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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** **Tuesday, October 09, 2007**

**Charter School:** Nittany Valley CS  
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## **SECTION I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Organization Description**

Nittany Valley Charter School was originally chartered in 1998. After nine years of working to implement our original concept, the school family, including teachers, staff and trustees, has found effective ways to contribute to the academic opportunity that we provide to our students. As

a school, we have made it through the growing pains of infancy and the rebellion of the young adult years and are finally at a level of maturity allowing us to focus on the business of educating our special group of students. Together, we continue to learn and to improve what we do to best meet the needs of our diverse student body.

Nittany Valley Charter School is a small school with 48 students and five full-time teachers. Four of the teachers serve in the regular classroom; one full-time Special Education teacher works to meet the needs of our identified and struggling students. We also now have three part-time classroom assistants whose roles are to support the teachers in the ways we, as a team, determine would best serve our students. Our school serves grades one through eight. The student population reflects the community of this university town, with diverse cultural and national backgrounds, family education levels, and socio-economic standings. Yet the school provides a close-knit learning community, in large part due to the family emphasis with multiple siblings attending the school and mandatory parent participation.

The Nittany Valley Charter School Mission Statement itemizes the core beliefs of the staff and families of this school: each learner is an individual with different strengths and challenges; parents are a vital part of each child's education; involvement in the community enhances learning; and an understanding of and respect for our environment is necessary for the future.

Respecting each child's individualism preempts a promise of knowledge and skills in a given time frame. However, providing a comprehensive curriculum along with instruction in skills necessary for future learning prepares each child based on his or her ability. Each child should be prepared to progress with an education based on the state mandated standards. At a minimum, each child will be prepared to grow toward a life that realistically represents their ability level.

Although many aspects of the program at NVCS are innovative, few of them are unique. All around the country, educators are struggling to improve education. In some cases we have learned from their efforts and, at times, they have implemented aspects of our program. Without a doubt, the three most important aspects of our program in furthering the academic success of the children are small class size, parent involvement, and individualized learning. Our environmental education program, in which children spend time in class and time out of doors, is also a significant part of our program.

Everyone at NVCS values each and every whole child. Not only do we work to further their academic progress but to ensure growth in physical, social, and emotional well-being. However, caring for the child is not the only consideration in preparing for the future. Our values dictate that we work to help our students become responsible citizens and care-takers of our earth.

## **Core Purpose**

### **Mission**

The mission of the Nittany Valley Charter School is:

To provide a flexible learning environment with small classes and a high teacher-student ratio where individualized instructional programs are designed to meet the needs of the whole child. We believe that school must be able to accommodate each child's individual learning style and developmental pace, and respond not only to their intellectual needs, but equally importantly to their emotional, social, and physical needs.

To provide opportunities for students to interact with a variety of instructional materials, as well as to stress the importance of learning from each other, from adults, and from community resources. We believe experiences outside the traditional classroom setting are an essential component of learning.

To involve parents as an integral part of the overall school program.

To integrate the learning process with a personal understanding of the natural environment.

Our vision is a school where individualized instruction, small classes, and a flexible, open classroom environment encourages the development of an intrinsic motivation to learn. This offers the opportunity for the academic success of all students and also contributes to the essential character traits of self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-sufficiency.

The need for this charter school comes from the broad spectrum of children's educational needs. The small classes and high teacher-student ratio at Nittany Valley Charter School make it possible for teachers to individually design each student's educational program. This creates an environment where all children can strive to reach their highest potential.

We feel the charter school model is perfect for our mission. It gives Nittany Valley Charter School the autonomy to admit those students whose families are in agreement with the mission and are willing to uphold the requirements of the school's charter. That autonomy will also be important to hiring staff who must also be dedicated to the school's mission and all aspects of its implementation. The charter school will afford the opportunity of an option in education to all district students.

## **Vision**

### Vision Statement (Core Purpose)

Education would be a simple process if everyone learned in the same way and valued the same knowledge and skills. If we were all headed to the same place and could get there in the same way, there would be little need for charter schools.

At Nittany Valley Charter School, we hold a vision of every child learning in the way that is best for them and having a major role in determining what they will learn. As involved, valued learners they will develop a foundation for continued growth, both academically and as human beings. They will have the confidence to ask for help when needed and to work toward personal goals. Every student has limitations, strengths, and their own personal style. By developing those strengths and overcoming limitations, each child will move ahead in their own style to meet their potential.

To do this, we cannot ignore the whole child as we concentrate on academics. Rather, we must first acknowledge the emotional, physical, and social needs of the child. Meeting those needs can help the student achieve academically.

To accommodate 48 different learners, flexibility is key. We need teachers with many strengths and talents; we need a curriculum that easily adjusts to different interests and levels of skills; we need caring support personnel to provide for all of each child's needs. Still, as a school we cannot do this alone. We must involve parents in all aspects of the school; we must reach out to the community to give and to receive; we must use resources provided locally, statewide, and internationally through the use of technology and interactions with others.

Our small size is key to our success with our mission. Small classes with highly qualified teachers and paraprofessionals and a small school environment where everyone feels safe and comfortable enable us to successfully fulfill our vision.

As our students change, so must our program change. It is not up to us to discover “the right way” to do school, but rather to continue to take the time to know our students and their needs and to devote ourselves to meeting those needs. Where we are going and how we are going to get there will vary as long as our students and our world continue to change.

## **Shared Values**

At Nittany Valley Charter School we value an environment that responds to the unique developmental needs of the whole child, including the physical (gross and fine motor skills), the social (cooperative teamwork, conflict resolution, and independence), the emotional (self-control, confidence, security, and happiness), as well as the intellectual, so that each student develops into a healthy, happy, productive adult. We recognize the importance of academic and non-academic goals and objectives.

