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# Pennsylvania Department of Education

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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
333 MARKET STREET  
HARRISBURG, PA 17126-0333

## **Charter Annual Report** **Monday, November 10, 2008**

**Charter School:** Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School  
**Address:** 1332 Enterprise Dr  
West Chester, PA 19380  
**Phone:**  
**Contact Name:**

## CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY DATA

### Charter School Annual Report Summary Data 2008 - 2009

**Name of School:** Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School

**Date of Local Chartering School Board/PDE Approval:** Renewed July 2007

**Length of Charter:** 5 Years **Opening Date:** September 2004

**Grade Level:** K-12 **Hours of Operation:** 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

**Percentage of Certified Staff:** 96.24% **Total Instructional Staff:** 133

**Student/ Teacher Ratio:** 1/15 **Student Waiting List:** 0

**Attendance Rate/Percentage:** 97.41%

**Enrollment:** 1920 **Per Pupil Subsidy:** \$8137.22

#### Student Profile

**American Indian/Alaskan Native:** 24  
**Asian/Pacific Islander:** 21  
**Black (Non-Hispanic):** 299  
**Hispanic:** 120  
**White (Non-Hispanic):** 1402  
**Multicultural:** 54

**Percentage of Students from Low Income Families Eligible for a Free or Reduced Lunch:** n/a

**Provide the Total Unduplicated Number of Students Receiving Special Services (Excluding Gifted) as of Previous December:** 296

Number of:	K (AM)	K (PM)	K (FTIME)	ELEM	MIDDLE	SEC.	TOTAL
Instructional Days	0	0	180	180	180	180	180
Instructional Hours	0	0	1440	1440	1440	1440	1440

## SECTION I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Organization Description

The legal name of the school is **The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School**. The address of the school is **1332 Enterprise Drive, West Chester, PA 19380** (previous address was 17 Ravine Road, Frazer, PA 19355). The Federal Employee Identification Number is 35-2225538 (AUN Number 1-24-15-000-4). The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School is part of **Chester County Intermediate Unit #24**. The school was granted a charter by the Pennsylvania Department of

Education in January 2004, in accordance with Act 22 of the 1997 Charter School Law, and the school opened on **September 13, 2004**. A charter renewal application was submitted to the PDE in October 2006, and the charter renewal was granted in July 2007 for a period of five years.

The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School serves students in **Kindergarten through Grade 12**. Kindergarten students must be age five by October 31st of the year they are entering school. The age limit (ceiling) for high school students is 21, the legal age of majority. Special education students are able to attend until the age of 23.

The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School is governed by a **Board of Trustees** comprised of business and community leaders as well as educators. Members of the Board are elected by majority vote of the current membership. Board members serve for one-year terms but are eligible for re-election. The Board of Trustees has fiduciary responsibility for the school as well as responsibility for hiring and monitoring the CEO, approving all school policy, and adhering to the requirements of all state and federal law in addition to regulations set by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School is responsible to the Pennsylvania Department of Education for all compliance measures, including the preparation of an annual report, participation in site visits, and the chartering/re-chartering process.

## **Core Purpose**

### **Mission**

The PA Leadership Charter School's purpose is to provide an academically challenging, knowledge-based curriculum, individually designed for each child's needs. PALCS will combine the benefits of a classical basics oriented education with the latest Internet / computer technology and the best teaching and learning education practices. By studying the lives and works of the great leaders in history, PALCS students will develop multi-cultural perspectives and a global awareness. PALCS will prepare students to be informed, responsible citizens with a global mentality who will succeed through mentoring leadership.

### **Vision**

**The vision** of Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School is to provide parents with an option for public education that tailors the educational experience to the unique needs of their child and allows them to receive that experience via the World Wide Web. The PALCS curriculum incorporates different learning styles within a strong academic environment. PALCS teachers are encouraged to develop a flexible curriculum that incorporates state-of-the-art resources to ensure that each student can utilize a learning style that is most effective for him/her.

Each student in grades K-8 receives instruction in music, art and technology as well as basic core requirements to ensure a well-rounded education. Students in grades 9-12 receive instruction in core courses; additionally, high school students are offered the option to participate in music, art, technology and foreign language courses.

**Unique and innovative aspects** of the school's vision include:

- An Individualized Program of Instruction (IPI) for each student that creates a partnership between the student, parent, and school to provide the best possible learning environment that takes into account the student's unique characteristics
- Live teachers providing instruction in online classrooms that allow students to attend class and do curriculum work wherever they can connect with the World Wide Web
- Fully interactive technology that allows for live classroom instruction, live chat rooms and live individual instruction as well as timely responses to submitted assignments
- Periodic conferences for students to allow them to excel in an area or discipline
- Instruction that provides an opportunity for gifted or highly motivated students to accelerate their learning and allows for special education students to work at a pace conducive to their needs
- Continuous grading of assignments that allows teachers, students, parents and/or Home Facilitators to see an online progress report that tracks individual student progress
- A curriculum that meets or exceeds requirements of the Pennsylvania Academic Standards

## Shared Values

**The core beliefs and values of the school community** are typified by an overarching educational goal to prepare students to be creative, intuitive and analytical leaders with a firm understanding of the forces, leaders and thinking that have shaped world cultures. The curriculum will prepare students to be problem solvers both individually and collaboratively.

The goal of PALCS is to nurture the natural curiosity of children, to instill the joy of learning, and to motivate students to a lifelong fascination with their potential and their world.

Life is education. Aspects of the school are teacher-student-parent driven, where all parties learn together. Life experiences, broad perspective, creativity, discovery and exploration are nurtured and valued.

We believe we must...

- Challenge and expand traditional public school education to provide a place for underserved students
- Provide all students the opportunity to learn in the home in a safe and caring environment
- Meet children where they are, and accelerate, not remediate them
- Communicate that the Internet, integral to everyday life, is a positive, valuable resource to our students and their education
- Create tomorrow's leaders
- Deliver standards-based curriculum through teacher-designed, interactive, quality lessons
- Grow and adapt to changes in the educational field, using the newest technologies and best practices

## Academic Standards

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All courses designed to meet eligible content are provided with Pennsylvania State Academic Standards that correspond to content areas. Lesson material must meet relevant Pennsylvania State Academic Standards. Professional development training for all faculty in Assessment Anchors assists the teaching staff to further align the course content to relevant standards. Curriculum materials are under constant review by department coordinators to ensure that standards are met.

Academic Standards are measured through assessments that are provided within each course in a combination of free response, multiple-choice and short answer tests, project assignments, and classroom participation. Quarterly assessments are also built into curriculum as such as Reading. Proficiency is assessed through PSSA testing in Grades 3 through 8 and Grade 11 for Math, Reading, Writing (Grades 5, 8, and 11), and Science (Grades 4, 8, and 11). Other assessments include Star Reading and Star Math, Compass Test, Prompt and New Prompt, Word Examiner List, and DIBELS Assessment for Benchmark and Progress Monitoring.

Students must receive a minimum of 60 percent to be considered as "passing" a mid- or end-of-year assessment. In order for students to be promoted to the next grade, they cannot fail more than two core courses (math, science, social studies, reading/language arts).

In order to be promoted to the next grade, high school freshman must have at least 5 credits, high school sophomores must have at least 10 credits, and high school juniors must have at least 15 credits. In order to graduate from PALCS, students must have earned at least 20.25 credits.

The following chart shows current courses offered at PALCS, and which standards each course meets.

<b>Arts and Humanities</b>	<b>Career Education and Work</b>	<b>Civics and Government</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Art and Music K</li> <li>• Art and Music 1</li> <li>• Art and Music 2</li> <li>• Art and Music 3</li> <li>• Introducing Art 4</li> <li>• Introducing Art 5</li> <li>• Introducing Art 6</li> <li>• Introducing Music 4</li> <li>• Introducing Music 5</li> <li>• Introducing Music 6</li> <li>• Exploring Art 7</li> <li>• Exploring Art 8</li> <li>• Exploring Music 7</li> <li>• Exploring Music 8</li> <li>• American Artists (9-12)</li> <li>• World Artists (9-12)</li> <li>• Arts and Culture I (9-12)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career Awareness (8)</li> <li>• Young Leaders Program (11/12)</li> <li>• Leaders in Action (9-12)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Studies Grade 1</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 2</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 3</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 4</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 5</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 6</li> <li>• United States Government (9)</li> <li>• Criminal Justice (9-12)</li> <li>• Psychology (9-12)</li> <li>• Sociology (9-12)</li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts and Culture II (9-12)</li> <li>• Creating an Art Portfolio I (11/12)</li> <li>• Creating an Art Portfolio II (11/12)</li> <li>• Music Appreciation I (9-12)</li> <li>• Music Theory I (9-12)</li> <li>• Music Appreciation II (9-12)</li> <li>• Music Theory II (9-12)</li> </ul>		
<b>Economics</b>	<b>Environment and Ecology</b>	<b>Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Studies Grade 1</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 2</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 3</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 4</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 5</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 6</li> <li>• World Studies (7)</li> <li>• American Nation (8)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science Grade 1</li> <li>• Science Grade 2</li> <li>• Science Grade 3</li> <li>• Science Grade 4</li> <li>• Science Grade 5</li> <li>• Science Grade 6</li> <li>• Life Science (7)</li> <li>• General Science Middle (8)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language Arts Grade 1</li> <li>• Language Arts Grade 2</li> <li>• Language Arts Grade 3</li> <li>• Language Arts Grade 4</li> <li>• Language Arts Grade 5</li> <li>• Language Arts 6</li> <li>• Language Arts 7</li> <li>• Language Arts 8</li> <li>• Lit and Comp 9</li> <li>• Lit and Comp 10</li> <li>• American Lit (11/12)</li> <li>• British Lit (12)</li> <li>• World Lit (11/12)</li> <li>• Foundations of Lit (9-12)</li> <li>• Intro to Shakespeare (9-12)</li> <li>• Shakespeare Studies (9-12)</li> <li>• Practical Writing (9-12)</li> <li>• Creative Writing (9-12)</li> <li>• Mythology (9-12)</li> <li>• Journalism (9-12)</li> <li>• Journalism 2 (10-12)</li> <li>• SAT Prep (11/12)</li> </ul>
<b>World Languages</b>	<b>Family and Consumer Sciences</b>	<b>Geography</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intro to Foreign Language 4</li> <li>• Elementary Spanish 5/6</li> <li>• Elementary French 5/6</li> <li>• Middle School French A</li> <li>• Middle School French</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food Science (9-12)</li> <li>• Child Development (9-12)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Studies Grade 1</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 2</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 3</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 4</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 5</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 6</li> <li>• World Geography (9-12)</li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B</li> <li>• Middle School Spanish A</li> <li>• Middle School Spanish B</li> <li>• French I</li> <li>• French II</li> <li>• French III (10-12)</li> <li>• French IV (11/12)</li> <li>• Spanish I</li> <li>• Spanish I Honors</li> <li>• Spanish II</li> <li>• Spanish II Honors (10-12)</li> <li>• Spanish III (9-12)</li> <li>• Spanish III Honors (10-12)</li> <li>• Spanish IV Honors (11/12)</li> <li>• Mandarin Chinese (9-12)</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Health, Safety and Physical Education</b></p>	<p><b>History</b></p>	<p><b>Mathematics</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health, Safety and PE K</li> <li>• Health, Safety and PE 1</li> <li>• Health, Safety and PE 2</li> <li>• Health, Safety and PE 3</li> <li>• Health, Safety and PE 4</li> <li>• Health, Safety and PE 5</li> <li>• Health, Safety and PE 6</li> <li>• Health, Safety and PE 7</li> <li>• Health, Safety and PE 8</li> <li>• Health, Safety and PE 9-12</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Studies Grade 1</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 2</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 3</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 4</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 5</li> <li>• Social Studies Grade 6</li> <li>• Great American Conflicts (9-12)</li> <li>• US History (10)</li> <li>• World History (11)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Math Grade 1</li> <li>• Math Grade 2</li> <li>• Math Grade 3</li> <li>• Math Grade 4</li> <li>• Math Grade 5</li> <li>• Math Grade 6</li> <li>• Middle School Math 2 (7/8)</li> <li>• Middle School Math 2 Advanced (7/8)</li> <li>• Middle School Math 3 (7/8)</li> <li>• Middle School Math 3 Advanced (7/8)</li> <li>• Pre-Algebra (7/8)</li> <li>• Pre-Algebra (9)</li> <li>• Algebra 1 (9-12)</li> <li>• Algebra 1 Advanced (9)</li> <li>• Algebra 1B (9)</li> </ul>

## Strengths and Challenges

**Overarching program strengths** of Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School include:

- Redefining the cyber school model by focusing on the relational characteristics of current technology, including: incorporating instant, online access, one-on-one instruction and interactive, multi-media classrooms
- The ability for students to work at a time and place convenient to their lifestyles
- The ability to maximize student time by eliminating non-instructional time wasters such as waiting in line for the cafeteria, switching classes and transportation to and from school
- The ability for students to take a subject of particular interest and use inquiry based learning because they are not regulated by inflexible class “periods”
- The ability for students to work at an accelerated pace
- Continuous grading via a web portal that allows students, teachers, and parents to have instant access to the child’s academic progress

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### **Instructional Delivery Method Strengths, Challenges and Plans for 2008-2009**

At the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year, it was determined that the current technology platform was not adequate for delivery of instruction and technology needs. A portal committee looked at a number of technology platforms, weighing costs against the need for student information security, as well as supporting the standards-based curriculum. It was determined that the Moodle platform best fit our needs. A Moodle Steering Committee oversaw the process to convert to the new platform, and contracted with a professional consulting firm to tailor the Moodle platform to our unique needs. As of the 2008-2009 school year, the new platform will be fully functioning, integrated with a new student information system and billing system, and enhanced parent capabilities. All student data now resides in-house, and is easily accessible for the state’s PIMS system.

Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School uses the gifts and abilities of its teachers to instruct their students combined with the latest technology. Teachers collaborate and seek out best practices as they create lessons which include methodology that meets the needs of all types of learners. With the transition to Moodle as our primary Learning Content Management System, teachers were given more tools and resources to instruct their students. Methods that teachers use to instruct their students include but are not limited to: written presentations, PowerPoint presentations, audio lectures, teacher created videos, presentations utilizing the online Adobe Connect Classroom, and supplementary resources that PA Leadership Charter School has purchased. With the use of more advanced video equipment, teachers have been able to record their own science experiments, drama productions, and other lessons for their students to view.

Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School formed the Instructional Design Sub Committee to maximize Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School’s instructional delivery method this year. The purpose of this committee was to evaluate the effectiveness of current methods of instructional delivery and to research and implement new methods. The members of the committee included teachers from all subject levels, the Curriculum Coordinator, and the Associate Director of Academics.

