

ACADEMY INTERNAL REVIEW



FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

CHARTER SCHOOLS OFFICE

MID-CONTRACT AND REAUTHORIZATION REVIEW





Charter Schools Office Vision, Mission, and Core Values

VISION

Ferris State University will authorize public school academies that promise to transform the lives of students by demonstrating high-quality performance.

MISSION

The Ferris State University Charter Schools Office focuses on student success and continuous improvement through quality oversight, professional learning opportunities, and relevant resources for its authorized public school academies.

CORE VALUES

The core values of the Ferris State University Charter Schools Office are the foundation of our organization's culture. Our values are static, unchanging and non-negotiable, built from the belief that learning is a lifelong process and *all* students can learn.

WE VALUE:

Student Learning

As a higher education institution, student learning is in our DNA; we see the opportunities created when students succeed, and we focus our oversight and support efforts on continual student success.

A Collaborative Working Environment

By supporting each other and building partnerships, we encourage a sense of community through cooperation, teamwork and consensus building with our stakeholders.

Diversity

Recognizing that stakeholders are made up of diverse populations, we honor diversity of ideas, beliefs, and cultures.

Opportunities

Through the work we do as a charter school authorizer, we help create learning opportunities and environments by lending support for professional growth and development.

Excellence

Committed to superior results, we engage in practices that produce the highest quality outcomes in all our endeavors.

Accountability

Accountability leads to academic progress—we believe in being held accountable for our work as an authorizer as deeply as we believe in holding all stakeholders accountable for their work.

Integrity and Trust

Our actions are guided by fairness and respect through transparency, effective communication and the building of positive relationships with each other and our stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

This document is one of several key documents for those academies undergoing either a Mid-Contract or Reauthorization Review. These reviews are requirements as part of the charter contract and are essential to the Reauthorization process. **If this is an Internal Review for a Reauthorization onsite or virtual review, this document, when completed and submitted, also serves at the Academy's reauthorization application.** The Ferris State University Charter Schools Office (CSO) views these review processes as part of an ongoing evaluation of quality, and not as a singular event.

The **Academy Internal Review** focuses on the Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP), Contract Performance Report (CPR), internal data review information, and initiatives, policies, and procedures generated by staff and stakeholder meetings. These documents and procedures provide an opportunity for the Academy's school improvement team and other key stakeholders to self-reflect on some of the key indicators of quality student performance and organizational effectiveness. The CSO firmly holds that quality organizations engage in ongoing conversations regarding continuous quality improvement in all aspects of performance. This review must be based on staff, board, and stakeholder discussion and input to ensure accuracy and agreement on current and future activities, policies, and procedures.

The majority of the information the CSO team will be reviewing and discussing before, during, and after the review will focus on the following categories, all related to the FSU CSO pillars for successful academies:

1. Review of prior Mid-Contract and Reauthorization Review
2. Academic Progress (Pillar #1)
 - a. Academic Data
 - b. Curriculum, Instruction, and Interventions
 - c. The MICIP Process and Results
3. Fiscal Solvency (Pillar #2)
4. Operations (Pillar #3)
5. Compliance & Governance (Pillar #4)

INSTRUCTIONS

The Academy Internal Review is a series of questions that need to be discussed and researched by the school staff. When the process is completed, the Charter School Office (CSO) should have a basic knowledge of strengths and weaknesses the school identifies related to the five categories listed on the previous page. The school's responses to the questions need to be short and to the point (bullet points, short statements, examples of evidence, graphics, etc.). The quality of the answers, not the quantity, is your goal. You will need to review and reflect on past performance and objectively determine current plans and improvements.

Before your team begins to answer the questions in this document, they need to review your School Improvement Process including your Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) documents, your local building/district improvement procedures, Strategic Plans, specific building goals, Contract Performance Report, and any other relevant supporting documents. Strategies to support or bolster efforts in the categories are also appropriate to include in your responses and should be based on documentation.

