

BSU Continuous Improvement Report-2019 Renewal Application

BSU Continuous Improvement Report

Aspire Charter Academy

Renaë Robinson
4900 W 15th Ave
Gary, Indiana, 46406-2308
United States of America

Last Modified: 11/21/2018

Status: Open

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ENROLLMENT DIAGNOSTIC.....	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	4
STUDENT PERFORMANCE DIAGNOSTIC.....	10
STAKEHOLDER DIAGNOSTIC.....	17
ORGANIZATIONAL AND FINANCIAL DIAGNOSTIC.....	18
FINANCIAL DASHBOARD.....	22
ATTACHMENT SUMMARY.....	23

BSU Continuous Improvement Report

ENROLLMENT DIAGNOSTIC

Guidelines for Building an Enrollment Diagnostic

Using the Enrollment Diagnostic:

- a. Download the [Enrollment Diagnostic](#).
- b. Develop your institution's enrollment using the Enrollment Diagnostic Template.
- c. Upload your completed Enrollment Diagnostic in the attachment area below.
- d. You may enter an optional narrative about your Enrollment Diagnostic below. If you do not have an optional narrative, enter N/A.

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

Please be sure to upload the files in the Attachments section at the end of the diagnostic.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

School and Community Overview

1. Describe the school's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school serves?

Aspire Charter Academy (Aspire) opened in the fall of 2008 to serve the city of Gary. Gary has had the distinction of being one of the largest cities in Lake County, with manufacturing as its economic engine. United States Steel was anchored in Gary and was a primary employer for northwest Indiana. Gary was the center of an Industrial boom, with a population that hovered around 170,000. From the late 1960s to present, the area has experienced long-term economic decline and a population loss of about 100,000. Gary's current population is around 75,000. No new industry has developed in Gary, and its largest employer, USS, now employs approximately 7,000 employees. Over the years, Gary has been plagued by the loss of economic industries, and the abandonment of Gary has led to growth in social challenges plaguing the city. The primary social determinant is poverty. The median household income in Gary is between \$25,000-\$29,522. This is compared to nearby cities, such as Munster, Indiana, which has a median income of \$105,000-\$110,000 for a family of four. The state-wide median household income is \$52,314. The published unemployment rate in Gary is 9 percent, but actually joblessness is estimated at 22 percent for adults and 44 percent for youth. The statewide published rate for unemployment is 4 percent. The variance in the numbers is due to the population not counted by the Department of Labor once a person is no longer included in "seeking employment" status. These individuals are classified as "long term unemployed" and are not counted in the published numbers. It was the desire for Aspire Academy to be the rigorous learning environment Gary had modeled to the country for decades. Recognizing that this vision cannot be accomplished overnight, the founders realized this endeavor would require a retraining of families in the communities and a confronting of many of the social issues impeding the education of the children. Aspire started by serving 470 students in grades K-5; we added one grade level a year until reaching grade 8. Today we serve 709 students in grades K-8, of whom 85 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, 11 percent qualify for special education services, and 1 percent of students are ELL. Our school size and the demographic makeup of our staff have remained consistent over the last three years. The demographic makeup of students has seen an increase in students with disabilities. This trend has led to an additional evaluation of appropriate and competent educators, especially within the last three years. Aspire is located at 4900 W. 15th Ave. Leased as a newly constructed (built in 2008) building, the founder, Mr. Richard J. Comer, and National Heritage Academies (NHA) designed the environment to focus on student learning. The total building is approximately 47,000 square feet and has 28 traditional classrooms plus dedicated art and music classrooms. In addition, the school offers: a full-sized gymnasium; a playground and play field; and a resource room used to provide special education services. Along with Gary's overall economic decline, another issue faced is the transient populations moving into the Gary area. With the decline of public housing in the Chicagoland area, many families have migrated to northwest Indiana, and Gary has been one of the major cities effected. This is seen in both the school systems and the housing market. With a higher rental population, the property tax base has decline by double digits, reporting a less than 50 percent tax collection. As a result of a state tax cap, Gary has been doubly impacted. Many of Aspire families are definitely defined by this transient behavior. Establishing strong parent responsibility, family engagement, and student achievement for many of the transient families is also challenging. Exit surveys are utilized to further understand the need of the parents in establishing strong values focused on education, ethics, stewardship, and citizenship. Many of our students come to our school significantly below grade level. We typically face the challenge of quickly accelerating academic growth for these students so they can begin to perform at grade level. In fall 2017, 77 percent of our newly enrolled students were below grade level in math, and 70 percent of them were below grade level in reading. This data substantiates the need for high-

quality school options for students in Gary. We readily embrace these challenges, and we embrace and accept these students as they are – without making excuses for academic results. Our founding Board members opened Aspire understanding the challenges facing Gary families facing especially strong economic challenges. The option of sending their children out of the area to private-pay or parochial education alternatives typically is not an option, due to finances. It has also been clear families may face greater challenges both in and out of the classroom. For this reason, it was paramount to provide a caring comprehensive learning environment for Aspire students. Mr. Richard J. Comer led our efforts to ensure that we achieved this end, from acquiring the land to consulting on the building of the school. As a result, our school environment has mirrored the options of well-financed school infrastructure. The focus has been to offer a high-quality education while addressing high character standards to produce educated, productive citizens. Aspire leadership has recognized the importance of students being prepared for continual education, whether in college or through apprenticeships, to meet the competition in the world of work. Aspire focuses on preparing the students, and families, in acquiring the necessary skills to pursue a healthy quality of life through education. We prioritize expanding students' scope to encompass higher education, options in the workplace, and the importance of reading and math.

2. State the charter school's mission and describe the educational needs the school's founders were seeking to address in your community. Describe why this initiative is important to the community the school serves.

Our mission is to offer a high-quality education that emphasizes the learning of core academic knowledge and foundational character values. Parents, students, and staff work together to create a safe and caring environment where quality scholarship, punctuality, and good citizenship are developed. We also strive to nurture in our pupils the desire and capacity to be lifelong learners. Today, our mission serves as a rallying cry for the entire school community and guides our continuous improvement efforts. The mission is prominently displayed in the main entrance to the school, and it is regularly referenced in our staff and Board meetings, as well as during school assemblies and in parent communications. We reinforce it daily when students recite the school creed in unison: "We believe we can. We are proud students of Aspire Charter Academy. We are exceptional because we work hard every day. We will successfully complete high school and college. We are dedicated, committed and focused. We never fail because we never give up. We believe in ourselves. We believe in each other. We believe in Aspire. We believe." Founding Board members realized, in the midst of a voucher and charter school surge, that the quality of education and delivery of services needed to be well supervised with accountability and oversight by an established authority. Mr. Comer, in discussion with Ball State University, was assured that the Board was the ultimate governance of Aspire. The decisions about infrastructure, funding, educational performance measures were model areas for the Board to establish. The Board sought to re-create the high values of academics, the arts, stewardship, and citizenship, in the public-school choice for parents in Gary. Before Aspire opened in 2008, steps had been taken to reform and improve the traditional education system in Gary. The politics was strong, and the undermining of the Gary School District left the School Corporation open to internal and external devices facing expensive disruption and declining academic performance. The founding Board believed that removing some of the political red tape would enable the education of the student to resurface as the priority. In embracing a private-sector engagement to pursue the mission, we resolved to ensure accountability of the private EMO selected. Assurances needed included high-level educators, licensed educators teaching in their learned subject matter, and comparable and reasonable costs as a value-based supply chain. Most important to the Board was assessing student progress and ensuring all aspects of assisting students to reach their full potential. Therefore, the Board came together understanding Aspire could not be a one-size-fits-all school. Academic responsibility – based on the capacity of the building to welcome student growth, the teacher-student ratio, and the interventions necessary to remediate, enhance, and adapt to different learning styles – was going to be pertinent to the success of students and the school.

Aspire is privileged, not entitled, to offer an educational option to the Gary families. They depend on Aspire to stay to the mission: preparing their children to embrace the future.

School Design

1. Provide a brief summary of the school's key design elements and specific examples of how the school implements the key design elements. Key design elements support the implementation of the school's mission and make the school unique and distinct from any other school. Key design elements should all relate to the mission statement or the intentions set out in the school's original (or amended) charter.

Our school embodies our mission by focusing on four foundational pillars: academic excellence; student responsibility; character development; and parental partnerships:

- **Academic excellence:** We work intentionally to create a culture of academic excellence by providing students with a challenging learning environment. By providing an academically rigorous program, we believe that students will have the opportunity to achieve academic excellence and acquire the knowledge and skills they will need to thrive in high school, college, and beyond. We do this by continually monitoring and tracking assessment data to ensure that every student's academic needs are being met. Our teachers use assessment data to differentiate instruction, so every student is challenged at their academic level.
- **Student responsibility:** Children thrive in an environment where they clearly understand what is expected of them, and after putting forth their best effort, they take pride in seeing the results. From day one, our students are taught that their best effort is vital to their academic success, and teachers will strive to consistently reinforce the importance of students' responsibility for their education and accountability for their actions. For example, our teachers conduct a student conference after we administer the NWEA assessment in the fall. During these conferences, teachers and students discuss individual growth goals and create a plan to achieve these goals. Students understand that it is their responsibility to put forth their best effort to achieve their goals. Data talks continue to take place throughout the year to track how students are progressing toward their goals. Only with such commitment can they ensure that they have the tools they need to be successful in high school, college, and beyond. In addition, our students are provided with an opportunity to hold different roles within their classrooms and are held responsible for fulfilling the duties assigned to their role. Older students also have an opportunity to join Student Council and serve as a student leader in the building.
- **Character development:** We continue to believe that great schools develop students' hearts as well as their minds. Our character development curriculum builds on the virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. Through these lessons, students build and maintain strong personal character while also developing the qualities necessary to achieve academic success and become good citizens. Each month, we have a focal virtue that teachers incorporate into daily instruction. At the beginning of each month, students participate in a moral focus assembly during which staff and students speak on the monthly virtue. In addition, moral focus is intentionally scheduled into each day. We encourage students to share their own experiences. We recognize and celebrate students, staff, and parents who embody the monthly virtue.
- **Parental partnerships:** Aspire remains committed to fostering strong partnerships with parents. We actively engage parents in their children's learning, dedicate a Parent Room specifically to ongoing "anytime" interaction between parents and teachers. We consistently communicate with parents about their children's academic progress. We also hold literacy nights and parent workshops to strengthen parent partnerships and provide parents with the tools they need to support their student's academic success. This year, we have implemented the "Power Plus Parent" initiative. With this initiative, each parent has a punch card and will receive a punch for each school event they attend. Parents who complete a full card are rewarded with a tee-shirt, have their picture hung in the parent room, and have the accomplishment highlighted in the school newsletter. In addition, we have begun "side-by-side" days when parents get a chance to sit with their child throughout the school day.