A. Our academic goals and objectives:

1. Provide an individualized program for each student to recognize and meet:

a. Individual needs for learning pace

b. Individual learning styles

c. Individual interests

2. Provide opportunities for each student's active involvement with all curriculum areas by providing and encouraging:

a. Activities that are relevant to each student

b. Activities that integrate various subject areas

c. Activities that foster an appreciation of the environment

d. Activities that foster self-expression

e. Active involvement with instructional materials, each other, adults, and

community resources

3. Provide a specially prepared environment maximizing learning by:

a. Maintaining a non-threatening, non-competitive learning experience

b. Maintaining continuity in instructional sequence, behavioral expectations, and experiences with students and teachers

c. Maintaining open learning, utilizing community facilities and moving outside of the classroom whenever appropriate

- d. Maintaining flexibility and readily adjusting to individual needs
4. Provide a balanced educational program that includes:
- a. Activities across the spectrum of learning experiences, from interactions with nature to use of the latest technology
  - b. Elements of varied educational philosophies
  - c. Both individual and group learning activities
5. Provide preparation for each child's continued learning by ensuring:
- a. A strong foundation in mathematics, communication/language arts, sciences, and social studies
  - b. A mastery of the processes of learning
  - c. The development of higher-order thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and creativity
  - d. The continued intrinsic motivation to learn
6. Provide the basis for self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-sufficiency by encouraging:
- a. Self-directed learning and self-evaluation through goal setting
  - b. Perseverance in meeting challenges
  - c. A respect for a wide diversity of individuals and cultures
- B. Our non-academic goals and objectives:
1. Provide an emphasis on physical development by including a variety of activities:
- a. For gross motor development
  - b. For fine motor development
  - c. Contributing to personal health
2. Provide an emphasis on social development by offering experiences:
- a. With cooperative teamwork
  - b. With conflict resolution
  - c. That contribute to independence
3. Provide an emphasis on emotional development by developing:

- a. Self-control
- b. Confidence gained through significant successes
- c. Feelings of security which are accomplished through self-reliance and an understanding of one's own values

To accomplish all of these goals and objectives, we provide small classes with a high teacher-student ratio. The teachers operate as a team to meet the needs of each child. We require the involvement of parents with the school and their child's learning experiences. We integrate these goals in the development of activities and experiences designed to teach the school's curriculum.

## **Academic Standards**

At Nittany Valley Charter School the academic program provides a strong foundation in the core subjects of mathematics, communication/language arts, sciences and social studies. In addition, students study environmental education, Spanish, music, art, physical education and health. Teachers incorporate the state standards into their teaching and all students participate in state mandated testing.

Reading, writing, grammar, and spelling are taught through integration with social studies, science, and environmental education, as well as through specific skill lessons. Through read-aloud time in younger grades, book groups, poetry study, group reading, and individual choice reading, students expand their knowledge of and appreciation for literature. Students write in journals, do weekly writing assignments, and write larger projects as part of their thematic studies.

In mathematics, students work individually or in small groups according to their abilities and learning styles. There is opportunity for students at any level to review material and to be challenged with new concepts at their own pace. Many students catch up quickly if they are behind their grade level and those who are ready to advance can easily do so. Students learn problem-solving skills at all levels and algebra and geometry are introduced early.

Social studies and science are taught through integrated units that often involve the whole school. Using a four-year rotation, students study history from the dinosaurs to the 21st century and geography from pole to pole with all seven continents in between, based on the processes of learning rather than the memorization of facts. Building on prior knowledge, students develop questions that intrigue them on each topic. Reading, researching, and completing projects all contribute to their understanding and prepares them to be independent learners.

Science units are also on a rotation, meaning that a student will be introduced to content as a primary student and then receive more advanced instruction as a middle schooler. In addition to our weekly environmental education lessons, students have whole units based on science, such as Oceans, Simple Machines, or Chemistry. In addition, NVCS participates in a program with Penn State University in which students and professors come into our classrooms to teach concepts and share materials that few elementary or middle school students have access to.

Environmental Education is a vital component of the Nittany Valley Charter School. Each week, the Environmental program includes a 45 minute classroom session. In the fall and spring, the program is supplemented by a half-day or full-day field trip. The classroom time can be structured into mini-lessons, activities, and/or observation but its ultimate goal is to give the students the

information needed to then go out into the field and conduct real environmental activities. The field trips give the students a chance to apply book learning to a real life experience, foster in them an appreciation and sense of stewardship for nature, and teach them about our natural environment, geology, and cultural history. Perhaps most importantly, they also provide opportunities for team building, cooperation, adventure, and the sense of accomplishment that comes from hiking up a mountain, going through a cave, or learning how to steer a canoe.

Spanish studies begin in first grade and continue through eighth. Much of the learning is self-paced, individual work with the advantage of having a class for group work and conversational practice. The students learn vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, reading, and writing and study about Spanish speaking cultures.

Music class provides students with a variety of vocal and instrumental opportunities, depending on the interests and abilities of each group of children. Students learn music appreciation, study basic music theory, and sing and/or provide instrumental accompaniment. Students who are interested can learn keyboarding, guitar, or choral singing and they have three or four opportunities for performance each year.

Art is sometimes tied in with thematic studies so that students are painting while lying on their backs like Michelangelo or learning about the physical properties of light or illustrating a group project book about the voyage of a toy duck down the Susquehanna Watershed. Students also have the opportunity to take courses in pottery, drawing, and painting.