The committee created and sent out a survey to all PALCS students and home facilitators inquiring of the instructional methods in each subject area that they felt were most effective for them. Close to 300 students and parents responded to the survey. The results of the survey are being analyzed and will act as the foundation for future methods of lesson delivery. Early study of the survey has indicated what instructional methods student and parents feel are most help in each core subject area as well as time spent on assignments within each subject area.

The committee also studied the National Standards of Quality for Online Courses (NACOL). After careful study of NACOL's standards, members of the committee worked with Subject Area Coordinators of each academic department to initiate a more in depth review of instructional practices. Many of NACOL's standards will be implemented through the use of professional development opportunities for the 2008-2009 school year.

The committee also established an Instructional Design Model that will be implemented in all courses for the 2008-2009 school year. This model represents a consistent approach to lesson creation and delivery across all grades and subject levels while still allowing for the gifts and creativity of the teachers to be utilized. Subject Area Coordinators were trained on April 7, 2008 on the implementation of the Instructional Design Model. The Coordinators trained their staff on April 24, 2008 for the 2008-2009 school year.

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## **Curriculum Strengths and Challenges**

### **Learning Focused**

Over the summer of 2007, a team of English and Math teachers in grades K-12 attended a training hosted by Learning Focused. The purpose of the Learning Focused training was to learn the process of developing the power curriculum using the Learning Focused software. Upon completion of this 2-day workshop, teachers prioritized standards and assessment anchors, and identified key concepts for instruction. The curriculum is developed by starting with assessment anchors and standards, in efforts to identify focus areas within courses to assure proper articulation. Each course has a curriculum map for each unit of instruction, which acts as the unit framework, guided by essential lesson questions and key learning concepts. In October, the science department underwent the same process, designing an articulated curriculum for all classes in grades K-12. The use of the Learning Focused Model has allowed PALCS to develop a scope and sequence and articulated curriculum in the areas of Math, Language Arts, and Science for grades K-12.

On February 25, 2007, 16 academic leaders attended the Learning Focused Leadership and Balanced Achievement Training. This training focused on strategies to effectively implement the Learning Focused Schools Model within the school. This training helped academic leaders to identify the essential components within the curriculum development process which supports our school improvement plan.

A sub-committee of the curriculum council developed a sequence of in-house workshops, addressing the needs and concerns of faculty using the Learning Focused Schools Model. These workshops include training and guided practice using the instructional strategies presented in the Learning Focused Model. The first workshop focused instructional topics by having teachers identify what they want students to know, understand, and do within mapped topics. The second workshops organized by the curriculum council, was focused on identifying launch activities for each mapped topic. The launch activity is an anticipatory activity that is designed to engage the student in the new topic and activate prior knowledge. The final workshop focused on the culminating activity. Teachers are encouraged to design an authentic assessment at the end of each mapped topic which allows students to demonstrate understanding of the content.

### **Curriculum Council**

The curriculum council was developed to oversee the development and implementation of the curriculum framework for PALCS. The curriculum council consists of 23 individuals, and represents all departments (K-12) within the school including: Language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, ESL, Title 1, and Leadership. The curriculum council also has an active parent representative. The curriculum council is chaired by the curriculum coordinator, and makes recommendations to the Chief Academic Administrator concerning curricular matters and the implement curricular initiatives. Recommendations may include, but are not limited to:

- Changes to academic programs pertaining to curriculum
- Changes in courses based on evaluations of curricula
- Changes in Instructional Resources
- Recommendations for instructional design
- Recommendations for implementations of benchmark assessments

The foundations of the curriculum council are based on the research of Steven Gross's model of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Gross believed that the model of curriculum, instruction, and assessment create an equilateral triangle where each component share an equal value in creating the area of learner development.

The curriculum council meets bi-monthly and works in 3 sub-committees addressing Instructional Design, Learning Focused Implementation, and Textbook and Instructional Resource Review. The instructional design sub-committee has researched best instructional practices and has implemented the "3-P" instructional design template, a teacher guideline for lesson development. This template requires all lessons to include a purpose, process, and product in all lessons. The development of the 3-P lesson design was based on research of best practices, guidelines provided by the North American Guideline for Online Learning (NACOL), and input gathered by parent and student surveys. The Learning Focused sub-committee is responsible for designing in-house workshops, and monitoring the implementation of Learning Focused Strategies. The Textbook Review Sub-committee is responsible for reviewing and approving any changes in instructional resources. A 3-year textbook cycle has been developed, which requires departments to pilot new curricular resources for a full school year prior to adoption.

## **Curriculum Plans 2008-2009**

In the fall of 2008, the social studies, foreign language, and electives department will develop their power curriculum, using the same process that the previous departments had used last year. With the completion of these department maps, all courses will have developed an articulated curriculum and scope and sequence. This process lays the ground work for integrated instruction and cross curricular activities. Increased professional development will help to facilitate the integration of activities across the curriculum.

In the 2008-2009 school year all teachers will be monitored to ensure they are incorporating Learning Focused Strategies throughout their courses. These strategies include launch and culminating activities, activating and scaffolding strategies, and summarizing techniques. All PALCS lessons will be designed based on the guidelines of the 3-P's. A focus will be places on incorporating multiple forms of differentiated instruction to address the needs of our diverse learner.

Local assessments will also be integrated to support the content. Professional development and training will focus on teachers developing effective assessments which support the content maps and establish a continuum of student understanding. Science teachers will be working to incorporate standardize questions pulled from an assessment question bank developed by the Chester County Intermediate Unit, while Language Arts and Mathematics use benchmark assessments to make instructional data driven decisions.

A link will be added to the PALCS home webpage, providing parents, students, and teachers valuable information regarding the curriculum. Posted within this link will be paths to access the developed curriculum maps.

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## **PALCS Elementary Program Strengths 2007-2008**

### **Departmental Framework:**

- Utilizing a Homeroom for K-3, with a Homeroom option for 4-5 and Team teaching for 4-6, teachers were better able to see the whole child, tracking and planning their academic responsibilities, and monitoring progress and individualizing as needed
- Creating grade level teams and partnerships strengthened our program by providing opportunity for curriculum mapping, lesson planning, and collegial dialogue
- Having a low teacher-student ratio has enabled our teachers to reach into homes, thus improving communication, and to know our students, thus providing more effective individualization and support
- Expanding our elementary program to include an Elementary guidance counselor, designating special education teachers solely for K-6 children, collaborating more closely with the Title program, utilizing elementary department coordinators to work with families, teachers, and other school personnel are

some of the program implementations that provide a strong foundation for our department

**Curriculum and Instruction:**

- Implementing new curriculum in Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies using Harcourt for Language Arts, Math, and Social Studies, with Scott-Foresman for Science in 1st-6th grades, allowed for instructional consistencies
- Using Learning-Focused to design Language Arts and Math maps and timelines created a focus for targeting instruction to essential grade level standards
- Developing an effective assessment portfolio and gathering test results for data-based decision-making were goals our department set that made a difference
- Analysis of our existing elementary instructional design and the creation of a modified L.E.A.R.N. model for K-2 and the PPPs (Purpose, Product and Product) for 3-6 aligns with NACOL instructional design/lesson format standards and was created this year, with In-service training for an 08-09 implementation

**Departmental Accomplishments:**

- Significant gain in PSSA scores in Reading and Math compared to 06-07
- Advancement of reporting and communication of individual student progress through the utilization of quarterly K-3 addendum report cards, the issuance of progress reports, the routine of bi-monthly phone calls to Home Facilitators as a minimum requirement, and the maintenance of electronic student portfolios

**PALCS Elementary Program Plans for 2008-2009**

**Departmental Framework:**

- Maintain the existing framework as described above in program strengths
- Tap into teachers' areas of strengths to advance our team and to keep us united in our mission

**Curriculum and Instruction:**

- Entering year 2 of new curriculum, the department will critique the curriculum, adjust pacing and instruction according to assessment data analysis
- Using Learning-Focused, the department will dive deeper into the mapping of Language Arts and Math curricula, creating effective acquisition and extension lessons that stem from the Know-Do-Understand section of unit planning
- Improving existing local assessments that align with targeted benchmarks will remain our goal, along with using Edu-test to create a more viable Science assessment for our lower grade levels. The department will break down end-of-year grade level benchmark skills to show quarterly growth for progress monitoring
- Implementing the modified LEARN model and the PPP format for instructional design and lesson creation across all content areas

**General Plans:**

- To continue to show growth in PSSA scores in Reading and Math
  - To meet the academic needs of our students
  - To continually improve and add to the quality — depth and breadth — of available technology resources and opportunities to present the best online cyber learning environment
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### **On-Site Programs' Strengths and Plans for 2008-2009**

PALCS students have the ability to attend live programs physically or virtually in both performing arts and gifted courses through the Center for the Performing and Fine Arts and the University Scholars Program.

Through the Center for the Performing and Fine Arts, students have the opportunity to participate in specialized programming in the performing and fine arts. For 2008-2009, the Center for the Performing and Fine Arts will continue to offer specialized programming in the performing and fine arts, including music, theatre, art and dance.

Students who attend the University Scholars Program are drawn to its rigorous program, outstanding teaching, and flexibility that provides students with a customized course and course plan to best meet the students' individual educational needs. For 2008-2009, the full University Scholars Program will be available via the off-site cyber format. In addition, new classes will be offered both on and off-site.

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### **Guidance Department Strengths**

Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School dramatically expanded its guidance department during school year 2007-2008 to meet the growing needs of the student population. Three new guidance counselor positions were created, increasing the guidance counselor staff to 5 full-time positions. A Director of Guidance position was created to oversee the department.

To better serve the needs of our students, the counselors were assigned to specific grade levels. In this restructured department, there is now a K-8 counselor, plus one counselor assigned to each high school grade level. At the high school level, it was decided that the counselors will move up with their assigned class and follow the students throughout their high school careers. Each counselor created grade-level appropriate guidance courses to be an entry point into what the guidance department at PALCS could offer students and families.

With a solid structure in place, the department was then able to move on to lend its services to the other departments in the school. The guidance department worked closely with Subject Area Coordinators and the Chief Academic Administrator to create new courses for the 2008-2009 school year that would appeal to and meet the needs of our diverse and growing population. The school's course catalog was revamped and published online so that it was available to students and families 3 months earlier than in

previous years, and course enrollment for students was completed before the summer break.

The department also created a seamless workflow for a number of other tasks that touch multiple departments, including transcripts, course selection, organization and tracking of courses being taken by PALCS students in other schools' summer school programs, new enrollments and course auditing.

In addition, the department turned its attention to broadening students' career and education opportunities through offering Career Education Courses at 2 levels - 8-10 and 11 & 12 - as well as offering SAT Prep and ACT Prep courses. College Fair opportunities were also presented to students both at in-house mini college fairs during our spring open houses in West Chester and Pittsburgh, and through trips to local college fairs.

#### **Plans and Goals for 2008-2009 for the Guidance Department include:**

- Offering additional trips for high school students for college exploration
- Expansion of grade level guidance courses to further meet the guidance needs of the students
- Streamlining the department's system for communicating student needs/academic plans with instructional staff
- Streamlining the department's system for communicating new student information to instructional staff
- Offering online, real-time group chats with guidance-related topics for students
- Creating a calendar to complete various projects such as: report card distribution and returning student course selection
- Increasing capacity for being a resource base for parent's and students to access college and career planning materials, as well as standardized testing and financial aid materials

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#### **Student Assistance Program (SAP) Strengths and Challenges**

In September of 2007 our school became aware of the need to develop and maintain a viable Student Assistance Program. Since that time the school has made progress in this area. Points of progress include:

- Coordinator of Student Interventions was appointed as SAP coordinator for the school
- Twenty five teachers were selected for training from a pool of 47 interested applicants
- All 25 teachers were trained and became SAP certified as of March 25, 2008. The Caron Foundation ensured that all training was completed and all competencies were achieved by April 1, 2008
- Regularly scheduled team meetings have been held since that time for purposes related to team organization and infrastructure development. Structures and forms have been developed that will now permit the team to process referrals beginning October 1, 2008

- A working relationship has been established with PNSAS regional coordinator, Joseph Loccisano. Our SAP Coordinator is attending the monthly meetings of the Chester County SAP council
- 90 minutes of faculty/staff in-servicing time was used to introduce all school personnel to the nature of SAP in general and the specific work of our school's SAP team. Our team name has been adopted and team members introduced to all faculty and staff
- SAP Coordinator attended the state PASAP conference held in State College in March of 2007
- First Local Advisory Council meeting held
- Our CARE team has explored funding options to help pay for SAP expenses including student assessments. This includes an application for funds via the SFDFSC grant

### **Student Assistance Program (SAP) Plans for 2008-2009**

- CARE Team meetings will be held every other week for 90 minutes at our West Chester Office. All CARE Team members are required to attend
- Teacher orientation will include SAP in-servicing. All new faculty and staff will receive intensive training at the start of the school year
- An additional 6 hours of faculty staff in-service is scheduled to be completed between September 26, 2008 and April 1, 2008
- Because PALCS is a cyber charter school, our portal will feature a link that has been developed that will enable faculty, staff, parents, and students to become better acquainted with the work of our CARE team and many other related issues.
- Our Local Advisory Council has been formed and will meet on at least 3 occasions during the 2008-2009 school year
- Our SAP Coordinator will attend Chester County SAP meetings and the state PASAP conference
- School SAP team will meet for at least 60 minutes every other week during the school year. Guidelines for SAP best practice will be followed and monitored
- Contact and communication will continue with state regional SAP representatives
- A special pilot program to address the needs of students who are parenting or expecting a child will be implemented
- Small groups (in online chat rooms) related to our school's student needs connected to SAP will be formed
- Creative approaches to addressing SAP needs in a cyber environment will be developed to meet the needs of our school family in this area.
- Administrative records and reports will be kept and made as needed

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### **Student Academic Assistance Program (SAAP) Strengths, Challenges and Plan for 2008-2009**

Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School provides the SAAP program for students who are not succeeding academically. Year 2007-2008 was the third year of the program, and it was a year of great growth.

Previously, the program was overseen by 2 staff members and enlisted the help of all faculty members to monitor students. For school year 2007-2008, the program underwent a major overhaul to meet the needs of our increasing needs of our diverse population. One advisor was assigned to K-6, one for grades 7 & 8, one for grade 9, one for grade 10, one for grade 11, and one for grade 12. One additional staff member oversaw the data analysis and parent contact for the program.

