

Annual Charter School Visits

Academic Year 2017-2018

Purpose, and Background

PURPOSE: California Education Code (47604.32) requires authorizers to annually visit charter schools.

BACKGROUND: The Charter office offered schools options over a 30 day period, and sent instructions* to charter Principals, who made specified arrangements to minimize impact to their school schedule.

WCCUSD Board members and Area Director of California Charter Schools Association were invited to attend each visit. One visit included District site leadership.

- ★ Three hour visits took place beginning March 29, 2018, and were completed May 1, 2018.
- ★ 100% of visits included interviews with students, teachers, and principals.
- ★ 90% of visits included parent interviews.
- ★ 80% of visits included board interviews.

*(<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-2jMU07Wf7RNV1ypkMv58XQ2feLplxPT>)

Report Contents

REPORT CONTENTS: A synopsis for each school follows, and is comprised of “Wows!”, meaning exceptional practices or results, and “Wonders”, consisting of questions or concerns. Finally, the “Opportunities” section focuses on how charters and District schools can partner.

Charter staff have initiated contact, or completed actions to support partnership opportunities listed under “Opportunities”. Completed actions are marked with a checked box (☑). For actions not yet completed, the Charter office will work with CCSA Regional Director, and site leadership from Harding, Dover and Montalvin Elementary Schools to develop or complete further opportunities.

Manzanita Middle School

Wows

- ★ Engaged, empowered **parents and students**.
- ★ Dedicated and focused **staff and leadership**.
- ★ Calm campus, and positive culture.
- ★ Gains on SBAC.
- ★ **Families and students** value small school and class size, and close relationships between leadership, staff and families.
- ★ **Teachers** value collegiality and opportunities to collaborate.

Wonders

- Does staff have opportunities to leverage evident strengths in each department to encourage the culture of innovation throughout?

Opportunities

- ☑ Staff expressed interest in observing District Schools that have implemented Writers' Workshop.
- ☑ Montalvin leadership have expressed interest in touring Manzanita and RTA.
- ☑ Manzanita staff are interested in touring Aspire RTA to observe math instruction.
- ☑ Staff and leadership are interested in District process of sending tablets home with students.
- ☑ Arranged Science support for NGSS.

Aspire RTA

Wows

- ★ Shared Mission and Vision, well supported by site leadership.
- ★ Orderly and friendly environment, evidence of student engagement.
- ★ Commonly adopted processes and procedures insure efficiency and focus on learning.
- ★ **Parents** reported feeling welcome and included from staff, leadership and front office staff. Parents appreciate being “in the loop” on student progress.
- ★ Strong results on SBAC in math, and plans to bring Eureka Math.
- ★ **Students** report a high level of support and encouragement for learning.

Opportunities

- Arranged visit for Montalvin Principal to observe and discuss math instruction and curriculum.
 - Asked for K-2nd assessments, and Aspire principal agree to share (pending).
- Arranged visit for Aspire RTA teachers to visit Montalvin to observe Writers' Workshop.

Wonders

- Are limited opportunities for sports, enrichment and afterschool care a limiting factor in enrollment?
- Will Aspire RTA have support from the home office to develop a play yard?

Aspire Cal Prep Academy

Wows

- ★ Clear evidence of a strong culture of acceptance and unity.
- ★ Student Art aligns to theme of school, and work is well-presented throughout school.
- ★ Friendly and happy staff, despite significant challenges (several unexpected faculty deaths, doubling in enrollment, and numerous staff out on mat/paternity leave over the school year).
- ★ Unified focus and processes.
- ★ Students described warm and caring staff and leadership who hold high expectations and provide ample support.

Opportunities

☑ Leadership offered opportunity for District school students to engage in their college fair. Charter staff sent invitations to all Middle and Charter Schools.

Wonders

- Will the impact of the many unforeseeable challenges have an impact on student learning?
- Evidence of helpful grieving opportunities could be found throughout the school. How will staff, leadership and CMO central office insure that all are supported going forward?

A method BJE

Wows

- ★ Locally rooted **school leader** with extensive experience and skills.
- ★ Site leader implemented parent conferences, and intends to work at training teachers to work with parents.
- ★ **Students** feel engaged and challenged.
- ★ **Parents** report a high degree of satisfaction with teachers, and appreciate teacher warmth and innovation.
- ★ **Parents** report satisfaction with strict uniform policy (no nail polish, no earrings).

