

THE IVY CHARTER SCHOOL

2014 SITE VISIT REPORT



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Introduction

Site visits to the State Sponsored Charter Schools are a regular and systemic examination of a charter school's administration and implementation of the charter agreement. They are one of the essential functions of the Oregon Department of Education, Office of Learning, as delegated by the State Board of Education (SBE), with ORS 338.095 (2) which states, "The sponsor or sponsor's designee at least annually shall visit the public charter school site and review the public charter school's compliance with the terms and provisions of the charter."

The mission of the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is to "...foster excellence for every learner through innovation, collaboration, leadership, and service to our education partners." With the mission and statute in mind, a Site Visit Protocol was developed to establish a framework and focus for the annual site visits to State Sponsored Charter Schools.

The purpose of the annual site visit is to gather and document evidence about the school's performance, implementation of the education and organizational program outlined in its charter, and compliance with law and regulations. The documents and observations gathered assist in assessing the extent to which the State Sponsored Charter School is faithful to the terms of its charter, educationally and fiscally sound, and organizationally viable.

Data Collection Process and Methodology

Acting as a representative of the State Board of Education, the ODE conducted the 2013-14 site visits to SBE sponsored charter schools. The site visit team at the Ivy School included three ODE specialists, a contracted retired educator, and a principal from another SBE sponsored charter school and two members of the SBE. In conducting the site visit, the team:

- Reviewed key background documents provided by the ODE, including the current charter agreement and the 2012-13 annual report.
- Researched other available information about the State Sponsored Charter School, including relevant statutes, report and evaluations, newspaper articles and other data.
- Reviewed documentation provided by the State Sponsored Charter School prior to the visit.
- Arranged the site visit in coordination with State Sponsored Charter School, including identifying participants for the focus groups.
- Collected evidence of the school's compliance or performance, with respect to its charter contract, during the site visit.

The site visit occurred January 15, 2014 at the The Ivy School. The school is housed in Portland at two facilities: one at N. Williams and Morris with four classrooms grades 4-8; the other at NE 42nd and Prescott with four classrooms grades 1-3. The Review Team visited both sites. In addition to touring the facility, visiting classes, and observing students during and between classes, the Review Team interviewed representatives of the Ivy School parents, staff, students, the school leader, and charter board members. At the conclusion of the site visit, the team members met with the leadership and staff members to share the team's initial observations, ask follow-up questions, and review the site visit reporting process.

This report is an analysis of the data and information gathered prior and during the site visit to the school. It also provides the Review Team's observations and conclusions about the Ivy School's compliance and performance as a State Sponsored Charter School.

Background

The Ivy School began its process of becoming a charter school when a Montessori administrator and a group of parents (called the Ivy School Design Team) realized a public school Montessori was needed in the Portland Public School district. The 18-member design team consisted of a financial planner, child development director, social worker, architect, software engineer and technologist, finance and banking manager, marketing strategist, realtor, human resources officer, and education consultant. The team believed that the philosophy of Montessori could meet the needs of all children, especially those with diverse learning styles and special needs. The team also wanted to offer Montessori education to all children regardless of socio-economic status since there would be no tuition for a Montessori public school.

An application to Portland Public School was submitted in 2007. While the school district was open to having a public Montessori school, the district denied the proposal in December, 2007. In 2008, the team appealed their charter proposal denial to the State Board of Education and the school charter was approved under the State Board sponsorship.

The Ivy School opened its doors in the fall of 2009 with 60 students in two blended classrooms of grades 1-3. The staff consisted of two lead guides, two Spanish-speaking assistants, one clerical, and two part-time volunteer administrators.

In 2010, the school population doubled to 120 students in four classrooms. One classroom blended grades 4 through 6 which is called Upper Elementary. Two more lead guides and two Spanish-speaking assistants were hired. A principal was hired part-time.

In 2011, the school population grew to 150 students in five classrooms, consisting of three lower elementary classrooms and two upper elementary classrooms. The school

moved two classrooms to a new campus, approximately three miles from the Prescott campus. The principal and administrative assistant were hired full-time.

In 2012, a middle school program and classroom was in place. The Ivy School used the same two buildings, the Prescott and Morris campuses, which housed three lower elementary, two upper elementary, and one middle school classrooms in grades 1-8. The staff consisted of seven lead guides, five Spanish-speaking assistants, two support staff, and two administrators.