Students can enter the SAAP program either upon enrollment, if they are determined to be at-risk academically, or at review periods, which occur at mid-quarter and end-of-quarter. Students who are failing one or more core courses are automatically entered into the SAAP program and are notified electronically and through postal mail. The first step is Academic Assistance, where students must submit a weekly time log to their advisors. Advisors were required during 2007-2008 to contact each student at least weekly, either by phone, email or Moodle Message. In addition, students were enrolled in the grade-level specific Academic Assistance course in Moodle, and advisors provided through that course information about study skills, how to contact teachers, and how to get help outside of the course. The second step is Intensive Academic Assistance. If students continue to fail after being in AA for one review period, then they are moved to Intensive Academic Assistance, and are required to communicate with their advisors daily. The IAA Moodle course provides more helps for students, and advisors are also available to do extensive training with the students on study tactics and Moodle navigation. If students show little or no progress after being in IAA for one review period, they can be withdrawn for Academic Truancy.

The SAAP program faces many challenges, including apathy from students and parents. However, with the revised department this year, the advisors were able to reach out to more students and saw 52% fewer withdrawals for Academic Truancy. Advisors contacted students at all hours through Moodle Message, and were able to meet students when and how they were used to being contacted. As a result, the program helped over 900 students during the year, but only 375 were recommended to remain in the program at the end of the 2007-2008 school year. In addition, 120 students went from being in AA or IAA one marking period, to being on Honor Roll the next.

Plans for 2008-2009 for the SAAP program include:

- Increased communication with guidance, IT, and teachers
- More frequent phone conversation with parents and students
- Providing Moodle training for parents and students

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### **Extended Year Program**

In June of 2007 PALCS offered an Extended Year Program to seniors who were not finished with their graduation requirements. This was an effort to increase our graduation rate and to prevent students from dropping out of high school. Students were permitted to complete up to 4 courses during a 9-week period in the summer. PALCS teachers oversaw the program, and 32 students completed their graduation requirements before the start of school year 2007-2008. This had a tremendous impact on our graduation rate, which increased by 10.06% from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007.

The option for completing coursework during the Extended Year Program was pointed out to many students who were ready to give up mid-year 2007-2008, enabling us to decrease our dropout population dramatically.

The Extended Year Program was again offered during summer 2008, and there are 54 students working on completing coursework this summer.

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## Homework Help

Many PALCS students were having difficulty with their coursework outside of traditional school hours, and PALCS recognized the need to provide some off-hours tutoring for students at all grade levels. Homework Help was instituted in December 2007, and provided online help to students through our Adobe Connect classrooms. Teachers were on-call for drop-in help Sunday-Thursday from 5-10 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. The following graph shows the average time in minutes students spent in the 4 types of Homework Help rooms:



The next graph shows the average number of students helped per month over the life of the Homework Help program (December-April):



The teachers who worked for the Homework Help program were dedicated and eager to help students; Homework Help even was scheduled during Winter Break and Spring Break. Students were surveyed in February for their feedback, and provided us with the following information:

*"[Students] should consider it because it helps out in so many ways! I does not matter what class you have they can help you out!"*  
— April, grade 9

*"It's especially helpful to students who are behind and are getting confused because they're working fast to catch up. Sometimes, you just need a breather and to have someone else explain it. Mainly, you're pretty much guaranteed get a better grade if you go to Homework Help."*  
- Heidi, grade 12

*"Well, I didn't understand Geometry before, and how to write it, but now I do. We did some of the questions on the white-board...and it helped me understand it better."*  
- Sophie, grade 5

PALCS plans to bring back Homework Help for the 2008-2009 school year.

## **Student Services Strengths**

The Student Services department at PALCS has grown significantly during the 2007-2008 school year. Major areas of strength include:

- Improved Technology — development and transition to new database. The new database allows Student Services a more efficient workflow and added reliability in record keeping
- PIMS — Student Services developed procedures and record keeping system in order to comply with the mandated reporting system for the state
- An outgrowth of complying with PIMS and having our new database has been our improved ability to track documentation and make sure records are accurate and complete
- Improved the orientation process / technology training
- Computers are distributed at orientation to prevent lag time in starting school
- Total Transformation Group — Successfully piloted this program that provides support for parents struggling with effective parenting techniques. The program will be continued in the 2008-2009 school year
- Improved Family and Student Technical Support — a collaborative effort between Student Services and IT. The collaborative effort was designed to support families whose technical problems may create or complicate other school related issues
- Improved follow up with students after orientation
- Creation of Truancy Elimination Plan — a multi-step plan that helps to educate families about attendance requirements and establish parental accountability for student's attendance and participation in school
- Improvements have also been made, specifically in response to our charter renewal. Those include:
  - Student Services is coordinating efforts with the newly implemented virtual programs for Performing Arts and University Scholars
  - Implemented "on-the-road" orientations / enrollment sessions.(as identified as "educational opportunities for students residing outside of geographical area")
  - Expanded our offerings of virtual meetings (info meetings, training sessions, parent chats) to accommodate families unable to travel to the school's physical locations
  - Internet Service Provider (ISP) reimbursement policy was revised as per renewal response
  - HelpDesk improvements
  - Student data (Moodle Student Information System (MSIS) and Moodle) now resides at the school on the school's servers
  - Unexcused/Illegal Absences — attendance policy changed to meet the requirements of the renewal

## **Plans and Goals for 2008-2009 for Student Services include:**

Communications — internal

- Internal improvement goals — when job descriptions / positions change, appropriate individuals will know who is replacing them
- Strive to keep the phone contact lists up-to-date with correct contact information and details about who works at PALCS and what they do
- Develop procedure to keep everyone current on new policies and procedures as they happen

#### Communications — external

- Explore alternatives — besides our internal email — to communicate with parents
- Utilize the newly developed regions of the state in MSIS to provide targeted information by region
- Work on the development of a centralized department that reviews all communications before they go out for accuracy
- Revise system to notify parents about attendance issues and problems
- Advertising - Develop strategies to inform potential PALCS families about the unique opportunities available

Education and Training — Increase staff knowledge base of Moodle from a student / teacher perspective. Develop a more in depth awareness of the laws that govern charter schools and public education, the collection and distribution of educational documents, FERPA and other school codes that relate to their interactions with families and students

Orientations for new students and parents - To continue to better equip families for success at PALCS during the orientation process and increase follow up with students and Home Facilitators.

Improve document management. Utilize a system to save on copies, reduce storage issues, and improve access to other offices.

Consistency in our orientation process across the state. This is an area that was recognized as needing attention and progress has been made. Our senior orientation coordinators mentor those who have less experience.

Moodle education — providing thorough training for students at orientation. This has been recognized as an area that needs consistent attention as our technology continues to expand.

Truancy Elimination — Now that our program is established, the department is confident in its ability to continue to improve communication with families and help to identify and deal with issues that might be interfering with students attending school regularly.

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### **Student Activities and Community Involvement Strengths**

PALCS prides itself on providing a large number of activities for students and families to get together virtually and face-to-face throughout the year. Students and parents were

surveyed about what activities they would like to see, and survey data was used to plan our activities.

For the second year, PALCS had Regional Area Coordinators for 6 main regions of the state. These coordinators planned trips and activities for students and families in their assigned areas. The RAC program was not as successful during this year as was hoped, so it is being evaluated and revamped for 2008-2009.

The following is a list of activities provided by the RACs in the regions of Pennsylvania for 2007-2008:

**South Central:**

The Regional Activity Coordinator was active through January, 2008, and then resigned. The North Central Coordinator planned events that could accommodate families from both regions after resignation of the South Central Coordinator.

September:

Back-to-School Picnic: 9/28/2007 at Letort Park, Carlisle.

October:

Fall Harvest Days, Ashcombe Farm, Mechanicsburg - 10/24/2007.

November:

The Oakes Museum, Grantham - 11/29/2007.

December:

"Kid Healthy Ideas" GIANT Foods Tour, Mechanicsburg - 12/5/2007

January:

The Oakes Museum, Grantham

**Southeast:**

The Regional Activity Coordinator resigned after February, 2008. The remaining trips were planned by West Chester staff.

September:

Back-to-School Picnic, West Goshen Park — 10/4/2007

November:

Herr's Snack Factory Tour, Nottingham — 11/26/2007

December:

-Ice Skating, Grundy Recreation Center, Bristol - 12/14/2007

-Kwanzaa Workshop, Fox Chase Library, Philadelphia - 12/19/2007

January:

-Fur, Feathers & Fins, PETCO, King of Prussia- 1/31/08.

-Kid Healthy Ideas, GIANT Foodstore, West Chester - 1/24/08.

May:

Philadelphia Book Festival - 5/17 - 5/18

June:

End of Year Picnic, West Goshen Park — 6/9/2008

**Southwest:**

Due to the close proximity to the Pittsburgh office, the Regional Activity Coordinators in this region typically work with the office to plan additional activities.

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The RAC for this region is planning to serve in the same capacity for the 2008-2009 school year.

### September:

Back-to-School Picnic, Emmerling Park — 9/28/2007

### November:

Movie Trip to see "Underdog" at Cheswick Quad, Cheswick.

### December:

-Behind-the-Scenes Mall Security Tour, Pittsburgh Mills Office - 12/5/2007

-Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera's a Musical Christmas Carol - 12/12/07

### February:

Family Game Night, Pittsburgh Office - 2/1/08.

### March:

*The Spiderwick Chronicles* movie, Cinemark, Tarentum - 3/14/08.

### April:

BODIES: The Exhibition, Carnegie Science Center, Pittsburgh - 4/30/08.

### May:

Kennywood Park Science Day, Pittsburgh - 5/20/08

### June:

Pittsburgh End of Year Picnic, 6/9/08

### **North Central:**

This is the second year with the same Regional Activity Coordinator in this area. She has been very successful in planning events that are well-attended. The RAC for this region is planning to serve in the same capacity for the 2008-2009 school year.

### September:

Back-to-school Picnic, Tom Tudek Park, State College — 9/28/2007

### October:

Altoona Railroad Museum and Horseshoe Curve Historic Site, Altoona - 10/31/2007.

### November:

PETCO "Fur, Feathers & Fins" Tour, Altoona - 11/15/2007.

### December:

Cici's Pizza Tour and Party, Altoona - 12/14/2007

### January:

Civil War Exhibit and Penn State Creamery - 1/25/2008

### March:

Galactic Ice Rink, Altoona - 3/21/08.

### June:

End-of-Year Picnic, DeGrosso's Amusement Park, Tipton - 6/6/08

### **Northeast:**

The RAC position was not filled until January. The RAC for this region is planning to serve in the same capacity for the 2008-2009 school year.

### January:

-Canine Experience, Allentown - 1/27/2008

-Crayola Factory, Easton - 1/30/2008

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### February:

-Northlandz Miniature Train Display, Flemington, NJ - 2/7/08

### March:

-Martin Guitar Museum and Factory Tour, Nazareth - 3/6/08

### May:

-Crystal Cave, Kutztown, PA - 5/3/08

-Becky's Drive In Movies, Walnutport - 5/16/08

### June:

-Bushkill Falls/End of Year Picnic, Bushkill - 6/1/08

### **Northwest:**

This region historically has very sparse participation for extracurricular activities especially during the snowy winter months. The Regional Activity Coordinator, who has been with us for 2 years, started the year with 2 activities and then did not plan any other events until later in the Spring. The RAC for this region is planning to serve in the same capacity for the 2008-2009 school year.

### October:

-Back-to-School Picnic, Port Farms, Waterford — 10/21/2007

-Fall Festival/Picnic, Port Farms, Waterford - 10/21/2007

### January:

Warren County Winterfest, Chapman State Park - 1/26/08

### June:

End of Year Picnic, Waldameer Amusement Park, Erie - 6/8/08

PALCS staff members also planned a number of trips and activities throughout the year. They were:

### October

-Pittsburgh Meet-and-Greet with Teachers/Mini Golf Event: 10/02/2007

-Leadership Team Building Days in the Western Region

-Leadership Team Building Day - Eastern Region, Grades 5-12 (Philadelphia Area): 10/18/07

-South East Region: Waveboard Day, West Goshen Park. Grades 5-12

### November

-Family Literacy Night/Poetry Cafe - 11/13/2007 (Pittsburgh)

-Viva Flamenco Performance, Philadelphia - 11/29/2007

-French Musical Play, Pittsburgh — 11/8/2007

### December

-Scholastic Book Fair, Pittsburgh Mills Office — 12/3 through 12/7/2007 (Pittsburgh)

### January

Pittsburgh Office Open House — 1/15/2008

February:

-Parent's Night Out, PALCS Center for Fine and Performing Arts (West Chester) - 2/7/08

March:

-Open House & College Fair, Pittsburgh Office - 3/25/08  
-PALCS Talent Show, Pittsburgh Office - 3/28/08  
-Open House & College Fair, West Chester Office - 3/25/08  
-Center for Performing Arts Movie Night: Casablanca - 3/27/08  
-PALCS Talent Show, West Chester Office - 3/28/08

May

-PALCS Prom West, Saxonburg, 5/23/08 (Pittsburgh)  
-Frida Kahlo Exhibit, Philadelphia Art Museum - 5/5/08  
-PALCS Prom East, Pottstown, 5/8/08  
-Historic Philadelphia Walking Tour, Philadelphia - 5/15/08  
-PALCS Community Night at Isaac's Restaurant, West Chester - 5/21/08  
-"Afternoon in Mexico" Luncheon, West Chester - 6/13/08

**Pittsburgh "After School" Reading Program**

This was the second year for this program, which takes place at the Pittsburgh Mills office once a month October through May. There are 4 groups: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. The K-3 group meeting includes a story time, craft, and snack. The older groups have an assigned reading which is completed before each month's meeting. During the meeting the reading selection is discussed and activities are completed.

Some of the selections/themes from this year:

K-2

-Dr. Seuss Month  
-Being Thankful  
-Holidays Throughout the World  
-Growing Gardens/Picnics

3-5

*Magic Tree House Series*  
*The Tale of Despereaux* by Kate DiCamillo  
*Clementine* by Sara Pennypacker  
*Because of Winn-Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo

6-8

*Rules* by Cynthia Lord  
*The Dark is Rising*  
*The Spiderwick Chronicles* by Holly Black  
Poetry Month  
Autobiography Month

9-12

*A Separate Peace* by John Knowles

*A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle  
*Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer  
*The Eyre Affair* by Jasper Fforde

The Pittsburgh staff plans to continue this program for the 2008-2009 school year. An average of 5 students attended each group monthly, and sometimes 10 or more. There is currently discussion about creating a blog for students who do not live close enough to the Pittsburgh office to attend.

In the spring semester of 2007-2008, the school created a **Virtual Bulletin Board** at the request of the Parent Involvement Committee. The Virtual Bulletin Board is a way to help build community among the school. The VBB exists to post events of interest to the school community that are not school sponsored. Response from the parent community of PALCS has been very positive so far. The Virtual Bulletin Board can be accessed from the scrolling news bar at the top of our Moodle website.