2. Does the school engage in a systematic, inclusive and comprehensive process to review, revise and communicate the school's mission and design? Please describe this process, and when it last occurred, or is planned.

We communicate our school mission and design to stakeholders in a variety of ways. As mentioned previously, the mission is prominently displayed in the main entrance to the school, and it is regularly referenced in our staff and Board meetings, as well as during school assemblies and in parent communications. Our scholars and staff are all able to recite the mission using our "ACA Creed" that we recite every morning and at every assembly. Each spring we review, and if needed, we revise our mission and school design as part of our comprehensive needs assessment. The School Improvement Team includes teachers, support staff, parents, and school leaders. A Board member also participates, and the full Board reviews the team's recommendations. External stakeholders are given information regarding Aspire and the mission, promoting community engagement. Stakeholders, such as Work Driven Strategies, Boys and Girls Club, and healthcare partners are growing in participation. These groups are relevant as Aspire broadens the scope on areas of nutrition, obesity, food insecurities, and strengthening families.

3. Describe any changes to the school's mission or substantial revisions to the educational program as described in the current charter that the school proposes to make for the next charter term. Discuss any associated challenges or risks.

Since opening in the fall of 2008, we have remained dedicated to fulfilling our mission to offer a high-quality education that emphasizes the acquisition of core academic knowledge and foundational character values. Upon being approved for an additional charter term, Aspire has re-evaluated and will continue accessing student progress to ensure changes are implemented in a timely manner to achieve the desired, competitive student progress. We consider this imperative in addressing and achieving the mission. We will continue to ensure that high-quality instruction is occurring in every classroom, every day, so that student learning is accelerated. We have refined our curricular tools to better serve our teachers in providing instruction, and we have added additional intervention time into our master schedule. For example, we have implemented a new approach to literacy education, balanced literacy, throughout the school. This initiative makes Reading Mastery, a curricular tool we have used successfully for intervention, our primary driver of reading instruction in foundational standards for grades K-2; for grades 3-8, we are using a separate instructional tool, Comprehension and Decoding. Our classrooms now have 150-165 minutes of English language arts (ELA) instruction with students rotating among three 40-minute small-group blocks. Each student rotates among a phonics block (led by an interventionist), a comprehension block (led by the classroom teacher), and an independent work block with computers and text-based exercises (overseen by the teacher and an interventionist). In addition, there is an interventionist present during each ELA block, so intervention-level support is given to each student, not just to students who received tier-three intervention in previous years. In 2018-19, Aspire is expanding its commitment to a "math stories"-based approach to math instruction. The school began this effort as a K-2 pilot program in 2017-18; this year, it is a K-5 program. In this approach to math instruction, learning starts with a story with an embedded math problem. Students work alone to develop a problem-solving strategy and discuss their ideas with other students. Students must then explain aloud their approach. Only then does the teacher reinforce the skills and facts students discovered and used to solve the problem. Students learn essential facts and skills better than they do from lectures and, as they do so, they polish their procedural fluency and refine their number sense. In 2017-2018 we piloted the playbook instructional tool in order to ensure that our curriculum aligned with of state standards. The playbook will be further implemented for the 2018-2019 school year. In addition, we have added an additional 45-minute intervention block in middle school, on a rotating schedule, to allow students more time in the day to work on math and ELA. Beyond these enhancements, Aspire will continue to monitor student achievement, as planned, during the next charter. Aspire will continue fulfilling

the educational mission by focusing on individual student progress regarding key parts of Aspire's educational deliverables. For example, initial objectives already being implemented include: having licensed teachers in appropriate subject matters leading the appropriate studies; and developing a pool of teachers through a residency program for qualified teaching substitutes, based on subject matter and grade appropriateness

Goals and Plans

1. State and provide an overview of the charter school's future goals. Summarize the plans for accomplishing these goals (e.g. academic benchmarks, organizational changes, facility improvements, financial stability).

Academic performance: In the next charter term, we will focus on improving proficiency and growth rates. As mentioned previously, we have implemented balanced literacy schoolwide, have expanded math stories into grades 3-5, and have added an additional intervention block to the middle school schedule. To track student progress, teachers and deans are expected to keep a data log with detailed information on assessment outcomes for each individual student and for the class as a whole. Deans also maintain a "data wall" in their office that they update with weekly common assessment data from their wing. This data is then discussed during one-on-one meetings between deans and teachers. In addition, the staff lounge houses a data wall with all assessment data from grades 3-8. This wall helps everyone recognize trends that may be happening across multiple grades, and it provides the principal a summary, so she can identify how students are performing on critical standards. **Organizational changes:** We believe we also must strengthen parent engagement to help students grow. To increase parent participation, we have implemented the "Power Plus Parent" initiative, under which each parent receives a card that gets a punch for each school event the parent attends. To track our success with this initiative, the punch cards are housed at the school, and a staff member punches cards after checking the sign-in sheet from each event. Parents who complete the card receive a tee-shirt, have their picture hung in the parent room, and are highlighted in the school newsletter. **Facility improvements:** Aspire has 709 students, and 131 students on a waiting list. As mentioned earlier, Aspire's student population is also inclusive of special needs students, about 11 percent. Aspire is exploring ideas for addressing the possibility of expanding classrooms, meeting spaces, and storage. **Financial stability:** Though Aspire does not have any financial stability goals beyond what is provided within the performance framework, there are sustainability goals Aspire will be discussing. The benefits of the current operational and financial model – especially in ensuring our financial stability – are detailed in the financial section of this application.

2. Summarize plans for addressing any past academic, organizational, or financial deficits.

Although Aspire has seen progress, we know there is more work to be done. The Board is aware of the performance accountability to the students, families, the city of Gary, and the state. The most recent major commitment to changed results has been the turnaround approach to the Aspire administration and teaching staff. As of the 2018-2019 school year, Aspire has retained a new principal, Mrs. ReNae Robinson, and a new director of school quality, Mrs. Staci Bennett. Per the Board's request, these educators are from Northwest Indiana, have superior records in their previous schools, and are living in the Gary community. Also, the Board mandated that no teachers who were not licensed in their specific area of teaching would be retained after 90 days. This was honored by NHA, while Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. Bennett worked with the Board on processes, and contacts with the colleges and universities to recruit a pool of interested, qualified licensed, or soon to be licensed educators. As mentioned previously, to ensure that high-quality instruction is occurring in every classroom, we have enhanced our ELA program in K-2 with balanced literacy, we have expanded a new math program, math stories, into grades 3-5, and we have added an additional intervention block in middle school. Since, many of our teachers have fewer than five years of experience, our new approach to ELA instruction will help these teachers precisely schedule their time block to provide the most effective instruction. In spring of 2017-18,

69 percent of kindergarteners tested at grade level on NWEA in math, which is 10 percent higher than the previous year. We attribute this success to the math stories-based approach, so in 2018-19 we expanded this program into grades 3-5. In addition, we added an additional 45-minute intervention block into the middle school schedule. This will allow students additional time in the day to work on math and ELA. By ensuring change in the delivery of education, new tools, the new administration of the principal and the director of school quality and implementing the mandate of all teachers being licensed within months of 2018-2019 school year, we have already seen progress in student performance. Upon approval of the charter renewal, Aspire is confident that we will continue to see academic improvement.

3. (OPTIONAL) Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.

From 2015 to 2017, Aspire Academy experienced a massive leadership change. Increasing health concerns and eventual passing of our Board Chair, Mr. Richard J. Comer, the stability of the Board membership, transitions in school administration, increases in waivers of unlicensed teachers, and an increase in special needs areas without an increase in qualified educators to work with these populations – all led to a deterioration in student performance. The fulfillment of the mission was always the intent, but our implementation was becoming more and more fractured. These things were tremendous impediments to the success of Aspire children and families. Aspire Academy has always had a growing, inclusive, and active parent engagement. Though a comprehensive team is involved, the facilitator is clearly the parent advocate, Mrs. Hobbs. She goes far beyond the initial call to assist in getting and maintaining the engagement of the family. Activities are coordinated with other stakeholders in the community to bring exposure and information. The family engagement at Aspire has not been the challenge. The leadership and instruction have been. In turning the curve, NHA rigorously worked with the Board requests and supplied ongoing information in an improvement mandate due to the Academy's academic standing. The above-mentioned areas were addressed with NHA leadership during the summer of 2017. Per these conversations, NHA recruited high-level leadership for both the principal and the director of school quality for Aspire Academy. Both were brought on prior to the official start of the school year. Aspire Academy opened its 2017-2018 academic year with strong academic and administrative leadership. These leaders meet with the Board chair, review all quality, academic instruction, and student development concerns on a regular basis, and address Board members on all events, recommendations, and internal developments.

Attachment Executive Summary

Please list any comments for this section below with attachments, if applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

Please be sure to upload the files in the Attachments section at the end of the diagnostic.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE DIAGNOSTIC

Continuous Improvement Practices

1. Describe the school's assessment system and how it is used to improve instructional decision-making, support student learning and implement professional development.

All assessments (except for NWEA*) – interim assessments, unit tests, quizzes, and even exit tickets – strive for the closest possible alignment with state standards. As a result, data from those assessments offers valuable insights.