Currently, in 2013-2014, The Ivy School services students in grades first through eighth. The staff consists of eight lead guides, eight Spanish speaking assistants, a part-time development person, and one administrator. There are two support staff, four after-school staff, and two lunch staff. The school is divided into four lower elementary classrooms (grades 1-3) at the Prescott campus, and three upper elementary classrooms (2 at grades 4-5 and 1 at grade 5-6) and one middle school classroom grades (grades 6-7) at the Morris campus.

The Prescott campus, which is now owned by the Ivy School, is a cheerful school building, located in a northeast neighborhood at the corner of NE 42nd Avenue and Prescott, a relatively busy intersection. It has its own playground, parking lot, and easy access to Tri-Met buses. The Morris campus, in an older brick school building, is located at the corner of N. Williams and N. Morris (approximately two miles from Prescott) across from Legacy Emanuel Hospital, a city park, and next to a local church. The school has access to Tri-Met buses and many adjacent businesses. The city park, used by students in the past, has been under remodeling/development this year which has created some outdoor changes for students. Staff and visitors generally park on N. Morris.

As stated in the 2012-2013 Annual Report regarding the Morris campus, a number of “renovations are slated for 2013-2014 year including new glass doors to have natural light in the hallways, new lighting in the classrooms, and bathroom. There is a beautiful green space and outdoor classroom at the Morris Campus. A working watershed/geology table will be installed in the spring of 2014 in the outdoor classroom. The multi-use room is available as additional space at the Morris Campus and houses all of Ivy’s whole school events.”

Comment

A part titled *Comment* is at the end of each section for consideration and possible actions.

Mission and Vision

The Ivy Charter School has the following mission and vision as stated in its 2012-2013 Annual Report:

Mission

The Ivy School offers a Montessori education with Spanish-language study. Our mission is to inspire students of diverse backgrounds to be lifelong, independent learners who value responsibility and embody peace.

Vision

Ivy students will engage in a dynamic Montessori curriculum which allows for exploration of the world around them. Through creative and challenging multi-sensorial instruction, Ivy students will develop critical thinking skills necessary to be global citizens. The Ivy educators are reflective by implementing best practices through Montessori philosophy and materials, state standards, authentic assessment and student interest. By partnering with parents and the community, the Ivy School will be a safe place where all students can thrive.

The mission and vision of the school were alive within the school as evidenced through conversations with staff, school leadership, and parents. An important Montessori tenet is “With Freedom Comes Responsibility” and that the Montessori method “honors the gifts and talents” of its students was shared with the Review Team at the very beginning of the site visit. The principal reminded the Review Team that this is the only public Montessori school in Portland, and that The Ivy School is proud to provide an education that meets state expectations, employs licensed staff, provides Spanish instruction, encourages outreach to the community, and has strong parent involvement.

The teacher focus group interviewed reported that the mission/vision of the school is realized by its focus on Montessori/Spanish instruction, a day-to-day focus on peace and responsibility, mixed-age classrooms, cooperative learning, diverse backgrounds of students and staff, flexible physical space and, above all, independence and choice in the classrooms.

The parent group shared many ways the school's mission/vision is apparent, such as “educating the whole child,” “social respect is very apparent,” “can feel cultural and social diversity,” “special needs child is not labeled,” “helps each child and family member succeed,” “treats children as individuals—not just test scores,” different children in the same family “are accepted at each level/strength,” “Spanish component is apparent,” “expectation of application of ideas,” and “ownership of community by students empowers them.”

Students on the Prescott campus believe the mission is “to have fun while we are learning.” Students on the Morris campus stated that the mission helps to create a community of different backgrounds, as well as freedom to learn about things they love and to work at their own pace.

When asked, the charter board members believe the mission is being met because classes are structured for choice/options that give students an opportunity to engage in learning, encourages “overlap” between home and school because parents are asked to follow the Montessori model at home, and students are excited and want to come to school.

Comment

The school has adapted over the last two years and the current mission's approach to Spanish Language exposure and instruction is better aligned with day-to-day practice. The school is encouraged to integrate student and staff recruitment with the mission's focus on diverse backgrounds to ensure both populations are also representing the diverse backgrounds of the communities in which the school is located.