Another way the school sought to build community was through the creation of a **school store**, hosted by CafePress. PALCS clothing and other promotional items are now available for sale at [www.cafepress.com/palcs](http://www.cafepress.com/palcs). Our CafePress store opened on Tuesday, March 18. It is free to run a CafePress store. The school uploads our images to the site and select the items to sell. Each item has a base price, and PALCS sets what additional costs to add to generate profit. Customers of our store pay CafePress directly. As items are ordered, they are created by CafePress and shipped to the customers. PALCS will receive a check once a month for our profits. Proceeds from the store will benefit our Student Activities Fund.

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Our School Improvement Plan for 2007-2008 was incredibly successful, and provided the school a number of gains. The school will continue to build on our success in 2008-2009 through this year's School Improvement Plan, and focus on the continuing to improve the following **key areas that have been identified as needing improvement**:

- Ensuring that all stakeholders in the school understand and are committed to the school's mission and vision
- Aligning the school curriculum to state standards, focusing on Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content
- Aligning classroom assessments to the Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content
- Collecting formative and summative data to inform our decisions with regard to our curriculum and its impact on our students' proficiency levels, and with particular emphasis on at-risk students and their unique needs
- Raising students' proficiency levels in both Reading and Math
- Raising the proficiency levels of all sub-groups of students, with added attention to Special Education and Black subgroups
- Enrollment and Retention plans for students

## **SECTION II. STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLANNING**

### **Strategic Planning Process**

## Strategic Planning Process

Building on the strategic objectives articulated in the Charter Renewal and the 2006-2007 Annual Report, as well as the Pennsylvania System of Cyber Charter Review (PSCCR) process, members of the strategic planning committee attended the Getting Results Governor's Conference for School Improvement in July 2007. A School Improvement Plan was drafted and was presented to the strategic planning committee, under the direction of the Chief Academic Administrator. This Plan formed the nucleus of a 2007-2008 work plan for the PALCS strategic planning committee, now called the Strategic Planning and School Improvement Task Force.

The School Improvement Plan identified six key initiatives for the Strategic Planning and School Improvement Task Force to focus on during the 2007-2008 school year:

- Special Education Proficiency
- Math Proficiency
- Reading Proficiency
- Graduation Rate
- Student Mobility, Enrollment and Retention
- Collaborative Leadership

The Strategic Planning and School Improvement Task Force met weekly throughout the year. Sub-committees were formed based on the six initiatives. The Task Force continually evaluated the progress of the committees to fully implement the recommendations. An Evaluation Report was written and presented by the Co-Coordinator of the Task Force in June. The report addresses the underlying causes of the six areas of concern, and summarizes the proposed plans and accomplishments achieved during the school year.

On July 1, 2008, Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School was notified of its AYP status. For school year 2008-2009, Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School's AYP Status remains School Improvement II. As a result of the School Improvement Plan and Task Force accomplishments, there were dramatic improvements in student achievement. To see the percentage of change from 2007 to 2008, [click here](#). For the 2007-2008 school year, PALCS met 21 out of 23 targets.

Additionally, as a result of a separate 2006 internal strategic planning process within the school's department of Student Services, the following improvements were made during the 2007-2008 school year:

- The Guidance department staff was increased to help students prepare for and apply to college, encourage students to remain in school and address issues that were creating impediments to learning
- Academic Advisors were added to provide an academic support system for students and parents
- The Orientation process was streamlined to provide more training to families and to avoid information overload
- The HelpDesk was restructured to target technology support and homework assistance

The Strategic Planning and School Improvement Task Force is drafting a 2008-2009 School Improvement Plan that will focus on new initiatives to build upon demonstrated improvements in: reading and math scores at almost every grade level, graduation rates, curriculum mapping, scope and sequence, expanded course offerings, a new teacher development and evaluation plan, and the student academic assistance program.

**Strategic Planning Committee**

Name	Affiliation	Membership Category	Appointed By
Chip Harper	Associate Director of Academics	Administrator	Chief Academic Administrator
Amy Murphy	Coordinator of Special Education	Administrator	Chief Academic Administrator
Erin Keefe	Coordinator for School Improvement	Secondary School Teacher	Chief Academic Administrator
Lynn Rodden	Director of Western Regional Office and Parent Liasison	Parent	Chief Academic Administrator
Steve Rockelman	Director of Federal Programs	Administrator	Chief Academic Administrator
Mark Allen	Director of Performing Arts	Administrator	Chief Academic Administrator
Debby Weisbach	Director of Student Services	Other	Chief Academic Administrator
Kelly Pappas	Curriculum Coordinator	Regular Education Teacher	Chief Academic Administrator
Valerie Harris	Early Elementary Subject Area Coordinator	Elementary School Teacher	Chief Academic Administrator
Carolyn Melo	Math Subject Area Coordinator	Secondary School Teacher	Chief Academic Administrator
J Alan Hutto	Science Subject Area Coordinator	Secondary School Teacher	Chief Academic Administrator
Regina Murry	English Subject Area Coordinator	Secondary School Teacher	Chief Academic Administrator
Mike Krieg	Guidance Counselor	Ed Specialist - School Counselor	Chief Academic Administrator

**Goals, Strategies and Activities**

**Goal: Collaborative Leadership**

*Description:* Effective collaborative leadership strategies will be in place by end of school year 2007-2008.

**Strategy: 2. Employee evaluation criteria needs to be established and presented to staff at all levels.**

*Description:* TDEF Model will help to ensure all employees are meeting expectations.

*Activities:*

Activity	Description	
Consistent Use of TDEF Model		
Person Responsible	Timeline for Implementation	Resources
Not Currently Assigned	Ongoing	\$0.00

**Strategy: 3. Board Meetings need to allow for an open-forum and invite teachers and parents/students to attend live or via internet.**

*Description:* Parents/students would like to attend board meetings virtually.

*Activities:*

Activity	Description	
Board Meeting Open Forums	Suggestion has been made for Open Forums	
Person Responsible	Timeline for Implementation	Resources
Not Currently Assigned	Ongoing	\$0.00

**Strategy: 4. A School Improvement team appointed in August 2007 to oversee and evaluate all parts of the plan with the help of all top administrators.**

*Description:* SIP Task Force oversees Strategic Planning.

*Activities:*

Activity	Description	
Ongoing SIP Task Force Meetings	Task Force will meet once a month during 2008-2009	
Person Responsible	Timeline for Implementation	Resources
Not Currently Assigned	Ongoing	\$0.00

**Goal: Enrollment/Retention/Student Mobility**

*Description:* Effective strategies will be in place to enroll and retain students.

**Strategy: 2. Provide parent courses and support for new families through contact with veteran families.**

*Description:* Parent interaction is an important part of student success.

*Activities:*

Activity	Description	
Parent Login for Moodle To Include Parent Courses	Parent Courses will be offered 2008-2009	
Person Responsible	Timeline for Implementation	Resources
Not Currently Assigned	Ongoing	\$0.00

**Goal: FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE (for districts and schools that graduate seniors)**

*Description:* Graduate rate will meet an 80% threshold and/or show growth.

**Strategy: 2. Purchase a GED program**

*Description:* GED courses offered through GED Online.

*Activities:*

Activity	Description	
Continue to Provide GED coursework		
Person Responsible	Timeline for Implementation	Resources
Erin Keefe	Ongoing	\$1,800.00

**Strategy: 3. Educate students on importance of staying in school**

*Description:*

*Activities:*

Activity	Description	
Continue to move all calls through retention specialist		
Person Responsible	Timeline for Implementation	Resources
Erin Keefe	Start:7/21/2008 Finish: N/A	\$0.00

**Statement of Quality Assurance**

Charter school has not met AYP.

Charter school has created a School Improvement Plan.

Charter school has submitted and reviewed its School Improvement Plan with the Intermediate Unit designee.

**Intermediate Unit designee met with and when meeting occurred:**

Plan was reviewed by Melody Wilt through email.

**SECTION III. QUALITY OF SCHOOL DESIGN**

**Rigorous Instructional Program**

The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School has developed a **rigorous instructional program** that utilizes more than a 35 different **curriculum** companies with a combination of textbook and online components. The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School is committed to an educational design that meets or exceeds statewide content standards. **These standards are used not only to develop curriculum** that follows a scope and sequence, but also to measure the success of the curriculum in meeting state standards. Curriculum was chosen based on whether or not it was aligned with Pennsylvania state standards. New instructional resources must be proposed and submitted to the curriculum council for approval, prior to adoption. Textbooks adopted support the curriculum.

Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School works with the Learning Focused School Model to **increase student achievement**.

The Learning Focused model has been developed by Dr. Max Thompson. Dr. Thompson developed the Learning Focused Schools model based on his experience as an Executive Director of School Improvement, and twenty years experience as a Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the Appalachian State University in North Carolina. The Learning Focused Schools Model is an approach to school improvement that focuses on student achievement through balanced achievement. Balanced achievement is defined by program developers as the point at which all students are on or above grade levels in all areas. The Learning Focused Model identifies that leadership and the power curriculum are the keystone components to balanced achievement. The power curriculum must be supported

by research based instruction, comprehensive literacy, acceleration and scaffolding, and efficient use of assessments.

Teachers prioritize state standards and assessment anchors, and develop curriculum maps for each topic of instruction within their course. Curriculum maps, or “student learning maps,” identify key concepts of the topic and the lessons’ essential questions to drive instruction. The curriculum maps developed act as a guideline for the teacher’s instruction, assuring that instruction is aligned with state standards and assessment anchors. The goal of developing curriculum using the Learning Focused Model is to produce measurable student achievement, while preserving instructional integrity and creativity. Developed and orchestrated by teachers, the student learning map provides an expectation of student learning for each topic in a course, and facilitates the development of assessments. The scope and sequence, a by-product of the curriculum mapping process, assures vertical articulation, and makes horizontal articulation plausible.

PALCS partners with more than 20 professional online curriculum companies to create an educational program for students that is dynamic, flexible, and designed to meet the needs of different learning styles. The curriculum utilized during the 2007-2008 academic year included:

**Book Publishers**

Pearson Education  
Prentice Hall  
Pearson Learning  
Scott Foresman  
AGS Globe  
McDougal Littell  
Houghton Mifflin  
Powerglide  
McGraw Hill  
Glencoe  
Hampton Brown  
Holt  
Thomson Learning  
Wiley and Sons  
DK Publishing  
William Sadlier-Oxford  
Publisher’s Group West  
Teacher Created Materials

**Online Providers**

Adobe - *Adobe Connect*  
ALEKS  
Animation Factory  
Learning Pages  
BrainPop  
Compass Learning  
Facts on File  
Holt  
EasyTech - *Learning.com*  
NetLibrary  
MyAccess!  
Performance Pathways - *TechPaths*  
PLATO  
Prentice Hall  
Study Island  
TumbleBooks  
Turnitin  
Typing Master  
  
UnitedStreaming

**Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School does maintain accurate documentation to meet the requirements of Chapter 4.12 of Pennsylvania School Code.** Courses are developed and aligned with grade appropriate state standards and assessment anchors. The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School's curriculum is articulated to assure that the planned instruction exposes students to the appropriate sequencing of standards and assessment anchors. Records of instructed assessment anchors and state standards are maintained using the Learning Focused Tool Box.

Instruction aligned to state standards and assessment anchors includes the content areas of: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Studies, Civics and Government, Economics, Family Consumer Science, Environmental and Ecology, Health Safety and Physical Education, Arts and Humanities and Career Education and Work. Courses are developed based on the prioritization of grade-appropriate standards and assessment anchors. Instruction of the state standards and assessment anchors is designed to prepare students for proficiency. Teachers develop assessments to evaluate student understanding. Teachers are encouraged to focus on accelerating student achievement by previewing content, but will provide remediation for students who do not meet standards. Title 1, ESL and Special Education faculty provides support for students who do not meet standard requirements.

**The curriculum has been built on the grade-level appropriate standards and assessment anchors.** Working with the Learning Focused Software, mapped courses are analyzed to assure proper vertical articulation. Topic level assessments allow teachers to monitor student understanding, and adjust instruction accordingly. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate various forms of differentiated instruction to meet the needs of our diverse learners.

The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School's curriculum is based on the foundations of essential questions, which **promotes in-depth and inquiry based teaching and learning**. Essential questions direct high teacher expectations of student learning and increases student achievement through the understanding of said expectations. The use of Learning Focused strategies such as graphic organizers and summarize helps promote student retention, as opposed to memorization. The use of graphic organizers is identified by the developers of Learning Focused to "develop thinking routines."

Essential questions are identified as an acquisition or extended/refined thinking question. Teachers are encouraged to weave acquisition lessons with extended thinking lessons to insure that students learn the content to greater depths. Extended thinking lessons require students to use higher level thinking skills such as critical thinking and concept synthesis. Culminating activities are authentic assessments which ask students to demonstrate their understanding of the content by applying it. The use of graphic organizers and the authentic assessments found in culminating activities are supported by the latest brain-based research and have been proven to increase student achievement.

Teachers have been trained on the use of scaffolding strategies and are encouraged to use methods of scaffolding to increase the retention and student understanding. As a Learning Focused Strategy, teachers are encouraged to **incorporate acceleration methods** within their classes. Acceleration focuses on vocabulary development and

shifts methods of remediation to methods of accelerating students by previewing content.

Teachers are encouraged to include a variety of teaching strategies to engage our diverse learners. Teachers have been trained on the Learning Focused Model, which includes strategies such as scaffolding, accelerating, activating strategies, summarizing strategies, and differentiated instruction. All lessons are required to be presented to students using the 3-P model. This model states that all lessons must include a purpose, process, and produce. Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School Faculty has been provided a copy of the North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL) standards and guidelines. Teachers use a variety of mediums to deliver these strategies and engage the learners. Such mediums may, to name a few, include the use of PowerPoints, audio recordings, videos and web quests.

Strategies used to **accelerate academic skill development, content knowledge and learning strategies of students performing significantly below standards in literacy and mathematics skills include:**

1. Implementation of Title I and ESL Program
2. Implementation of Student Academic Assistance Program
3. Online math tutoring/Homework Help for students needing extra help
4. Assessment of all incoming students

#### **1. Implementation of Title I Program:**

PALCS applied for and received noncompetitive federal grant funding through the Pennsylvania State Department of Education for Title I programs. Title I is a federally funded grant that must be used to improve the academic achievement of disadvantaged students. The percent of families living at the poverty level is below 40%, therefore, PALCS has implemented a targeted assistance Title I program for grades K-6. Funds received from this grant may not be used to supplant services required by law. Rather, Title I funds may be used to coordinate and supplement services otherwise required for disadvantaged students.

