

**Evaluation of the
Indianapolis Mayor Sponsored
Charter Schools**

**Paramount School of Excellence
Fourth-year Charter Review**

2013-2014 School Year

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OFFICE OF EDUCATION INNOVATION

Office of the Mayor of Indianapolis

FOURTH YEAR CHARTER REVIEW

Paramount School of Excellence

November 14-15 & December 12, 2013

The Indianapolis Mayor's Office Fourth Year Charter Review (FYCR) is designed to assess the fourth year of the school as it fully implements the policies and procedures developed in the previous academic years. The Fourth Year Charter Review Protocol is based on the *Performance Framework*, which is used to determine a school's success relative to a common set of indicators, as well as school-based goals.

Consistent with the Indianapolis Mayor's Office Performance Framework, the following four core questions and sub-questions are examined to determine a school's success:

Is the educational program a success?

- 1.1. *Is the school's academic performance meeting state expectation, as measured by Indiana's accountability system?*
- 1.2. *Are students making sufficient and adequate gains, as measured by the Indiana Growth model?*
- 1.3. *Does the school demonstrate that students are improving, the longer they are enrolled at the school?*
- 1.4. *Is the school providing an equitable education to students of all races and socioeconomic backgrounds?*
- 1.5. *Is the school's attendance rate strong?*
- 1.6. *Is the school outperforming schools that the students would have been assigned to attend?*
- 1.7. *Is the school meeting its school-specific educational goals?*

Is the organization in sound fiscal health?

- 2.1. *Short term Health: Does the school demonstrate the ability to pay its obligations in the next 12 months?*
- 2.2. *Long term Health: Does the organization demonstrate long term financial health?*
- 2.3. *Does the organization demonstrate it has adequate financial management and systems?*

Is the organization effective and well-run?

- 3.1. *Is the school leader strong in his or her academic and organizational leadership?*
- 3.2. *Does the school satisfactorily comply with all its organizational structure and governance obligations?*
- 3.3. *Is the school's board active, knowledgeable and abiding by appropriate policies, systems and processes in its oversight?*
- 3.4. *Does the school's board work to foster a school environment that is viable and effective?*
- 3.5. *Does the school comply with applicable laws, regulations and provision of the charter agreement relating to the safety and security of the facility?*

Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?

- 4.1. *Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?*
- 4.2. *Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?*
- 4.3. *For secondary students, does the school provide sufficient guidance on and support and preparation for post-secondary options?*
- 4.4. *Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?*
- 4.5. *Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?*
- 4.6. *Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?*
- 4.7. *Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?*
- 4.8. *Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?*
- 4.9. *Is the school properly maintaining special education files for its special needs students?*
- 4.10. *Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to English as Second Language (ESL) students?*

COMPLETION OF THE FOURTH YEAR CHARTER REVIEW

As part of its oversight of charter schools, the Mayor's Office authorized Research & Evaluation Resources (RER) to conduct site visits of schools in their fourth year of operation. The purpose is to present the school and the Mayor's Office a professional judgment on conditions and practices at the school, which are best provided through an external perspective. This report uses multiple sources of evidence to understand the school's performance. Evidence collection begins before the visit with the review of key documents and continues on-site through additional document review, classroom visits and interviews with any number of stakeholders. Findings provided by the site visit team can be used to celebrate what the school is doing well and prioritize its areas for improvement in preparation for renewal. It is the task of the site visit team to report on the following pre-identified aspects of the *Performance Framework* and to assist the Mayor's Office in its completion of the FYCR Protocol: **Responses to sub-questions 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10 of Core Question 4.**

The outcome of this review will provide the school with written report that includes a judgment and supporting evidence on various aspects of the school, based on a rubric of indicators¹ developed for each of the four core questions and sub-questions in the *Performance Framework*. The assessment system utilizes the following judgments:

Does not meet standard

Approaching standard

Meets standard

¹ Rubric indicators are subject to revision by the Mayor's Office.

The Paramount School of Excellence

School Specific Goals

The mission of the Paramount School of Excellence (PSOE), as described in the charter application, “is to offer a world class education to each child. Built on a foundation of knowledge and wisdom, each child will maximize their potential against measurable standards, developing the skills necessary to become successful and productive citizens in a Global society. Developing compassion and understanding, students will learn to respect their environment, themselves and one another. Paramount School of Excellence will serve “a high needs population in Grades K – 8 using an integrated, humanities and research based curricula, and will develop a network of existing programs, services and resources to broaden the reach of choices to all schools, students and families.”

