Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Carolyn Sheehan, Director of Education
Blackstone Academy Charter School
334 Pleasant Street
Pawtucket, RI 02860

February 15, 2010

Dear Director Sheehan,

Congratulations to you and to your school community on successfully completing the 2010 Commissioner's Review.

As you are aware, in January 2008, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education approved a new set of secondary-school regulations. These regulations require local educational agencies (LEAs) to develop a means to certify that, beginning with the Class of 2012, all students demonstrate the required proficiencies in order to graduate. Additionally, the regulations specify that the Commissioner review the level of implementation of the Diploma System in each LEA, every two years.

The review process for 2010 was primarily focused on access and opportunity, development of local assessments including standard-setting; and personalization, focused on the ILP. The review criteria for the 2010 Commissioner's Review were used to determine the validity and effectiveness of implementation of each LEA's diploma system as well as, the level of progress made toward meeting the 2012 criteria. Across the state, sufficiency and standard setting are identified as critical areas of need. The expectation for 2012 is that all districts adopt clear policies that define proficiencies, describe sufficiency and establish the standard setting process for graduation decisions.

Through review of documentation and on-site collection of evidence, Commissioner's Review teams reviewed the evidence of implementation of the Diploma System in each LEA. As a result of this review process, it is determined that **Blackstone Academy successfully completed the 2010 review process and has made progress toward meeting the 2012 criteria**.

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To meet the 2012 criteria for full approval will require maintenance of effort in those areas of the diploma system that are well implemented and greater attention to the identified gaps in your diploma system. The gaps in your system that must be addressed before full approval can be awarded for 2012 are identified in the complete CR Final Feedback Report previously sent following your site visit.

The following represent ***a few of the key findings*** from the district review.

In your District, there was evidence of:

- Strong leadership and commitment to the Diploma System
- Well developed personalization strategies that promote academic and personal success of students (e.g. Advisory that meets daily and incorporates monitoring of the ILP)
- Clear communication of graduation expectations to all key stakeholders
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The following items represent key areas that need more immediate and focused attention:

- Complete alignment in all courses along with depth of knowledge (DOK) identification for assessments and subsequent gap analysis to ensure access and opportunity for all students
- Develop a formal task validation process that examines Universal Design (UDL), bias, DOK of assessments and the Diploma System as a whole
- Develop a policy and procedure for analyzing local and state assessment data and how it is used to make proficiency based graduate/not graduate decisions

Finally, enclosed is a copy of a parent/guardian letter to use in your communications with key stakeholders regarding the results of the 2010 Commissioner's Review.

If you have any questions regarding this correspondence or to obtain the complete copy of the Commissioner's Review for your district, call the Office of Middle and High School Redesign, at 222-8461.

Sincerely,

Deborah Gist, Commissioner

Enclosure: Parent letter

cc: Kyleen Carpenter, Principal
Honorable Raymond Cooney, Board of Directors Chairperson