- State assessments: Yearlong planning starts with data from the prior year's state assessments. Teachers use this data to identify problem areas and respond by modifying instructional plans and schedules throughout the school year as needed.
- Interim assessments: Data from interim assessments offers predictive value on likely outcomes on state assessments in June. These data give us opportunities to modify instructional strategies if the data show that such changes are needed.
- Quizzes: Aligned weekly quizzes give teachers a snapshot of learning on standards covered that week. Teachers analyze quiz data immediately to decide how to modify instruction. Teachers often modify instruction within a day of quizzes – by re-teaching material the next day, changing workshop groupings to support struggling learners, and so on.
- Exit tickets: On any day, teachers may give an exit-ticket test based on standards in that day's lessons. Because state standards drive daily lesson plans, a simple roomful of thumbs up or down can give teachers valuable, aligned, and actionable feedback. Data analysis focuses on individual students, on entire grade levels, and on the entire school. School leaders use aggregate data to evaluate school-wide and classroom performance and to direct school-wide improvement. Deans and teachers collaborate during staff meetings and grade-level meetings to analyze assessment data to pinpoint learning gaps, set improvement goals, and clarify professional development needs. Teachers receive many different professional development opportunities that help them implement various instructional methods and our curriculum. For example, in 2017-18, staff received professional development on Atlas Data Analysis, Cognitive Guided Instruction, and Corrective Reading/Reading Mastery. Teachers also receive differentiated professional development and one-on-one coaching based on their individual professional needs. Our principal and director of school quality are dedicated to the professional development and growth of Aspire. Understanding the need to expose teachers to the challenges arising in urban and rural areas, the lack of continuity of leadership and educators has been another detriment to the success of Aspire students. With these policies and procedures clearly articulated and understood, Aspire is looking forward to an improved academic and fulfilling school year. *We use and value the nationally normed NWEA assessment because it benchmarks student growth and gives valid comparisons to national norms, but we do not use data from this assessment for insights on state standards.

2. Describe how the school uses other data (qualitative and quantitative) to evaluate the effectiveness of the academic program.

Our system of assessment allows us to collect and analyze data to determine the effectiveness of our academic program and make school-wide decisions. To facilitate the review of our program, we implement a collaborative, comprehensive, and systemic school improvement process (SIP). Through this process, we gather data and informally evaluate it throughout each year. We also conduct a formal needs assessment each spring. During this formal needs assessment, we collect and analyze data on student achievement, school programs and processes, perceptions, and demographics. Examples of reviewed data include:

- Student achievement on the state assessment.
- Student achievement on norm-referenced assessments.
- Student engagement.
- Curriculum alignment.
- Discipline and rates of attendance.
- Staff surveys, including teacher-quality information.
- Student demographics.
- Parent/student perception surveys.
- Program implementation.

In addition to assessment data, Principal Robinson and the deans use school-wide and classroom frameworks to monitor the effectiveness of the school's educational program.

- School-wide framework: We follow a school-wide framework for excellence that includes five specific elements.
 1. Establish a professional culture of excellence.
 2. Systematize collaborative

improvement. 3. Lead instructional excellence. 4. Implement systematic intervention. 5. Cultivate meaningful parent partnerships. • Classroom framework: To complement the school-wide framework, we also implement a classroom framework of instructional competencies, which are structured to improve academic results for individual students and the school as a whole. There are four key instructional competencies in this classroom framework: 1. Classroom culture. 2. Planning. 3. Teaching. 4. Assessing.

3. Describe how the school leadership implements a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving student learning.

Assessment data and educators' insights on it support both our comprehensive needs assessment and ongoing improvement efforts. This comprehensive effort helps us address learning needs and evaluate progress toward school, grade-level, and individual student goals by clarifying achievements, needs, and opportunities to improve. Data is crucial in helping us set goals, objectives, action steps, school-wide improvement strategies, PD activities, and parent/community involvement.

4. Describe how leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes have resulted in improved professional practice and student success.

A key component of school assessment is rigorous, ongoing, and accountability-driven evaluations of teachers. We believe this effort is an important manifestation of our commitment to accountability as a core value at Aspire as it is in the entire charter school movement. We have always believed that student learning is an adult responsibility, and that students' long-term results are directly connected to efforts to ensure that students benefit from a good teacher in every classroom, every day. That is an ideal we pursue through many initiatives, including our commitments to teacher evaluation and improved professional practices. The NHA evaluation system is based on six competencies: classroom culture; planning; teaching; assessing; professional accountabilities; and quality of student learning. The school determines competencies in classroom management, instruction, and professional practices through multiple observations, feedback, and coaching. This system allows for a fluid discussion around performance and informs professional development goals and opportunities for our teachers. To measure quality of student learning competencies, NHA uses the data from state assessments, if available, for grades 3-8. NHA uses student performance and growth in oral reading fluency from the fall-to-spring benchmark assessments, if available, for K-2. If no data is available for a teacher, a subjective rating will be provided on the indicator of Positive Impact on Student Learning. Teachers are evaluated annually by their assigned dean. A mid-year progress report contains observation of classroom culture, planning, teaching, and assessing. All teachers receive an individualized development plan within the interactive classroom framework (ICF). The plan is created based on the professional development goals that are set by the leader and the teacher. Goals are clearly marked in the ICF, and action steps and progress toward goals are documented within the tool. Teachers are evaluated using a four-level scale of exemplary, effective, developing, and ineffective. Information from the evaluation system contributes to decisions regarding compensation, retention, promotion, and termination. The mid-year progress report and year-end evaluation are used to inform professional development goals for teachers.

Needs of Learners

1. Describe the systems in place to monitor the progress of individual students and facilitate communication between interventionists, classroom teachers and parents regarding the needs of individual students.

Aspire's staff uses diagnostic assessment data, along with formative and summative data, to plan instruction, monitor progress, and adjust to meet the identified needs of students. Assessment data helps teachers identify their students' strengths and weaknesses – and differentiate instruction accordingly. More specifically, our teachers use assessment data in three stages: • Before

instruction: We administer a norm-referenced assessment in the fall and in the spring. The purpose of the fall administration is to create a baseline knowledge of academic performance and to help teachers plan for instruction. In addition, diagnostic and classroom assessments are administered before instruction and allow teachers to discover the needs, interests, previous experience, and background knowledge of their students in terms of the identified curricular objectives. Teachers use data from these assessments to illuminate what students already know and can do. This information also helps teachers determine a particular instructional approach or strategy for new learning. Here are examples of assessments that teachers may administer before instruction:

- o Teacher-led discussion and questions.
- o Observation.
- o Student evaluation of sample work products using a scoring rubric.
- o Teacher-developed or commercially produced assessments.

• During instruction (formative assessment): Assessments administered during instruction serve as checkpoints to determine students' understanding and progress. They help teachers identify successes or difficulties in learning. This information allows teachers to effectively adjust instruction. Below are examples of assessments that teachers may administer, each of which can be used formatively to guide further instruction:

- o Teacher-developed or commercially-developed mid-unit quizzes.
- o Teacher-developed or commercially-developed worksheets.
- o Teacher-led discussions.
- o In-class observation.
- o Questioning strategies.
- o Homework.
- o Anecdotal notes.
- o Learning logs.
- o Graphic organizers.

• After instruction (summative assessment): Assessments administered after instruction help teachers determine what students have learned and the quality of that learning. This information helps teachers gauge the effectiveness of their instruction and adjusts their teaching methods to best meet the needs of students. Here are examples of assessments that teachers may administer after instruction to determine students' understanding of the lesson:

- o Teacher-developed or commercially-developed post-tests.
- o Student presentations.
- o Self-assessments.
- o Peer assessments.
- o Projects.
- o Papers.
- o Oral reports.

Interventionists who work with diverse learners closely monitor student progress using various progress monitoring tools such as classroom assessments, norm-referenced assessments, and curricular program assessments. However, the primary tool used to monitor progress is Aimsweb Plus. Aimsweb Plus provides information on student progress immediately after students complete an assessment. Teachers and interventionists can access reports that track student performance on recently taught material through the myNHA dashboard and the Aimsweb Plus website. This information enables staff to closely monitor progress, adapt instruction, and close learning gaps right away. Deans meet with each grade-level on a weekly basis and with all instructors on their wing monthly. In addition, lead-teachers hold an additional weekly meeting with all classroom teachers of that grade-level. Interventionists also participate in these meetings as well. During these meetings, teachers and interventionists review assessment results, discuss student progress, and plan instruction.

2. Explain how the school supports for diverse learners.

We believe that student achievement gaps (which are often correlated to a student's economic status) can and will be closed when teachers consistently and aggressively provide targeted instruction and monitor student academic progress. Aspire has a comprehensive process that ensures that educators consistently identify, serve, and monitor students who need intervention. Our systematic intervention, or response to intervention, program is designed to stimulate early action that helps prevent academic failure and maximize the effectiveness of grade level instruction. This process is based on a framework of six key practices:

- Schedule intentionally. A strategic, complete schedule is set for the delivery of all needed services to each identified student. Scheduling also accommodates the dedication of the most skilled interventionists to the students with the highest needs.
- Create collaborative teams. Intervention staff and classroom teachers meet frequently to discuss student assessment data, monitor progress, and update intervention plans. This monitoring also includes students recently exited from intervention services.
- Identify students and allocate resources appropriately. Our school trained all staff to understand the

process of reviewing student performance data and of the thresholds established to qualify students for intervention services. The school's leadership team works to ensure that funds are allocated in ways that will allow all identified students' needs to be met, focused on progress monitoring and intervention tools as well as qualified staff to deliver services.

- Develop intervention plans. Internal diagnostic assessments are used to determine student needs, with data supporting the initiation of intervention services. A written plan that details the interventions that will meet student needs is developed and used as a "living document" that is updated regularly and used during decision-making about the student's learning. Plans are implemented through a team of interventionists comprised of an at-risk teacher and paraprofessionals as well as the after school tutoring program.
- Monitor progress. Identified students are closely monitored for progress using various progress monitoring tools such as classroom assessments, norm-referenced assessments, and curricular program assessments.
- Provide professional development. One-on-one meetings between the dean of academic intervention, who manages Aspire's intervention program, and the intervention staff are scheduled regularly with sessions focused on individual student data and strategies to meet student needs.

Students with disabilities: Students with disabilities receive instruction tailored to meet their individual educational needs. We educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment as determined by the student's individual education program (IEP). Students receive resource room services and consultant teaching services from a certified special education teacher. Additionally, Aspire provides related services in accordance with a student's IEP. These services include speech and language services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and counseling. Aspire employs and/or contracts with certified professionals who provide these services to meet the students' IEP requirements. Individual student progress toward IEP goals and/or objectives is tracked and reviewed throughout the school year. Progress monitoring data is used to complete student IEP progress reports, which are distributed to parents at least four times a year. We give parents the opportunity to discuss these reports in detail with the special education and general education teachers during two scheduled parent-teacher conferences throughout the year and again after each quarterly report card is distributed. Beyond a student progress report, parents are encouraged to contact special education providers at any point throughout the school year to discuss students' progress toward meeting individualized IEP goals.