In the charter application, the Paramount School of Excellence proposed several school specific educational goals that were enumerated in the First and Second Year Charter Report. The Paramount School of Excellence has revised some of these goals, mainly those around the use of “Discovery Zones,” but has maintained those goals that dealt directly with academic performance. Specifically:

- Every student will have academic performance goals with the expectation of improvement in each academic and content area:
 - Pass or Pass Plus on the English/Language Arts ISTEP+ in the spring 2013 by 85% of all students who entered PSOE in Kindergarten and maintained consistent enrollment.
 - Pass or Pass Plus on the Mathematics ISTEP+ in the fall of 2013 by 85% of all students who entered PSOE in Kindergarten and maintained consistent enrollment.
 - Pass or Pass Plus on the Science ISTEP+ in the fall of 2013 by 60% of all students.
 - Each year, students entering 3rd grade will demonstrate improvement in their overall skill level abilities in Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics and Science. Improvement will be demonstrated by a combined ISTEP+ passage rate of 65% and/or a pass rate that will exceed that of IPS by at least 5%, in the fall of 2013 by all students who entered PSOE in Kindergarten and maintained consistent enrollment.
 - Each year, students in grades 2 – 5 will demonstrate improvement from year to year as measured by student mean RIT reading, language and math NWEA scores at or above the state and national NWEA norm peer groups cut scores.
- Student recruitment and enrollment plans will be implemented to allow completion of the enrollment process to stated capacity for all grades and sections no later than April 1, 2013 for the 2013-14 school year. Recruitment efforts will be concentrated in the local community surrounding the Academy within a two-mile radius of the school.
- The annual average attendance rate for the 2012-2013 school year, as calculated by the Department of Education for students at the PSOE will increase to 96% school-wide by fall

of 2013; and the annual average attendance rate for the 2013-2014 school year will increase to 97% school-wide.

- Paramount School of Excellence will follow the Indiana Standards supplemented with the Core Knowledge guidelines. PSOE's curriculum will be built on the Core Knowledge Sequence using innovative technology and effective instructional practices as a hybrid design for delivery. Technologies such as interactive Promethean whiteboards, touch screen computers and computerized student workstations coupled with teacher interaction will form the foundation.

The Paramount School of Excellence also proposed a series of school specific organizational and management performance goals:

- PSOE adopted an open enrollment policy, accepting any child qualified for admission under Indiana law. The projected enrollment for the first year was 465. The recruitment plan for the PSOE was to focus on the local neighborhood children. If needed, an admissions lottery would be held.
- Position of School Director who reports directly to the Board and oversees the Paramount School of Excellence. The School Director will have direct supervision of the fiscal operation, organizational management and employment matters. The School Director is responsible for every aspect of the charter school operation and is the primary facilitator of the school's success, quality and character.
- Position of Curriculum Director who oversees the PSOE learning community with the continuous improvement of curriculum and instructional strategies and educational programs aligned with the Schools' mission and goals. He will report to the School Director.
- Teaching staff will be responsible for implementing the curriculum, coordinating with instructional assistants, maintaining current achievement level information, working closely with all students, keeping accurate and concise records, establishing classroom procedures and maintaining positive relationships with parents and students.
- The Board of Directors and standing committees will be responsible for approval of Budget, development of school policy, hiring the School Director, and approval of staff, staff hires and dismissals and election of the Board officers.
- Development of Parent Organization. School leadership will assist parents in the organization and development of a parents' organization.
- Staff Roles and Responsibilities. In year 1 the leadership staff will include a School Director, Curriculum Director and Operations Manager. The initial teaching staff will be made up of 15 k-5 classroom teachers and a special education teacher and one of each: Music, Art, World Language and PE.

Background and History of the Paramount School of Excellence

The charter for the Paramount School of Excellence is was officially ratified on June 29, 2009 with a projected start date of August 16, 2010. The Paramount School of Excellence was originally proposed as a Challenge Foundation Academy, however, the summer prior to the opening of the school the Challenge Foundation withdrew its academic support from the Paramount School, although the Challenge Foundation did continue its financial support of the PSOE in the form of grant moneys that had been promised prior to the split. This, and other issues with the PSOE building led to a delay in the opening of the school until August 30, 2010. During that time many parents who had enrolled their students in the Paramount School decided not to wait for the delayed opening and enrolled their student in other area schools. Consequently, PSOE opened with 401 students enrolled in August, and 372 for ADM day, far below the projected number of 465. Enrollment increased in the second and third years of operation, however, with PSOE enrolling 461 students in its second year, and 531 gross (496 ADM) students in its third. The current enrollment in the 4th year of operation 508, which is slightly over the 500 that is full capacity for PSoE.

New Developments in Years 2, 3 and 4

The development of the Five Pillars and the Rise Teacher Evaluation Process. As part of the preparation for the Rise teacher evaluation process, Tommy Reddicks and Scott Frye have been working to develop a school wide system they have named the 5 Pillars. These 5 Pillars form the core of the school culture and the school improvement plan. These pillars of strength form the foundation for all the feedback given to the teaching staff as part of the Rise system, and are also embedded in the daily classroom culture in the form of the “Fast Fives,” or five questions that can be answered during that lesson, or five skills that can be developed. The “Fast Five” strategy was developed by Mr. Frye and Mr. Reddicks to align with the Five Pillars. Fast Five are five core learning objectives which are decided by each grade level as part of an analysis of the state standards, the common core as well as the topics being covered by core knowledge. One teacher described the “Fast Five” as analogous to SWBAT’s, or “students will be able to.” This focus on core learning objectives has come to fruition in the third year of operation, as a particularly useful tool in ensuring that the curriculum is being implemented as designed.

Staff development in Core Knowledge and the Common Core. Additional professional development around the Core Knowledge curriculum has enabled the staff to expand Core Knowledge as it is being implemented in the curriculum and in the classroom. Additionally, the teaching staff has begun the process of implementing the Common Core and it is currently being used in the state mandated grades.