Enrollment and Attendance

Ethnicity and Race

The Ivy Charter School ethnicity and race enrollment data are as of October 2012. The source is the ODE's Student Enrollment Reports for 2012-2013 at <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?=3225>. For the purposes of this report, Ivy's enrollment data are compared to Portland Public Schools (PPS) because the Ivy School is located in that district. It was reported, during the site visit, that in 2013-2014, 30% of students are students of color.

GROUP	THE IVY SCHOOL		PPS	
Total Enrollment	180	100%	46,581	100%
Female	96	40%	22848	49%
Male	84	60%	23733	51%
American Indian/Alaskan N	5	3%	540	1%
Asian	2	1%	3738	8%
Pacific Islander	0	0%	417	1%
Black/African American	19	11%	5258	11%
Hispanic/Latino	18	10%	7333	16%
White	133	74%	26196	56%
Multiracial	2	1%	3099	7%

Comment

The Ivy School's ethnicity and race enrollment data provide the Ivy School the opportunity to consider whether its enrollment reflects the surrounding area. The Ivy School is strongly encouraged to review its approach to marketing and recruitment to better engage diverse populations within the school's communities. A possible way to

increase diversity is to offer parent and family education nights to the community in partnership with local organizations and churches.

English Language Learners

The Ivy School staff reported one student is identified English Language Learners. The Portland Public Schools Report Card shows its ELL enrollment is: grades 3-5 at 16%; grades 4-5 at 16%; and grades 6-8 at 17%.

Comment

To better meet its mission to inspire students of diverse backgrounds, The Ivy School needs to examine its marketing, outreach, and application processes to area minority communities.

Special Education

The 2012-13 annual report cited 25%, or 45 of Ivy's students, were eligible for special education. PPS District Report Card shows its special education enrollment is: grades K-3 at 13%; grades 4-5 at 18%; and grades 6-8 at 18%.

Instruction for special education students is provided in the classroom. Teachers reported they use small group instruction and Response to Intervention (RtI) as a way to help structure the system for students with interventions. Portland Public Schools assigned a .5 FTE special education teacher to the school; a school psychologist and a speech-language pathologist were each assigned 4 hours a week.

With the flexible morning schedule, the special education specialist is able to come in during that time and work with students. Teachers also reported they give IEP students "movement breaks" as a normal part of the class. Also having multiple year age-groups in class, students appear to support one another and teachers believe students with special needs feel successful and confident; one teacher noted that a student "thanked the class" for helping him.

The teachers did feel that with two buildings it is challenging to find time to collaborate with and use the special education specialist. There is a Building Screening Committee (BSC) that appears to a regular and on-going process for providing "interventions and/or moving to an evaluation planning meeting for the student," which was stated in the 2012-2013 Annual Report.

Comment

The Ivy School is encouraged to continue using RtI as a structure for identifying interventions and tracking student progress. Based on comments from the administrator and teaching staff, the school and district have been finding more success in collaborating to serve students. The Ivy School has an opportunity to share its curriculum and program with the special education personnel assigned to their school to better understand the vision and mission of the school. The Ivy School should continue

to find ways to support ease of communication and collaboration between the two buildings.

Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum

Montessori education is characterized by an emphasis on independence, freedom within limits, and respect for a child's natural psychological development, as well as technological advancements in society.

The Ivy School uses Montessori methods by providing classes which range in size from 25 – 30 children, typically staffed by a trained teacher and one assistant. Lessons are typically presented to small groups of children, who are then free to follow up with independent work of their own as interest and personal responsibility dictate. The scope of lessons and work in the elementary classroom is quite broad. Classroom materials and lessons include work in language, mathematics, history, the sciences, and the arts. As stated in the 2012-2013 Annual Report, the classroom environment reflects the “integration of arts, sciences, geography, history and language [that] engages the student's natural imagination and an abstraction of the elementary students are developed.”

Curriculum also includes the “Great Stories” (those that span the history of the university, cultures, and civilizations), many types of writing (i.e., creative, expository, research, interpretive), spelling/grammar, oral expression, dramatic productions, movement/physical education, art, and music. The Spanish program, while not bilingual, does include direct instruction in Spanish, content material integrated in Spanish, and cross-cultural understanding of learning a second language. The principal noted that they would like half of the students to be in the “bilingual track in grades 1-3.” Parents also commended teachers for being “creative to trying new ideas such as choir, journalism and the read-a-thon” which all enhance the program parents believe.