Physical Education is an active, fun program with a variety of games and activities that build skill levels, promote physical confidence, encourage team building, and increase fitness levels. The students play sports like soccer, tennis, and basketball as well as participate in games like Pickle Ball, Wacky Ball, and "Andy's Crazy Ball Bounce."

Health is taught first in practice with a healthy, high-protein snack offered at morning break, two active, outdoor play periods a day in addition to PE and hikes and other outdoor activities as a part of Environmental Education. Students also take a bi-weekly health class to learn about hygiene, healthy choices, and drug abuse prevention.

Nittany Valley Charter School's motto is "We work hard today to make dreams come true tomorrow." Perhaps we should have added " . . .while having a good time." Our well rounded program with primary concern for the well being of the whole child and a strong academic program allows each child to meet their fullest potential. Student accomplishment on Pennsylvania System of School Assessment and the Terra Nova exam, each administered yearly, prove that students can meet their academic potential while enjoying the process of learning.

### **Strengths and Challenges**

Nittany Valley Charter School has developed a great strength in working with individual students and meeting the needs of each child. Teachers are continually attending professional education seminars on students with special needs and new support staff is being added to help implement best teaching practices with all students. Students feel that they belong here, they feel safe and important. This allows them to achieve to the best of their ability.

An ongoing challenge at our school is balancing an acceptance of our students with their disabilities and the level of change necessary for them to continue to find success in other environments. Teaching the students strategies to be independent learners and contributing citizens is an important part of our curriculum. Helping students to modify unacceptable behaviors related to their disabilities is also an important goal at NVCS.

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

## Strategic Planning Process

The Board of Directors of our school is made up of parents, teachers, and the head administrator. As a board, they determine how best we can meet the mission of our school. To develop our strategic plan, the board surveyed the families and staff of the school in regards to their priorities for the future. The survey clearly conveyed the direction that the school is to follow as it continues to serve its students. The number one priority was to hire and retain highly qualified teachers. Continual professional development is to be supported at the highest level possible. The second priority was the improvement and maintenance of a safe environment conducive to learning. In the near future, this involves remodeling and enlarging our existing school building. As always, meeting our mission dictates how we will address the educational needs of our students.

## Strategic Planning Committee

Name	Affiliation	Membership Category	Appointed By
Carolyn Maroncelli	Nittany Valley Charter School	Administrator	Carolyn Maroncelli
Chris Sandoval	Nittany Valley Charter School	Board Member	Penny Sandoval
Danielle Betz	Nittany Valley Charter School	Board Member	Penny Sandoval
Eric Grele	Nittany Valley Charter School	Board Member	Penny Sandoval
Joyce Kreuter	Nittany Valley Charter School	Middle School Teacher	Carolyn Maroncelli
Kara Martin	Nittany Valley Charter School	Other	Carolyn Maroncelli
Mike Fogelsanger	Nittany Valley Charter School	Middle School Teacher	Carolyn Maroncelli
Penny Sandoval	Nittany Valley Charter School	Board Member	Penny Sandoval
Phyllis Little	Nittany Valley Charter School	Parent	Penny Sandoval
Shelby Green	Nittany Valley Charter School	Special Education Representative	Carolyn Maroncelli

## Goals, Strategies and Activities

### **Goal: Attendance/work completion**

*Description:* Students will have 95% attendance based on hourly accounting with a reduction in tardiness and/or 95% of assignments turned in on time

### **Strategy: Reduce tardiness**

*Description:* Tardiness is currently a chronic problem for 18.75% of our students. They miss the plan for the day and disturb the class when they arrive.

*Activities:*

Activity	Description	
Clear expectations	Parents and students will be informed of expectations in handbook and at back to school meeting	
Person Responsible	Timeline for Implementation	Resources

Carolyn Maroncelli	Start: N/A Finish: N/A	\$0.00
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Activity	Description	
Communication	Communicate with parents encouraging attendance	
Person Responsible	Timeline for Implementation	Resources
Carolyn Maroncelli	Start: N/A Finish: N/A	\$0.00

**Strategy: Work completion**

*Description:* Students who miss school to participate in educational activities show high achievement if missed work is completed on time.

*Activities:*

Activity	Description	
Clear expectations	Parents and students will be informed of expectations in handbook and at back to school meeting	
Person Responsible	Timeline for Implementation	Resources
Carolyn Maroncelli	Start: N/A Finish: N/A	\$0.00

Activity	Description	
Communication	Communicate with parents encouraging assignments to be completed when school is missed	
Person Responsible	Timeline for Implementation	Resources
Carolyn Maroncelli	Start: N/A Finish: N/A	\$0.00

**Goal: Language Arts**

*Description:* At least 75% of all students will make progress in Reading, Vocabulary, or Language as measured by the annual state-wide PSSA assessments and/or district administered Terra Nova. Students already scoring 95% will be excluded from this data.

**Strategy: Individualize instruction**

*Description:* Each student's areas of weakness in reading, vocabulary, or language will be expressly targeted by individual or small group instruction.

*Activities:*

Activity	Description	
Authentic practice	Students will participate in multiple authentic practice situations that connect to the individual student.	
Person	Timeline for Implementation	Resources

<b>Responsible</b>		
Carolyn Maroncelli	Start: N/A Finish: N/A	\$0.00

**Goal: Mathematics**

*Description:* At least 75% of all students will show improvement in Mathematics, as measured by the annual state-wide PSSA assessments and/or the district administered Terra Nova. Students already scoring above 95% will be excluded from the data.