The completed Internal Review should be submitted to the CSO, via Epicenter, by the date determined in collaboration with the Review Chair (two weeks prior to the visitation). The submission must be a discussion item at a Board of Directors meeting and include the signature of the board president assuring that the full board had a chance to review. Questions regarding the review process or the *Academy Internal Review* document should be directed to CSO Review Chair, Jim Scholten, via email (JamesScholten@ferris.edu) or phone (616) 430-0891.

1. Prior Mid-Contract or Reauthorization Review

After your last Mid-Contract or Reauthorization Review, you received a Final Report, which included a section titled “Opportunities for Growth”. **Briefly list** the “Opportunities for Growth” you addressed and connected activities, procedures, or policies that have been initiated. (Responses in *italics*)

- Consider determining what your non-negotiables are and make those the priority with all staff.
- Consider establishing a universal walk-through process that you follow when visiting classrooms.

With the adoption of pedagogical practices outlined in Get Better Faster staff was made aware of the non-negotiables with regard to classroom management and their preparation for teaching. Throughout the building, common language about how we behave in the hall (called “HALL”), as well as classroom learner position have been taught and are measured daily by the academic coaches.

- Continue your efforts to determine the needs of your student population and make adjustments to the culture as needed.
- Consider finding ways to consistently celebrate teacher and student successes.

We have adopted a student behavior “economy” that fills a great many needs. The software is called kickboard and in it teachers can award or take away student “dollars.” On Mondays, students can use their “paycheck” to purchase something from a gift cart or save for something bigger. Teachers have to be clear about why they are taking or adding funds to a student’s account so the student knows what behavior is expected, but they also record the times of day, places, and hall passes so we can collect data on when/where disturbances are most likely to occur. It is also a communication tool between the teacher and the family, replacing Class Dojo.

- Consider working to find ways to weave your mission into the school day when possible.

We are all-in on Bobcat pride and have developed school chants that the students enjoy and chant at assemblies and in the morning. We have also made every classroom a college classroom and students and staff refer to the rooms this way, “I’m in Oregon” or “Training will be in University of Columbia.” In addition to building an esprit de corps among the students, the classrooms are part of building the college-going culture we want to communicate to our students and their families.

- When presenting data consider presenting both the positive data the school has accomplished while specifically recognizing the areas of needed improvement.

We always share our data with staff and look for our bright spots. Teachers are also given a spreadsheet to track their students for acceleration and share student goals with them from their NWEA scores.

- Work to ensure 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.

As of the 21-22 school year, the PLC's are happening at the grade level with instructional coach present. Teachers have been presented with a protocol to be used when planning and reviewing student work and aligning that to the grade level pacing guides. PLC's are intensely focused on making sure that all students receive grade level instruction every day, regardless of their current ability level. We have read the research about acceleration over remediation and have shared it with our teachers to help them in this challenge.

- 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.

This is an expectation for all teachers.

- Consider activating the RTI (MTSS) team as soon as possible.

Our MTSS team works in conjunction with Berrien RESA and had training at Kent ISD to run this properly. We are still in the early stages of implementation that focus on behavior (we are using Kickboard instead of SWIS, but can upload our data from it into the MiMTSS dashboard), attendance, and literacy.

- Consider having the board take a deeper dive into the student achievement of the current student population, including both growth and proficiency.

When our data is available, we present it to the board for review.

- Continue your effort to find additional financial resources to support the staff in hopes of providing more stability.

We have dedicated a significant portion of ESSER funds to address current needs and are looking to create a sustainable compensation plan that both attracts and inspires teachers and all staff in being a part of our mission. Regrettably, we are up against a shortage of workers where compensation isn't the issue.

Academic Progress (Pillar #1)

Academic Data

Based on the team's review of your current academic assessment data, identify 3-5 areas of strength and 3-5 areas of improvement. For each area of improvement, list at least one current initiative that addresses that area (if available).