Title I program services include in-class academic support (suggested modifications and enhancements), extra resources such as the Harcourt Title I resource kit; dedicated chat sessions to re-teach or supplement individual lessons; office hours for Title I students and for parents to ask questions about the program. Title I offers homework support, parent training programs and a parent resource center (on the portal) for parents to access activities to reinforce lessons.

The student selection process is based entirely on the achievement level of the students. Students are selected based upon criteria chosen by the LEA. To qualify for the Title I program students must achieve at a below proficient level in 2 assessment criteria. These criteria for grades 3- 12 must include students performing below proficient on the PSSA and may include the following attendance/suspension, retention, report card grades, anecdotal records, teacher recommendation, and other appropriate assessments. Criteria for students in K-2 must include developmentally appropriate assessments and may include teacher recommendation, parent recommendation, anecdotal records and other non-paper/pencil assessment tasks.

Title I students are also identified through:

- PSSA Reading/Math Assessments — All Tested Grades
- CBA — Harcourt End-of-Year Reading/Math Assessments — Grades K-6
- Compass Learning End-of-Year Reading/Math Assessments — Grades K-6
- Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)\* - Grades K-2
- Imagination Station (Reading) — Grades K-1
- Star Reading/Math Assessments — Grades 1-6
- Circus Math Assessment — Grade K
- Individual Reading Inventory (IRI) — Grades 1-2
- Writing Samples — Grades 1-6
- Teacher Recommendations — Grades K-12

*\* During the 2007-2008 school year parent representatives and teachers trained for administering the assessment traveled to various regions to meet students face-to-face and complete the DIBELS assessment for students in K-2 using hand-held computers.*

Summer Success is a Title I summer school program designed to re-teach and remediate areas of academic difficulty discovered using a pretest designed to assess grade level standards. All Title I students are invited to attend this 7 week program which is taught by the Title I teachers who teach small flexible groups that are formed based upon areas of need. More than 2 dozen students participated in the program during the summer of 2008. Pre- and post-tests showed significant strides in content knowledge. (Test results are available upon request.)

School Improvement ~ Due to results on the PSSA, PALCS was given the classification of School Improvement II. As a result, a portion of the total Title I budget was set aside to offer Supplemental Educational Services, SES, to any student who qualified based upon household income. Forty-five students participated in the SES program. These students received extra tutoring from independent State approved providers paid for using money allocated in the Title I budget for SES. Each child was given pre- and post-assessments to gauge academic growth as well as formative assessments during the course of the program. The providers met with the parents on a regular basis and provided PALCS with reports detailing assessment scores, skills covered, copies of notes from parent meetings signed by parents, anecdotal notes from the tutor who provided the services and documented hours of attendance.

In addition, PALCS was able to apply for State Title I School Improvement funds in the amount of \$40,000. An additional \$9,500 was secured from the State for School Improvement. Listed below are examples of how the money was spent.

- Purchase Learning Focused Schools software licenses and training
- Performance Tracker software licenses
- Pay salaries of teachers participating in the after-school tutoring program and in the extended year summer program
- Provide additional SES tutoring hours for students
- Other professional development opportunities

## **2. Implementation of Student Academic Assistance Program:**

Students who have experienced difficulty academically prior to enrolling at PALCS or

who have failed one or more core courses while enrolled at PALCS are placed on Academic Probation to underscore the seriousness of our academic expectations. They are enrolled in their grade-level Academic Probation course which includes study tips and tutoring information. They are monitored weekly by their Academic Advisor, and are required to submit a weekly time log to their advisor.

At mid-quarter and end-of-quarter intervals, students are re-evaluated. Students who improve are removed from Academic Assistance; students who continue to not make academic progress are moved to the next level of the program, Intensive Academic Assistance (IAA).

Students in IAA are moved to the grade-level appropriate IAA course and are required to check in daily with their Academic Advisor. They are monitored closely during their time in IAA, and are made aware that this is their last chance to improve at PALCS. If need be, the advisor provides additional training for the students and/or their home facilitator, including how to better communicate with teachers and how to better use Moodle. At the next evaluation period (mid-quarter or end-of-quarter) students who are improving are moved to Monitoring status, while students who have shown little or no progress are in danger of being removed from the school for Academic Truancy.

### **3. Online math tutoring/Homework Help:**

PALCS provides additional math tutoring Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. by a certified math teacher dedicated solely to students needing immediate mathematics help.

Beginning in December 2007-2008, PALCS provided online Homework Help Sunday-Thursday from 5 to 10 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Four rooms were provided simultaneously — Elementary, Middle School, High School and Math (grades 7-12).

### **4. Assessment of all incoming students**

Students are assessed upon enrollment to PALCS to determine reading level and math ability level.

Evidence of the state's acceptance of our **Professional Development Plan** is included as **Attachment A**. Evidence of the state's acceptance of our **Teacher Induction Plan** is included as **Attachment B**.

## **Rigorous Instructional Program - Attachments**

- Rigorous Instructional Program
- Rigorous Instructional Program

## **English Language Learners**

### **English Language Learners**

Children whose first language is a language other than English are identified using the Home Language Survey. The HLS is sent to each family for each child enrolled in PALCS. Students whose preferred home language is a language other than English are placed on a Preferred Home Language Other Than English or "PHLOTE" list. These students are then scheduled for the *Wida Access Placement Test or WAPT*. If possible

the WAPT is given during the student's enrollment appointment. If this is not possible the ESL teacher or the ESL program director travel to a location that is convenient to the student/family being assessed. Usually, the assessment is administered at a public library within a short distance from the home. In either case the WAPT is always administered within the first 30 days of school or within the first 15 days of school after initial enrollment if the child enrolls after the first day of school. A description of the ESL program at PALCS follows:

### **English as a Second Language Program Description**

#### ***Definition of an English Language Learner:***

A student whose native language is a language other than English and/or comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant.

A student whose English language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing causes difficulties that hinder the opportunity to learn successfully in the courses where English language is the dominant mode of communication.

#### ***Goals of the Program:***

Create a well-defined sequential ESL program for English language learners that will encourage and facilitate the language acquisition necessary for them to achieve success and meet or exceed the Pennsylvania academic standards for reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Assist all students in content areas while they are learning English, so these students can remain at grade level or make progress towards grade level competency in content areas.

Mainstream students into regular curricula as soon as they can successfully learn like native English speakers.

Periodically evaluate the progress of ELLs through assessments, teacher feedback and classroom performance.

Monitor the progress of ELLs after exiting the ESL program to determine if additional alternative language instruction is needed and to provide content area remediation when necessary.

#### ***Student Identification:***

##### ***Step 1 — Home Language Survey***

PALCS will determine the English language proficiency level for any student whose primary language is a language other than English (PHLOTE).

##### ***Step 2 — Language Proficiency Assessment***

The Wida Access Placement Test is given to determine a level of English proficiency in listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing.

### **Step 3 — Level of Service**

According to their language proficiency needs, students will receive ESL instruction, support services, or will be monitored for academic difficulties.

#### ***ESL Courses:***

ESL courses take the place of the regular English course for all ELLs who earn score between Level 1-4 on the WIDA K-12 English language proficiency standards as assessed using the Wida Access Placement Test and/or the Wida English Language Proficiency Assessment.

ESL courses have been designed to address each proficiency level using curriculum support materials provided by Hampton Brown called Avenues (K-6) and High Point (7-12). These courses were created and adapted to the PA Leadership Charter School format and course descriptions. The courses are delivered via the PALCS portal, Moodle. Lessons for each course and unit have been written and are implemented on a daily basis.

#### ***ESL Support Services:***

Support Services to those students who qualify for ESL. The support services include:

- Weekly contact with student and home facilitator
- Office hours to ask for help
- Open Chat for live conversations, homework help, etc.
- Live in-person individual and small group tutoring sessions at local libraries

#### ***Assessment of English Language Growth***

Summative assessments include PSSA, Access for ELLs© and local assessments.

Formative assessments include formal and informal classroom assessments such as DIBELS, Baseline/End-of-Year Reading/Math Assessment, and writing samples. These are given only when it is appropriate to do so based upon a student's English language proficiency.

#### ***Exit Criteria***

Score of BASIC on the annual Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)

Score of PROFICIENT on the Pennsylvania Language Proficiency Standards for English Language Learners in the areas of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing on the annual state-required WIDA Access for ESLs© . The PROFICIENT or BRIDGING score is based on the total results of all the language skills.

#### ***Curriculum and Instruction***

ELLs assessed at Level 1 (Entering), Level 2 (Beginning) and Level 3 (Developing) English language proficiencies will receive ESL instruction to replace their language arts/English instruction. Each student will be enrolled in a full-year course focusing on oral language development (listening and speaking) and on literacy development (reading and writing).

ELLs assessed at Level 4 (Expanding) English language proficiencies will be enrolled in a full-year course integrating oral language and literacy development instruction. The ELLs will also receive ESL support services in the form of topic-specific chat rooms, support homerooms. This course will focus on concepts and skills that are essential for increased proficiency in the English language and retention of skills already learned.

ELLs assessed at Level 5 (Bridging) English language proficiency will be monitored on a weekly basis for progress, academic success and/or academic difficulties in regular English, Math and content area courses.

Exited students will be monitored on a regular basis for 2 years post exit. Difficulties will be discussed by the PALCS ESL Committee which includes the Director of ESL, ESL teachers, regular teachers, parent(s) and other appropriate personnel. The possibility exists that exited ESL students will be placed back into the program for reinforcement, closer support opportunities and English language instruction. A decision to place a student back into the ESL program will be made on an as needed basis. If appropriate, ELLs will not be “re-exited” into Monitor status until the start of the next marking period.

### ***Pennsylvania Language Proficiency Standards for English Language Learners\****

Level 1: Entering

Level 2: Beginning — Students are able to produce and understand general language that is related to the content areas. They will use phrases and short sentences.

Level 3: Developing — Students are able to produce and use some general and specific language of the content areas. They will use expanded sentences orally and in written paragraphs.

Level 4: Expanding — Students will use specific and some technical language of the content areas. They will use a variety of sentence lengths of varying complexity orally and in multiple related paragraphs.

Level 5: Bridging — Students will use the technical language of the content areas and a variety of sentence lengths of varying complexity orally and in written form (including, stories, essays, and reports).

\*Taken from page 7, Figure 1, of the WIDA Manual, *Performance definitions for the WIDA K-12 English Language Proficiency Standards*.

### ***Communication with Parents***

PALCS makes every effort to communicate with the parents of ELLs in their preferred home language. Spanish is the native language of the majority of our ELLs. TransAct and Iverson translation services are currently in use for translating written correspondence. AT&T Language Links provides on-demand over the phone interpreting services. The enrollment packet, NCLB notification letters, ESL program documents, student/parent orientation documents and other important documents have been translated into Spanish and are used when appropriate. Several bilingual staff members serve as interpreters for meetings and phone calls.

**Professional Development**

Training in all aspects of the ESL program and working with ELLs and families are provided during the year for all faculty and staff.

The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School **ESL Program's 5-Year Plan** is included as **Attachment C**. The **ELL Report** is included as **Attachment D**.

**English Language Learners - Attachments**

- English Language Learners
- English Language Learners

**Graduation Requirements**

The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School **requires all students to successfully complete the following:**

4 credits of English

3 credits of Mathematics\*

3 credits of Science\*

3 credits of Social Studies \*

1 credit of Health/Safety/Physical Education

1 credit of Technology

1 full credit of Arts and Humanities Electives

4 credits of additional electives

Successful completion of Senior Seminar or equivalent (.25 credit)

**Total minimum required credits for graduation: 20.25\***

*\* For the Class of 2012, graduation requirements increase to 20.75 with the addition of .5 credit of Economics (Social Studies). Among these requirements is also that one of the Mathematics credits must be Algebra, and one of the Science credits must be Biology.*

All course **assessments are aligned to state standards**. The Senior Seminar fulfills the **Culminating Project requirement**.

## Special Education

### Special Education

Upon enrolling at PALCS, a new IEP is created for each student that is relevant to our unique learning environment. Each special education student is assigned to appropriate courses while taking into consideration the student's grade level and ability level. Each student is also assigned to a special education teacher upon enrolling. The special education teacher is responsible for providing resource level learning support to each student on their caseload.

As required by law, Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School first uses an inclusion approach to **educating special education students**. Special education students are enrolled in regular education courses but will receive modifications and adaptations to their curriculum as needed. The modifications and adaptations are determined by the IEP team and are carried out by the resource room teacher assigned to the student. In accordance with our School Improvement Plan, all regular education teachers must keep a binder of all of their students' accommodations sheets from the students' IEPs at their desks and refer to it when creating and modifying lessons.

There are times when a student may be functioning too far below grade level to be placed in regular education classes, even with modifications and adaptations to their curriculum. In these instances, a student is placed in remedial courses taught by a licensed and highly qualified special education teacher. These students are held to the same standards as their regular education peers, but the information is presented to them in a modified, simplified manner.

In addition to students who are placed in PALCS' remedial courses, there are a few Life Skills students who are served at The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School. These students are enrolled into our Life Skills reading and math courses, Edmark Reading and KinderMath. A designated special education teacher is assigned to work with this population of students to meet with each of the Life Skills students on a daily basis in the multi-media room to work on the Life Skills curriculum being offered.

For **related services**, Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School contracts with several different therapy companies across the state of Pennsylvania. Speech, occupational, and physical therapy are almost always provided to the student in their home. In some

instances the student travels to a therapy building. If this is the case, PALCS reimburses their parents for travel time and mileage.

If a student is in need of an evaluation or a reevaluation, PALCS will schedule an appointment with one of the several psychological service companies to complete the evaluation. **PALCS adheres to all guidelines set forth by Chapter 711 regulations.**

**Special Education Policies and Procedures** are included as **Attachment E**. The **Penn Data Report** is included as **Attachment F**.