English language learners: We embrace a set of "guiding principles" when working with English learner (EL) students, as recommended by the Center for Equity and Excellence in Education at George Washington University. The principles of effective practice for ELs include the following:

- EL students are held to the same high expectations of learning established for all students.
- EL students develop full proficiencies in English in the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, consistent with expectations for all students.
- EL students are taught challenging content to enable them to meet performance standards in all content areas, including reading and language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, the fine arts, health, and physical education, consistent with standards for all students.
- EL students receive instruction that builds on their previous education and cognitive abilities and that reflects their language proficiency levels.
- EL students are evaluated with appropriate and valid assessments that are aligned to state and local standards and that take into account the language acquisition stages and cultural background of the students.
- The academic success of EL students is a responsibility shared by all educators, the family, and the community.

All students are given a home language questionnaire (HLQ) upon acceptance to Aspire. The HLQ contains questions about the primary language of the student, the parents, and the household. If the student identifies a language other than English, the student is assessed with an initial assessment as mandated by the U.S. Department of Education. This initial assessment will provide a preliminary level of proficiency in English and will be used to place the student in the instructional program that best suits his or her needs. If a student is initially identified as proficient in English, no further action is taken. A student who does not demonstrate proficiency in English will participate in the school's alternative language program. All students identified as ELs participate in a sheltered English instruction (SEI)

program for core classroom instruction. A SEI program is one in which all instruction is delivered in English with scaffolding and sheltering, so all EL students can access the academic content regardless of their potential lack of proficiency in English. Students who score below specified thresholds are identified as high need and participate in the English Language Development program (ELD). This program uses a push-in and pull-out models to deliver intensive language support in and out of core classes. To be exited from EL services, Kindergarten students must test at least 4.5 in the writing domain, 5.0 or greater in the listening, reading, and speaking domains and earn a minimal composite proficiency level (CPL) of 5.0 on the annual WIDA ACCESS assessment. A student in grades 1-8 must test at or above 4.3 CPL on the WIDA ACCESS. Additional exit criteria are also considered to ensure that the student is ready to be exited from EL services, notwithstanding any applicable transition services. Students are monitored for four years after their exit to ensure continued success. This monitoring includes both consultations with teachers and monitoring of grades. If a monitored student is not succeeding, quick and timely interventions must be made. If the student continues to struggle, and language is believed to be the primary factor, the student will be reassessed with the initial assessment. If the score is below proficient, the student may be re-classified as an EL and provided services until proficiency is once again attained. Re-classification as an EL can be emotionally disturbing to students, so we implement stringent exit requirements and a robust monitoring system. Advanced learners: Our curriculum creates opportunities for advanced learners to be challenged with higher-order thinking skills and project-based learning. For example, classroom teachers offer accelerated students differentiated instruction and extended opportunities in various ways, including: enrichment; differentiation in content, process, products, and/or learning environment; infusion of higher-order thinking skills; and individualized learning opportunities.

Areas of Notable Achievement and Areas for Improvement

1. Which area(s) are above and below the expected levels of performance?

Areas above expected levels: Proficiency for tenured students. Our students that have been enrolled at Aspire for three or more years outperform their peers on the state assessment. In 2017-18, these students outperformed their peers by 6 percentage points in ELA, 13 percentage points in math, 4 percentage points in science, and 21 percentage points in social studies. Additionally, third grade students enrolled for three years or more outperform their peers on the IREAD-3 assessment. In 2017-18, these students outperformed their peers by 10 percentage points. Actual vs. expected reading and math proficiency. Historically, researchers have found a significant correlation between the percentage of free or reduced-price lunch students and the absolute proficiency on the state assessment for all schools in Indiana. To control for this effect, a linear-regression analysis was performed using (1) the percentage of free or reduced-price lunch students at each school in Indiana and (2) their overall math and reading proficiency by grade on the 2017-18 state assessment. This analysis yields an effect size by grade and subject, which corresponds to the difference between the actual and expected proficiency rates. The effect size is then averaged and translated to a percentile for comparison purposes. In 2017-18, Aspire scored at the 69th percentile, which means their actual proficiency rate is above expected for schools with similar free or reduced-price lunch populations. Aspire is among the top schools in risk-adjusted proficiency in Gary Community Schools and charter schools authorized by Ball State University. IREAD-3 proficiency. Aspire students have demonstrated high performance on the IREAD-3 assessment. Our students have performed near or above the state average and have outperformed Gary Community Schools. We achieved this performance while serving a much higher percentage of free or reduced-price lunch students (93%) than Gary Community Schools (77%) and the state (47%). In 2016-17, Aspire's IREAD-3 proficiency rate was 15 percentage points greater than Gary Community Schools. Strong reading scores for third grade students. In addition to our third graders achieving high passing rates on the IREAD-3 assessment, third graders' NWEA growth is above the national average. Since 2013-14, the median fall-to-spring

NWEA MAP growth for third grade students has been at or above the national average. In 2017-18, third-grade reading growth was 22 percentage points greater than the national average. Grade 3 NWEA Median Rate of Growth Fall to Spring 2013-14: 121% 2014-15: 100% 2015-16: 125% 2016-17: 150% 2017-18: 122% Proficiency compared to the local district. In Aspire's first years, it underperformed its local district, Gary Community Schools. However, proficiency increased steadily each year and in 2012-13, Aspire outperformed Gary. In 2017-18, Aspire outperformed the local district by 12 percentage points overall. Areas below expected levels: Math student growth on the state assessment. For the past five years, student growth in math has remained below the state average. However, the median student growth percentile for all students improved from 30 to 35 from 2016-17 to 2017-18. For students in the bottom 25 percent, growth improved significantly from 31 to 45 from 2016-17 to 2017-18. Student growth for students in the top 75 percent remains low. While this growth is below our expectations, Aspire continues to outperform the local district in growth. State accountability results. From 2016-17 to 2017-18, Aspire increased its state report card grade from an 'F' to a 'D.' This is driven primarily by an improvement in student growth.

2. Describe the area(s) that show a positive and negative trend in performance.

Positive Trend: ELA proficiency and growth. Over the past three years, ELA proficiency has increased by four percentage points from 41 percent to 45 percent, based on 2017-18 results. Student growth has also improved for all students and is now at the state average (50th percentile). NWEA growth. Students scoring in the bottom quartile in the fall are achieving NWEA growth above the national average. The fall-to-spring NWEA median rate-of-growth for bottom-quartile students was 140 percent in 2015-16, 119 percent in 2016-17, and 117 percent in 2017-18, which is much greater than the national average (100 percent). NWEA school growth percentiles were above the national average in the majority of grade and subjects tested for the past three years. In 2017-18, all grades earned a school growth percentile above 50 in reading, except for first grade. In math, student growth was low in middle school, which we believe is due to intervention being focused on ELA. We hope to increase our math scores with the use of the math stories approach and the additional intervention block we have added to the schedule this year.

Negative Trend: Math proficiency. Over the past three years, math proficiency has decreased by four percentage points from 34 percent to 30 percent, based on 2017-18 results.

3. Between which subgroups is the achievement gap closing and between which is the gap widening? Please support with data.

Achievement gap closing: Aspire serves a predominantly Black student population (93%) and the majority of students qualify for free-or-reduced price lunch (93%). Based on 2017-18 state test scores, Black students at Aspire are making proficiency gains in ELA. Last year, the ELA proficiency rate of Black students at Aspire was 6 percentage points lower than the ELA proficiency rate of Black students across the state. This year, the ELA proficiency rate of Black students at Aspire was the same as the ELA proficiency rate of Black students across the state. That is a 6-percentage point improvement against the state year-over-year.

Achievement gap widening: In 2017-18, 93 percent of students at Aspire qualified for FRL. From 2016-17 to 2017-18, the math proficiency gap on the state assessment between FRL students at Aspire and FRL students across the state increased by 2 percentage points in math. However, FRL students at Aspire made a 6 percentage point gain in ELA against FRL students across the state.

4. Which subgroup(s) show a trend toward increasing performance, and which toward decreasing performance? Please support with data.

Increasing in performance: ELA Proficiency for FRL Students. Aspire primarily serves students that qualify for FRL (85 percent). Over the past three years, ELA proficiency for FRL students has increased by 4 percentage points from 41 percent to 45 percent.

Decreasing in performance:

Students with an individualized education program (IEP). In 2017-18, 10 percent of students at Aspire qualified for IEP. The ISTEP+ math and ELA proficiency rate for students with an IEP has remained flat over the past three years. Although flat performance over three years is not, technically, decreasing performance, we are disappointed in this outcome and are determined to generate improvements. Math Proficiency for Non-FRL Students. Approximately 7 percent of students at Aspire do not qualify for FRL. Over the past three years, math proficiency for non-FRL students has decreased by 14 percentage points from 48 percent to 34 percent

5. Discuss areas of academic concern, and changes made to address any deficiencies.

An area of academic concern is math as seen in low growth in middle school and the decrease in proficiency based on preliminary and embargoed 2017-18 results. To address this concern, we have provided more structure to our math instruction. As noted, we saw success with our K-2 math stories-based approach last year, so we have expanded this program to grades 3-5 this year. We are pleased with the progress this program made possible last year with our K-2 students and have high hopes for our higher grades. We believe that it is crucial to build the foundational skills in lower grades, and with this program students learn essential facts and skills better than they do from lectures and, as they do so, they polish their procedural fluency and refine their number sense. To better support our middle school students, we have structured our instruction more intentionally and we have added an additional 45-minute intervention block. This block is titled Response to Intervention Plus ("RTI plus). During this block of time our students are working on ELA, math and skills that will help students on the state assessment. Within a week, all of our middle school students receive intervention in the subject areas listed. The intervention provided is based on the student's data from their weekly assessments in the subject area. This structure allows the teacher to work on closing the gap, especially when it comes to critical standards. This structure and focus on math intervention are new to Aspire this year. We believe it will improve student proficiency on the state assessment.

6. If academic performance has resulted in a rating of 'Falls Far Below' on any Quality indicator in the BSU Academic Framework during the charter term, please provide the school's assessment of those results and describe what has been done, and is planned to improve academic performance.

1.2 Student Achievement (proficiency) Quality Indicator 1.2a: Are students in grades 3-8 achieving proficiency on state assessments in ELA? • Falls Far Below Standard: 45% of students met proficiency in ELA. Quality Indicator 1.2b: Are students in grades 3-8 achieving proficiency on state assessments in Math? • Falls Far Below Standard: 30% of students met proficiency in math. Quality Indicator 1.2k: Are students in grades 3-8, who have been enrolled at the school for at least 3 years, achieving proficiency on state assessments in both ELA and math? • Falls Far Below Standard: 30% of students met proficiency in ELA and math. 1.3 State Accountability Quality Indicator 1.3a: Is the school meeting acceptable standards according to the A-F Accountability Label? • Falls Far Below Standard: School received a 'D' according to the state grading system. After assessing our results, we believe that our recent changes to ELA instruction, expanding our math-stories based approach, and adding an additional intervention block in middle school will help us improve our results on the indicators listed above.