Continued focus on school climate. As in the past year, the school leadership continues its focus on providing a school culture that fosters learning and values each child as an individual. The school has continued its focus on green living, and has expanded its community partnerships. Most importantly,

iRead pass rate. In the 2012 school year, the Paramount School of Excellence third grade students passed the iRead assessment at a rate of 87%, one of the highest in the area. The pass rate for the

2012-13 school year is 92.2%, as reported on the Indiana Department of Education Compass website.

Award of the Innovation Fund Grant to develop the Time and Space Room. In 2013 Paramount School of Excellence received a competitive Innovation Fund Grant to develop the Time and Space Room. The Time and Space Room was completed over the summer of 2013, and had its grand opening on November 19, 2013. The Time and Space Room will serve as a valuable resource for the teachers and students of Paramount, and will also be open to area schools and community groups.

The Evaluation Process

This report represents an evaluation about performance in each of the standards and indicators that are the responsibility of RER to evaluate. These indicators: 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10 are outlined in the Performance Framework.

Research & Evaluation Resources staff engaged in a number of evidence-collecting activities. The focus of this evaluation was to gauge perceptions of key stakeholders at the school in relation to the areas of the performance framework that are part of the evaluation. RER conducted focus group discussions with students, staff, and parents, as well as interviews with the school administration. These focus groups and interviews were conducted over a 2-day period, with the classroom observations, teacher and student focus groups, as well as parent and leadership interviews completed on November 14 and 15, as part of the site visit. Additional information for the Special Education and ESL indicators was gathered on December 12, 2013.

Fourteen classrooms were observed using the instrument provided by the Office of Education Innovation. Each observation lasted approximately 30 minutes, and over half of the teaching staff was observed once. Classroom observers spent 6.96 hours (418 minutes) observing 14 classrooms, 244 students, and 14 teachers. On average, each observation lasted 29.5 minutes and the observed student to teacher ratio was 17.4:1. Two of the teachers were observed by both classroom observers at the same time in order to ensure inter-judge reliability.

In the following report, standards and indicators are listed with relevant evidence given related to the performance criteria. Following the discussion of each indicator, a summary of strengths and areas for attention are provided for the core question.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
PARAMOUNT SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE**

<i>Core Question 4: Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?</i>	<i>Finding</i>
<i>4.1. Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.2. Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.4. Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.5. Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.6. Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.7. Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.8. Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.9. Is the school properly maintaining special education files for its special needs students?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.10. Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to English as Second Language (ESL) students?</i>	Meets standard

Standard 4: Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?

4.1. Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum does not align with the state standards; b) the school does not conduct systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school does not regularly review scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) the sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas does not focus on core (prioritized) learning objectives; e) the staff lacks understanding and/or consensus as to how the curriculum documents and related program materials are used to effectively deliver instruction; f) there is a lack of programs and materials available to deliver the curriculum effectively.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum does not align with the state standards; b) the school does not conduct systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school does not regularly review scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) the sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas does not focus on core (prioritized) learning objectives; e) the staff lacks understanding and/or consensus as to how the curriculum documents and related program materials are used to effectively deliver instruction; f) there is a lack of programs and materials available to deliver the curriculum effectively.
Meets standard	The school: a) curriculum aligns with the state standards; b) conducts systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school regularly reviews scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) has a sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas that is prioritized and focuses on the core learning objectives; e) the staff understands and uniformly uses curriculum documents and related program materials to effectively deliver instruction; f) programs and materials are available to deliver the curriculum effectively.

The Paramount School of Excellence uses the Core Knowledge curriculum, which is fully aligned to the state standards. Every lesson plan provided by the teaching staff as part of the observation protocol identified either the Common Core or the state standards (indicator a) The staff and leadership at PSOE conduct regular systematic review of the curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance (indicator b). Focus groups with the teaching staff revealed that the current curriculum was modified during the previous summer, but that the changes were “minor tweaks.” The teachers expressed their satisfaction with the current curriculum and noted that they were given regular feedback from school leadership regarding the quality of their lesson plans and curriculum maps. When asked about assessment and data usage, the teaching staff noted that there had been no major changes since the Spring 2013 semester, and that staff and leadership at PSoE continued to conduct regular assessments of student learning using both standardized and classroom-based assessments. The data from the standardized assessments, Acuity and mClass, is disseminated to the teaching staff quickly and in a format that is easy for them to use. This data is used to drive curriculum revision and development.

The Paramount teaching staff is divided into teams based on grade levels and each team has a teacher who acts as team leader. These team leaders meet regularly with school leadership and also with representatives of the Rooney Foundation, a group of retired administrators who work with PSOE staff to analyze and understand student data. Team leaders then take this data back to their

team for additional discussion. These comprehensive and systematic reviews of student data allows the staff of Paramount to identify gaps in student performance which are then addressed through a variety of strategies, such as standards based quizzes and the Fast Fives (indicator b).

Both the leadership and teaching staff at Paramount School of Excellence are keenly aware of the need to review instructional content, as well as scope and sequence of lessons in order to present information in time for testing (indicator c). Part of the emphasis on data driving instruction at Paramount is on improving their standardized testing scores. The teaching staff reported that they regularly use data as part of their instructional practices, while interviews with the school leadership revealed that student data is regularly used to set school-wide goals, particularly for student performance on Acuity and ISTEP. Data from mClass and Acuity are combined to present a comprehensive picture of each student, which is then used to set individualized goals. These goals were generated as part of a review of the PSOE School Improvement Plan.