**Special Education - Attachments**

- Special Education
- Special Education

**Special Education Program Profile - Chart I**

Teacher	FTE	Type of class or support	Location	# of Students	Other Information
Collet, Caroline	.33	Learning Support	Cyber	29	Learning Support
Collet, Caroline	.33	Edmark Reading	Cyber	3	Remedial Course
Collet, Caroline	.33	KinderMath	Cyber	2	Remedial Course
Conroy, Jennifer	.25	Learning Support	Cyber	30	Learning Support
Conroy, Jennifer	.25	Remedial General Science	Cyber	35	Remedial Course
Conroy, Jennifer	.25	Study Skills	Cyber	36	Transitional Support
Conroy, Jennifer	.25	Life After High School	Cyber	25	Transitional Support
Cummings, Erin	.50	Learning Support	Cyber	30	Learning Support
Cummings, Erin	.50	Practical Math 3	Cyber	20	Remedial Course
DiPaolo, Jill	1.0	Learning Support	Cyber	24	Learning Support
Galati, Melissa	1.0	Learning Support	Cyber	25	Learning Support
Gleason, Judy	1.0	Learning Support	Cyber	32	Learning Support
Gruber, Daniel	.50	Learning Support	Cyber	25	Learning Support
Gruber, Daniel	.50	Senior Project	Cyber	85	Remedial Course
Hourigan, Maureen	.50	Learning Support	Cyber	25	Learning Support
Hourigan, Maureen	.50	Remedial Life Science	Cyber	35	Remedial Course
Kulp, Deborah	.50	Learning Support	Cyber	26	Learning Support
Kulp, Deborah	.50	Remedial Social Studies	Cyber	58	Remedial Course
Laurelli, Ellen	.25	Learning Support	Cyber	0	Learning Support
Laurelli, Ellen	.25	Remedial English 1	Cyber	34	Remedial Course
Laurelli, Ellen	.25	Remedial English 2	Cyber	25	Remedial Course

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Wertley, Heather	.25	Learning Support	Cyber	26	Learning Support
Wertley, Heather	.25	Practical Math 1	Cyber	29	Remedial Course
Wertley, Heather	.25	Practical Math 2	Cyber	22	Remedial Course
Whitehead, Jennifer	1.0	Learning Support	Cyber	27	Learning Support

**Special Education Program Profile - Chart II**

Organization	FTE	Type of class or support	Location	# of Students	Other Information
The Valley Day School	1.0	Emotional Support	The Valley Day School	1	Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School is contracted with The Valley Day School to provide full-time emotional support to one student enrolled at PALCS. Due to the severe nature of the student's emotional issues, an alternative placement was needed in order to meet his needs.

**Special Education Program Profile - Chart III**

Title	Location	FTE
Special Education Coordinator — Amy Pancher-Murphy	PALCS- Main Building	1.0
Related Services Coordinator; Tara Adams	PALCS- Main Building	.50
Related Services Coordinator; Mary Fran Frankenheimer	PALCS- Main Building	.50
Special Education Teacher; Ellen Laurelli	PALCS- Main Building	.75
Special Education Teacher; Jennifer Conroy	PALCS- Main Building	1.0
Special Education Teacher; Deborah Kulp	PALCS- Main Building	1.0
Special Education Teacher; Judy Gleason	PALCS- Main Building	1.0
Special Education Teacher; Melissa Galati	PALCS- Main Building	1.0
Special Education Teacher; Erin Cummings	PALCS- Main Building	1.0
Special Education Teacher; Jennifer	PALCS- Main Building	1.0

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Whitehead		
Special Education Teacher; Daniel Gruber	PALCS- Main Building	1.0
Special Education Teacher; Caroline Collet	PALCS- Main Building	1.0
Special Education Teacher; Maureen Hourigan	PALCS- Main Building	1.0
Special Education Teacher; Heather Wertley	PALCS- Main Building	1.0

**Special Education Program Profile - Chart IV**

<b>IU, Public Agency, Organization, or Individual</b>	<b>Title/Service</b>	<b>Amount of Time Per Week</b>
Andrea Carter, Psychologist	Psychological	15 minutes
Aspire Pediatric Therapy	Speech Therapy	60 minutes
A Total Learning Center	Tutoring	120 minutes
CAMCO	Occupational Therapy	30 minutes
Champion Christian	Tutoring	160 minutes
Cindy McGahuey	Speech Therapy	60 minutes
Ellingsen ONline Speech	Speech Therapy	615 minutes
Huntington Learning Center	Tutoring	120 minutes
Invo Health Care	Speech Therapy	150 minutes
Manayunk Academy, Wilson Tutor	Tutoring	240 minutes
Manayunk Academy, Speech Therapy	Speech Therapy	120 minutes
Manayunk Academy, Occupational Therapist	Occupational Therapy	90 minutes
Next Step Therapy	Occupational Therapy	60 minutes
Next Step Therapy	Speech Therapy	60 minutes
Pediatric Therapy Associates	Physical Therapy	60 minutes
Pediatric Therapy Associates	Occupational Therapy	120 minutes
Sue Ellen Foster	Occupational Therapy	60 minutes
Sue Schechtman	Tutoring	120 minutes
Susanna Varga	Tutoring	180 minutes
Therapy Source	Occupational Therapy	375 minutes
Therapy Source	Speech Therapy	660 minutes
Therapy Source	Physical Therapy	120 minutes
The Valley Day School	Speech Therapy	60 minutes
The Valley Day School	Occupational Therapy	60 minutes
Tracy Ranze	Vision Services	60 minutes
Tutoring Referral Services	Tutoring	180 minutes

**SECTION IV. ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Student Assessment - Primary**

Test/Classification	K	1	2	3	4	5
PSSA	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
PASA	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Baseline and EOY Reading Assessment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Baseline and EOY Math Assessment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DIBELS	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Benchmark LA Assessment	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Writing Sample - Narrative	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
End of Qtr. - Rdg, Writing	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
End of Qtr - Rdg, Writing, Math	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gentry Spelling Test	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Reading Level Check	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Writing Sample - Narrative/Informational	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Writing Sample - Narrative/Persuasive	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Writing Sample - Narrative/Expository	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

**Student Assessment - Secondary**

Test/Classification	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
PSSA	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
PASA	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
EduTest Reading	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EduTest Math	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

**Student Assessment**

**a) Based on State and Local assessment date, Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School has shown increased performance.**

**Elementary Program — Reflection of Improved Performance**

*(Refer to attached Aggregate Data — Attachment G)*

**Mathematics**

PSSA Math

Comparing 2007 to 2008, gains were made at each grade level, 3rd-6th grades, ranging from 1.9% to 14.49%, with the overall improvement rate in Math of 7.21%.

Harcourt Math

Using a Beginning of the Year Inventory test and an End of Year assessment in Grades 1-6, data reflects students' growth across all grade levels, with growth ranging from 2% to 20%.

### STAR Math

Using percentile ranks, the number of students at 50<sup>th</sup> percentile or above increased from fall to spring in grades 3, 4, and 6, stayed the same for grades 1 and 2, and fell in grades 4 and 5.

### **Writing**

#### Writing Samples

Beginning of the Year and End of Year writing assessments to monitor progress that were graded according to the PA writing domain rubric and the PSSA genre specific rubrics, student results reflected improvement with a higher percentage of students scoring a 4 in all grade levels and a lower percentage of students scoring a 1 in all grade levels, except 6th grade which remained relatively the same. Grades 3 and 5 showed the greatest growth in writing scores. The percentage of students scoring a 2 versus a 3 on EOY samples was higher in grades 1, 4, and 6, while the percentage of those scoring a 3 versus a 2 was higher in grades 3 and 5, with grade 2 having the same percentage of 2s and 3s.

#### PSSA Writing

Data showed that 36% of our 5th graders are Proficient or Advanced, 42% are Basic or Below Basic, with 22% not participating in the PSSA writing assessment. Comparing the PSSA results with the Writing Sample test results, there is an almost exact correlation for Basic and Below Basic students, with a 12% variation between Proficient (3) scores and a 14% variation on Advanced (4) scores.

### **Reading**

#### PSSA Reading — Grades 3-6

Comparing 2007 to 2008, gains were made in the 3rd, 5th, and 6th grades, with gains ranging from 14.08% to 23.16% with the overall improvement rate across grades 3 to 6 of 13.74%. Fourth grade showed a -3.75% gain.

#### STAR Reading — Grades 3-6

Using percentile ranks, the number of students at 50<sup>th</sup> percentile or above increased from fall to spring in every grade level, 3 to 6, with gains ranging from 2.4% to 11.2%. Likewise the percentage of students scoring below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile decreased in every grade level, 3 to 6.

#### DIBELS — Grades K-2

DIBELS data reflected growth within specific skill areas, such as grade 2 Phonemic Awareness, but overall DIBELS did not reflect improvement from fall to spring. DIBELS results also showed a greater percentage of Strategic and Intensive level students than Benchmark students.

### **Elementary Program - Data-Driven Development**

Factors to consider when reviewing results:

- Student Turnover Rate — The Elementary Department lost approximately 33% of our students and gained approximately 33% of new students

- Data Collection — The methodology used to collect data did not identify those students who participated in Fall assessments when recording End of Year assessment results. (Goal: Plan to make the necessary changes in 08-09 so that the department can more accurately report growth in that specific student body as well as look at the overall EOY data for all K-6 students, which the department has done this year. For example, the department would report the percentage of students who showed growth on writing samples as well as reporting the overall percentage of students who scored a 4, 3, 2, or 1
- Assessment Participation — Overall, the department experienced a much greater assessment participation rate in every grade level for our End of Year assessments. Fall scores were reflective of a lower percentage of the student population. Goal: Maintain a more consistent assessment participation rate

### **New or Revised Annual Measurable Goals and Targets:**

#### Targets:

- Aim to decrease student turnover rate.
- Strengthen our data collection techniques. The department plans to make the necessary changes with data collection for 08-09 in order to more accurately report growth in that specific student body as well as look at the overall EOY data for all K-6 students, which was done this year. For example, the department would report the percentage of students who showed growth on writing samples as well as reporting the overall percentage of students who scored a 4, 3, 2, or 1.
- Maintain our overall assessment participation rate.
- Continue to assess and to build our assessment package to provide the most reliable and valuable means of gathering data to target instruction.

#### Annual Measurable Goals:

- Achieve a 10% or greater gain in PSSA scores for Math and Reading for grades 3-6 as a whole.
- Demonstrate individual growth in writing skills among 1st-6th grade students, more specifically at least 50% of students receiving a Fall score of a 1 or a 2 will raise their score by one point, and 85% of students scoring a 3 or a 4 will maintain their level of proficiency, with 15% growing to a 4.

### **Elementary Program - Locally Developed Tests**

Locally developed tests are used predominantly as progress monitoring tools to track growth, identify needs, and providing data to make more effective instructional decisions.

The main use of the quarterly assessments is to identify which students are on target, developing, needing improvement, or exceeding benchmarks, and who are in need of alternative strategies or interventions to build a strong foundation of academic skills to ensure future success.

The Open-Ended Response Math assessments were given as stand-alone assessments for the first time as an End of Year measure in 07-08, but will be given at the beginning, middle and end of year in 08-09 in order to improve student performance with open-

ended response items. Direct instruction for answering open-ended math questions and assess open-ended response items, scoring with an approved rubric, has been identified as an area for improvement.

Writing sample prompts are locally selected and presented in a PSSA—style format, as a test prep technique. This allows students to become familiar and more comfortable with not only the page format, but also with the genre specific grading rubrics. We will assign writing samples quarterly for progress monitoring purposes in 08-09, rather than Baseline and End of Year (07-08).

Locally developed assessments are also used as a way to communicate and dialogue with our Home Facilitators and students as to what strengths and needs the students have and as to whether or not they are working at grade level.

Progress monitoring tools, benchmarks assessors, and checking for mastery of standards throughout the year is invaluable as it directs teachers to focus instruction more effectively, meet students' needs to elicit growth, and to serve as a basis for evaluating our curriculum — the gaps in skill development and comprehension as well as the depth and breadth of content knowledge.

### **Elementary Program - Student Achievement Plan**

There are 5 main components of our student achievement plan:

- Providing appropriate placement, and curriculum and lessons, including differentiating instruction for above and below level students and supporting the development of readers through guided reading instruction at students' instructional reading levels.
- Providing on-going communication and interaction with Home Facilitators and students for input and feedback — including but not limited to phone calls, office hours, instant messaging, PALCSmail (e-mail system), surveys, field trips and gatherings to build rapport and student self-esteem (meet-and-greets, open house, back-to-school nights, etc.)
- Teacher-conducted instruction through Adobe Connect, our online classroom. These classroom experiences are for regular instruction, enrichment opportunities, re-teaching, as well as for teacher observation and alternative assessments, such as presenting a living history project with video and audio, and for developing speaking and listening skills, student—to-student and student-to-teacher.
- Record-keeping and individual student performance portfolios which are maintained electronically and include Moodle report cards, addendum report cards with teacher comments, progress reports, samples of student work, assessment results, and a means to keep notes and documentation in a central location.
- Strategies for teachers to use and an intervention plan for struggling students — including but not limited to Title 1, ESL, Special Education, and Guidance

Additional Assessment Instruments for Measuring Student Progress include:

#### ***Teacher administered and scored***

K-3 Informal Reading Inventory

The department uses Reading A-Z benchmarked passages and scoring rubrics. In addition to monitoring student IRIs with STAR Reading quarterly, and administered teacher-administered IRIs in grade 1 for MP3 and MP4 and in K, grade 2 and grade 3 at the end of the year. Using newly established quarterly reading benchmarks levels in grades K-3, and Semester benchmarks in grades 4-6, teachers will in 08-09 administer IRIs more frequently.

1st-2nd Grade Gentry's Developmental Spelling Test — administered and scored for progress monitoring purposes and to support decision-making for individual instruction

***Online administration and electronically scored***

K-6 Compass Learning Odyssey — standards-based/web-based assessments constructed from question bank and targeting standards of our choice for Baseline and End of Year assessments as well as for PSSA prep. Compass Baseline and End of Year tests are also used as one of our Title program criteria for qualification.

K-1 Imagination Station — web-based progress monitoring assessment and interactive teaching tool for Literacy Skill development for progress-monitoring and individualizing instruction

1st-6th Pearson — Online curriculum-based Science assessment system that reports mastery level of specific content questions for individual student and class performance

Assessments listed above are used for teacher-initiated Title referral documentation, for decision-making with regard to curriculum and student achievement, to monitor progress, and in general to report on achievement of students in our elementary program.

No single set of assessments or instruments functions independently of other sets or data collected from authentic or alternative assessment techniques, but rather functions as a part of a portfolio of performance. PSSA, STAR Reading and Math, Harcourt assessments, DIBELS, our locally developed assessments, and the instruments listed above constitute our components of our K-6 assessment package. This package supports our student achievement plan.

