's financial condition?

Upon review of the Board minutes, they do appear to accurately convey information about the school's financial information and condition. Board minutes contain records of discussions of budgetary issues and the subsequent vote and/or actions taken.

3) Is the School promoting student attainment of expected knowledge and skills?

Are students at the school meeting proficiency standards as measured by state assessments? Are the students at the school making progress towards meeting state proficiency standards?

The students at CATA are meeting proficiency standards as measured by the NECAP assessment. This is evidenced by CATA’s success in making AYP in 2008. CATA’s 2007 combined scores for those student’s showing proficiency (Proficient with distinction combined with Proficient) exceed state levels for reading (CATA 80% NH 67%) and writing (CATA 45% NH 33%). Scores for mathematics, however, fell short of state results (CATA 20% NH 28%). CATA mathematics scores, while improving enough to make AYP in 2008, are still quite low with only 20% of student showing proficiency in mathematics.

NECAPS (October 2007)	Reading CATA	Reading Statewide	Mathematics CATA	Mathematics Statewide	Writing CATA	Writing Statewide
	(n=20)	(n=15, 611)	(n=20)	(n=15,546)	(n=20)	(n=15,557)
Proficient with Distinction	10%	17%	0%	2%	5%	3%
Proficient	70%	50%	20%	26%	40%	30%
Partially Proficient	15%	22%	40%	28%	45%	49%
Substantially Below Proficient	5%	12%	40%	45%	10%	18%

Are students at the school meeting credible internally defined measures of proficiency?

CATA has designed an assessment tool identified as the Numeric Assessment Rubric which is used to grade students in courses. This rubric uses a five point scale (5=Advanced, 4=Proficient, 3=Competent, 2=Developing, 1=Beginning, and 0=No credit).

“Students MUST receive an overall numeric score of 3 (or above) in the area of (3.) Content & Demonstration of Knowledge along with a minimum numeric score of 3 (or above) in at least three (3) other areas: (1.) Work Ethic/Habit, (2.) Class Participation & Communication, (4.) Format/ Quality of Documentation, (5.) Process and/or (6.) Creativity to receive credit for a completed course.”

These numeric scores are reported on the student’s transcripts. Narratives are also provided by teacher in the following areas: Content & Demonstration of Knowledge; Work Ethic/Habit; Class Participation & Communication; Creativity; Format/Quality of Documentation; and Process. This rubric is designed to encompass the creative focus of the students and allow them to creatively participate in guiding their own learning yet be assessed in a structured manner.

Student scores on internal assessments, as shown in the tables, are mixed. These results are combined results for each subject area across all courses in that content area at the school. Students showed progress in the number of students passing English, mathematics and science courses from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007, however drops in the passing rates occurred in all courses between 2006-2007 and 2007-2008. Student passing rates in English for all years are quite high, with a low of 97% for the 2007-2008 school year. Passing scores for Mathematics were reasonably good for 2005-2006 with 84% of students passing and excellent in 2006-2007 with 98% of students passing math. The number of students achieving course credit in mathematics for 2007-2008 dropped significantly to 69%. Science passing rates were good to excellent with a high of 100% of students passing the course in 2006-2007 and a low of 80% of students passing science in 2007-2008.

From the internal assessment, in the area of content and knowledge, students are performing adequately with scores averaging between 3.21 and 3.84 for math and science (between competent and proficient). English scores are somewhat better, averaging 3.87 in 2005-2006 and reaching a high of 4.1 (slightly above proficient) in 2007-2008.

Internal assessment results									
	English			Math			Science		
% of students achieving course credit	05-06	06-07	07-08	05-06	06-07	07-08	05-06	06-07	07-08
	100%	100%	97%	84%	98%	69%	89%	100%	80%
Total #of students taking course	39	47	61	38	41	51	36	32	25

Content and Demonstration of Knowledge			
	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
English	3.87	4.00	4.10
Mathematics	3.21	3.56	3.31
Science	3.22	3.84	3.64
Data obtained from the 2008 CATA Charter Renewal Application			

4) Is the school sustainable?

a) Does the school's governing Board function effectively and in accordance with public meeting laws and regulations?

Upon review of various documents including board minutes and through interviews with members of the board of directors, the Board appears to be in compliance with public meeting laws and regulations. Board minutes are well documented and appear complete.

Concern exists, however, about the Board composition. The charter states that the Board should be composed of 11 voting members and one non-voting student member. These members shall represent the following: two parents of enrolled students, three local, professional artists (minimum of one artist and one performer), two professional educators or direct service providers, two technology professionals and two community members. Board membership is not in alignment with this description and recently lost one member to leave the number of members at six. These individuals represent one teacher (not employed at CATA), one business person and four parents. Board members in interviews stated that they were looking for more members and that a parent had expressed interest to the Board in potentially becoming a trustee. It is unclear whether the Board has sufficient expertise in business, education, technology and art to effectively guide CATA.