The 2012-2013 annual report stated that “Montessori materials are used in the classroom along with other instructional materials provided from Montessori approved sources, and supplemented with instructional materials that are aligned with the Oregon Benchmarks and Common Core State Standards. The Common Core math curriculum, as well as the Montessori math curriculum, is presented with concrete materials that simultaneously reveal arithmetic, geometry, and algebraic correlations. This curriculum recognizes the student's need for experience, for repetition, for various levels of concentration, and for going from concrete to symbol to abstract. The emphasis is on making formulae and rules a point of arrival and discovery. We have also aligned the Common Core State math Standards with the Montessori lessons, and are continuing to create math lessons using the standards.”

It was apparent the school's focus is to integrate the Montessori methods with Common Core State Standards. The staff is working on a curriculum map to align-the Common

Core State Standards with the Montessori methods. The three groups (staff, leadership, and parents) related how challenging it is to align the two. Common Core State Standards require showing mastery of certain learning by a specific grade level which is prior to that of Montessori curriculum. In math, for instance, the *Connected Math* textbook is being used in the middle school classroom to be sure math standards are incorporated into instruction with *Saxon Math*, a supplement for all grade levels.

The parent focus group felt strongly about the school's curriculum that is teaching their child. Parents reported that students were expected to work on their own personal best, be independent, are motivated by teachers, does not put limits on students, without grades it is more open-ended, and there is a lack of criticism and judgment so students do not judge themselves so much. One parent noted that typically there is not a great deal of homework so parents are not exactly sure about academics but she understands the "ebb and flow of learning." Another parent discussed test scores and says it is very hard to "test what is happening here" when there is only "one way to test."

Students interviewed discussed that school work is challenging. A few felt math, with its time limits, can be stressful, but teachers help you find your limit but "then push you." Another student noted that "if you get to your goal, the teacher helps you master it or changes your goal." Students said they get lots of encouragement, there is a level for everything, and they can do what "they like but encouraged to do more."

When students at the Morris campus were asked about Spanish curriculum, students reported they were "conjugating in Spanish," and "sometimes the teacher only speaks in Spanish." Students said they use Spanish packets, flashcards, crossword puzzles, songs, and games as ways to learn Spanish. They also have six "Spanish stations around the room" and try to do two of those stations a day.

Instruction

It is the goal of the teachers and principal that the students are "self-directed learners by the time they leave." One of the ways this is occurring with students is in the use of individual Work Plans, used daily by students to track their work, to share with their teachers, and to use for student self-reflection. Various teacher-developed systems (i.e., charts, lists, multiple pages of activities, single lists of topics) were shared with the Review Team by teachers and students. At the upper grades (4-8), the teachers use a contract system so the students can voice individual preferences/needs. The teacher can also use the Work Plan to differentiate instruction. The school addresses academic accountability, especially in math and reading/literacy, through the Work Plan.

Described in the 2012-2013 Annual Report, instruction is based on "open-ended research that is student generated and teacher-guided." Students draw conclusions, develop knowledge, make observations, record them, and demonstrate skills. Teachers reported that they give some direction as to what students will learn but then students have some choice. Teachers use different group structures (i.e., size, time allocated to them, topics) and then "send students to work on their own." This helps make the students responsible for their daily and weekly choices. One teacher said, "Students

are never done working.” One comment about the use of multi-age classes was regarding older children in a classroom are considered “teachers” by the classroom teacher. The older students help problem solve and show leadership when they work with younger students. Then, when the younger children become older they become leaders which reinforces the responsibility that the school expects of each child.

Students shared that if they need help during class they are reminded to “ask a friend first before the teacher or look it up in a book.” Students feel they have a close relationship with teachers so they can ask for help and that the teacher often comes over to help.

Observations

The principal provided each Review Team member with an observation form, to be used during the morning and afternoon classroom observations, based on Montessori strategies and philosophy. The four sections of the observation form were labeled, with bullet items for each section: Montessori Environment, Montessori Teacher, Montessori Procedures, and Montessori Academics.

The morning of the site visit began with a visit to the Ivy School at the Prescott Campus. All classrooms are multi-age, grades 1-3.

