

**Report:** Reauthorization Review Visitation  
**Academy:** Benton Harbor Charter School Academy  
**Date:** November 12 - 13, 2018

The visitation occurred at the Benton Harbor Charter School Academy with three members on the Ferris State University Charter Schools Office (CSO) visitation team. The team had the opportunity to meet with and interview the school leadership team, one school board member, and the School Improvement Team. The team was able to tour the facility and visit several classrooms to observe teaching and learning. We appreciate the staff and stakeholder’s open communication and transparency that was apparent during our visit.

## Visitation Findings

School Improvement Process and Results	
Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff is aware they are working to improve their NWEA and M-Step scores and have strategies/activities planned and implemented to address that.</li> <li>• Staff and school leadership recognizes the current SIP is too wide and needs to be narrowed to be more purposeful to assist in student growth/achievement which has been done with the strategic plan.</li> <li>• The school has the interventionists and specialists in place that the plan calls for.</li> <li>• The staff is implementing an RTI process to provide support for Tier 2 and 3 students.</li> <li>• It is evident the staff has received training in Restorative Justice and believes it has been helpful in keeping students in school.</li> <li>• Teachers and administration are receiving training on MTSS through the Kent ISD.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider determining what your non-negotiables are and make those the priority with all staff.</li> <li>• Consider establishing a universal walk through process that you follow when visiting classrooms.</li> <li>• Consider a review and modification of your SIP plan so it only includes the strategies/activities you are focused on.</li> <li>• Consider aligning your SIP plan to your Action Plan and strategic plan.</li> <li>• Consider developing professional development to help your more seasoned teachers become experts while also offering PD that will assist the new(er) teachers to be prepared and able to work with the students in your building.</li> <li>• Continue efforts to make sure each teacher becomes an expert using the curriculums the school has adopted.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It appears ELA and Math curriculums are providing a sound foundation and prescribed resources for your staff to follow.</li> </ul>	
<u>Facilities Review</u>	
<b>Observations</b>	<b>Opportunities for Growth</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The building is well maintained, building is clean, and classrooms are conducive to learning.</li> <li>• The school is working to provide alternative seating for students to enhance learning.</li> <li>• There is adequate technology throughout the building and is being used for Tier 1 instruction as well as for interventions.</li> <li>• The building is very secure. The building is locked during the day and visitors must be buzzed in. In addition, there is a second security door, which is new this year.</li> <li>• Parents have commented on how they feel the school is safe which they appreciate and is a main reason they send their child to the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is evident the facility is ready for possible program expansion, consider keeping FSU informed about any expansion planning.</li> </ul>
<u>Academy Culture Review</u>	
<b>Observations</b>	<b>Opportunities for Growth</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers have had training on how to meet the needs of their student population.</li> <li>• Teachers shared that building relationships with the students is critical.</li> <li>• The teachers work as a team and believe collaboration is key to the culture of success.</li> <li>• It was stated the “toxic” staff culture from last year has left and the overall culture of the building this year is much improved.</li> <li>• The teachers shared they need to be in a learning zone and not a performing zone to grow and are willing to be there.</li> <li>• It was evident the staff is all in and seem to give their all on a daily basis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue your efforts to determine the needs of your student population and make adjustments to the culture as needed.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for seasoned staff to mentor or guide newer teachers in the building.</li> <li>• Consider determining the elements of your culture that are helpful in retaining staff.</li> <li>• Consider finding ways to consistently celebrate teacher and student successes.</li> </ul>

<u>Mission Accomplishment</u>	
Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The leadership team is working to revise their mission to be more specific to their current intention of making all students' college and career ready.</li> <li>The school promotes colleges by having each classroom represent a different college/university from a variety of levels (i.e D-2, Big Ten, HBCU, and Ivy League).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider working to find ways to weave your mission into the school day when possible.</li> </ul>
<u>Website</u>	
Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website includes up to date information and all of the expectations of a school's website.</li> <li>The school has established different social media platforms to share information about the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider adding more student/staff celebrations on the website which will assist in telling your story.</li> <li>Consider reducing the amount of words on each page so it is less overwhelming to the reader.</li> </ul>

## Academy Internal Review

<u>Student Outcomes</u>	
Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The data provided in the Academy Internal Review comparing the school to other schools in the ISD on the M-Step was very positive.</li> <li>Staff is using NWEA data and common assessment data to place students in tiered resources for additional help.</li> <li>Staff is consistently using exit tickets on a daily basis to determine student understanding of what they learned.</li> <li>Literacy coach is working effectively K-3 to support teacher instruction and provide the means to meet the needs of individual students. This is accomplished by her leading PD as well as modeling good instruction in the classroom.</li> <li>Interventionists in both math and reading are working to assist students one on one who need more intensive support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When presenting data consider presenting both the positive data the school has accomplished while specifically recognizing the areas of needed improvement.</li> <li>Work to insure your PLC's are following a consistent format which are led by experienced staff and are held on a regularly scheduled basis, reporting out information that was discussed.</li> <li>Consider working with students to establish their own growth targets and then reviewing those on a regular basis.</li> <li>Consider establishing incremental (i.e quarter, semester, testing cycle) academic goals which are challenging and rigorous, yet attainable, celebrate those gains as they occur, then reestablish new goals creating a cycle.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has a written RTI plan to support the learning needs of their students.</li> <li>• The staff is using the NWEA Learning Continuum to adjust instruction as needed and have established 2 hours per week for both math and ELA for this remediation.</li> <li>• Data walls were observed in some classrooms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider having all staff displaying their learning objectives written in language appropriate to the grade level with the expectation that all teachers will refer to those during the lesson.</li> <li>• Consider activating the RTI team as soon as possible.</li> </ul>
--	--