The Board is responsible for creating a job description for the director as well as for conducting an annual performance for that position. The director reported that she worked without a contract for three years and only in the current school year was a job description created for her. She reported requesting both a job description and an annual review in previous years.

Board members described the Board prior to the 2008-2009 school year as being primarily concerned with "putting out fires." They report they are currently working to take a less reactive approach to managing the school. The board is taking a proactive stance in moving the school to Dover where enrollment may

improve, however the effort is coming very late and budgetary problems may force the school to close despite this effort. It is also unclear whether this move is really proactive or instead reactive to the budgetary crisis. Budgetary planning for this year was significantly off target when compared to the actual availability of funds. It is unclear whether the decrease in funding was foreseeable during the budgetary process.

b) Has the school established systems to manage operations efficiently?

CATA has managed operations efficiently in the past, however with the elimination of the positions of business manager and assistant director, the majority of the responsibility for running CATA is placed on the new director. Some of the business manager's responsibilities will be contracted out to an accounting service and one of the board members stated that he would provide business support as necessary. The new (interim) director in interviews was acutely aware of the issues at the school (financial, academic, etc.) and presented ideas for improving the school, but is not an educator and has not previously led a school before.

c) Are there systems in place to assure instructional quality?

Systems are in place to assure instructional quality. The outgoing director conducted frequent informal observations and "walk-throughs" of classrooms. In addition, she conducted formal observations. These observations included a pre-conference and the use of a formal observation protocol and form which is grounded in the Charlotte Danielson framework for teaching. Teachers were provided with a copy of the book by Danielson, "Enhancing Professional Practice- A Framework for Teaching" in the prior school year and received a letter in October 2008 describing the formal observation process with the attached observation rubric and a "Performance Assessment Matrix" which outlines expectations for teacher performance.

Teachers and administrators also review student data to determine instructional quality. Data reviewed includes the NECAP results and the Progress Through Standards Online Assessment (PTS3) data. Data is reviewed at both the school and student level.

d) Has the school established an appropriate relationship with the local LEA to facilitate services to students with special educational needs?

According to the guidance counselors, CATA has developed a working relationship with the local LEA to provide services to students. Approximately 22% of CATA students receive services through an IEP or a 504 program. Support from the district is described as being “occasional” with assistance being provided to students in organizational skills, psychological support services and in specialized services (e.g. reading). The CATA guidance team have reported that they had some experience with students who are in need of assistance who have not previously been identified by the school district, however.

e) Are school facilities safe, clean and suited to the purposes of the school?

CATA is currently located in a spacious, safe and clean facility that is well suited to its use as a school. The students appear psychologically and emotionally safe with friendly interactions occurring between staff and students as well as between students. No signs of intimidation or bullying were observed and students were comfortable and free from stress in the classrooms while asking and answering questions related to the day’s lesson.

The school is in the process of relocating to a new location in a mill building with artists’ studios in Dover. Although this facility was not inspected, it is reported to provide students with increased access to cultural resources, local artists and public transportation.

f) Is the school psychologically and emotionally safe for children and adults, free from intimidation and bullying?

CATA is psychologically and emotionally safe for the children and adults. Students reported enjoying a “family” feeling at the school. No negative social contacts were observed. Students instead were observed in very healthy social interactions. Students were also observed on numerous occasions spontaneously supporting each other both in classes and in common areas.

g) Does the school have a viable financial plan to support its program?

CATA is currently in a serious financial situation. The school is operating at a \$60,000 deficit for the 2008-2009 school year. The board and director reported that efforts are being made to resolve this primarily through fundraising and reduction in staff. The school will not be able to complete instruction through the end of the year if additional money is not found. There are no contingency plans beyond the fundraising plans below.

It should be noted, however, that tight financial conditions is not unusual for New Hampshire charter schools due to the limited funding available. The success and continuance of these charter schools is highly dependent on how successful they are in the fundraising arena.

Fundraising

CATA has had limited success with fundraising in the past. Board members and the director of the school reported that previously the school hired a development coordinator to create fundraising opportunities to raise funds for CATA programs. The development coordinator position, however, was eliminated after several months due to funding issues. The school has engaged in a variety of programs to raise money for the school including small scale student-run activities such as car washes that have provided small amounts of money to fund student programs. Many of these activities are organized through the Students, Parents, and Educators Activity Community/Committee (SPEAC) which is a committee formed by the Board. Student counsel is a branch of SPEAC.

According to board minutes, recently the Board voted to allocate \$5000 for dues to join the New Hampshire Public Charter School Association (NHPCSA). This organization will be raising funds for all member charter schools in Massachusetts. The coordinator from NHPCSA will be creating a “spotlight” on CATA to be aired on public television. CATA will also be able to participate in a charter school expo in the spring where they will be able to present marketing information to participants. Board minutes report that the coordinator is anticipating being able to raise \$2000 per student for each member school.

CATA will also be holding their first auction. Board members anticipate being able to raise \$15,000 at this event despite no experience with this type of event at CATA. Previously school leaders asked families to donate \$1000 to the school and only had one family participate.