Morning observations included Review Team member statements, such as:

- Students are working individually or in small groups, sitting at tables, on the floor or on a rug. The teacher and assistant are moving around the room talking with individuals or groups of students; one student is asked to sit in his chair and complete his work. One group of students was working together to compare the terms positive, comparative and superlative by creating a list. Other students are writing poems, writing in general, reading silently or aloud, and using a variety of literacy materials (i.e., words, flashcards).
- Another classroom has a guest speaker on the topic of pollution. Most students are sitting on the rug with a few at a desk, with the assistant sitting near those students. Students are using small charts on pollution to match solutions to prevent pollution.
- In another classroom, the teacher is rotating from group-to-group. Students enter and exit from the outside door. Some students are eating a snack while most students are working on reading or writing. Pairs of students were practicing multiplying and adding. One student shared her “work plan” with a reviewer.
- During a transition time in a classroom, the teacher used vocal clues to direct the students.

The afternoon visit continued at the Morris Campus. Classroom configuration includes two classes at grades 4-5, one class of 5-6, and one class of 6-7.

Afternoon observations included Review Team member statements, such as:

- In a 4/5 classroom, the teacher is working on a fraction lesson with manipulatives and an assistant is working on the floor on a reading/writing task. Various students are working on his/her own project, working independently on word tasks or pattern blocks, two students playing with “hundreds” math manipulatives, and several students eating a snack and reading.
- In another 4/5 classroom, several students were using headphones or one of six computers in the room; some working on math or reading. The assistant moved about the room while most students went up to the teacher for help. One student shared her work plan and how it is used with a review team member.
- In the 5/6 classroom, students were helping one another, some were writing, one student was singing. The teacher told students how they could “overcome challenges” and most students stopped to listen. At one point, the teacher was teaching a specific subject to students seated near her on the floor.
- In the 7/8 classroom, it was noted there was science on the walls and individual desks were moved into blocks of small groups. Students were working independently at desks or on the floor on a writing exercise. The teacher and the assistant were moving from group-to-group or sitting on the floor with students.
- Review Team listed “activities” they saw: creating collage with magazines, problem solving, science projects, reading, using six traits of writing, math “problem of the week,” writing a reflection essay, and writing to a prompt with a “timed writing lesson.”

Comment

The Ivy School instructional staff is observed working with a variety of student groupings in each class: 1-on-1, small group, whole group. There are some opportunities for continued classroom management techniques to be developed to ensure every student is engaged with as little disruption as possible throughout each work cycle.

Professional Development

ODE Site Visits are Not for Teacher or Administrator Evaluations

The site visit and report are not intended to be and should not be interpreted to be evaluations of individual teachers or their instruction, or an evaluation of the school administrator. Those are the responsibilities of the Ivy administrator and board.

Ivy School’s Processes for Teacher and Administrator Evaluations

The Review Team discussed teacher evaluation with the principal and teachers. The principal has instituted a process of evaluation which includes her being in each classroom every day. Observations occur during “lots of walk throughs” and routine

pre/post conferences between the principal and teachers. In addition, the principal described how she spends an hour, a couple of times a year, with each teacher in what she calls “tutorials.” These are time when they, together, share lesson plans, class work, student behavior and analyze how classroom instruction is progressing. The principal believes she “grows teacher leaders” by working with them and also by encouraging peer support. Teachers said that the principal “helps them set curriculum goals; she makes time to do this regularly.”

Teachers are also encouraged to self-reflect which the principal noted was very important. Teachers are also collecting a portfolio of student work, following a Charlotte Danielson's conference they all attended in Eugene. Teachers were trained on how to collect a student's best work. The plan next year is to have teachers track 2 or 3 “low,” “average,” and “high” students to analyze individual growth and potentially see how it is actually occurring. While currently, the portfolio is being collected in “pizza boxes,” the school hopes it will eventually use more of an electronic system.

Federal Law, Highly Qualified to Teach

The principal reported that 100% of its teachers were highly qualified, assignments consistent with state and federal standards, for their teaching.

Staff Licensure and Years of Experience

The principal reported that in 2013-2014, 83% of Ivy's full-time teaching and administrative staff hold a Master's Degree or higher and 16% are on the charter school registry. Teachers have between two to eighteen years of teaching experience.