Attachment Student Performance Diagnostic

Please list any comments for this section below with attachments, if applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

Please be sure to upload the files in the Attachments section at the end of the diagnostic.

STAKEHOLDER DIAGNOSTIC

Recommended surveys to complete this diagnostic: Climate and Culture Surveys for Students and Parents, with option of customized questions

1. Which area(s) indicate the overall highest and lowest levels of satisfaction?

Each spring, Aspire Charter Academy parents are asked to take a satisfaction survey, "Voice of the Parent." On the spring 2018 survey, 80 percent of parents expressed satisfaction with our school and 84 percent of parents said they are proud their student attends Aspire. Parents expressed the highest satisfaction in three key areas: 88 percent said that the school is providing a safe environment; the same percentage said the school delivers on its promise of moral guidance; and 86 percent said the teachers model positive behavior and relationship-building for their child. Parents indicated that they would like to see improvement with the discipline policies at the school and they would like more effective and timely communication.

2. Which of the above reported findings are consistent with findings from other sources (e.g. surveys, observations, anecdotal, third party reviews), please explain.

The findings above are somewhat consistent with our employee engagement survey staff takes each year. From spring 2017 to spring 2018, both parent and staff surveys saw a slight decline in overall scores. We believe this is due to many changes that took place at the school during the 2017-18 school year. However, when looking at specific questions asked, there are many aspects that both staff and parents are satisfied with at the school. Both staff and parents agree that the school provides a safe environment.

3. What are the implications and/or challenges related to any negative stakeholder perceptions?

Aspire was not surprised by the 2018 decline in parent satisfaction and employee engagement. The turnaround in 2017-18 year saw major change in leadership. The parents, students, and community responded to change. Families not wanting to adhere to safety, procedural, and timely requirements had critical conversations and decisions to make. Educators not professionally prepared to move forward, began looking for other employment options. In the long term, Aspire is confident the school culture is on a positive path.

4. How will survey findings inform school improvement plans? What actionable steps will be taken based on survey results?

Aspire believes the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents are important and relevant. Feedback received from stakeholders is used to drive the improvement efforts. Upon receiving survey results, time is taken to identify and prioritize goals. Once goals are in place, we track progress both formally, future survey results, and informally, with one-on-one meetings and observations.

Attachment Stakeholder Diagnostic

Please list any comments for this section below with attachments, if applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

Please be sure to upload the files in the Attachments section at the end of the diagnostic.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND FINANCIAL DIAGNOSTIC

Organizational

1. Provide a reflection of the school's governance and organizational performance over the past charter term. Describe any anticipated changes to the governance and management of the school, including but not limited to board composition, board member roles, member recruitment, committee structure, and/or amendments to by-laws.

Throughout the term of the charter, Aspire has benefited from strong, stable governance. Of the six original founding Board members for Aspire, three remain. Our president is one of those three founding members, and she is the daughter of our founding president, Richard Comer. Our full Board includes the following members: • Denise Comer Dillard – president. • Sherylin Freeland-McCrary – vice president. • LaCrecia Lott – treasurer. • Rachael Wright – secretary. • JoAnn White – director. Our Board of Directors' experience in business, education, health care, and social services provides the basis for a strong, competent governance structure and positions us to fulfill the school's mission for the families we serve. We continue to recruit new members to fill any potential vacancies. The school's Board maintains a relationship with independent legal counsel to ensure that we remain in compliance with all laws, regulations, rules, and policies. The Board recently selected new legal counsel, Ice Miller LLP. Counsel participates in Board meetings, reviews documents, contracts, and discusses Aspire concerns with NHA's corporate counsel. We are pleased to report that we have complied with applicable state and federal laws and regulations during the charter term. We also effectively manage our relationship with National Heritage Academies (NHA) and hold it accountable for the deliverables needed for a successful school. The Board reviews student performance, operations, financials, and capital expenditures, through reporting and discussions with leadership. The liaison, Mr. Andrew Gayle, with NHA, is engaged, informative, and professionally prepared. Open dialogue has never presented a problem with NHA. The Board is currently considering the addition of committees but has no confirmed plans to change its structure. After discussion with Ball State University, the Board and its previous legal counsel made initial changes to its bylaws. However, with the transition to a new law firm, there were items the new attorneys want to review with the Board. Hence, the Board has not approved the updated version of the bylaws. Aspire plans to do this after the Board retreat. We are pleased to report that during the term of our charter, we have also demonstrated compliance with Ball State's Organizational Performance Framework, including requirements related to the following components: • educational program. • financial management and oversight. • governance and reporting. • students and employees. • school environment.

2. Please specify whether the board intends to contract or terminate a contract with an education service provider (ESP), educational management organization (EMO), or charter management organization (CMO).

- Yes
- No**

2a. (OPTIONAL) If Yes, please describe evidence illustrating an effective working relationship with an ESP, and describe the ESP's roles and responsibilities in relation to the school's management and governing board; describe how the governing board holds the operator accountable for specific academic, operational or financial outcomes from the agreed upon contract.

The Aspire Board intends to continue contracting with NHA. Our services agreement with NHA requires it to accept all responsibilities and risks associated with building, launching, and operating the school. To make this possible, NHA receives, in return for its services, all governmental funding for the school (minus a \$35,000 allocation for discretionary Board uses). This model allows the Board to focus on oversight and governance, not fund-raising. In this case, NHA views itself as staff of the Aspire Board with all operational responsibility. Specifically, NHA invests in: • The school building: NHA buys land and builds (or renovates) a building at no added cost to the local

taxpayers. NHA made these investments for Aspire. • Professional team: NHA recruits and hires the principal (with Board input) as well as deans, teachers, and staff. This team operates under a distinctive academic model that typically features at least three deans who provide supervision, mentoring, and coaching to teachers. • Infrastructure: NHA provides all school equipment, including books, curricular materials, desks, and instructional technology. • Contributions: NHA invests additional funds as needed to balance the school's budget in its first years of operation and enhance academic performance as needed. These investments are contributions, not loans; repayment is not expected or required. • Back office support: NHA employs over 300 professionals at its Service Center who provide many services, including talent recruitment and other HR services, IT support, parent relations services, and professional development offerings for teachers, deans, principals, and Board members. NHA bears all the costs and risks of investments in a new school. These risks are significant and unique to our services agreement and/or all charter school projects: • NHA schools are single-use buildings that cannot easily be repurposed. • NHA typically invests in struggling communities with limited development potential – as it has in the Gary neighborhood that Aspire serves. • Charter schools that fail can be closed with as little as a year's notice. • Partner Boards can terminate services agreements without cause. Our Board has been satisfied with the relationship with NHA to date, and we continue to dialogue with NHA on ways to improve academic performance at the school. We believe that our partnership provides the systems, personnel, and processes needed for improvement, and we will hold NHA accountable to do so.

2b. (OPTIONAL) If Yes, please describe any anticipated changes to service contract or provider over the next charter term, including, but not limited to, intentions to terminate your contractual relationship with your management organization. If terminating, describe in detail the plans for carrying out the primary operational and educational activities for which the service provider had been responsible.

We plan to continue the relationship with our education management partner, NHA, for school operations. As we do so, the Board will also be taking a strong look at the school's performance and demanding greater accountability from NHA in its efforts to improve academic outcomes. We remain confident in our relationship with NHA in part because we know that NHA and the Board are on the same page in their determination to help the students we serve achieve essential improvements in academic outcomes.

3. Describe the current condition of the school's facility, and its capacity to serve students. Discuss any anticipated changes in facilities needs and/or location, which includes any changes to lease terms and/or building plan. If the facility is leased, how does the board oversee the terms of the lease agreement?

The building that houses Aspire is in excellent condition. We lease from NHA a building that was newly constructed in 2008 that is designed to focus on student learning. The total building is 47,000 square feet and has 28 traditional classrooms plus dedicated art and music classrooms. In addition, the school offers: a full-sized gymnasium; a playground and play field; and a resource room. The new counsel for the Aspire Board is reviewing the lease. With the change of leadership and new Board members, it is a topic of Board training being provided at the Board Retreat. The Board of Directors has no concerns regarding the lease.

4. If any organizational deficiencies or findings were noted in any of the annual independent audits, prior notices of deficiencies, onsite reviews, or prior renewal letter, please note such deficiencies and how they were remedied.

Aspire did not have any organizational deficiencies or findings that were noted in our annual independent audits during this charter term. We did receive feedback on areas for improvement from our authorizer as a result of our mid-term visit in December 2017. We are working to remedy all findings.

5. (OPTIONAL) Describe the plan for providing transportation to students to attend the school, including transportation to extra-curricular activities, if applicable.

We work diligently to ensure that our school is accessible to all students and that transportation needs are not a barrier to any child attending Aspire. We do not provide bus transportation to the general student population. However, our student-family liaison collaborates with parents, guardians, and daycare providers to provide any resources and support to coordinate their transportation needs. We believe that asking parents to partner with us in transportation creates an important educational benefit: It allows members of the staff to greet students and parents during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up. This practice gives students a transition between school and home that is safe, smooth, and welcoming. This approach also gives staff an additional point of contact with parents, and it offers parents an additional opportunity to become a part of the day-to-day life of the school. Finally, it allows students to arrive more focused on the activities of the day and with lower levels of anxiety and distraction than those that are often attributed to school bus rides. We recognize that this transportation strategy may not be a viable option for every family. Before the first day of school, during an orientation program for families, we work with parents to address and coordinate their transportation needs to ensure that they are not a barrier to any child wishing to attend Aspire. In addition, the student-family liaison works to identify and plan the use of public transportation options that are available, and if needed, to make arrangements with private carriers. The school's budget also includes funds to cover the cost of such transportation needs, which also may include transportation for students who are experiencing homelessness or students with special needs who have transportation requirements in their IEPs.

Financial

1. In what ways does the board assure that financial resources provide adequate support for the school's overall program and to improve student achievement? Please reflect on the allocation, challenges, trends and any shifts in resources directed toward Student Academic Achievement, Student Instructional Support, Overhead and Operational, and Nonoperational (See Form 9).