**Strategy: Direct instruction in areas of weakness**

*Description:* Students will receive direct instruction to improve mathematics test performance  
*Activities:*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>	
Highlight key words	Students will highlight or underline key words and operation signs while completing math sheets and tests	
<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Timeline for Implementation</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Carolyn Maroncelli	Start: N/A Finish: N/A	\$0.00

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>	
Problem solving strategies	Students will be taught a variety of problem solving strategies with repeated practice in each method.	
<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Timeline for Implementation</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Carolyn Maroncelli	Start: N/A Finish: N/A	\$0.00

**Strategy: Individualize instruction**

*Description:* Make mathematics instruction meaningful to each student  
*Activities:*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>	
Integrate math into student projects	A math component will be integrated into student projects at least 20% of the time	
<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Timeline for Implementation</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Carolyn Maroncelli	Start: N/A Finish: N/A	\$0.00

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
Meaningful activities	Students will participate in meaningful activities that connect to the student at least 20% of the time and have the number relationship to the activity clearly explained

<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Timeline for Implementation</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Carolyn Maroncelli	Start: N/A Finish: N/A	\$0.00

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>	
Target weaknesses	Each student's areas of weakness in mathematics will be expressly targeted by individual or small group instruction	
<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Timeline for Implementation</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Carolyn Maroncelli	Start: N/A Finish: N/A	\$0.00

### **SECTION III. QUALITY OF SCHOOL DESIGN**

#### **Rigorous Instructional Program**

#### **Rigorous instructional program**

**The curriculum at NVCS is constantly evolving as the state standards continue to be developed in various subject areas and the population of the school changes. Teachers continually evaluate students' interests and learning with current curriculum and incorporate new content and teaching strategies as required.**

**The PA content standards form the basis for our curriculum. Teachers and volunteer educators have developed year-by-year checklists to assist classroom teachers in progressing towards the benchmark standards in all of the major subject areas. Looking at the big picture presented in each group of standards, units are developed to deliver content material in a relevant and integrated manner. Yearly state assessments show that our curriculum is more than meeting the proficient standards in most cases.**

**The NVCS curriculum revolves around a four-year rotation of units to present standards-based material to all students at an appropriate level. Whenever appropriate, students are pre-tested on subject matter and skills prior to class instruction. Their instruction is then compacted to allow the advanced learner to move ahead as appropriate. Background content or skill instruction is offered to students who require such remediation. Students benefit from individualized instruction, working at their**

own pace to move ahead in math and other subjects if skills and knowledge warrant it. Enrichments are offered with mixed age groups to further involve students in areas of learning that are of special interest to them.

Using cues from students, the teachers at NVCS have the liberty to engage in inquiry-based learning in all areas. From a few extra moments during a regularly scheduled lesson to entire units based on a student's questions, teachers take advantage of each child's natural curiosity to further their learning. An object or article that may pique a student's interest is offered in the classes on a regular basis. Reading The New York Times each morning in the middle school classroom connected unit materials to what is happening in the world today. Students were anxious to learn more about the lead stories or articles discovered in special interest sections, the Science section being a favorite of many. In addition, all students have convenient access to the Internet for in-depth study in a particular area. Students are encouraged to continue their inquiries with the benefit of conversation and research with their parents. Individualizing instruction and allowing students to pursue areas of greatest interest allow for significant in-depth study. Both individual lessons and entire units are designed with a progression of knowledge, incorporating an application phase whenever possible. To apply their new knowledge, students must have an in-depth understanding.

The first step in accelerating skill development, content knowledge, or learning strategies is a thorough understanding of why the child is lagging in this area. Following informal evaluation, diagnostic testing is administered by the classroom teacher or special education teacher, as necessary. Instructional methods that assist the individual child are then put in place. The classroom teacher is offered assistance in the process from special education teachers or aides and parent volunteers. One-on-one instruction is readily available if needed in addition to the regular individualized classroom instruction. Students who qualify are further offered after school assistance by approved service providers.

A variety of strategies are employed to actively engage students in the learning process. At all grade levels, students set academic and behavioral goals on a regular basis. They are taught to recognize their responsibility for their own learning. Students

**evaluate the learning materials and activities offered and offer suggestions for ways that the teacher can further assist their learning. The learning activities themselves are usually student-centered, activity based lessons that draw on many skills and subject areas. Students may work alone or in a group to complete project-based activities. Students speak, move, create, share, and further engage in active involvement with their learning. All-school presentations or competitions developed by the students at the culmination of their learning are very memorable and popular with the students.**

**Teachers work together as a team to meet the needs of each child. They help each other to determine which of three ways of individualizing will be most effective for a given assignment or a given student. The learning style of each child is determined through inventories and observation. Necessary accommodations are then made to maximize the student's learning ability. Content area assignments are differentiated to help individualize content, process, and product. Finally, students are allowed to work in their strongest intelligence but are also challenged to work in and strengthen areas that are not naturally as strong for them. Process and product integrate the multiple intelligences. All teachers are trained in these three areas and are encouraged to use these strategies to engage students in successful learning.**

**The goals of the mission at NVCS also include ways to actively engage a student in the learning process. The use of experts from the community, the use of a variety of technologies, and learning experiences and application of knowledge outside the classroom all enrich the curriculum at Nittany Valley Charter School.**

#### **Rigorous Instructional Program - Attachments**

- Rigorous instructional program -Professional Development Approval Letter
- Rigorous instructional program -Teacher Induction Approval Letter

#### **English Language Learners**

##### **English Language Learners**

In 2007, NVCS had the first student enter who qualified as an English Language Learner. We provided testing for the student with the cooperation of Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania. The testing showed that the student no longer required supplemental language services. Although some of our other students are bilingual, all speak, read, and write English as appropriate for their grade level.