Staff Demographics

Staff demographics this year has changed with several new minority staff members hired; however, the percentage of minority staff did decrease overall. Several teachers left due to various "life" reasons, the principal reported. Yet, the principal noted that there is diversity in religion and gay/lesbian/transgender staff members. The principal would like to connect with more college-level education programs next year so they can help find qualified staff on a regular basis. It should be noted that all assistants this year are receiving full benefits, vacation pay, attend staff meetings, and are included in professional development opportunities, which will make it easier to recruit and retain staff.

Professional Development (PD) and Other Supports

The professional development opportunities for staff include training at the school and at the Montessori center. Teachers reported they have had workshops on relationships with students, Love and Logic, Professional Learning Communities, and individual workshops that align with their goals. Common Core workshop included how to integrate standards with the Montessori method. Math lesson training incorporating

Montessori methods; math also included primary to middle school curriculum so teachers “could see the whole spectrum.” Several teachers are working toward their Montessori Certificate and Oregon state licensure.

Comment

The Ivy School should strengthen and formalize its recruitment plan to proactively seek qualified staff who represent the student population and the community in which the school is located. The school is also encouraged to continue providing professional development supports to instructional staff. School leadership may consider linking professional development opportunities to staff goals and areas identified for growth in their annual evaluation.

Student Performance Data

Participation in State Assessments

The Ivy School’s School Report Card shows 94.5% of Ivy’s students participated in the 2012-2013 Oregon Assessments of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS).

State School Report Card – 2012/2013

The Ivy School’s 2012-2013 OAKS testing results and the Oregon Report Card, revealed an overall Level 2. Academic Achievement was Level 4; Academic Growth was Level 2; Subgroup Growth was Level 2.

The Ivy School is located in the Portland Public School District, but the PPS does not sponsor the Ivy School. For those reasons and the purposes of this report, Ivy’s performance data are compared to Portland Public Schools and statewide results.

**2012-13 Ivy School Student Achievement:
Percentage of Students “Met” or “Exceeded” State Standards
compared to other State Sponsored Charter Schools,
Portland Public Schools and the State Average**

Subject	Ivy School	Portland Public Schools	State
Reading (grades 3-8)	73.4	74.6	70
Math (grades 3-8)	54.1	67.3	62.1
Science (grade 5, 8)	80.8	Grd. 5: 72.9 Grd. 8: 64.4	67.6

For disaggregated data, see the 2012-13 Oregon School Report Card for The Ivy School.

OAKS testing reported in the 2012-2013 Annual Report:

- 73.4% of Ivy students met or exceeded in reading, and Ivy scored +3.4 the state average
- 33.9% of students exceed compared to the state average of 24.7% exceeding
- 54.1% of students met or exceeded in math, which is -8.0 the state average
- 80.8% of students met or exceeded standards in science, which is +13.2 above the state average

School Improvement

In the Ivy 2012-2013 Annual Report, the School Improvement Plan of Action for 2013-2014 includes:

- Improve student achievement in math.
- All students will make measurable gains or test on grade level in reading.
- Develop consistent curricular planning across school and improve teacher collaboration.
- Create and implement a vibrant after-school program including enrichment classes.

A School Improvement Plan of Action for Student/Parent/Staff for 2013-2014, based on the ODE Survey from 2012-2013, includes:

- A progress report that provides information on student performance in between report cards.
- Teacher morale will improve through shared planning, collaboration, and professionalization.
- Develop peer relations at Ivy. Establish stronger community of respect among students.

While these goals were not all specifically discussed during the site visit, the Review Team saw and heard evidence that Ivy was working toward these goals.

The Charter Board members shared that purchasing the Prescott building was a major step in creating stability in facilities and believe the focus can move to academics more. They are concerned that testing is not in line with the school's mission or with the Montessori model, but stated the principals' leadership on the testing issue makes them feel confident. There is also a concern regarding diversity and believe the lottery system and transportation issues create these challenges. They do believe there are strengths which include the principal as the administrator and the new teachers hired this year. Montessori curriculum that "can better meet the individual needs of all students and encourages them to become active, engaged learners."

As the board now feels it has moved beyond being a start-up charter school, it was noted in the 2012-2013 Annual Report that board members are accessing training topics from the internet, for example: conflicts of interest, complaints, ethics statutes, and executive sessions. As a board, they received training together from Stephanie Hinkle regarding ethics, conflict of interest, mission, and administrator evaluation.