The teaching staff reported that grade level teams mapped the Common Core and the Indiana state standards to the Core Knowledge curriculum at the beginning of the academic year, linking all subjects across the curriculum. Additionally, Paramount School of Excellence has a unique system of ensuring that the curricular objectives are throughout the curriculum. The teaching staff of the core subjects share a “focus form” with the teaching staff providing instruction in art, music language and physical education (the “specials”) sharing with them the focus of their work for the week. In this way, the topics and standards being instructed in the core classrooms can be supported and integrated into the lesson of the specials. As an example, when the science courses were covering animals and habitats, the Spanish instructor coordinated his lessons and vocabulary with this topic, providing an additional opportunity to reinforce the core learning objectives of the curriculum (indicator d).

The classroom observations revealed that the teaching staff understood and uniformly used curriculum materials to deliver instruction (indicator e). The majority of the grade level curriculum maps provided for the document review revealed a focus on core learning objectives. Both staff focus groups and classroom observations revealed that the Paramount School of Excellence provides programs and materials to provide effective delivery of the curriculum (indicator f) with the teaching staff reporting that they had the materials necessary to provide a quality education and classroom observations revealing that each classroom contained a full complement of computers, reading materials, and classroom supplies. The completion of the Time and Space Room greatly enhances the materials and programs available to the Paramount teaching staff, and additionally serves as a resource to the surrounding neighborhood, as well as other schools across the city.

Areas of Strength: The curriculum of the Paramount School of Excellence is fully aligned to the state standards and staff and leadership regularly review the curriculum to ensure that there are meeting the needs of their students.

Paramount School of Excellence provides all necessary programs and materials for their staff and students. The addition of the Time and Space Room provides

additional valuable resources for Paramount staff as well as for schools across the city.

The use of the “Fast Five” and the cross-curricular focus forms shows that the Paramount School of Excellence leadership is inventive and creative in meetings the curricular needs of their staff and students.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.2. Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum is not implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is not focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery lacks the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities lack variety and/or limited use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) staff do not receive feedback on instructional practices.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum is not implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is not focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery lacks the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities lack variety and/or limited use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) staff do not receive feedback on instructional practices.
Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) the curriculum is implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery possesses the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities possess variety and/or use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) supplies sufficient feedback to staff on instructional practices.

The curriculum was implemented in the all of the classrooms that provided lesson plans for the day (14 out of 14) as it was written on the lesson plans. Further, a document analysis of the lesson plans and curriculum maps revealed the classroom instruction followed the pace and guidance of the curriculum maps, with the classroom teachers providing instruction on the topics scheduled for that week in the curriculum maps (indicator a.) A review of the documents revealed that the majority of the curriculum maps were of extremely high quality, with cohesive unit planning and very detailed plans for the semester. The curriculum maps also clearly noted the Common Core or Indiana State Standards.

Core learning objectives, in the form of “Fast Fives,” were posted in 13 out of 14 classroom observations, and an examination of the lesson plans revealed that core learning objectives were specifically noted in all. As delivered, classroom instruction did focus on core learning objectives (indicator b).

Classroom observations revealed that the pace of instruction provided the appropriate rigor and challenge in 13 out of 14 classroom observed (indicator c). Student engagement was uniformly high across the observations. A variety of classroom instructional techniques were noted during the classroom observations, most notably with small group work, computer stations, worksheets, class projects and direct instruction being observed (indicator d).

Finally, a rigorous system of formal and informal classroom observations, curriculum reviews, and meetings support the staff and provide feedback from leadership. Mr. Reddicks and Mr. Frye perform a mandatory formal classroom observation with feedback at least once a year. This formal evaluation is organized around the 5 Pillars and therefore is based upon the common themes that run throughout the life of the school. Each formal observation lasts from 40 minutes to an hour. If the teacher requests it, an additional formal observation will be performed during the school year.

In addition to the formal evaluation, Mr. Frye and Mr. Reddicks make a point of visiting at least one classroom a day for informal observation and feedback. During focus group interviews it was noted by members of the teaching staff that the feedback they received from classroom observations was both rigorous and supportive. They noted that for newer staff members classroom observations could occur as frequently as once a week. One teacher noted that leadership will “observe my teaching and then send me links to websites that will help my teaching.” Another noted that at a previous school “the principal didn’t stay long enough to really observe what I was doing.... and I was always rated as excellent. Now I get feedback and everyone is accountable to the same standards of teaching.” (indicator e).

Areas of Strength: The Paramount School is providing a rigorous education for their students.

Paramount teachers report that they benefit from a rigorous system of both formal and informal evaluative information.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.4. Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are not accurate or useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are not received by classroom teachers in a timely or useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments lack sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is limited frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are not used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are not accurate or useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are not received by classroom teachers in a timely or useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments lack sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is limited frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are not used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.
Meets standard	The school: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are accurate and useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are received by classroom teachers in a timely and useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments have sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is sufficient frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.