In preparation for future ELL students, one of our paraprofessionals, who is bilingual, is completing the ELL certification training.

## **English Language Learners - Attachment**

- ELL Report

## **Graduation Requirements**

Although NVCS has students only through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, we work diligently to prepare students to meet high school graduation requirements by offering standards-based curriculum and learning strategy instruction to all students to build a strong foundation for their future academic success.

## **Special Education**

Nittany Valley Charter School's small class size and individualized approach makes it ideal for an inclusionary model of special education. Most students receive all services in the regular education classroom with itinerant support. Students who require extra instruction in a given subject area may be pulled out individually or with a small group. In addition, support services are contracted for students who require occupational, speech, physical, or psychological therapy.

At NVCS, we believe that all students can learn. It is our responsibility to discover how they learn best and to provide the level of support that meets their needs.

At the beginning of each year, the classroom teachers informally evaluate students to determine the best academic program within their classroom of peers. If a student appears to have difficulty grasping objectives, the student support team will contact the parent(s) and determine if further formal evaluations are needed. When necessary, we contract related services, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. If needed, an individual educational program is set up for a child. Our learning support teachers, classroom teachers, and paraprofessionals work with each child, as needed, to help them meet his or her goals. With educational support and our small, safe environment, special needs students are provided excellent opportunities for success at Nittany Valley Charter School.

### Special Education - Attachments

- Special Education-Behavior Support Policy
- Special Education-Child Find Policy
- Special Education-Independent Education Evaluation
- Special Education-Surrogate Parent Policy

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart I

Teacher	FTE	Type of class or support	Location	# of Students	Other Information
Kay Delaney	1	Learning Support	Resource Room	4	Ms. DeLaney departed half way through the year. She administered our special education program half time and helped students in learning support half time.
Shelby Green	1	Learning Support/Behavior Support	Classroom	14	Until Ms. Delaney left the school, Ms. Green was mainly responsible for learning support. She took over as special education administrator as well as helping with learning support.

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart II

Organization	FTE	Type of class or support	Location	# of Students	Other Information
0	0	0	0	0	Does not apply

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart III

Title	Location	FTE
Special Education Supervisor	Resource Room	1
Special Education teacher	Resource room and classroom	1
Paraprofessional (3)	Classroom	1
Personal Care Provider	Classroom	1

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart IV

IU, Public Agency, Organization, or Individual	Title/Service	Amount of Time Per Week
Strawberry Fields	Speech Therapy	3

Strawberry Fields	Physical Therapy	1
Clear-Care	Occupational Therapy	2

## SECTION IV. ACCOUNTABILITY

### Student Assessment - Primary

Test/Classification	K	1	2	3	4	5
PSSA	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Terra Nova Second Edition	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PASA	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

### Student Assessment - Secondary

Test/Classification	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
PSSA	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Terra Nova Second Edition	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
PASA	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No

### Student Assessment

Students at NVCS receive two batteries of standardized tests each year, the state assessment and the Terra Nova. We use the results of both of these instruments to check our students' progress and to set goals for improvement. Because our school is so small, some years with only 3 or 4 students in a single grade, a local assessment does not give us a broad enough prospective on our students' achievement. For this reason, we use the Terra Nova as a second norm referenced assessment.

In the attached sheet of scores on the Terra Nova, scores reflecting significant improvement or lack of improvement are highlighted. This helps us to see which children need additional help- such as Classroom Plus tutoring- and which teachers need professional development in a particular subject area.

In general, our scores show very high levels of achievement. Over half of our students scored in the advanced range on the PSSA's and 65% had one or more scores in the top 10 percentile points in the Terra Nova. Almost all students falling into the basic or below basic range are special education students and already receive extra support. Of our special education students, more than half scored proficient or above on all of their PSSA's. These test scores help us to update academic plans and to reevaluate staff placements for paraprofessionals. Additionally, our year's professional development plans reflect needs determined through the analysis of test scores.

Students are also evaluated continually and less formally throughout the school year. Teachers keep records of all student progress and report it on a weekly basis to parents. Three times a year, these observations, test scores, and projects are evaluated for a more formal reporting. The information in these reports is used to develop each child's academic program. Failure to make adequate progress with intervention usually leads to an evaluation for special needs.

One strategy used for improving performance is assessing if the content and skills being presented is at an appropriate level and that the student has adequate background knowledge. If this is the case, and the student "connects" with the material, additional support in the classroom is our next step. We have four fulltime regular education teachers and six paraprofessionals offering assistance as needed. If after a period of time, a student is unable to make progress, an evaluation is recommended and provided by the school. The majority of our students make wonderful progress in our small, personal environment. The very few that do not usually choose to stay at our school as long as possible and then transfer to a life skills class at the high school.

## **Student Assessment - Attachment**

- Local Assessment Scores- Terra Nova

## **Teacher Evaluation**

The four main features of the teacher evaluation plan currently in place include a setting of individual goals at the beginning of the year, a self evaluation completed by the teacher within the first three months of school, a formal evaluation by the administrator mid-way through the year, and an analysis of progress made towards meeting individual goals at the end of the year.

The current forms are based on meeting the mission of our charter and cover the areas of Personality, Preparation, Technique, and Pupil Reaction. As we continually strive to improve the quality of education offered to all students at NVCS and to assist teachers in improving their professional skills, we will be implementing state mandated forms PDE426 and PDE427. In addition, each teacher will be evaluated by the special education teacher at the school for their compliance in meeting each child's IEP requirements.