Comment

The Ivy School should continue to focus its energy on the improvement plan to improve student academic performance. To support improvement plan efforts and other identified areas for improvement, the governing board should pursue proactive solutions instead of attributing deficiencies on things like the lottery and transportation. As the school looks to the future and renewal, it will be important for the board to take ownership and leadership of the school's performance and improvement.

School Effectiveness

The board members stated they evaluate the administrator and themselves (board) each year. The board also observes in classrooms and assesses students and staff. The board members also mentioned the Montessori Compass program which allows the school to keep records for each child, including a portfolio. The compass will be able to show standards that are met each year, and the program also allows staff to run reports to show data for the school population. The board solicits feedback from parent, staff, and students, including a yearly parent survey. Board members also survey parents and "ask outright 'how are things going for your kids?'" It is noted, in the annual report, that the Montessori Compass program was selected this year because it "aligned with the Common Core State Standards better and facilitated comprehensive lesson planning" better than the previous Montessori Records Express used in the past.

Teachers reported they use a variety of measures to track growth, including a fall and spring benchmark level assessment for each student. Besides standardized tests and Common Core math assessments, they use Fountas-Pinnell reading assessment three times a year, *Saxon Math*, pre/post Clackamas assessments, writing rubrics, and *Spelling Words Their Way*. In addition to collecting data, the teachers believe they give immediate feedback due to small group instruction. Teachers use the Work Plans with students which they collect and also discuss with students. At the upper grades, teachers reported they collect math and science lessons weekly. The Review Team members saw evidence of materials in folders/files that students collect and saw student Work Plans being used.

This year there is after-school math support offered free of charge to students below grade level in math. All students in upper elementary classes and middle school are offered Khan Academy which is an individual computer program where students can work at their own pace. As described on the Khan Academy website, students are

given practice materials and math problems, provided feedback on what they have learned, what to focus on next, and see “hard data about increasing mastery of math.”

Parents, in the focus group, appear to trust in the school's success by how well they believe their students feel about school and their teachers. Parents are not as concerned about assessments as it is only a “small thing in learning,” but they understand “we live in a testing society.” They are glad that testing isn't the only means of assessing progress but “just have tests as a part” of the whole program. Parents believe Ivy is “using their child's intrinsic/internal interest in learning” which is very important to families. Overall in assessing the success of the school, parents “feel very comfortable so students are comfortable,” stated one parent. The fact that more parents are involved in applying for the lottery and the increase in enrollment are also signs of a successful charter school. A final comment by a parent said, “Now that structures are in place, parent and students can do their job and the school can continue.”

Students from both campuses were eager to share what they like or would change about the school and how safe they feel.

Prescott campus students said:

- “Teachers teach you to be the best.”
- “The pace—I can do anything but not always at the same time as other students.”
- “Can choose what I do and I can move around.”
- “At my old school, I had to sit at one desk and each time period was a specific topic.”
- “Here we have a lot of different materials than my old school.”
- “We didn't have much art at my other school.”
- “I love Ivy.”
- “I wish we had more Spanish.”
- “I wish we had more time for research.”
- “We need more playground equipment like monkey bars.”
- “The 'excluding rule' [it was explained that if there is no more room for a new child to join a game then the game has to stop] isn't always fair when you want to play with just a friend.”
- “I feel safe because teachers will put a stop to something wrong happening.”
- “I feel safe because strangers can't come in because the front door is locked and they would need to know the code.”
- “I feel safe because teachers are kind.”

Morris campus students said:

- “Ivy is fun, different pace, can break down learning, work at your own time.”
- “Teachers trust you to finish your own deadlines.”
- “Feel I have made lifelong friends.”
- “I have a good relationship with my teachers.”
- “I like doing projects.”
- “Teachers are great.”

- “Not as stressful environment compared to my old school.”
- “My old school was a 'do this' schedule so we didn't get to do what we wanted.”
- “I would like to feel ready to go to 8th grade.”
- “We don't have enough money for supplies and field trips.”
- “I feel safe as there are no bullies.”
- “I feel safer at school than at home.”