**b) Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School has numerous strategies and interventions at both the elementary and secondary levels to address students who are at-risk of failure or who are not making progress.**

**Elementary Program - Strategies and Interventions to Support At-Risk Students/Opportunities Afforded to Struggling Students**

- K-6 Orientation screening assessments in Language Arts and Math allow us to gather information about newly enrolling students to appropriately place them into our elementary program. Collaboration between Student Services and the Academic Team provides an effective process for student placement decisions
- In Language Arts, provided guided reading lessons and readers at instructional levels, monitor skill development and adjust tasks based on student

- developmental levels, such as with writing assignments. Some students are placed off grade level for their Language Arts placement; this option is especially effective for Kinders and First graders who do not have the foundation of skills or the exposure to schooling prior to attending our school. They can succeed, gain essential knowledge and skills and experience success
- In Math teachers use a variety of techniques to present alternative algorithms for problem-solving and a multitude of technology resources for closing gaps and strengthening comprehension of content. Teachers offer live chat sessions to work directly with students, and also provide the n option of placing students off grade level, depending on needs
  - For Social Studies and Science, teachers have audio texts and leveled readers available to support a below-level reader's comprehension of content. Teachers use alternative assessment techniques and a variety of assignments to stimulate interest and to reach those who learn and express themselves best through various modalities
  - Strategies such as the use of graphic organizers, the Fraayer Model, and teaching with Essential Questions and rubrics for grading student work supports struggling students
  - Our instructional design is consistent across subjects and grade levels for students ease of learning. K-3's basic design is based on linking learning, then to engage and educate (guided instruction and differentiation), provide active learning (independent work) and reflection (review), and lastly connecting learning to what's coming ahead
  - Academic Advisors work closely with students who are failing. See more under Student Academic Assistance Program
  - Support services, such as Title 1 services and Summer Success Programs, ESL services, and Special Education monitors to modify, adapt, and to collaborate with the regular classroom teacher. Setting standards-based IEP goals is an example of strategy
  - The department maintains a small class size at the K-6 level to provide opportunity for frequent interaction and monitoring of our 'lower school' student's needs. Our teachers at times work with students who are able to come to our offices for individual tutoring sessions
  - The department schedules IST-type meetings to address specific students' needs and to see the whole picture. This allows for effective planning and decision-making

### **Elementary Program - Evidence Demonstrating Effectiveness of Interventions**

- PSSA assessment results reported a significant gain in Proficient and Advanced students compared to last year. This is our most reliable indicator of student growth
- Student portfolios of performance and assessment results provide a way of tracking growth
- Record-keeping shows a decrease in the number of elementary students placed in our Student Academic Assistance program, likewise the decreased number of retention candidates
- Isolating data for targeted struggling students and reporting their growth rate would be ideal, although teachers do not presently have data within our department for that. Title students would be defined as our At-risk students and Title reports may show progress percentages for their identified students

- Parent feedback on the growth that their children have made since partaking in our school serves as another indicator of program effectiveness

**Local Assessment Aggregate Data** is included as **Attachment G**.

### **Student Assessment - Attachment**

- Student Assessment

### **Teacher Evaluation**

A) **The main features of Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School's Teacher Evaluation Plan** included evaluating teachers on an ongoing basis informally and formally by the Subject Area Coordinators, through a process called TDEF (Teacher Development and Evaluation Framework), which was created in-house (see below).

Teachers at PALCS were vetted through an extensive interview process that was directed by the Associate Director of Academics but includes a number of administrative team members (Subject Area Coordinators, CEO, Chief Academic Administrator, Business Manager, etc.).

Teachers were monitored via a computerized record of number of hours that they were logged into the school web system. A detailed log of activities performed online was kept for each teacher.

Additionally, the Associate Director of Academics and Subject Area Coordinators had the ability to view all of a teacher's communication with students and parents, as well as grading, comments, and lessons. This was done if a concern about instruction came up during the year.

In September of 2007, the entire PALCS faculty was introduced to TDEF. This new framework adapts the Charlotte Danielson model for teacher evaluation (as found in PDE Forms 426, 427, and 428) in order to match the demands of teaching in the cyber environment in general and at PALCS in particular. In this tool, the art of teaching is viewed through four domains, each broken out into three components, to create an overarching framework for thinking about virtual teaching:

- Domain 1: Planning and Preparation
- Domain 2: The Learning Environment
- Domain 3: Instruction
- Domain 4: Professional Responsibility

TDEF includes "positive indicators" to help evaluators to know what specific teacher behaviors to look for, as well as designated traits, skills, and strategies needed for success in each domain. Although TDEF does provide a structure for evaluation, including four performance levels, it is designed also to function as a framework for development, helping teacher focus in on particular areas for self-directed professional growth.

During the 2007-2008 school year, Subject Area Coordinators met regularly with individual teachers, the vast majority of whom were headquartered in the same office

space as the administrative staff and team leadership. In the fall semester, the spring semester, and then again at the end of the year, each Subject Area Coordinator conducted a one-on-one meeting with each faculty member in order to review performance and set goals for further growth. The TDEF Workbook was the vehicle for documenting these exchanges, as well as a place to record the teacher's own reflections on his or her progress. For the year-end meeting, the Subject Area Coordinator also filled out a TDEF Summary form that included both qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the teacher's performance through the year. These Summary forms were then reviewed and signed by the Associate Director of Academics and the Chief Academic Administrator. Teachers who wished to appeal their evaluation were given the opportunity to schedule meetings with the Associate Director of Academics, the Chief Academic Administrator, or both.

**B) A number of people are responsible for teacher and staff evaluation.** The Associate Director of Academics is directly responsible for evaluation of all teachers. Our current Associate Director of Academics is in the process of obtaining his principal's certification. Overseeing the Associate Director of Academics is the Chief Academic Administrator, who has served, in the past, as both a principal and a superintendent of schools. The Director of Student Services is responsible for evaluation of Student Services staff, and the CEO is responsible for evaluation of all administrative staff.

C) Professional development for evaluators, particularly in the areas of special education and instructional techniques that are unique to the mission of the charter school, included PDE seminars at the charter school conference, networking with other charter schools, special training provided for the Special Education Coordinator, and professional development offered by a consultant to PALCS who is a former superintendent of schools for two Pennsylvania districts.

Teachers received professional development on a weekly basis and participated in in-service trainings four times per year.

New teachers were required to complete an exhaustive three-day orientation, during which time the educational practices were thoroughly examined as well as the grading and student accountability system. New teachers were given training on educational software, the use of online resources, policies and procedures, and methods to make instruction effective in the online environment.

TDEF materials — Instructions for Evaluators, Summary Evaluation and Workbook — are included as **Attachments Ha, Hb and Hc**.

### **Teacher Evaluation - Attachments**

- Teacher Evaluation
- Teacher Evaluation
- Teacher Evaluation

## **SECTION V. GOVERNANCE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Leadership Changes**

During the 2007-2008 school year, **the following changes were made in the membership of the Board of Directors:** Terence Farrell and Peter Caso resigned from the Board in 2008 to pursue other interests. Gwenne Alexander joined the Board in 2008. Officers remained the same.

### Board of Trustees

Name of Trustee	Office (if any)
William Middleton	President
Donald L. Drain	Treasurer/Secretary
Shannon E. Royer	member
Gwenne Alexander	member

### Professional Development (Governance)

**Professional development for the governing body of the school** included ongoing training by former Board President and former School District Superintendent Dr. John Wingerter, as well as ongoing communication and consultation with the Pennsylvania Coalition of Charter Schools (PCCS) and PALCS solicitor Andrew Lehr, Esq. Ongoing and new Board member training will be provided using the following resources:

- BoardSource (formerly the National Center for Nonprofit Boards)
- Support Center for Nonprofit Management.
- Free Management Library provided by Authenticity Consulting LLC
- Pennsylvania School Boards Association
- American Association of School Administrators

### Coordination of the Governance and Management of the School

The Board of Directors is responsible for hiring, providing overall direction, and evaluating the Chief Executive Officer, who in turn manages the daily operation of the school. The CEO is evaluated by the Board on an annual basis.

In monthly Executive Sessions and at monthly Board meetings, comprehensive financial reports are presented for review; these reports are prepared by an independent accounting firm. Additionally, the Board commissions an annual financial audit by an independent accounting firm. Student enrollment and child accounting reports are presented to the Board, along with program reports submitted by each department within the school.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is the charter school's granting body. PALCS was visited by 2 members of the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Office of Community and Student Services. The school was also visited by Lisa Irgang of the Bureau of Special Education. Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School is in regular contact with the Office of Child Accounting and other departments within the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The CEO of Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School met this year with the Secretary of Education for the Commonwealth of

Pennsylvania. School staff attended conferences that were sponsored by the Department of Education.

Additionally, PALCS was visited by state senators, members of the state House of Representatives, and county officials.

During 2007-2008 the Board and staff of Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School worked with the Department of Education on follow-up to the Pennsylvania System of Cyber Charter Review (PSCCR) and the charter renewal. An Annual Report for 2006-2007 was submitted on August 1, 2007 through the e-strategic planning portal. Additionally, PALCS submitted all required PIMS reports.

All Board Meetings are held at 1332 Enterprise Drive, West Chester. The Executive Session begins at 5 p.m. and the Public Session begins at 6 p.m. **The schedule of meetings for 2008-2009** is included as **Attachment I**.

### **Coordination of the Governance and Management of the School - Attachment**

- Coordination of the Governance and Management of the School

### **Community and Parent Engagement**

During 2007-2008, the Board of Directors **supported opportunities for community and parent engagement in school activities** through a highly visible website ([www.palcs.org](http://www.palcs.org)).

The organization has on staff a parent liaison to serve as a tangible link to parents and families. The parent liaison works closely with the Student Services and academic departments, as well as the Strategic Planning and School Improvement Task Force, to help identify ways to improve the delivery of educational and support services.

PALCS continues to have on staff 6 Regional Area Community Coordinators to organize field trips and activities for families throughout the state.

During 2007-2008, 2 Open Houses were held for PALCS families at both ends of the state (Philadelphia and Pittsburgh areas). Students participated in department sponsored activities and had an opportunity to meet and talk with faculty and staff.

Under the direction of the Director of Student Programs, weekly chat sessions were held for parents on Wednesday evenings. Parents were given key informational updates during these sessions, and they were encouraged to ask questions and voice opinions on various topics.

Additionally, a Virtual Bulletin Board was added as a new technological feature for PALCS families. This Virtual Bulletin Board was used to post community and school-sponsored activities held in local regions throughout the state, in order to enhance opportunities for face-to-face interaction between students and families.

Special events such as the annual original murder mystery comedy play (written expressly for PALCS students) helped to build a sense of community.

The 2008 Graduation ceremony was held in Lancaster and attended by more than a thousand family members and friends, as well as 101 faculty members and the President of the Board of Directors. The special guest and keynote speaker was Pennsylvania State Representative Sam Rohrer.

## **SECTION VI. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Major fund-raising activities**

There **were no major fund-raising activities** for the 2007-2008 school year.

There **are no major fund-raising activities** planned for the 2008-2009 school year at this time.

### **Fiscal Solvency Policies**

**PALCS budgets for emergencies, shortfalls or delays in receiving state or federal monies** by keeping billing to school districts current and communicating to vendors that there may be delays in payment due to funding delays and by leasing computers and office equipment. **The Board has developed policies that govern Business Operations, Internal Controls, Business Policies and Procedures, Petty Cash and Investments.** Each month a financial report is presented to the Board of Directors by an independent accountant that details the current financial status.

### **Accounting System**

**PALCS budgets for emergencies, shortfalls or delays in receiving state or federal monies** by keeping billing to school districts current and communicating to vendors that there may be delays in payment due to funding delays and by leasing computers and office equipment. **The Board has developed policies that govern Business Operations, Internal Controls, Business Policies and Procedures, Petty Cash and Investments.** Each month a financial report is presented to the Board of Directors by an independent accountant that details the current financial status.

### **Accounting System**

The school uses the QuickBooks Accounting System. It follows these guidelines in the practices of accounting:



**The Preliminary Statements of Revenues, Expenditures & Fund Balances is included as [Attachment J](#).**

**Preliminary Statements of Revenues, Expenditures & Fund Balances - Attachment**

- Preliminary Statements of Revenues, Expenditures & Fund Balances

**Audit Firm, Date of Last Audit, Auditor's Opinion, and Any Findings Resulting From the Audit**

The accounting firm of Siegal and Drossner, PC conducted an Independent Audit for year ended June 30, 2007.

The audit team has been in and is working on a draft of an audit for school year 07-08, and will be complete in the fall. Preliminary statements of financial information can be found in the Preliminary Statements of Revenues, Expenditures & Fund Balances sheet.

The Auditor's Opinion and Findings Resulting From the Audit are included as [Attachment K](#).

**Audit Firm, Date of Last Audit, Auditor's Opinion, and Any Findings Resulting From the Audit - Attachment**

- Audit Firm, Date of Last Audit, Auditor's Opinion, and Any Findings Resulting From the Audit [View Back](#)

**Citations and follow-up actions for any State Audit Report**

We have not had a state audit, so there are no citations and follow-up actions.

**SECTION VII. FACILITY RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Acquisition of Facilities, Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment During the Last Fiscal Year**

PALCS acquired a facility at 1332 Enterprise Drive, West Chester, to use for the school's headquarters. The school leases additional facilities to house program initiatives, as well as a facility in Pittsburgh to serve families in the Western part of the state.

Video conferencing equipment was purchased and installed, based on recommendations from the charter renewal committee, to increase statewide access to educational programs and services. All furniture is purchased or leased for these facilities.

**Future Facility Plans and Other Capital Needs**

There are no immediate plans to acquire or lease additional facilities. However, the school has organized a long-range building plan committee made up of 10 staff members, a realtor, solicitor, banker, and Board members to evaluate and determine any future building needs.

Long-term capital needs include an expanded technology infrastructure, enhancements to facilitate cyber instructional delivery, webcasting opportunities, and opportunities for community outreach.

## **SECTION VIII. HEALTH AND SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Compliance With Health and Safety Requirements and Maintenance of Health and Immunizations Records for Students**

The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School **complied with health and safety** requirements by employing a Certified School Nurse to oversee health records and fulfill mandates for the Pennsylvania Department of Health. In addition to a second, part-time Certified School Nurse, one full-time and one part-time Health Room Assistants were employed to assist with health data monitoring and collection. School districts continue to be notified when new students enroll in PALCS with requests for their complete medical record files.

State mandated health screenings are routinely performed during enrollment orientations or scheduled appointments so that data may be recorded in student health records and referrals can be made accordingly. **Complete immunization records are required** and current physical and dental exams are requested for school enrollment.

The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School has developed **Emergency Preparedness Plans** for all buildings. Security systems are in place at each facility to provide a safe work and school environment. Building exits are clearly identified with instructions for efficient building evacuation posted in all classrooms.