Areas of Strength:

1. *All things considered, the kindergarten data in NWEA is not as bad as it might be. We will make sure to keep on with enrichment so that this cohort can succeed and make regular progress.*
2. *There are a few bright spots in our 6th, 7th and 9th grade data that show that some summer school efforts and focus on preparing for tests helps with student confidence and persistence.*
3. *Supportive parents and motivated staff. In both cases, we have people who recognize what was lost and are eager to assist and keep collaborating on how to ensure each student gets grade level work.*

Areas of Improvement:

1. *Address weaknesses that result from missing so much school that is seen in NWEA data*
Initiative: identifying prior skills missed and focusing in small groups
2. *Our literacy took a real nosedive over pandemic, especially in grades 1-5 where students may not have already been solid readers.*
Initiative: Focusing on research-based interventions and on acceleration over remediation and making sure we have the materials and resources to support children at school and at home
3. *Our math also needs significant focus.*
Initiative: Our Eureka curriculum is good at mapping out missed skills and our math coach is working with teachers on how to use this to “backfill” prior to introducing new concepts.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Interventions

- a. Briefly describe Tier I instruction at your academy (curriculum, lesson planning, in-class support to students, etc.).

We have struggled for years to guarantee that all students are receiving Tier One instruction. In 2021-22 we have begun a system that will be important in our future achievement. Specifically, all teachers’ work with their grade level partners to create lesson plans which we call “intellectual prep” that guarantees all students experience grade level work and that each grade’s objectives are aligned with state expectations with regard to learning outcomes. Grade level teams have common planning time that is done PLC-style to reflect on what students are supposed to learn, and what to do if they have or have not learned it. Teachers also use exit tickets to drive whole-group or small -group instruction. Finally, although we need more instructional aides, these aides push in to support students who may be struggling with a particular concept. There is also a formal MTSS process that students who do not show progress will be referred to for Tier 2 interventions.

- b. What school-wide instructional initiatives are occurring in your academy? What evidence do you have of their effectiveness?

We have adopted the systems in Get Better Faster that have shown remarkable results across the nation in schools just like Benton Harbor Charter School Academy. The authors are the founders of Uncommon Schools in New Jersey that have received national recognition for their outstanding results in getting scholars to college. Our first year of implementation is revealing both expected and unexpected struggles in some areas. But, we have accountability practices in place--6 week reflection/data meetings, along with mid-course correction meetings with colleagues from other Choice Schools' Scholar Schools.

- c. How is the school meeting the needs of at-risk students and special education students? Describe your intervention structure and programs. What evidence do you have that your intervention system is working?

Our return to in-person learning has revealed to us that nearly all of our students are at-risk. Although this was always true in a way, the lack of in-person instruction for the youngest learners in particular has required us to make some hasty plans to address these issues, while trying to stay true to our commitment to acceleration over remediation. These interventions are currently being invented as we learn about the areas of weakness in our first and second grade students in particular. In general, we practice interventions and support for special education students in the least restrictive environment through push-ins in classrooms and some pull-outs at times when students are missing either critical instruction nor the "fun stuff." Students are identified for these services through the MTSS process, as well as weekly grade level meetings for either intervention (general ed) or a review process for the possibility of special ed or a reevaluation if the student has already been identified.

MICIP & Strategic Planning

- a. Briefly describe your continuous improvement process and involvement of stakeholders.

The leadership team which includes administration and instructional coaches, as well as community leaders (there are three communities: K-2 is the Foundational Community, 3-6 is the Gateway Community, and 7-9 is the Preparatory Community) who provide input and assist in the review of our articulated goals and progress toward them. We regularly survey our parents to get their perspective to inform both our progress and necessary revisions.

- b. What did you learn about your academy from the "Data Analysis" and "Setting Goals" process within MICIP?

Quite frankly, due to the few numbers of students who tested last year because of COVID and remote instruction, our data is likely not a full picture. That said, it

did not provide many surprises. We are very aware of the major struggle in front of us.

- c. Highlight any specific strategies or activities you would like the CSO Review Team to observe or look for during their visit. What impact have they had on student growth and/or achievement?