Wonders

- Can CMO actualize stated plans to create more diversity at the school?
- In what ways are parents allowed access to authentic, decision-making roles?

Opportunities

- ☑ Site leader is eager to work with other primary principals; Charter office will connect RCP, Harding and Dover.
 - ☐ Looking for strong assessments for early primary-- will arrange to share Aspire's once received.
- ☑ Wants to see Student-Led Conferencing; sent planning materials and arrange tour with Montalvin.
- ☑ Site leader would like to see Writers' Workshop in action, and interested in a tour of Harding Elementary.
- ☑ Would like to connect with other elementary school leaders around English Language Learner support (Dover).

A method RCA

Wows

- ★ Strong, warm and knowledgeable **principal** who supports staff empowerment and growth.
- ★ **Teachers** feel supported by site leader, and able to learn and develop.
- ★ **Families** feel that small size and strong staff/family relationships support student learning.
- ★ Classrooms show evidence of interesting, challenging projects.
- ★ **Student** work was neatly displayed throughout the campus.

Opportunities

- ☑ Mr. Taylor is interested in bringing student led conferences to the school, and has been put in touch with the two site leaders who have implemented this concept in WCCUSD schools.
- ☑ Charter staff provided materials for implementation of student led conferences.

Wonders

- In what ways is the CMO communicating issues and challenges to parents?
- How can board and CMO leadership increase transparency?

A method JHHS

Wows

- ★ The site is well-situated.
- ★ The building has been reconfigured in an innovative fashion, and allows observers to see into many classrooms. Similarly the central area appears to offer a useful location for all-school meetings or student projects.
- ★ The students were bright.
- ★ The teachers worked hard at providing students with a college preparatory education.
- ★ The program is ambitious.

Wonders

- With high teacher and leadership turnover, can the model be sustained?
- Lab-based Science courses did not appear to have any materials. Will this affect student understanding of how labs are conducted?

Opportunities

- Staff expressed interest in viewing other schools, and working collaboratively with other High School teachers in local charters and West Contra Costa Unified.

Leadership Public Schools

Wows

- ★ Calm, kind, purposeful and professional **teachers** and **leadership**.
- ★ **Students** reported a full measure of support balanced with high expectations.
- ★ **Families** appreciate the strong preparation for all students.
- ★ **Teachers** appreciated the high expectations and support at honing their craft.
- ★ A high degree of transparency permeates the organization; challenges and successes are shared openly.

Opportunities

- ☑ The organization noted a trend toward serving students who were already successful, and so developed a new lottery process to bring in students who are behind grade level. Next year the District can support this effort by providing data on student SBAC scores.
- District and Leadership teachers have expressed interest in observing and collaborating.

Wonders

- Dr. Waters, Superintendent of LPS, has announced her retirement. Fortunately the organization's culture appears to have been codified into a set of effective practices and policies. What changes will new leadership bring?

Richmond College Prep

Wows

- ★ Orderly campus, clear behavior expectations, and consistent practices.
- ★ Shared vision and mission.
- ★ The school is educating a representative demographic population.
- ★ Student learning is evident from SBAC test scores.
- ★ Every classroom has an [aide](#) who actively supports student learning.
- ★ [Teachers](#) and aides report satisfaction in working conditions and site leadership.
- ★ [Students](#) felt supported and challenged.
- ★ [Parents](#) were committed and engaged.
- ★ Focus on Culturally appropriate pedagogy.

Opportunities

- ☑ Teacher-leads are interested in touring Harding to view Writers' Workshop practice.
- ☑ Board member expressed interest in learning about Summit platform. Charter office provided an introductory description and Powerpoint.

Wonders

- Board membership has been limited. Might new perspectives expand the reach of the program?

Summit Tamalpais

Wows

- ★ Shared vision and mission, upheld and supported by [leadership](#).
- ★ A culture of transparency-- challenges and successes freely shared.
- ★ Innovative and well-developed program and platform.
- ★ For [students](#) who appreciate and understand autonomy, an excellent option. For those who don't, an opportunity to learn it.
- ★ School building is innovative and effective, offering views into classrooms, open spaces for sharing student work, and collaboration.

Opportunities

☑ Charter office has shared detailed information about Summit Platform with three local schools: two Traditional Public Schools and one Charter.

Wonders

- In what ways can staff and leadership build student capacity for self-direction for students for whom this concept is new?
- In what ways do local schools collaborate on local challenges?