Teachers have a primary responsibility to continually evaluate their effectiveness. In addition, the CEO formally evaluates each teacher once during the school year.

During our in-service at the beginning of the academic year, all teachers and the CEO participate in trainings related to the main components of the mission — individualized instruction, multiple intelligences, and learning styles. This is an annual training with both theoretical discussions as well as hands-on applications through activities and role-playing.

The Special Education teacher facilitates a number of trainings specifically on the implementation of the IEPs. Furthermore, different ways of modifying curriculum to help our struggling students is often the topic at staff meetings and in-service days.

## **Teacher Evaluation - Attachment**

- Teacher Evaluation

## **SECTION V. GOVERNANCE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Leadership Changes**

The Board of Trustees elects a new executive committee every year. Usually, the board members work their way through the ranks. This year's president, Penny Sandoval, had served as treasurer; Pyllis Little who served as treasurer has now held every office; Rene Clavert served her second year as secretary; and Kathleen Yurchak was vice president for her first year on the executive committee. All executive committee members have been on the board for a minimum of one year prior to serving in this capacity.

The Chief Executive Officer, Carolyn Maroncelli, was new in this position this year. However, Carolyn is the founder of the school and has worked at the school since its beginning, even prior to receiving its charter. She was taking over for Kelly Herrity who moved with her husband to Baltimore so he could begin his career upon completion of his degree at Penn State. The transition has gone very smoothly with the new board and the CEO working well together.

### **Board of Trustees**

<b>Name of Trustee</b>	<b>Office (if any)</b>
Penny Sandoval	President
Kathleen Yurchak	Vice-President
Phyllis Little	Treasurer
Renee Calvert	Secretary
Carolyn Maroncelli	n/a
Mindy McDonough	n/a
Tanya Pakutz-Greenland	n/a
Chris Sandoval	n/a
Mike Fogelsanger	n/a
Beth Berube	n/a
Vicki Stout	n/a
Eric Grele	n/a

### **Professional Development (Governance)**

Trustees are provided with references to and/or copies of the Pennsylvania Charter School Law, the Sunshine Act, Public Officials Act, the NVCS Charter and Charter Application, and the NVCS Bylaws. It is the responsibility of each trustee to read and understand these documents. Board meetings frequently include discussions of governing documents to assist trustees in their decision-making.

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

The Board of Trustees establishes the policies for the operation of the school in accordance with the NVCS mission. Day-to-day management of the school and implementation of school policies is accomplished by the Chief Executive Officer, working as a team with the classroom teachers and other staff. At each regular board meeting, the CEO reports to the Board of Trustees issues that have arisen during the previous month and/or that can be anticipated. The board helps the CEO prioritize her responsibilities and assists her as needed with interpreting and applying the appropriate guidelines for the operation of the school.

The Board of Trustees primarily interacts with the charter-granting district through the Chief Executive Officer. The CEO attends monthly meetings with the district and is in frequent contact with the district representative when questions arise either originating with NVCS or the district. We have always felt that our relationship with the district has been one of cooperation and good will. It is the policy of NVCS to welcome visitors from the district to attend Board of Trustee meetings, or to observe the school at any time. Representatives from the district officially visit the school once each year.

#### **2006-2007 Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule**

Meetings will be held on the third Tuesday of each month. Meetings are at 7:00 PM in the school building.

## **Community and Parent Engagement**

Meaningful parent involvement in school activities is part of the charter of NVCS and it is a commitment we take very seriously. Our parent volunteers are involved in a wide range of activities, including operating after school clubs, teaching enrichments, assisting in the classrooms with groups or reading aloud to the class, preparing and distributing healthy snacks, organizing and maintaining our facility, and many others. Every member of the Board of Trustees is a parent of a current or former student of NVCS.

The NVCS mission stresses the need for students to be involved with the community outside the walls of the school. We interact with the community on several levels: academic, charitable, environmental, and professional. Our students were involved with Penn State's GREATT program, learning about advancements in transportation. We welcomed numerous professors from Penn State University throughout the year. We continue to have weekly field trips related to our environmental program. NVCS has adopted Slab Cabin Park and participates in an annual clean up there. This year NVCS cooperated with Penn State's College of Education to provide classroom experience to their pre-student teachers. This program was a benefit to both NVCS and the university.

## **SECTION VI. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

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

The main source of funding continues to be from the local school district. During the 2006-2007 school year, NVCS received \$3,000 for a Meaningful Watershed Grant from the Department of Education. The funds contributed to our regularly scheduled environmental activities and fieldtrips. Small fund raising activities took place throughout the year including a Carwash certificate sale, Grocery certificate sales, Box Tops for Education, and a NVCS Yard Sale. With our small school population, fund-raising activities do not provide a significant source of income; however, we do plan to continue activities that will financially help the school as well as provide opportunities for getting the school community together.

### **Fiscal Solvency Policies**

All financial decisions over \$500.00 must have the approval of the Board of Trustees. The board treasurer double checks all financial activity and reports quarterly to the board. In addition to maintaining an emergency reserve for regular expenses in case of a temporary loss of income, we maintain a building emergency fund. We plan to add to this fund on a yearly basis (between 5-10% of our annual revenues) in order to ensure that an unexpected expense or a delay in receiving monies will result in minimal disruption to the operation of the school.

### **Accounting System**

NVCS revenue and expenses are recorded in QuickBooks. QuickBooks chart of accounts is set up based on the chart of accounts for PA Public Schools for the ease of budgeting, accounting, and reporting. Payroll service is contracted through Keystone Payroll. They provide payroll service and quarterly reporting. We have a part-time Business Manager who is responsible for keeping all of our accounting up-to-date.