Aspire has partnered with NHA since 2008 to manage the school's day-to-day operations. NHA's compensation for its services is all revenue that the school receives from all sources. In return, NHA has met its obligation to bring significant resources to the school: facilities, real estate, and start-up and ongoing operating funds, as needed. These start-up funds and added investments in operating funds, it should be noted, are contributions and not loans to our school. Because of this model and our relationship with NHA, our Board is relieved entirely of burdens of fundraising, real estate, construction, or other aspects of school operations. In past years, the Board has not needed to be involved in additional real estate, construction, or other aspects of school capitalized expenses and operations. Our Form 9 submissions have documented a strong investment in costs that drive academic progress over this charter term. We have allocated resources based on all our student needs and will continue to work with NHA to do so. NHA willingly accepts all financial risks associated with launching and operating our charter school. Some charter schools' partnerships with charter school operators expose the schools to the risk of debt. Our agreement with NHA leaves Aspire with no such exposure. Our services agreement confirms that NHA neither requests nor expects repayment for the contributions described above that are consistent with the approved operating budget. Aspire has finished each year with a positive cash balance, has received an unqualified independent audit every year, and has no debt. We believe this demonstrates our long-term fiscal strength and financial health.

2. If any financial deficiencies or findings were noted in any of the annual independent audits, prior notices of deficiencies, onsite reviews, or prior renewal letter, please note such deficiencies and how they were remedied.

Aspire did not have any financial deficiencies or findings that were noted in our annual independent audits during this charter term.

Attachment Organizational and Financial Diagnostic

Please list any comments for this section below with attachments, if applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

Please be sure to upload the files in the Attachments section at the end of the diagnostic.

FINANCIAL DASHBOARD

Guidelines for Completing the Financial Dashboard

Using the Financial Dashboard:






- a. Download the [Financial Dashboard](#).
- b. Complete your institution's financial framework indicators using the Financial Dashboard.
- c. Upload your completed Financial Dashboard in the attachment area below.
- d. You may enter an optional narrative about your Financial Dashboard below. If you do not have an optional narrative, enter N/A.

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

Please be sure to upload the files in the Attachments section at the end of the diagnostic.

ATTACHMENT SUMMARY

Attachment Name	Description	Item(s)
 Aspire Enrollment Diagnostic	Aspire Enrollment Diagnostic	
 Data Sheet - Updated	Updated data sheet to support the student performance diagnostic	
 Financial Performance Framework Dashboard - Excel	Excel file provided by BSU.	
 Financial Performance Framework Dashboard - Showing Met/Not Met	Financial Performance Framework Dashboard showing met/not met status of each indicator.	
 Parent Satisfaction Survey	Copies of the parent satisfaction survey given to Aspire parents each year.	

I. Enrollment Diagnostic

Provide the enrollment and demographic information for the current school year.

2018-19 ENROLLMENT & DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION		
	#	%
Total Enrollment	709	
# of Students on Waiting List	131	
Gender		
Male	385	54%
Female	324	46%
Ethnicity/Race		
White	9	1%
Black	657	93%
Hispanic	43	6%
Asian	N/A	N/A
Native American	N/A	N/A
Other	N/A	N/A
Special Populations		
Students with IEPs	78	11%
English Language Learners	6	1%
Homeless Students	0	0%
Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch	602	85%

Provide enrollment information for length of current charter contract (ADM count).

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Total Student Enrollment	704	701	695	692	709

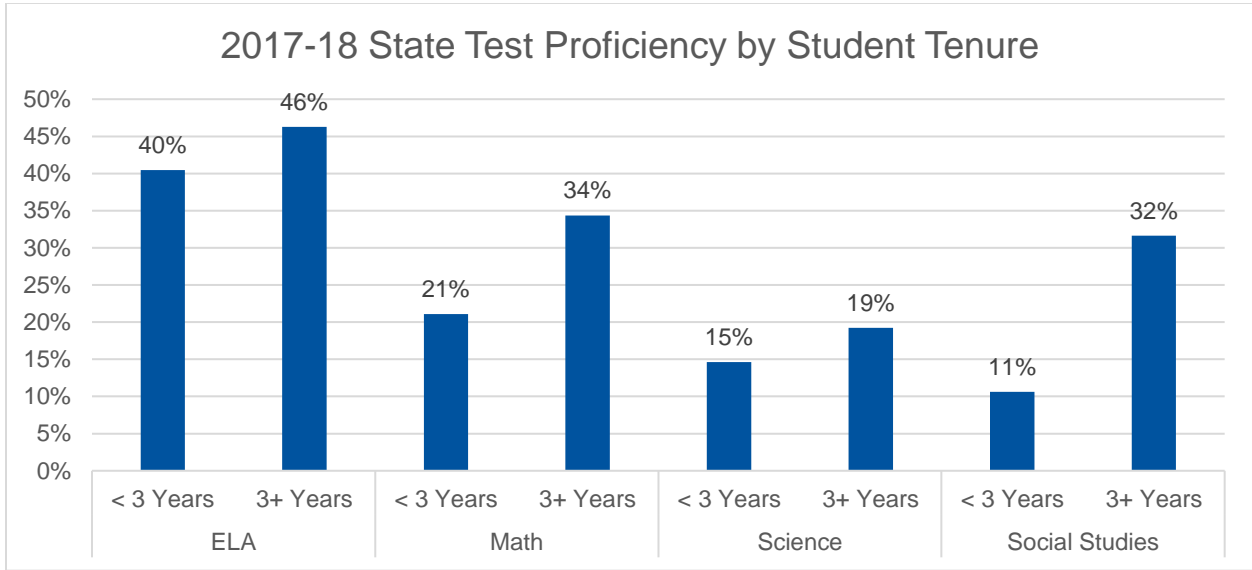
Provide the student attendance information for the length of the charter contract.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 2	Year 4	Year 5
Grade	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
K	82	85	77	86	88
1	78	83	80	78	77
2	81	79	82	81	74
3	81	76	83	79	82
4	78	83	74	81	79
5	80	78	80	79	81
6	74	78	79	71	82
7	76	74	77	79	74
8	71	65	75	62	71
9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
11	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
12	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
All Grades	701	701	707	696	708

Aspire Charter Academy Data Sheet

1. Which area(s) are above and below the expected levels of performance?

Areas Above Expected Levels:



2017-18 Risk-Adjusted Proficiency Comparison

Gary Community Schools Comparison

School Name	Proficiency (%)
Aspire Charter Academy	69
Gary Lighthouse Charter School	65
Benjamin Banneker Achievement Ctr	46
Jefferson Elementary School	43
Wm A Wirt/Emerson VPA	7
Frankie W McCullough Acad for Girl	5
Daniel Hale Williams Elem Sch	2
Bailly Preparatory Academy	1
Glen Park Acad for Excel in Lrn	1
Jacques Marquette Elem School	0
Beveridge Elementary School	0

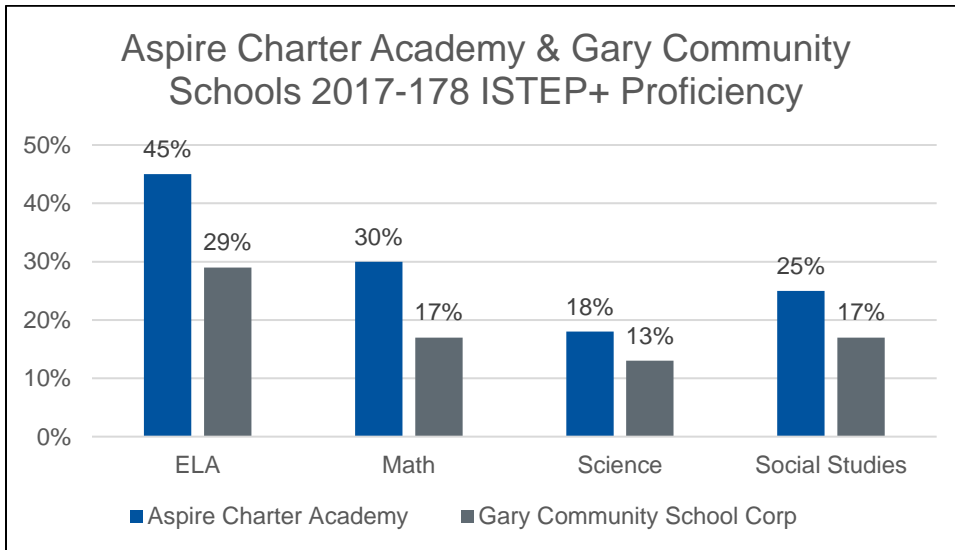
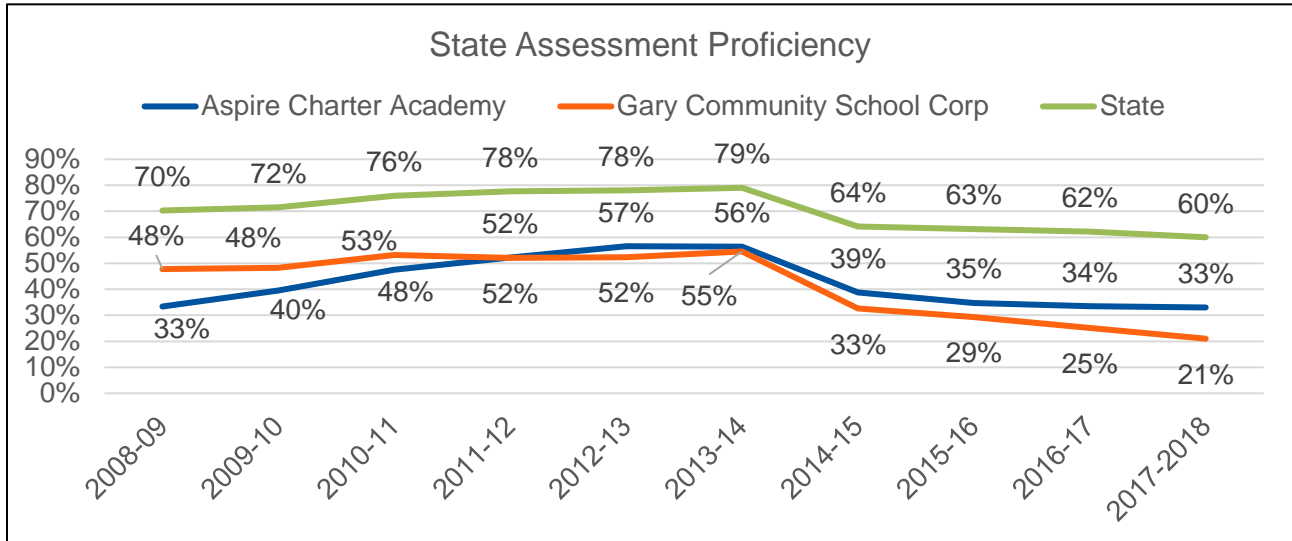
Ball State Schools Comparison

