

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

CHARTER SCHOOLS OFFICE

Review Type: Mid-Contract Review

Academy Name: Creative Technologies Academy

Date: December 13, 2022

The Review occurred at Creative Technologies Academy with three members on the Ferris State University Charter Schools Office (CSO) Review Team. The team had the opportunity to meet with and interview stakeholder groups, including the School Leadership Team and Governing Board. The team had a discussion with the building leader focused on current operations. We appreciate the open communication and transparency from the academy team.

Onsite Review Findings

Pillar #1: Academic Progress

- Are classroom interactions cooperative and conducive to learning? Is there a structure approach to managing student behavior throughout the school?
- Does teacher provide clear learning goals leading to purposeful instruction?
- Are a variety of instructional strategies materials used to meet diverse needs?
- Is the learning environment structured and time maximized for learning? Do leaders and teachers share the responsibility for creating a learning environment that supports all students?
- Are students given the opportunity to develop higher order thinking skills?
- Has the school identified growth initiatives that appropriately address the needs of their student population?
- Does the school prioritize continuous improvement and monitor progress toward goals?
- Is there evidence of a positive school climate focused on student learning?

| Areas of Strength | Opportunities for Growth |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Consistent culture building initiatives are utilized at all levels: Capturing Kids Hearts, focus on character traits, restorative practices, relationship building, social contracts.● Time is allotted at all levels (WIN @ elementary, advisory @ secondary) to meet individual student needs.● A common, guaranteed Tier I curriculum is used for all students. There is a consistent belief that gradual release and independent practice are essential to student learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Continue to improve intervention practices in late elementary, middle school and high school in order to meet goals outlined below in the <i>Contract Performance Review</i>.● Work on creating opportunities for teacher collaboration at the secondary level.● Work on creating opportunities for students to provide feedback to each other on academic products or outcomes which is especially impactful in upper grades. Seesaw may be able to be leveraged to assist. |

- The academy uses common language and has the common expectations that all teachers will use learning targets and success criteria so that students understand learning expectations and outcomes.
- CTA uses assessment for multiple purposes: screening, diagnostic, planning interventions. This allows for an individualized approach to providing Tier II and III interventions. Students are involved in understanding their own academic progress and setting goals for future learning (Seesaw app).
- CTA has created a Student Success Team. These professionals help support teachers and plan school improvement (MICIP).
- ALL staff is offered professional training aligned with the mission of the school, MICIP goals, and individual educator growth plans.

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Pillar #2: Fiscal Solvency
 ○ Does the academy demonstrate fiscal responsibility, responsiveness, and sustainability?

Areas of Strength

Opportunities for Growth

- Both the CTA board and leadership are focused on utilizing funds in order to meet the vision and mission of the academy. The board takes its role serious as being good stewards of public funds.
- CTA has prioritized sustainable uses of ESSER funds, such as building and technology upgrades.
- The board has set the priority of paying off debt and taking financial care of staff as financial priorities. Financial decisions are made thoughtfully, always thinking about the future of the academy.
- CTA has contracted with a marketing company to grow the academy. This has worked well to spread the positive message about the vision and mission of the academy.
- The board and leadership of CTA are transparent about the financial goals of the academy (paying debt, taking care of facilities, taking care of people).

- See *Contract Performance Review* section below.

Pillar #3: Operations

- Do school leaders and members of the Board of Directors effectively manage the academy's operations?
- Are there systems that make the school sustainable, even with teacher or principal turnover?

Areas of Strength

- School leadership has created a system where many staff are trained on the important initiatives, such as Capturing Kids Hearts, Cognitive Coaching, and Adaptive Schools. There are also district level goals set around the instructional framework (5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning). This intentionality ensures that the important programs are sustainable no matter what changes may occur in staffing.
- Expectations are modelled at all levels of academy including leadership and at the board level. This was evident in consistency in language that staff and the board used to answer the interview questions.

Opportunities for Growth

- Continue to find creative ways to retain and recruit highly effective staff that aligns with the academy strategic plan.
- Continue to strengthen the administrative team. This group has had some turnover and new additions (principal, finance professional, instructional leaders). Continue your diligence in providing support to new administrators.

Pillar #4: Compliance & Governance

- Does the academy comply with all applicable laws and regulations?
- Does the academy comply with all contractual obligations as outlined in the charter contract?
- Does the Board of Directors provide competent stewardship and oversight of the academy?

Areas of Strength

- The board and leadership have a great relationship. Both sides listen to one another. The CTA board and leadership works together to strategically plan for the success and growth of the academy.
- The CTA board is intentional on maintaining a board where members have a variety of life experiences and expertise (finance, academics, parent perspective, community perspective).
- The CTA board has an understanding as to their role as board members and how important that is to the success of the academy.
- The board has transitioned to an auditor and an attorney with more school experience. This will serve the board well moving forward so that they have access to information needed for decision making.

Opportunities for Growth

- Continue the focus on creating the new strategic plan for CTA.

Contract Performance Report(s) Review

| Pillar | Areas of Strength | Opportunities for Growth |
|---|---|--|
| Pillar #1: Academic Progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Technologies Academy (CTA) <i>MET</i> contractual goals at the K-8 level during for the 2021-22 academic year. CTA accomplished this through performance on the School Index released by MDE: 63.04 Overall & 61.21 for growth. • CTA achievement on the SAT EBRW in 2021-22 was at 60% of students meeting college readiness benchmarks. This exceeded contractual expectations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on NWEA growth, especially in the upper grades (5th-8th). CTA did not meet the reading or math NWEA goal (50th percentile SCGP) for the last two years. • Focus on growth over time on the SAT, especially in the area of math. CTA had 34% of students meeting college readiness benchmarks. A good goal should be to have at least 40% of students meeting SAT college readiness benchmark by 2025. This data will be used for reauthorization decisions in fall of 2025 (contract expires in June of 2026). |
| Pillar #2: Fiscal Solvency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTA has a string fund balance at 24% of revenue. • CTA met all fiscal KPIs for the last two years 5 out of 6 key performance indicators (current ratio, change in fund balance, days cash on hand, enrollment over time, and current enrollment) for the last two years. The only key performance indicators not met was the debt-to-asset ratio. This has improved since last year (1.8 to a 1.1). Even this indicator is very strong as CTA participated in the State of Michigan retirement system which factors some retirement debt into this calculation. • CTA has paid down debt over time, making the academy even more fiscally strong. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue seeking training in the area of finance in order to make sure the audit has no areas for improvement in the future. |
| Pillar #3: Operations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None reported in CPR- see <i>Onsite Review Findings</i> reported above. | |
| Pillar #4: Compliance & Governance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% compliant on all Epicenter compliance tasks for the last several years. • CTA has a seven-member board that has had all member vacancy filled. No board vacancies were reported in the 2021 nor the 2022 CPR. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to increase average board attendance to over 85%. 2020-21 attendance was 75%. 2021-22 attendance was 79%. |

Dr. Christopher White

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and "W".

**Associate Director
Ferris State University Charter Schools Office**