The Paramount School uses data driven instruction throughout the curriculum. The teaching staff reported that they perform a variety of formal and informal in class assessments, and that they receive the results of the standardized testing promptly and in a format that they can use. It was noted that mClass assessments are particularly useful (indicator a). The teaching staff reported that standardized assessments are received very soon after the testing is completed (indicator b). In some cases the data is received very quickly, with some staff noting that they administer assessments using iPads and receive the data immediately. It was also reported that they also implement a wide variety of progress monitoring assessments specific to their curriculum, as well as assessments designed by the classroom instructor. Assessment data is also used to drive differentiation in the classroom, with teachers reporting that mClass data has been particularly helpful in maintaining horizontal alignment, with data being used during team planning time to ensure that all grade level instruction focuses on the same major concepts.

The school uses Acuity for grades 2-8, mClass for grades K-5, A+ Tutorsoft, as well as in class assessments designed by the teaching staff. Reading A to Z had been used previously, but is being replaced by the TRC component of mClass. Standardized tests are administered three times a year in the fall, winter and spring and the data is used for benchmarking (indicators c & d). Teachers also state that they receive a monthly report from the Title I team. They also have access to data from writing prompts, as well as access to online data to track student performance. The staff reported that they look at comprehension data weekly and that they track the students on a monthly basis to ensure that the Title I students are making progress. In addition to using data to monitor the progress of Title 1 students, the staff reported that Dana Davis, the Title 1 Coordinator, provides

them with the data quickly and in an easily usable format. Ms. Davis also works closely with the Special Education staff to provide data for Response to Intervention.

An additional source of data for the teaching staff is the “school improvement worksheet,” which was designed by Mr. Frye and is maintained and updated by the school improvement committee. This comprehensive worksheet gives the teaching staff a concise view of each student based on a series of color coded student characteristics—e.g., Special Education students, Title 1, language and math scores, attendance and tardies, among others. These worksheets are updated regularly and are available electronically to the teaching staff. This comprehensive use of student data allows the staff of PSoE to both identify individual students who may be in need of additional tutelage to reach the next level, as well as identify overall patterns of student achievement across and within grade levels (indicator e).

Areas of Strength: The Paramount School uses to data to inform practice at all levels of the curriculum. The use of data has become part of the school culture, and the leadership and staff are very effective in their use of assessment data.

The addition of the school improvement worksheet has given Paramount teachers additional knowledge of their students, and is another example of the innovative use of data at Paramount School of Excellence.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.5. Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) hiring processes are not organized to support the success of new staff members; b) inefficient or insufficient deployment of faculty and staff limits instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are not certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) does not relate to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD is not determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is not explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) hiring processes are not organized to support the success of new staff members; b) inefficient or insufficient deployment of faculty and staff limits instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are not certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) does not relate to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD is not determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is not explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.
Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) hiring processes are organized and used to support the success of new staff members; b) the school deploys sufficient number of faculty and staff to maximize instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) is related to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD opportunities are determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.

All teachers at Paramount School of Excellence are certified or credentialed in their teaching area. The majority of the teachers are teaching a course load that appears manageable, and the various staff members have distinct roles. The teachers are all teaching in areas in which they are certified. Overall, the staff is deployed to best utilize their skills and training (indicators b & c).

Hiring processes were revised in the 2011-12 school year and now include a mock lesson and critique of the lesson by team leaders and school leadership. These procedures were used to hire the current teaching staff. It was reported during teacher focus group interviews that the hiring process were supportive of new faculty members, and further that new faculty members felt supported by the school leadership as well as by their teaching colleagues (indicator a). The School Director implemented a team leader/mentor/buddy program during the 2011-2012 academic year that is designed to provide mentoring for new teachers, as well as professional support for continuing staff. Team leaders currently perform peer-to-peer classroom observations, and provide support. These measures appear to be successful---one member of the teaching staff stated “they (the leadership) want good teachers but know that everyone doesn’t come out of the gate a good teacher and they are willing to work with you.” Additionally, another staff member noted “asking fore help is a sign of strength around here.” (indicator a).

According to the teaching staff, professional development at Paramount School of Excellence has been “retooled” this academic year. The staff noted that the goal of the 2013-14 professional development has been to provide “more sustained professional development and not one-shot

training.” They noted that the Reading Street professional development has been sustained and effective and they can see how their expertise in this program has increased, with each training building upon another to the point where they are able to modify and differentiate the program to effectively meet the needs of their students. The staff also noted that the professional development required at the beginning of the school year has been shortened and the additional days interspersed in the school year. They noted that funds are available for travel to content specific conferences if they request it.

Additionally, Paramount School of Excellence offers professional development for its leadership team in leadership. Led by Thomas Rude, the President of the Board of Directors, the leadership team at Paramount is being provided with professional development to improve their leadership capabilities. The impact of this professional development opportunity on the leadership team has been immediate, with members of the leadership team reporting that they have had new insights into the crucial role of leadership since working with Mr. Rude.