**Evidence of PALCS' submission for Health reimbursement** is included as **Attachment L. The school's wellness policy is included as Attachment M.**

### **Compliance With Health and Safety Requirements and Maintenance of Health and Immunizations Records for Students - Attachments**

- Compliance With Health and Safety Requirements and Maintenance of Health and Immunizations Records for Students
- Compliance With Health and Safety Requirements and Maintenance of Health and Immunizations Records for Students
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- Compliance With Health and Safety Requirements and Maintenance of Health and Immunizations Records for Students

## Current School Insurance Coverage Policies and Programs

Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School **maintains the following insurance coverage policies and programs:**

### The Hartford

- Commercial General Liability
- Automobile Liability (Scheduled, Hired & Non-Owned)
- Excess/Umbrella Liability
- Workers Compensation and Employers' Liability
- Business Personal Property

### Lexington Insurance Co

- Sexual Misconduct Liability Insurance

### American International Companies

E&O, D&O, EPLI

**Evidence of Current School Insurance Policies and Programs** is included as **Attachment N.**

## Current School Insurance Coverage Policies and Programs - Attachment

- Current School Insurance Coverage Policies and Programs

## SECTION IX. ADMINISTRATIVE NEEDS

### Quality of Teaching and Other Staff

Total professional staff for Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School for school year 2007-2008 was 133, an increase from 2006-2007 of 28 professional staff member positions (21.2%). Of those 133 staff members, 43 were new (32.33%).

Of the 43 new professional staff members, 33 were with the school the whole year (76%).

From the 2007-2008 school year, 88.64% of the Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School professional staff member were retained for the 2008-2009 school year. Teachers choose to remain at Pennsylvania Leadership because of their desire to teach in an innovative environment and the impact that they have on their students. PALCS believes in collaboration amongst the staff and building a family atmosphere where each staff member is highly valued. Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School also works with teachers by offering flexibility as far as the start and end of their work day as well as opportunities to work from home if needed.

Out of the 15 teachers who did not return, 9 resigned to seek other opportunities and 6 were not retained for PALCS.

**Evidence of submission of the ESPP report** is included as **Attachment O**. The **PDE 414** is included as **Attachment P**.

### **Quality of Teaching and Other Staff - Attachments**

- Quality of Teaching and Other Staff
- Quality of Teaching and Other Staff

### **Student Enrollment**

**A) Student Enrollment policies and procedures** follow all applicable PDE requirements and state law. The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School board recognizes that all resident children in Pennsylvania qualify for admission to Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School as follows:

As a charter school, Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School shall not discriminate in its admission policies or practices on the basis of intellectual ability, or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, status as a person with a disability, proficiency in the English language or any other basis that would be illegal if used by a school district.

As a charter school, Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School may limit admission to a particular grade level, a targeted population group composed of at-risk students, or areas of concentration of the school such as mathematics, science or the arts.

As a charter school, Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School may establish reasonable criteria to evaluate prospective students as outlined in the school's charter.

If more students apply to Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School than the number of attendance slots available in the school, then students must be selected on a random basis from a pool of qualified applicants meeting the established eligibility criteria and submitting an application by the deadline established by the charter school. However, Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School may give preference in enrollment to a child of a parent who has actively participated in the development of the charter school and to siblings of students presently enrolled in the charter school. First preference shall be given to students who reside in the chartering school districts.

The Board of Trustees of PALCS authorizes the Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School as follows:

Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School will utilize an open enrollment plan to encourage all parents to consider enrolling their children. Any child who is qualified under the laws of Pennsylvania for admission to a public school is qualified for admission to Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School.

Applications for student slots must be submitted by a deadline that will be established and made known by Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School.

**Kindergarten is offered.** Students who wish to enroll must turn 5 years old by October 31 of their enrollment year.

If more students submit applications than can be accommodated by the school's capacity -class, grade, or building - a lottery will be held to enroll students on a specified date that will be made known to all applicants and their families.

All students whose enrollment forms were filed by the enrollment deadline will be separated by grade and entered into a lottery. A drawing of names will then be held by grade until all open slots in each grade level are filled, with preference given first to students who reside in the chartering school districts.

A waiting list will be maintained in order drawn by lot, if needed, for the admission of students at a grade level should space become available during the school year. Students whose applications are received after the deadline will be placed on the waiting list in the order that their applications are received. Preference will be given first to students who reside in the chartering school districts.

Students are allowed to withdraw from the charter school at any time, upon written notice by the child's parent or guardian and upon evidence of arrangements at an admitting school. The district of residence will be notified by the school when a student withdraws.

No tests will be administered to students in order to determine eligibility for admission.

Students who have been expelled from school because their behavior reflected concerns for their personal safety or for the safety of others will be reviewed individually and enrollment decisions will be made in full compliance with Pennsylvania law and with the State Board of Education regulations.

**Enrollment History by Grade Level, 2007-2008**

Grade	# Enrolled as of 9/7/07	# Added after 9/7/07	Dropped between 9/7/07 and 7/6/08	Ending Enrollment 07-08	% change	% turnover
K	26	19	9	36	38.46%	25.00%
1	37	23	16	44	18.92%	36.36%
2	34	18	13	39	14.71%	33.33%
3	51	15	23	43	15.69%	53.49%
4	47	28	17	58	23.40%	29.31%
5	64	35	26	73	14.06%	35.62%
6	82	33	19	96	17.07%	19.79%
7	123	64	43	144	17.07%	29.86%
8	179	85	53	211	17.88%	25.12%

9	165	152	64	253	53.33%	25.30%
10	321	145	143	323	0.62%	44.27%
11	266	165	119	312	17.29%	38.14%
12	295	57	64	288	-2.37%	22.22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1690</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>609</b>	<b>1920</b>	<b>13.61%</b>	<b>31.72%</b>

The number of students who completed the 2007 - 2008 school year who are currently enrolled to return for the 2008 - 2009 school year is 1,520.

**Number of Students Required to Leave PALCS:**

- 112 Withdrawn for reasons of Academic Truancy
- 53 Withdrawn for Truancy
- 0 Students were Expelled
- 653 Students left Voluntarily

B) Looking at our enrollment numbers during 2007-2008, one can see that enrollment grew by 13% this year. Although PALCS had a projected enrollment of 2300 at the end of the school year, the year ended with 398 fewer students than that number.

Slower growth and larger turnover than expected was due to our challenge with technology during the first semester, primarily due to our platform not being able to sustain the growth in our student population. The first semester saw fewer than normal enrollments and higher than normal withdrawals.

Our enrollment began to grow once again in January and was stable throughout the remainder of the school year, indicating a renewed interest in the school and its ability to affectively deliver instruction.

Of the students who left the school, 13.69% were withdrawn due to academic truancy and .06% were withdrawn for truancy. The remaining 79.82% of students chose to leave of their own accord. Reasons for leaving are varied. The chart below shows the reasons given by students who withdrew during the 2007-2008 school year. The information was gathered by a Student Services Representative at withdrawal during a phone exit interview. This was the first year an exit interview process was instituted across the board for all students who indicated they wanted to leave the school.



PALCS recognizes that cyber schooling is not for every student and family, and many of our withdrawals (51.4%) are because this type of schooling was not a good fit for the students. This accounts for 4 of the reasons shown above - "Parent-Student Relationship," "Socialization," "Motivation," and "Needs More Structure." The most frequent reason why students left us during 2007-2008 was "Parent-Student Relationship." PALCS has found that families are not prepared to deal with the changes that having students working at home full-time will cause for their families. The second most frequent reason, "Socialization," is another aspect of cyber schooling that many families are not capable of handling. Students frequently miss the socialization that a

brick and mortar educational institution can provide. Though PALCS does provide socialization opportunities, for families who indicate that this lack of socialization was why they were leaving our school, the socialization PALCS provided was not enough. "Motivation" was the fifth most frequent answer as to why families were leaving PALCS. The change to cyber education and the freedom it allows in the student work day is difficult for some students, and they find they are unsuccessful with creating a schedule that keeps them on-task. This also is the reason for the eighth most frequent answer, "Needs More Structure."

When one looks at the chart Previous and Future Schooling, one can see that the majority of students who withdrew during 2007-2008 came to us from a brick and mortar school (88.46%) so had no experience with cyber schooling previous to PALCS. After leaving PALCS, only 3.03% of students plan on going to another cyber chart school, indicating that the fit with the cyber environment was the issue, not necessarily the fit with PALCS.



There are also reasons for withdrawals (44.60%) that PALCS can address as a school. These include 7 of the reasons for withdrawal - "Student Performance," "Technology Issues," "Student-Teacher Relationship," "Workload," "Parent-Teacher Relationship," "Teaching Style," and "Completed GED" All of these responses were forwarded to our School Improvement Task Force Sub-Committee for Enrollment and Retention, and the conversation for how to lessen the instances of students and families leaving us for these reasons is ongoing.

Finally, there are reasons beyond our control (4.19%) that students leave us - "Moving" and "Personal Reasons."

**Student Enrollment Policies and Procedures** are included as **Attachment Q**.

## **Student Enrollment - Attachment**

- Student Enrollment

## **Transportation**

Since PALCS is a cyber charter school, no **transportation** is provided.

## **Food Service Program**

As a cyber charter school, Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School does not have a **food service program**.

## Student Conduct

A) Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School's **expectations for student behavior and discipline are comprehensive**. These policies include an Honor Code and Students Rights and Responsibilities, Disciplinary Records, Special Education Students and Acceptable Use of Technology. In addition, the school has definite Rules of Conduct, a description of Level I and Level II Offenses, and Approved Corrective Action for those offenses.

Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School has high expectations for all students. In order for students to reach his/her potential, the school environment should be safe, orderly, and encourage the fullest possible educational development of each student. PALCS will not tolerate any actions from the student that in any way interferes with the delivery of educational services, jeopardizes the health, safety, and well being of any member of the school family, or threaten the integrity and stability of the school itself.

Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School's rules of conduct and discipline policy defines the types of offenses that would lead to exclusion from the school and are published for teachers, students, and families per PA Code §12.6 in the PALCS Parent and Student Handbook.

Offenses are broken into 2 types: Level I and Level II. All offenses for Level I and Level II are listed in the PALCS Parent and Student Handbook per PS § 12.6 with descriptions of conduct violations and approved actions for both Level I and Level II offenses.

If a student commits a level I or II offense that warrants a suspension or expulsion, the following steps are taken:

- Parents are notified in writing of the suspensions and reasons for suspension, and are given an opportunity to respond unless the health, safety or welfare of the school community is threatened per PA Code § 12.6(ii, iii).
- If the suspension exceeds 3 school days, the student and the parent shall be given the opportunity for an informal hearing per PA Code § 12.6(iv).
- The following are due process requirements for an informal hearing as regulated by per PA Code § 12.8(c, 1, 2, I, ii, iii, iv, v).
- Notification of the reasons for the suspension shall be given in writing to the parents or guardian and to the student;
- Sufficient notice of the time and place of the informal hearing shall be given;
- A student has the right to question any witnesses present at the hearing;
- A student has the right to speak and produce witnesses on his own behalf; and
- The district shall offer to hold the informal hearing within the **first 5 days of the suspension**.

If a student's actions result in expulsion from PA Leadership Charter School, a hearing must be held before the governing board per PA Code § 12.8(b) and a majority vote of the entire school board is required to expel a student.

The following are due process requirements for an informal hearing as regulated by per PA Code § 12.8(b, 1 et. all).

- Notification of the charges shall be sent to the student's parents or guardian by certified mail;
- Sufficient notice of the time and place of the hearing must be given;
- The hearing shall be held in private unless the student or parent requests a public hearing;
- The student has the right to be represented by counsel;
- The student has the right to be presented with the names of witnesses against the student, and copies of the statements and affidavits of those witnesses;
- The student has the right to request that any such witnesses appear in person and answer questions or be cross-examined;
- The student has the right to testify and present witnesses on his own behalf;
- A record must be kept of the hearing, either by a stenographer or by tape recorder.
- The student is entitled, at the student's expense, to a copy of the transcript; and
- The proceeding must be held with all reasonable speed.

Where the student disagrees with the results of the formal hearing, recourse is available in the appropriate court of the Commonwealth. If it is alleged that a constitutional issue is involved, the student may file a claim for relief in the appropriate Federal district court.

A copy of the **discipline policy** for students at Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School is included as **Attachment Q**.

B) The **number of students suspended this year was 0 and there were no expulsions**.

#### **Student Conduct - Attachment**

- Student Conduct

**ASSURANCE FOR THE OPERATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL SERVICES AND PROGRAMS**

**School Year: 2008**

The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School within Chester County IU 24 assures that the charter school will comply with the requirements of 22 PA Code Chapter 711 and with the policies and procedures of Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). PDE will specify, in writing, policies and procedures to be followed. Requests for any deviations from these regulations, policies, and procedures must be made in writing to PDE. The charter school assures:

1. There are a full range of services, programs and alternative placements available for placement and implementation of the special education programs in the charter school.
2. The charter school has adopted a "child find" system to locate, identify and evaluate children who are thought to be a child with a disability eligible for special education residing within the charter school's jurisdiction. "Child find" data is collected, maintained, and used in decision-making. Child find process and procedures are evaluated for effectiveness. The charter school implements mechanisms to disseminate child find information to the public, organizations, agencies, and individuals on at least an annual basis.
3. The charter school has adopted policies and procedures that assure that students with disabilities are included in general education programs and extracurricular and non-academic programs and activities to the maximum extent appropriate in accordance with an Individualized Education Program.
4. The charter school will comply with the PA Department of Education annual report requirements including special education information.
5. The charter school follows the state and federal guidelines for participation of students with disabilities in state and charter school-wide assessments including the determination of participation, the need for accommodations, and the methods of assessing students for whom regular assessment is not appropriate.
6. The charter school assures the Pennsylvania Department of Education that funds received through participation in the medical assistance reimbursement program, ACCESS, will be used to enhance or expand the current level of services and programs provided to students with disabilities in this local education agency.

**This assurance must be signed by the Board President and the Chief Executive Officer for the charter school to operate services and programs.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Executive Officer  
2008 - 2009 Annual Report for Pennsylvania Charter Schools

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Verify that all DATA reports to PDE are complete

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE PAGE**

*Identify the charter school's Chief Executive Officer.*

**Name** Dr. James Hanak

**Title** CEO

**Phone** 610.701.3333 ext. 103

**Fax** 610.701.3393

**E-mail** jakank@palcs.org

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*Signature of the Chief Executive Officer and Date*

*Identify the charter school's President of the Board of Trustees.*

**Name** Bill Middleton

**Title** President of Board of Trustees

**Phone** 610.430.3497

**Fax** 0

**E-mail** bmiddle623@aol.com

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*Signature of the President of the Board of Trustees and Date*

*Identify the charter school's Special Education Contact Person.*

**Name** Amy Pancher-Murphy

**Title** Special Education Coordinator

**Phone** 610.701.3333 ext. 105

**Fax** 610.701.3339

**E-mail** amurphy@palcs.org

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*Signature of the Special Education Contact Person and Date*

**Signature Page**

**Signature Page - Attachment**

- Signature Page