When students were asked about student behavior, Prescott campus students said they have a “Think Sheet” to write down what happened. If they misbehave they will lose something they like, such as recess or class participation. Teachers also talk to those involved to help them change their behavior. At the Morris campus, students know a phone call will be made home if the incident is violent. Generally, they get a warning and they talk/think about it but not usually punished; they could lose a recess or have to sit in the hall if they misbehave. One student mentioned “inevitable consequences” because they have “refresher conversations to remind us about expectations.”

Because 8th grade transition was mentioned by students, it should be noted that the principal is just beginning an after-school program for the ten 8th graders. She is calling it a “boot camp” to learn how to manage in a regular high school as well as analyzing the various high school choices the students will have. Last year, there were only two students who made this transition so this year this is more of a priority by the staff and leadership.

Parent/Community Involvement

The 2012-2013 Annual Report identified six goals development by the Ivy School PTA and summarized progress for each one:

- Promote the partnership between parents, teachers and the school community.
- Enrich the Ivy community through social events and gatherings.
- Support academic opportunities.
- Raise funds to support school needs.
- Encourage volunteering and parent involvement at school.
- Provide a non-biased forum for sharing information.

The parent focus group expressed its support of the parents and the sense of community the school feels. The board noted that at the Morris campus, staff is inviting neighbors to get involved in the school and learn about the program. The principal mentioned at least nine school events this year that parents have attended. She noted that most of them have occurred at the Morris campus because of the large multi-use room.

Teachers reported during their focus group that they communicate with parents through announcements and feedback through emails, phone calls, two progress reports, and

student-led conferences in the spring. Some students have a daily check-in that teachers share with specific parents. Parent focus group believes there is a strong Parent Teacher Association involved in the school. Parents noted information is easy to get about the school and their children; issues are easy to resolve. They feel secure when parents drop off their children and appreciate the “attention to social detail.” One parent said, “The community has a lot of pride, not just a few parents.”

The strongest community involvement appears to be at the Morris campus not only because of the proximity to the urban environment but the age and interest of the students. Some of those mentioned include:

- Randall Children Hospital (volunteering)
- Ronald McDonald House (volunteering)
- St. Vincent Catholic Church (meal program volunteering)
- Friends of the Children (use facility for their gym)
- Urban League (learning activities)
- Urban Farming Program
- New Season's (school sponsor)
- St. Mark's Church (Saturday educational program support)
- Food Pantry (volunteering)

In the annual report, many other partnerships were listed. The report also listed fundraising events and school “spirit events” such as a bowling night and talent show. The report also listed that the Ivy PTA had over 15 active members during 2012-2013.

Summary

The Review Team saw evidence of staff collaboration, a student-centered environment and positive relationships with all members of the community, especially between staff and students. The Montessori method is very evident in classroom instruction, multi-age grouping, materials, independent work by students, teacher education, and all-school community philosophy of “family” and cooperation. The Review Team saw that many parents are involved at the school and heard that parents were highly satisfied with the school and the opportunity to volunteer.

The Review Team was also very aware that there are tools and systems more in place for teacher development and evaluation. Teachers are focusing on academic goals and Common Core Standards with an additional awareness of student achievement on state testing. There is more of a math emphasis (with new materials) and science inquiry approach. The successes in tracking special education students' need and using RtI to implement those interventions was apparent.

During focus group discussions with students, parents, school leaders, and the Charter Board, there were challenges. One important area noted by all adult groups was improving state test scores without losing the focus of the Montessori method. The board and staff specifically mentioned having a diverse student and staff population as

a priority. Parents reported that having a student enrollment lottery system does make student diversity difficult for a charter school. Teachers mentioned that two campus sites can still be a challenge but this seems to be less of an issue than during last year's site visit. The teachers also feel like they still have to explain to parents about "longer work cycles to accommodate students" and are still in the process of establishing systems at the upper grades since it is the newest part of the school program.

Areas of focus by the Review Team included continued support for the Charter Board leadership and strategic development, and also to help the board move from "start-up to a sustained quality program." This also includes needing a recruitment plan and retention support to the teaching staff. Finding community engagement and marketing strategies will increase diversity in the building. The school would be strengthened by making assessments an on-going part of classroom, parent, teacher, and board culture. As the middle school enrollment grows, having a clearly defined middle school system of support, including attention to college/post high school education, at that level is recommended. Finally, the school must demonstrate improvement in student performance for the future viability of the school.