A new CATA community group, Friends of CATA, was formed at the end of last year. Friends of CATA has applied for non-profit, 501c3 status and has been successful in raising some money over the past two years. To date, however, according to the director, they have not provided any funds to the school. Friends of CATA recently voted to “not share their budget with the school.” They are currently planning, according to the director, to distribute \$2000 for a musician to be the school’s “artist in residence.” The school currently employs two full-time teachers with music minors. A clear understanding of the relationship between the Friends of CATA and the school does not currently exist according to the outgoing director and consideration should be given to developing and formally documenting the roles and responsibilities of the Friends of CATA and CATA in relationship to one another.

h) Are there indications of sufficient continuing enrollment to sustain the school’s program and meet its plans for growth?

i) The school has shown uneven enrollment over its charter and does not currently have a waiting list. Enrollment presents a very real financial problem for the school in 2008-2009. This year leaders planned for an increase in

enrollment to 70 students. Actual enrollment was substantially lower than this with only 58 students attending. This has caused significant financial issues to arise since budgeting was done using the 70 student enrollment as the basis for financial planning. Although school enrollment has increased from year to year, the numbers have fluctuated; in particular enrollment in the 2006-2007 school year began the year at 58 students and dropped to a low of 44 in July of 2007. In 2007-2008 enrollment increased from 62 students in September to 67 students in February 2008. Enrollment was at 62 students for July of 2008. The school has never had an enrollment of more than 67 students.

Because CATA has a limited history of enrollment data to draw from and an inconsistent enrollment history with no current wait list, more conservative estimates of student enrollment for the 2008-2009 school year would have been more prudent for planning purposes. Board members interviewed believed that the reduction in enrollment represented student inability to gain transportation to the school because of its less than central location. Board members expressed optimism that enrollment would increase upon the school's relocation to Dover.

Cocheco Arts and Technology Academy Enrollment Data				
	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
September	N/A	58	62	58
November	N/A	51	65	--
February	N/A	48	67	--
July	42	44	62	
Data obtained from the 2008 CATA Charter Renewal Application				

- i) Does the school employ teachers who meet state requirements for experience and/or certification?** Of the seven teachers at CATA, four are both highly qualified and hold NH state certification. Of the other three teachers, two have letters of eligibility, one through alt 4 critical need while the other has passed all

required tests and is awaiting a mentor relationship which will finish the licensure process. The school is seeking a mentor for her at this time. The final teacher teaches part time in a non-core subject area (theater).

Does the school demonstrate the ability to retain skilled and qualified staff?

There was an upheaval in the leadership structure during the final quarter of 2008. The School Director resigned as of December 23rd. She cited personal reasons and poor communication between the board and administration as her reasons for leaving. Following the acceptance of the director's resignation, board members made the decision to place the assistant director in the position of interim director. They made this decision after consulting with the outgoing director and offered the position to the assistant director. Immediately following her acceptance and without informing or consulting either the director or the assistant director. The current interim director was originally hired to promote art in the school and has a strong arts background. She does not, however, have a business background and is not an educator. The board members reported that it is expected that she will be interim director through the end of the school year. These changes have placed the school in a position where there is an absence of on site business expertise. The school will contract out for financial services. Board members stated that the business manager position was eliminated because the school was "top heavy financially."

To date the school has not experienced difficulties retaining qualified teachers. Teachers reported being happy with the school and very satisfied with the leadership provided by the outgoing director.

j) Do parents report satisfaction with the school in areas of academic programming, school-family interactions and timely communication?

A parent/student/teacher survey was conducted in 2007-2008. The response to the question is drawn from the survey question data that seem to apply most directly to these questions. In response to the academic programming question, the

questions contained in the survey were not directly aligned to the academic programming question. Questions deemed to loosely apply to this area are included. Surveys were sent to 62 parents and the school received 26 responses.

Parents appeared to be generally satisfied with the school in each of these areas. All but two questions received satisfactory rates of 80% or above. The only questions receiving low scores was, “The educational program supports the school’s goals for all students.” Which 71% of the parents agreed with and, “Teachers encourage parents to come to the classroom” which was agreed to by 52% of the parents.

Academic Programming

The educational program supports the school’s goals for all students.	71%
Students are regularly assigned homework that is meaningful and helps to reach the NH Curriculum Frameworks Standards.	89%
Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and learning activities to help students learn.	96%
The school emphasizes student thinking and problem solving, not just memory.	100%

School-Family Interactions

I can freely express my opinions or concerns to school staff.	96%
There is open communication between staff and parents.	88%
Teachers encourage parents to come to the classroom.	52%
School encourages parents to attend school events by scheduling them at appropriate times.	96%
The school keeps parents informed about what goes on at school.	88%

Students and parents are given feedback on student progress and are provided with suggestions for improvement when needed or requested. 85%

Timely Communications

The school responds to parent concerns in a timely manner. 84%

Teachers discuss student progress with him/her on a regular basis. 80%