The teacher evaluation plan has been completely revised and is currently in accordance with the requirements of the Rise evaluation system. As reported in focus groups in interviews, the teacher evaluation system is regularly implemented and understood by the staff and leadership. There are clear processes and criteria for the evaluation plan and the teaching staff reported that they felt that the evaluation performed by Paramount leadership was accurate and beneficial. (indicator f). It was noted by one teacher “it’s very structured here. The structure provides the support and it’s not a lot to deal with because I understand all of it...Because it is fine-tuned it helps me as a teacher to run my classroom.” It should be noted that the presence of structures to support students, parents, and teachers is common across almost all aspects of the day at Paramount. As will be described in Standard 4.7, there is a structured behavior plan for students and staff to follow, as well as structured processes for ensuring classroom objectives are met and instruction is of high quality.

Areas of Strength: The current teacher evaluation system is in place and providing good information to staff and leadership.

The addition of professional development for the leadership team provides support and growth for the leadership at Paramount School of Excellence and should be applauded.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.6. Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>both</u> of the following areas: a) significant disagreements exist among stakeholders about the school's mission; b) there is a lack of widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) significant disagreements exist among stakeholders about the school's mission; b) there is a lack of widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.
Meets standard	The school: a) has a mission that is shared by all stakeholders; b) has stakeholders possessing widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.

The School Mission is fully articulated in the materials online and in communication with stakeholders. Interviews with parents of students at Paramount School of Excellence revealed that they saw PSoE as an invaluable alternative to schools that had failed their students in the past. They noted that the staff will “go the extra mile for the parents” noting homework nights, the family resource center and the community coordinator as being particularly valuable. The parents also expressed the view that Paramount School had become a “neighborhood” school, and that is was a valuable asset for the entire family, with one parent noting, “The school is good for the parents, the kids and the community.... The community garden and the chicken coop are good for us all “(indicator a). The teaching staff and leadership are also fully committed to the mission of Paramount School of Excellence, and are knowledgeable of the mission and its intent.

Areas of Strength: All of the stakeholders in Paramount School of Excellence understand and share the mission of the school.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.7. Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas with no evidence of a credible plan to address them: a) The school does not have clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior; b) the school's discipline approach does not possess high expectations for student behavior; c) interactions between faculty and students are disrespectful and/or unsupportive and there are non-existing or unclear processes for resolution of conflicts; d) interactions between faculty and administration are unprofessional and/or unproductive.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas with no evidence of a credible plan to address it: a) The school does not have clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior; b) the school's discipline approach does not possess high expectations for student behavior; c) interactions between faculty and students are disrespectful and/or unsupportive and there are non-existing or unclear processes for resolution of conflicts; d) interactions between faculty and administration are unprofessional and /or unproductive.
Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) the school has clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior; b) the school's discipline approach possesses high expectations for student behavior; c) interactions between faculty and students are respectful and supportive and faculty and students are clear about processes for resolution of conflicts; d) interactions between faculty and administration are professional and constructive.

Paramount School of Excellence has made changes in the philosophy underlying their behavioral plan, and has made substantial progress in creating a school culture that provides a safe environment for students and staff while also providing students with the opportunity to develop self-control and understand the ramifications of their behavior. In the 2012-13 academic year PSoE began the process of implementing a “restorative justice” approach, as well as increasing the use of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). While in the past, PSoE enforced a clear set of behavioral expectations, the focus of the behavior plan was on discipline and on providing a safe and stable environment for students and staff. The restorative justice behavior plan being implemented at Paramount does succeed in providing clearly stated rules and encouraging positive behavior (indicator a), and this is accomplished in a student centered way.

The behavior plan at Paramount is focused on relationships between students and staff, and crucial to those relationships is the role of the Dean and the Assistant Dean of Students, Mr. Beauchamp and Mr. Knox, who work as a team to support students, teachers and leadership as they build a community of learning. Both Deans work to establish lines of communication and build relationships with parents and students. They are both regularly present at student drop-off and pick-up and take that opportunity to talk to parents and greet students. In the morning, drop-off is used as an opportunity to talk to students who may be starting the day off badly, give them some encouragement and ensure that they are ready to learn. In the afternoon, pick-up is a chance to talk to parents and “if they’ve (the student) had a rough day, it’s a chance to have a quick discussion and let them know they will start off fresh tomorrow.” The attitude brought to discipline was stated by Mr. Beauchamp, “we really try hard to get to the root of things with kids.”

The teaching staff, students and parents all reported that the discipline approach at Paramount School of Excellence possesses high expectations for student behavior (indicator b), but they also note that the new student focus also provides mechanisms for the students to value their learning community, and to understand their role in it. The behavior plan provides a well-understood structure for students, teachers and family. Based on the Response to Intervention format, the

discipline plan begins in the classroom, with the teaching staff using PBIS supports and restorative justice procedures to maintain the learning environment (Level 1) Should a student consistently disrupt the learning of other students, a call is placed to the Deans (Level 2). If the intervention of one of the Deans does not resolve the behavior, at Level 2 the parents will be notified and they will have a discussion with the students parents regarding the issue. Parents are contacted by phone and to resolve a Level 2 problem the parents must sign a document acknowledging that they are aware of the problem. Level 3 discipline occurs when the discipline issues are ongoing and have not been resolved by previous interventions, and will include a meeting with parents attending to discuss how to best help the student resolve the problem. The focus of the Deans is on academics, with one Dean noting, “When the student is out of the classroom environment we make sure that they have purposeful work for in-school suspension.”