Our system of checking for daily lesson plans (intellectual prep) and monitoring teacher behaviors that in turn support student behaviors and increase time on task is a strategy within a system that we have employed this year. We think that it will have an impact on student learning, as it is proven methodology and are designed to increase student time-on-task and support the “gradual release” model of instruction where students gradually take on the cognitive load for learning.

2. Fiscal Solvency (Pillar #4)

List your main financial challenges and any current activities that address the concerns. Also include any current or long-term projects or purchases involving a substantial increase in expenditures (examples: curriculum purchase, facility improvements, purchase of technology, etc.).

In the past, one of our major challenges has been to have competitive salaries compared to the surrounding districts. COVID relief money has alleviated that, at least temporarily, but we are engaged in determining how to have a sustainable compensation package that recognizes that our staff work harder than staff in other districts, and therefore attracts and retains the kinds of people we need to be successful. COVID relief money did allow us to also increase our technology, acquire curriculum materials, and make upgrades to the facility without impacting our general fund, which is in excellent shape. We are turning to the opportunity that the ESSER III funds present to us, especially with regard to addressing the needs of our scholars who have fallen so far behind.

3. Operations (Pillar #3), Compliance & Governance (Pillar#4)

Staff Retention

Describe teacher and administrator retention. Is the Academy operating with current staff shortages? Are there any incentives in place to retain current staff? Are there any other staff issues that are barriers to the educational environment?

As of this writing there are 27 teaching posted positions, not including our postings, in the Berrien RESA, along with social workers, guidance counselors, etc. that make up another 21 positions. With so few candidates available, and our teachers having a harder job of it in some respects, it is difficult to attract highly qualified teachers. We are eager to “grow our own” staff by recruiting college grads and potentially going the alternative

certification route. However, we have very few of these candidates apply as well, despite what we consider to be good pay. We do have incentives and other benefits, but there just aren't enough people interested in working in schools in general. We will be putting together a committee to try to figure out how to recruit more and better as well as how to use the current staff in a way that won't burn them out.

Board/ESP Relationship

What is the quality of the relationship between the Board and the Educational Service provider?

Very good.

Strengths & Areas for Improvement

List the strengths of your current organizational (board, management company, building administration) leadership procedures and personnel. List areas for improvement in the organization.

Strengths:

- *Good relationships with stakeholders*
- *A community reputation as a safe place for children*
- *A leadership team structure that shows promise for the future*
- *A student population that is eager to learn*
- *Some very talented and committed staff who have been at the Academy for a long time*
- *A restructured management company that is focused specifically on the needs of BHCSA and the families and students it serves.*
- *An excellent fund balance and a pretty good building.*

Areas for Improvement:

- *Staffing*
- *Staffing*
- *Staffing*
- *Refinement of our practices so that we are implementing our identified strategies with fidelity so that we can see the growth we know our students are capable of*

SIGNATURE PAGE

Stakeholder Involvement

List all academy team members who assisted with the completion of this document. Chairperson will sign to attest that all names gave input to the *Academy Internal Review* document.

<u>Tim Harris</u> Print Name	<u>Principal</u> Title
<u>Ashley Smith</u> Print Name	<u>Asst. Principal</u> Title
<u>Shaya Helbig</u> Print Name	<u>Lit. Coach</u> Title
<u>Kendra Zichterman</u> Print Name	<u>Inst. Coach</u> Title
<u>Laura Moellering</u> Print Name	<u>Superintendent</u> Title
<u>Laura M. S.</u> Chairperson Signature	<u>10.19.21</u> Date

Board of Directors Review

Date of Board Meeting Review 10.19.21

I attest that the full Board of Directors was given the opportunity to review the *Academy Internal Review* document prior to submission to the Ferris State University Charter Schools Office.

Board President Name: Jean Nesbitt

<u>N. Jean Nesbitt</u> Signature	<u>10.19.21</u> Date
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