School Name	Proficiency (%)
Mays Community Academy	99
Dr Robert H Faulkner Academy	97
Hoosier Academy - Indianapolis	91
Rural Community Academy	72
Aspire Charter Academy	69
The Bloomington Project School	65
East Chicago Lighthouse	60
21st Century Charter Sch of Gary	60
Discovery Charter School	48
East Chicago Urban Enterprise Acad	36
Renaissance Academy Charter School	20
Xavier School of Excellence	17
Rock Creek Community Academy	11
Inspire Academy - A Sch of Inquiry	11
Anderson Preparatory Academy	9
Indiana Connections Academy	8
Geist Montessori Academy	3
Community Montessori	2
Canaan Community Academy	1
Options Charter School Noblesville	0

Aspire Charter Academy Data Sheet

IREAD-3 Proficiency Rates (Spring and Summer Combined)

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Aspire Charter Academy	97%	97%	91%	87%	88%	82%
Gary Community Schools	66%	77%	84%	82%	73%	60%
State Average	91%	91%	91%	90%	89%	87%



**Aspire Charter Academy
Data Sheet**

Areas Below Expected Levels:

Math ISTEP+ Median Student Growth Percentiles Comparison

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Aspire Charter Academy	64	60	44	42	33	30	35
Gary Community Schools	27	28	32	26	23	28	N/A

ELA ISTEP+ Median Student Growth Percentiles Comparison

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Aspire Charter Academy	51	50	34	46.5	51	45	49
Gary Community Schools	32	35	36	32	34	28	N/A

2017-18 Median Math Student Growth Percentile

	2016-17	2017-18
Students in Bottom 25%	31.0	45.0
Students in Top 75%	29.0	32.5

State Report Card Results

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Proficiency Points	21.8	19.6	18.7	19.2
Growth Points	44.4	44.7	39.9	45.2
Overall Points	66.2 (D)	65.3 (D)	58.6 (F)	64.464.4 (D)

2. Describe the area(s) that show a positive and negative trend in performance.

Positive Trend:

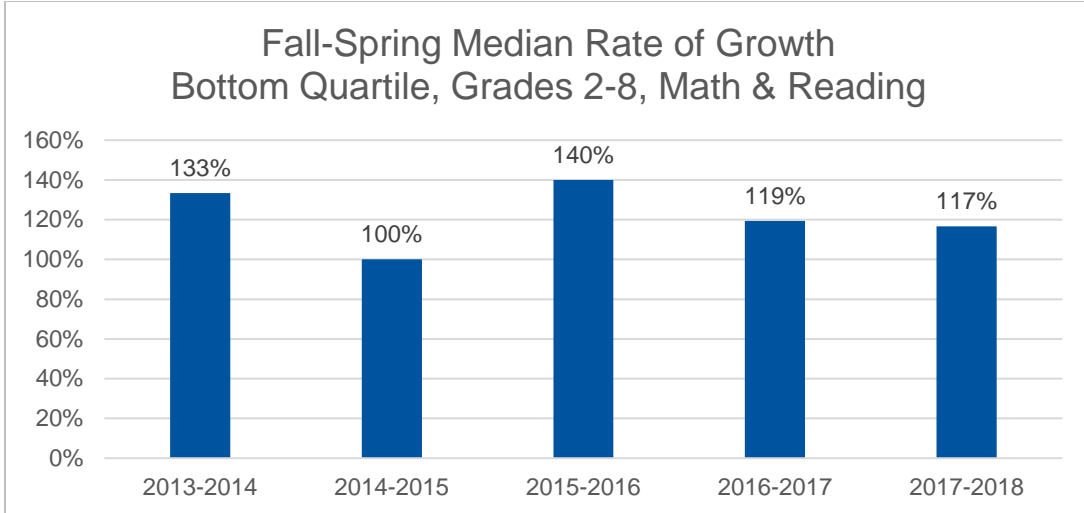
Aspire ELA ISTEP+ Proficiency Results

Grade	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
3	51%	53%	55%
4	35%	46%	42%
5	40%	25%	47%
6	35%	54%	37%
7	50%	37%	49%
8	36%	41%	37%
All	41%	42%	45%

**Aspire Charter Academy
Data Sheet**

2017-18 Median ELA Student Growth Percentile

	2016-17	2017-18
Students in Bottom 25%	47	51
Students in Top 75%	34	48



NWEA School Growth Percentiles

Grade	Math			Reading		
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
K	99	99	99	84	96	98
1	76	93	45	51	65	26
2	54	84	46	59	92	81
3	98	96	56	99	99	92
4	80	84	86	88	89	98
5	38	48	65	54	49	75
6	82	73	29	52	64	81
7	38	55	32	89	65	59
8	95	87	12	93	64	51

Negative Trend:

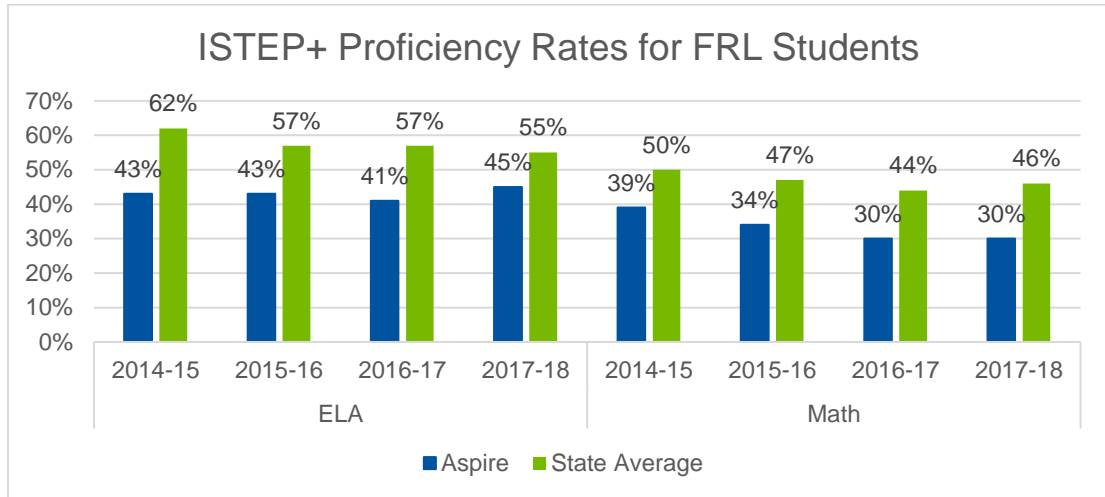
Aspire Math ISTEP+ Proficiency Results

Grade	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
3	47%	44%	44%
4	42%	54%	41%
5	36%	30%	39%
6	33%	27%	19%
7	19%	11%	18%
8	21%	23%	16%
All	34%	31%	30%

**Aspire Charter Academy
Data Sheet**

3. Between which subgroups is the achievement gap closing and between which is the gap widening? Please support with data.

Gap widening:



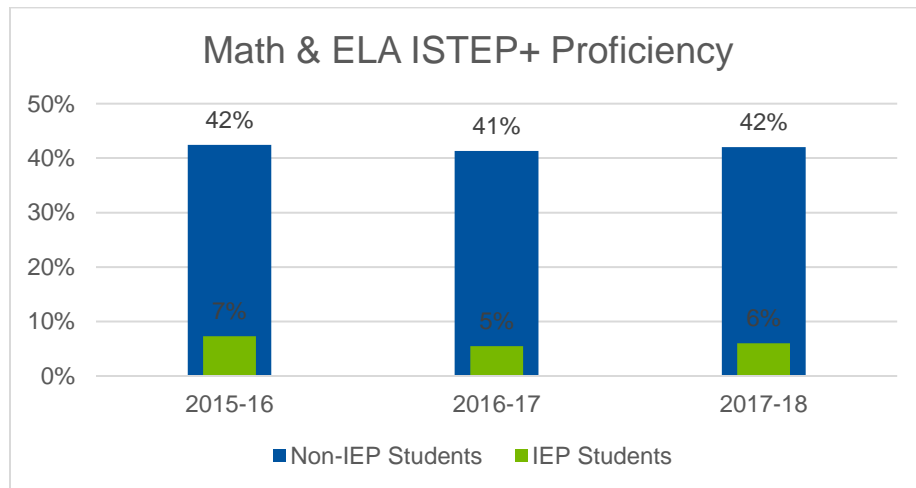
4. Which subgroup(s) show a trend toward increasing performance, and which toward decreasing performance? Please support with data.

Increasing in Performance:

ELA Proficiency: FRL Students

2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
41%	42%	45%

Decreasing in Performance:



ELA Proficiency: FRL Students (Total Student Count)

2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
48% (33)	40% (42)	34% (41)

**Aspire Charter Academy
Data Sheet**

**FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK
BALL STATE UNIVERSITY**

Meets
Does Not Meet
Falls Far Below

1. NEAR TERM INDICATORS			
1.a.	Current Ratio (Working Capital Ratio)	Current Assets divided by Current Liabilities	1.02
1.b.	Cash to Current Liabilities	Cash divided by Current Liabilities	0.78
1.c.	Unrestricted Days Cash	Unrestricted Cash divided by ((Total Expenses-Depreciation Expenses)/365)	\$0.00
1.d.	Enrollment Variance	Actual Enrollment divided by Enrollment Projection in Charter School Board-Approved Budget	0.97
1.e.	Default		School is not in default
2. SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS			
2.a.	Total Margin	Net Income divided by Total Revenue and Aggregated Total Margin: Total 3 Year Net Income divided by Total 3 Year Revenues	
2.b.	Debt to Asset Ratio	Total Liabilities divided by Total Assets	0.97793745
2.c.	Cash Flow	Multi-Year Cash Flow = (Year 3 Total Cash)-(Year 1 Total Cash); One-Year Cash Flow = (Year 2 Total Cash)-(Year 1 Total Cash)	
2.d.	Debt Service Coverage Ratio	(Net Income + Depreciation + Interest Expense)/(Annual Principal, Interest, and Lease Payments)	#VALUE!