All stakeholder groups at Paramount were familiar with the tiered approach to discipline, with students, families, and Paramount staff expressing their understanding of the different levels. The discipline team has been integrated into the academic life of the school and “the discipline team meets with the team leads weekly and we talk about kids that are struggling—we look at attendance and disciplines.” In these meetings the deans have opportunity to inform the teaching staff about any problems the student may be experiencing in or out of school, and vice versa. These meetings are an example of the student-centered focus of the PSoE discipline system. Finally, classroom and informal observations during visits to the school revealed that interactions between students and staff were supportive and respectful. The majority of the staff is responsive and enthusiastic in the classroom (indicator c.) The focus on building community and restorative justice has been embraced by the entire school.

Focus group interviews with the Paramount teaching staff, as well as informal observations, revealed that staff and leadership have a respectful and constructive relationship (indicator d). The teaching staff described an atmosphere of “intentional conversations,” in which leadership and teaching staff discuss students’ needs, potential improvements to the school and the intentional use of data. These conversations were described as “all the cogs of the wheel coming together to work,” “a sense of ownership and a positive atmosphere,” and “we have a team now that is supportive.”

Areas of Strength: Staff, students and the school leadership are all in agreement regarding the positive behaviors expected of the students.

The addition of the Dean of Students positions has had a positive effect on the school as a whole.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.8. Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) there is a lack of active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) school communication is neither timely nor relevant to the parental concerns; c) student academic progress and achievement reports are not clearly reported and/or misunderstood; d) the school's communication methods are not well-designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., not communicating in parents' native languages, communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at inconvenient times for parents).
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) there is a lack of active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) school communication is neither timely nor relevant to the parental concerns; c) student academic progress and achievement reports are not clearly reported and/or misunderstood; d) the school's communication methods are not well-designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., not communicating in parents' native languages, communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at inconvenient times for parents).
Meets standard	The school: a) has active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) utilizes communications that are both timely and relevant to the parental concerns; c) communicates student academic progress and achievement in reports that are understood by parents; d) the school's communication methods are designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., communicating in parents' native languages, not communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at convenient times for parents).

Parents who attended the parent focus groups reported that they were very satisfied with the education that their children were receiving, and as noted above, with the behavior plan, school culture and community that has developed in the school. Parents reported that they felt valued at the Paramount School, and that their students had made great strides academically and socially at the Paramount School. Parents also reported that they received many timely and useful communications with the leadership and teaching staff at Paramount and that they also received informal communications from teachers during pick up and drop off times, as well as from Facebook pages, newsletters, texts and emails (substandard b & d). As one parent noted “ we have good communication with the teacher... and he (the student) works better when he knows that the parents and the teachers work together.” One of the main concerns noted by parents is regarding their ability to help their student with homework. They noted that this concern makes the “homework help” nights that Paramount holds very valuable. Parents also noted that the student academic progress is clearly explained and conveyed to them through easy to understand report cards and parent-teacher conferences (substandard c). They also noted that they logged on and used Powerschool to track their student’s progress.

Areas of Strength: Parent satisfaction is very high, and the parents value the education their children are receiving at the Paramount School.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.9. Do the school’s special education files demonstrate that it is in legal compliance and is moving towards best practice?	
Does not meet standard	The school’s special education files present concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) services outlined within Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) do not adequately match the exceptional needs of the student; b) each need identified within the IEP does not have a corresponding goal and plan for assessment; c) all goals are not rigorous or based on state or national learning standards; d) evidence does not demonstrate that goals have evolved each year as the student developed; e) specifically designed curriculum is not outlined.
Approaching standard	The school’s special education files present concerns in <u>one</u> or more of the following areas: a) services outlined within Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) do not adequately match the exceptional needs of the student; b) each need identified within the IEP does not have a corresponding goal and plan for assessment; c) all goals are not rigorous or based on state or national learning standards; d) evidence does not demonstrate that goals have evolved each year as the student developed; e) specifically designed curriculum is not outlined.
Meets standard	All of the following are evident in the school’s special education files: a) services outlined within Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) adequately match the exceptional needs of the student; b) each need identified within the IEP has a corresponding goal and plan for assessment; c) each goal is rigorous and is based on state and national learning standards; d) explicit evidence exists to demonstrate that goals have evolved each year as the student develops; e) specifically designed curriculum is outlined.

Paramount School of Excellence: Fall, 2013

Special Education Audit

Azure DS Angelov, Ph.D.

All of the following are evident in the school’s special education files: (a) services outlined within Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) adequately match the exceptional needs of the student; (b) each need identified within the IEP has a corresponding goal and plan for assessment; (c) each goal is rigorous and is based on state and national learning standards; (d) explicit evidence exists to demonstrate that goals have evolved each year as the student develops; (e) specifically designed curriculum is outlined.

Paramount has a very successful and thriving special education population. File reviews depict IEPs that are compliant with all indicators outlined in 4.9. Student needs and goals were adequately matched, corresponding goals and assessments were in place, goals were rigorous and aligned with state standards and specifically designed curriculum was implemented. Additionally, their building is ADA compliant, students are happy and growing, and they have a well-established RTI program at both the elementary and secondary levels. Exploring a “greener” option for IEP files and storage would be their next opportunity to grow.