**Governance and Leadership**

Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board feels they are cohesive and value each other’s opinions. This has improved greatly over the past few years.</li> <li>• The board reports having a positive working relationship with both the management company and school leadership.</li> <li>• The board recognizes the good efforts the school leadership team and management company has put forth in stabilizing the school and its culture.</li> <li>• The board appreciates and is engaged in the financial stability of the academy.</li> <li>• The board recently developed a new strategic plan and discusses it frequently with an official update once per year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider having the board take a deeper dive into the student achievement of the current student population, including both growth and proficiency.</li> <li>• Consider having the board asking either the management company and/or the school leadership to present the student achievement data to allow for the deeper dive.</li> <li>• It was evident the board has a goal of expanding BHCSA to include a high school program, consider having a continued and open dialogue with FSU Charter Schools Office to be aware of the expectations that need to be met in order to do so and to insure a successful transition when ready.</li> </ul>

**Resources and Support Systems**

Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The management company is working diligently to maintain a consistent staff and is well aware of the difficulties they face in doing so.</li> <li>• Classroom resources and teaching materials are appropriate and meeting the needs of the students.</li> <li>• The school leadership is providing very robust professional development and have moved to early release Friday’s to provide more time.</li> <li>• The staff is provided a two-week boot camp each summer for professional learning.</li> <li>• The management company is providing sound financial information to the board on a monthly basis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue your effort to find additional financial resources to support the staff in hopes of providing more stability.</li> <li>• Continue to find non-financial ways to support and celebrate staff efforts in hopes to grow the culture and buy-in to serve this student population.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school is providing additional support staff, i.e. instructional coach and math and ELA interventionists to provide additional supports to struggling students.</li> </ul>	
---	--

## CSO Review of Overall Performance for Benton Harbor Charter School Academy

Contract Performance Report Review	
Observations (2017-18 data)	Opportunities for Growth (2017-18 data)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate MAP growth (9/14 above 50<sup>th</sup> percentile).</li> <li>MSTEP Proficiency Percentages are above composite/resident district</li> <li>Stable enrollment.</li> <li>44% of students have been enrolled for 3 or more years- good.</li> <li>Great compliance data for 2016-17.</li> <li>Appropriate fund balance after 2016-17.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MAP Achievement (goal is 50<sup>th</sup> percentile) was at 27<sup>h</sup> for Reading and 24<sup>th</sup> for Math.</li> <li>MSTEP Proficiency Percentages were well below State Averages.</li> <li>MSTEP Proficiency Percentages need to play a more positive role in the MDE Index.</li> </ul>

School Support Team (SST) and Field Representative (FR) Updates	
Observations (2018-19 data)	Opportunities for Growth (2018-19 data)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yellow SST Designated School.</li> <li>Using 2016-17 data, MDE Index was 50 (well above bottom 5%, that was just under 31).</li> <li>Index was generated by above average MSTEP growth data.</li> <li>MSTEP Proficiency Percentages remain above Composite District.</li> <li>No financial, facility, compliance, or leadership concerns from SST or FR. PSA is considering expanding to include high school grades.</li> <li>New Strategic Plan was created last spring- discuss and track progress periodically.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fall 2018 MAP Achievement remains below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in all grade levels.</li> <li>MSTEP Proficiency Percentages remain well below State Averages.</li> <li>Retaining quality staff members remains a challenge.</li> <li>ELA MSTEP Proficiency Percentage dropped 6%.</li> <li>Math MSTEP Proficiency Percentages grew 4% but remain low.</li> </ul>

### Overall Opportunities for Growth

- Assessment scores, especially proficiency and achievement remain very low. Overall, identify the grade levels who score very low (below 10% proficient on MSTEP and below 30<sup>th</sup> proficiency percentile in MAP) and address with interventions and improved instruction.
- Watch your ELA MSTEP scores to see if last year's decline was an anomaly or a trend.
- Get closer to that 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of MAP achievement in Math and Reading.
- Establish a core quality staff so a limited number of new personnel can be oriented and mentored by the vast majority of veterans.

**Current CSO Expectations in Consideration for Recommendation of Reauthorization. These are subject to change.**

#### **For Benton Harbor Charter School Academy:**

- Meet or exceed FSU CSO's academic measures and goals.
- Continue to follow all charter contractual expectations.
- The CSO may have other academic and non-academic expectations as more information becomes available. All other contractual and policy standards must be met and maintained.
- Keep your MDE Accountability Index Score above the bottom 5% in the State.

Signed James K. Scholten  
CSO Visitation Chair

Ronalds. Schneider  
CSO Associate Director