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

- Preliminary Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Fund Balances

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

Independent Audit completed by:  
Parente Randolph LLC  
220 Regent Court  
State College, PA

October 6, 2007

Findings: The financial statements fairly represent the financial position of the governmental activities and the major fund of Nittany Valley Charter School, Inc., as of June 30, 2006 and are in conformity with the accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

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

- Auditor's Annual Report Summary

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

There were no citations.

## **SECTION VII. FACILITY RESPONSIBILITIES**

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

Nittany Valley Charter School has been in its current building for a third year. Minimal new furnishings were required. A second special education teacher needed a new desk, filing cabinets, and a teaching table. One student also required specially sized furniture. Eight more individual student desks were acquired. Our more major expenditures were on computer equipment. We installed a new server, a new media center, and upgraded some student computers. Our business manager also received an upgraded computer.

### **Future Facility Plans and Other Capital Needs**

Based on our parent and staff survey determining priorities for the remaining term of our charter, it was determined that the building we own needed to be renovated and enlarged. We will be adding new office space, a library on the same level as the main classrooms, special education and therapist rooms, and additional storage. Upgrading the heating and cooling system as well as the electrical and internet systems are also part of our plan. Finally, our facility will be made more accessible for people with physical disabilities.

We are still in the planning phase of this project but hope to be ready for construction following the 2007-2008 school year. Our school has accumulated a reserve fund that should cover about half of the renovation costs. Additional financing will be obtained to cover the remainder of the improvement.

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

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

Our 'Emergency Evacuation Procedures and Rules' policy is still in effect and its application is reinforced through monthly fire drills. In addition, this year we have adopted our Emergency Plan, which is much more comprehensive than our previous plan. We now include crisis drills in our regular emergency drill schedule. Our school has also installed phones and intercoms in every room for better emergency communication. We have also contracted with AlertNow for

emergency notification to all families. Our school is inspected annually by the Centre Region Code Administration to ensure that all necessary safety precautions are in place and in working order in the building.

The sponsoring school district's nurse comes to the school each year for physical check-ups of the entire student body (this includes vision and dental checks as well). While she is here, she reviews all health and immunization records and ensures that they are up-to-date. We follow up with any missing information and coordinate with the nurse to ensure that all health and immunization requirements are met. The nurse provides us a summary of her findings, and we submit the annual health report to the Department of Health.

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

- Compliance with Health and Safety Requirements- Nursing Services Reimbursement
- Compliance with Health and Safety Requirements-Wellness Policy

### **Current School Insurance Coverage Policies and Programs**

The school contracts with the State College Area School District for employee coverage for health, life, dental, and disability insurance. Erie Insurance covers us for general liability, auto, property, liability, and workers compensation insurance.

## **SECTION IX. ADMINISTRATIVE NEEDS**

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

Nittany Valley Charter School has fourteen regular employees. Nine are fulltime; five are parttime. One of our teachers who was on the founding coalition and has been with the school since the beginning moved into the position of CEO. Our previous CEO moved due to her spouse's employment. We added one new special education teacher this year. The remaining fulltime teachers were returning from last year. All but two of our employees remained for the entire year. Our previously retired music teacher was forced to retire once again due to health concerns and we replaced him with a new music teacher. One of our special education teachers went on paid leave two thirds of the way through the year. This was in response to incapability issues with the employee and the mission of the school. Our staff remains relatively stable. Teachers enjoy the autonomy that our school allows and most departures are based on career moves for spouses. Parttime teachers are more likely to leave when they find a fulltime position..

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

- Professional Personnel
- Status Page Elementary and Secondary Professional Personnel Report

## **Student Enrollment**

Our Admission Policy, which was approved by the Board of Trustees in June 2004, is used as the basis for all student enrollment. The policy was developed based on state law and clearly defines the procedure for the lottery and waiting list. All students currently enrolled in NVCS, whether in-district or out-of-district, are exempt from the lottery process but must fill out a re-enrollment application. NVCS returning student's applications are reviewed and class placement determined by the Admissions Committee and staff. The committee will then determine how many openings are available for each class realizing that the best class size is 12 students in four classrooms. All completed new student applications received by April 30 will be processed through a lottery system. As in-district applications are received, each will be given a number. These numbers are then their identification during the lottery process. The actual lottery process will be conducted by the Secretary of the Board of Trustees, the CEO and the Chairman of the Admissions Committee. As each number is drawn, it is placed in order by grade on the Lottery Chart. Out of district applications are similarly drawn with separate identifiers and are then placed by grade on the chart behind the in-district applicants. Any openings are then filled using the following guidelines: First, the opening can be filled with a child of the founding coalition or a sibling (of a current student) in the same grade as the opening. Second, the opening can be filled with a student from the same grade waiting list. Third, if appropriate to maintain balance in the classroom, the opening can be filled with a student from a different grade but same class as the opening. Fourth, if the class that has the opening has a size greater than 12, the admissions committee and staff will review the school population to determine the best placement for a new student.

Students applying for 1<sup>st</sup> grade must be six years of age by September 1. Application procedure is described in the Admissions Policy.