Current Assets	\$1,022,094
Current Liabilities	\$999,544
Cash	\$783,152
Unrestricted Cash	\$783,152
Total Expenses	\$7,157,907
Depreciation Expenses	\$18,947
Enrollment Projection in Charter School Board-Approved Budget	725
Actual Enrollment	704
Default	School is not in default
Net Income	\$22,550
Total Revenue	\$7,158,027
Aggregated Total Margin	0.0031
Total 3 Year Net Income	\$72,441
Total 3 Year Revenues	\$23,129,950
Total Liabilities	\$999,544
Total Assets	\$1,022,094
Year 1 Total Cash	\$783,152
Year 2 Total Cash	\$540,280
Year 3 Total Cash	\$100,945
Depreciation	\$18,947
Interest	N/A
Interest Expense	N/A
Annual Principal, Interest, and Lease Payments	\$917,309

I. Financial Dashboard

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK BALL STATE UNIVERSITY			Meets
			Does Not Meet
			Falls Far Below
1. NEAR TERM INDICATORS			
1.a.	Current Ratio (Working Capital Ratio)	Current Assets divided by Current Liabilities	Meets
1.b.	Cash to Current Liabilities	Cash divided by Current Liabilities	Meets
1.c.	Unrestricted Days Cash	Unrestricted Cash divided by ((Total Expenses-Depreciation Expenses)/365)	Meets
1.d.	Enrollment Variance	Actual Enrollment divided by Enrollment Projection in Charter School Board-Approved Budget	Meets
1.e.	Default		Meets
2. SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS			
2.a.	Total Margin	Net Income divided by Total Revenue and Aggregated Total Margin: Total 3 Year Net Income divided by Total 3 Year Revenues	Meets
2.b.	Debt to Asset Ratio	Total Liabilities divided by Total Assets	Meets
2.c.	Cash Flow	Multi-Year Cash Flow = (Year 3 Total Cash)-(Year 1 Total Cash); One-Year Cash Flow = (Year 2 Total Cash)-(Year 1 Total Cash)	Meets
2.d.	Debt Service Coverage Ratio	(Net Income + Depreciation + Interest Expense)/(Annual Principal, Interest, and Lease Payments)	Does Not Meet

Financial Performance Framework – Data Points	
Current Assets	\$1,022,094
Current Liabilities	\$999,544
Cash	\$783,152
Unrestricted Cash	\$783,152
Total Expenses	\$7,157,907
Depreciation Expenses	\$18,947
Enrollment Projection in Charter School Board-Approved Budget	725
Actual Enrollment	704

Default	School is not in default
Net Income	\$22,550
Total Revenue	\$7,158,027
Aggregated Total Margin	.0031
Total 3 Year Net Income	\$72,441
Total 3 Year Revenues	\$23,129,950
Total Liabilities	\$999,544
Total Assets	\$1,022,094
Year 1 Total Cash	\$783,152
Year 2 Total Cash	\$540,280
Year 3 Total Cash	\$100,945
Depreciation	\$18,947
Interest	N/A
Interest Expense	N/A
Annual Principal, Interest, and Lease Payments	\$917,309

	Top Box Comparisons*			School's Frequency Distribution				
	Spring 2017 School	Spring 2018 All Schools	Rank	5 - Highly Satisfied	4 - Satisfied	3 - Neither	2 - Dissatisfied	1 - Highly Dissatisfied
Loyalty								
Overall Satisfaction	41%	54%	81	30%	50%	5%	11%	5%
Likelihood to recommend	51%	62%	76	44%	24%	17%	5%	10%
Likelihood to re-enroll	57%	70%	69	56%	17%	15%	4%	8%
How would you grade your school? (A = Top Box)	49%	58%	76	33%	38%	16%	7%	6%
I am proud my student attends this school.	72%	76%	53	70%	14%	11%	3%	2%
Academics								
School challenges my child to reach potential	65%	69%	66	61%	21%	7%	6%	5%
Academic program is one of best in area	63%	64%	71	49%	33%	11%	4%	3%
Satisfaction with child's academic progress this year	62%	65%	40	64%	21%	4%	7%	4%
Emphasis on reading and math is good for my child	68%	74%	63	68%	24%	6%	1%	1%
My child's teachers make adjustments based on how well he or she is learning	70%	68%	69	60%	22%	9%	3%	6%
School has high expectations for my child	69%	74%	61	66%	18%	7%	3%	6%
Schoolwide Behavior System								
The discipline policies at this school are effective.	55%	54%	51	49%	21%	14%	7%	9%
I am confident that this school is providing a safe environment for my child	71%	70%	47	68%	20%	7%	1%	3%
My child's classrooms are orderly, caring and safe	64%	71%	55	67%	17%	7%	5%	4%
Teachers role model positive behavior and relationship building for my child.	62%	71%	67	62%	24%	7%	3%	5%
Bullying is handled effectively at this school.	56%	51%	35	51%	19%	16%	5%	8%
Teachers and school leaders discipline children uniformly	60%	57%	64	51%	23%	15%	6%	5%
Moral Guidance								
This school delivers on its promise of moral guidance.	66%	70%	68	60%	28%	7%	2%	3%
This school has helped my child become more respectful and caring.	54%	58%	66	49%	24%	14%	8%	5%
This school has helped my child make wise choices, consider consequences, and take responsibility for his or her actions.	55%	63%	61	55%	25%	14%	3%	3%
Adults at this school treat students with respect.	56%	67%	68	57%	23%	6%	5%	9%
Communication								
I am satisfied with the updates I receive about my child's academic progress.	67%	72%	76	60%	23%	6%	3%	8%
Principals and teachers are accessible to discuss my concerns at a time that is convenient for me.	69%	73%	81	55%	23%	7%	4%	11%
School communication is effective and timely.	59%	69%	76	52%	22%	6%	8%	12%
I feel welcome at this school.	71%	78%	81	62%	22%	4%	4%	8%
This school values parent feedback.	69%	71%	68	62%	19%	6%	4%	9%
Leadership Staff								
The Deans/Assistant Principals are continually working to improve this school.	65%	69%	69	56%	26%	10%	3%	5%
The Principal is an effective leader.	68%	70%	78	49%	24%	19%	3%	6%
Other Staff								
The school's secretaries are helpful.	72%	81%	61	75%	15%	2%	3%	6%

Key *	Overall Satisfaction	Net Promoter*	Response Count
<p>Top Box Score is the percentage of respondents giving the 'best' response; e.g., a 5 on a 5 point scale.</p> <p>Rank is based off the Top Box score for the individual measure.</p> <p>Net Promoter = % Promoters (respondents who answered a 5 on Recommend) - % Detractors (respondents who answered a 1, 2, or 3 on Recommend)</p>	30%	12%	234

	Top Box Comparisons*			School's Frequency Distribution				
	Spring 2016 School	Spring 2017 All Schools	Rank	5 - Highly Satisfied	4 - Satisfied	3 - Neither	2 - Dissatisfied	1 - Highly Dissatisfied
Loyalty								
Overall Satisfaction	43%	55%	67	41%	44%	11%	3%	1%
Likelihood to recommend	57%	63%	60	51%	26%	12%	5%	5%
Likelihood to re-enroll	59%	71%	65	57%	33%	2%	4%	4%
How would you grade your school? (A = Top Box)	43%	59%	51	49%	32%	15%	4%	0%
I am proud my student attends this school.	55%	76%	52	72%	16%	8%	2%	2%
Academics								
School challenges my child to reach potential	45%	70%	57	65%	26%	4%	4%	2%
Academic program is one of best in area	41%	64%	39	63%	26%	8%	2%	2%
Satisfaction with child's academic progress this year	42%	64%	45	62%	29%	4%	3%	2%
Emphasis on reading and math is good for my child	44%	73%	59	68%	22%	5%	3%	1%
My child's teachers make adjustments based on how well he or she is learning	47%	69%	40	70%	21%	4%	2%	3%
School has high expectations for my child	43%	74%	58	69%	25%	4%	1%	1%
Schoolwide Behavior System								
The discipline policies at this school are effective.	33%	54%	35	55%	24%	10%	5%	5%
I am confident that this school is providing a safe environment for my child	44%	72%	46	71%	23%	2%	3%	1%
My child's classrooms are orderly, caring and safe	43%	71%	56	64%	24%	4%	6%	2%
Teachers role model positive behavior and relationship building for my child.	40%	71%	65	62%	25%	8%	2%	3%
Bullying is handled effectively at this school.		51%	25	56%	21%	11%	5%	6%
Teachers and school leaders discipline children uniformly	36%	57%	32	60%	22%	10%	3%	3%
Moral Guidance								
This school delivers on its promise of moral guidance.	41%	69%	49	66%	25%	7%	0%	2%
This school has helped my child become more respectful and caring.	36%	57%	51	54%	32%	12%	1%	1%
This school has helped my child make wise choices, consider consequences, and take responsibility for his or her actions.	37%	63%	66	55%	34%	8%	2%	2%
Adults at this school treat students with respect.		67%	68	56%	23%	9%	7%	5%
Communication								
I am satisfied with the updates I receive about my child's academic progress.	43%	70%	54	67%	25%	2%	3%	2%
Principals and teachers are accessible to discuss my concerns at a time that is convenient for me.	40%	74%	52	69%	22%	6%	2%	2%
School communication is effective and timely.	39%	69%	64	59%	30%	4%	2%	6%
I feel welcome at this school.		79%	68	71%	22%	3%	2%	2%
This school values parent feedback.		72%	53	69%	21%	7%	1%	2%
Leadership Staff								
The Deans/Assistant Principals are continually working to improve this school.		69%	51	65%	21%	10%	2%	2%
The Principal is an effective leader.		70%	48	68%	19%	7%	2%	4%
Other Staff								
The school's secretaries are helpful.	49%	81%	68	72%	20%	3%	4%	1%

Key *	Overall Satisfaction	Net Promoter*	Response Count
<p>Top Box Score is the percentage of respondents giving the 'best' response; e.g., a 5 on a 5 point scale. Rank is based off the Top Box score for the individual measure. Net Promoter = % Promoters (respondents who answered a 5 on Recommend) - % Detractors (respondents who answered a 1, 2, or 3 on Recommend)</p>	41%	29%	263