4.10. Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with limited English proficiency?	
Does not meet standard	The school is <u>not</u> fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ESL students, and requires substantial improvement in order to achieve conditions such as the following: a) appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; b) relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.
Approaching standard	The school is not yet completely fulfilling all of its legal obligations regarding ESL students, and requires <i>some</i> (but not considerable) improvement to fully achieve conditions such as the following: a) appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; b) relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.
Meets standard	The school is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ESL students, as indicated by conditions such as the following: a) appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; b) relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.

Paramount School of Excellence has one staff member, Mr. Austin Dietrich, who is the ESL coordinator for the school. Mr. Dietrich is an Indianapolis Teaching Fellow, and is currently working toward his certification in ESL. Mr. Dietrich is also the Spanish teacher and is fluent in Spanish. Mr. Dietrich is knowledgeable in current legislation regarding the education of ESL students. Mr. Dietrich is familiar with Indiana’s English Language Proficiency Standards and was able to produce lesson materials that were designed to follow these standards. Mr. Dietrich also displayed a great deal of understanding and familiarity with the goals of these standards and the how they are to be implemented. Mr. Dietrich also reported that he was able to participate in professional development opportunities relating to effective best practices in the field of ESL. Mr. Dietrich has completed courses offered by the Indiana Department of Education in ESL education, as well as several webinars on the topic. Mr. Dietrich is also currently completing the coursework required to be certified in ESL instruction.

Mr. Dietrich is also very familiar with the Indiana Department of Education Office of English Language Learning & Migrant Education Guidelines to Satisfy Legal Requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Mr. Dietrich has begun many effective ESL practices to ensure that Paramount is in compliance with these standards, including (but not limited to) providing students with the mandated language proficiency testing within 30 days, notification of parents of the results of these tests and their student’s placement, placement of ESL students in the grade level that was appropriate for their age rather than their language competency, providing students with both push-in and pull-out services, and providing supports and services to help his students with their socio-emotional adjustments as well (indicator a).

Mr. Dietrich also ensures that relationships with students, parents and external providers are well-managed and comply with the law (indicator b). As noted above, Mr. Dietrich provides services that comply with Indiana state law, as well as with the standards and best practices required by the Indiana Department of Education. Mr. Dietrich also provides invaluable translation services to

parents of ESL students at parent-teacher conferences, during disciplinary meetings and throughout the day for ESL students who may need his help. He has also gone beyond the state mandated requirements and has established biweekly meetings for parents of ESL students that are conducted in Spanish. Topics have included Acuity and ISTEP testing, access to services and the school disciplinary processes.

Areas of Strength: ESL services at Paramount School of Excellence meet both mandate practices and are implemented using ESL best practices. Additionally, Mr. Dietrich is a valuable asset to the school.

Recommendations: None at this time.

Appendix A:

Paramount School of Excellence Classroom Observation Summary

Fourteen classrooms were observed using the instrument provided by the Office of Education Innovation. Each observation lasted approximately 30 minutes, and over half of the teaching staff was observed once. Classroom observers spent 6.96 hours (418 minutes) observing 14 classrooms, 244 students, and 14 teachers. On average, each observation lasted 29.5 minutes and the observed student to teacher ratio was 17.4:1. Two of the teachers were observed by both classroom observers at the same time in order to ensure inter-judge reliability.

Classroom Environment

92.8% (13/14) had posted objectives in the form of “Fast Fives”. 92.8% (13/14) had posted state standards. 78.5% (11/14) used critical vocabulary. 100% (14/14) had challenging content. 14.2% (2/14) exhibited differentiation. 14.2% (2/14) of the instruction observed built on prior knowledge.

Learning Environment

The observers categorized observed learning experiences into four main categories. 42.8% (6/14) of observed activities were Remember/Understand Activities. 92.8% (13/14) were Apply/Perform Activities. 0.0% (0/14) was Analyze/Evaluate Activities. 0.0% (0/14) were Create/Design Activities. 0.0% (0/14) of activities were found to be ineffective.

100% (14/14) of classrooms contained rich print materials. 35.7% (5/14) showed examples of exemplary work. 57.1% (8/14) displayed a daily schedule. 63.6% (7/14) had posted behavior expectations. 57.1% (8/14) had culturally relevant materials.

Behavior Management

The site team observed proactive and reactive techniques. The site team recorded 14 (100%) classrooms using proactive discipline. 14 (100%) classrooms using reactive discipline were recorded. Student engagement was fairly consistent. Please see the table below.

Site Visit Classroom Observations

Number of Site Visitors: 2

Total Time Observing (Min)	Average Time in Classroom
418	30

Students Observed	Teachers Observed	Ratio (S:1T)
244	14	17

Topic of Lesson	
Metaphor	Writing styles in Literature
Algebra	Two-digit addition
Multiplication	Poetry
Sequencing in Poems	Phases of the moon
Writing workshop	Plot and context in Literature
Foreshadowing	Independent writing
Algebra	Pronouns

Proportion of Students Engaged During:	All		Most		Half		Few		None	
	#	% Total	#	% Total	#	% Total	#	% Total	#	% Total
Beginning of Lesson	5	35.7%	9	64.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
First Interval	5	35.7%	9	64.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Second Interval	6	42.8%	8	57.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Third Interval	3	21.4%	11	78.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
End of Lesson	3	21.4%	11	78.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%