**Provide an enrollment history for the past year, by grade level, including the number of students initially enrolled, number dropped, and number added. For students who transferred out, indicate the school(s) to which they transferred, if known.**

<i>Grade Level</i>	<i>Initially enrolled</i>	<i>Dropped</i>	<i>Added</i>	<i>Destination</i>
1	4	0	0	
2	8	0	0	
3	6	1	0	<i>Public School; Panorama Elementary</i>
4	7	0	0	
5	8	1	1	<i>Centre Learning Community Charter School</i>
6	6	0	1	
7	5	0	0	
8	4	0	0	
<i>Total</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	

**Provide the number of students who completed the 2006-2007 year who are currently enrolled to return in September.**

38 of 48 students will be returning.

**Provide numbers of students who left at the requirement of the schools, and the numbers who left voluntarily.**

No students were expelled; two moved to other schools during the school year; four 8<sup>th</sup> graders graduated and six students either moved out of State College or are moving to another school within the district.

**Discuss any trends in enrollment including student turnover and retention data. Drawing upon exit interviews and other sources, explain why students choose to return to the school or not. If the school is under- or over-enrolled, provide an explanation.**

Most students return to Nittany Valley Charter School year after year. In addition, many siblings from the same family attend over the years. The majority of students who elect to leave NVCS before moving on to high school choose to move to the middle school for extra curricular and special curricular activities and/or for a larger peer group. The other major reason for electing to leave the school is the family moving out of town due to a parent completing a degree at the university. We consistently have turn over of 1/4 to 1/3 of the student body. This year, however, we have been very stable. Only two students departed during the year. We have been more careful to ensure that families are in agreement with our mission before enrolling in the school.

### **Student Enrollment - Attachment**

- Admissions Policy

### **Transportation**

Transportation to and from school is provided by our chartering district, State College Area Schools. The SCASD has been very cooperative and helpful with regards to transporting students to NVCS. We have worked to bring our calendar as closely in line with the district calendar as possible. Our one complaint continues to be about the shuttling of the students to the High School in the morning. Many students who live quite near the school are transported an hour before the start of school. As a result, a number of parents chose to bring their children to school instead of using the provided busing.

One student has required special accommodations for transportation. Transportation is handled by

a bus company contracted through the school district. NVCS directly hires another company, Longs Buses, to provide transportation for our weekly fieldtrips. In addition, one trip each year is taken on a more luxurious charter bus. We are pleased with the overall transportation program at our school. Changing the morning pick-up schedule by SCASD is our only transportation goal.

### **Food Service Program**

Students at NVCS may bring their own lunch from home or purchase a bag lunch through our chartering district's food services. These lunches are offered with participation in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

### **Student Conduct**

Students at NVCS are expected to show respect for all other students, employees and volunteers, as well as people of the community with whom they have contact during school time. Students are expected to take responsibility for their own behavior. Students who exhibit persistent behavioral problems or endanger others with physical violence, endanger school relationships with the community through destruction of property or thievery, or participate in any illegal activity shall proceed with the due process for exclusion from school, including notification of student and parents, development and implementation of behavior contract, and ultimately suspension or expulsion.

The school's discipline policy is in compliance with Chapters 12 of the Public School Code. Specifically it includes expectations for students' assuming responsibility for their learning and showing respect to others (Section 12.2) and it outlines due process in cases of exclusion from school (Section 12.6)

In addition to our formal discipline policy, we have a day-to-day discipline code with clear consequences for inappropriate behavior.

There were no in-school suspensions this year and no expulsions.

### **Student Conduct - Attachments**

- Student Conduct-Code of Conduct page 1
- Student Conduct-Code of Conduct page 2

# CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY DATA

## Charter School Annual Report Summary Data 2007 - 2008

**Name of School:** Nittany Valley CS

**Date of Local Chartering School Board/PDE Approval:** April 1998

**Length of Charter:** 3 years/5years/5years    **Opening Date:** August 1998

**Grade Level:** 1-8    **Hours of Operation:** 8:15-3:15

**Percentage of Certified Staff:** 95%    **Total Instructional Staff:** 11

**Student/ Teacher Ratio:** 7:1    **Student Waiting List:** 22

**Attendance Rate/Percentage:** 94.2%

**Enrollment:** 48    **Per Pupil Subsidy:** (from SCASD) 9,026.40 reg. ed./17,166.60 spec.ed.

### Student Profile

**American Indian/Alaskan Native:** 0  
**Asian/Pacific Islander:** 5  
**Black (Non-Hispanic):** 3  
**Hispanic:** 5  
**White (Non-Hispanic):** 34  
**Multicultural:** 1

**Percentage of Students from Low Income Families Eligible for a Free or Reduced Lunch:** .06%

**Provide the Total Unduplicated Number of Students Receiving Special Services (Excluding Gifted) as of Previous December:** 14

Number of:	K (AM)	K (PM)	K (FTIME)	ELEM	MIDDLE	SEC.	TOTAL
Instructional Days	0	0	0	177	177	0	177
Instructional Hours	0	0	0	1062	1062	0	1062

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

**School Year: 2007**

The Nittany Valley CS within Central IU 10 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.**

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**Board President**

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**Date**

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**Chief Executive Officer**

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**Date**

**2007 - 2008 Annual Report for Pennsylvania Charter Schools**

**Verify that all DATA reports to PDE are complete**

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

**SIGNATURE PAGE**

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

**Name** Carolyn Maroncelli

**Title** Ms.

**Phone** 814-867-3842

**Fax** 814-231-0795

**E-mail** carolyn@nvcs.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** Kathleen Yurchak

**Title** Ms.

**Phone** 814-867-4554

**Fax** 814-237-5601

**E-mail** yurchak@centrelaw.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** Shelby Green

**Title** Ms.

**Phone** 814-867-2842

**Fax** 814-231-0795

**E-mail** shelby@nvcs.org

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*Signature of the Special Education Contact Person and Date*