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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, May 07, 2013  
(Last Accepted: Monday, October 03, 2011)

**Entity:** Discovery Charter School  
**Address:** 5070 Parkside Ave  
Philadelphia, PA 19131

# CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY DATA

## Summary Data Part I

### Charter School Annual Report Summary Data 2011 - 2012

**Name of School:** Discovery Charter School

**Date of Local Chartering School Board/PDE Approval:** April 16, 2008 (renewed)

**Length of Charter:** Five (5) years    **Opening Date:** September 2003

**Grade Level:** K-8    **Hours of Operation:** 7:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m. w/ extended day

**Percentage of Certified Staff:** 82.8%    **Total Instructional Staff:** 50 (36 teachers; 14 teaching assistants)

**Student/Teacher Ratio:** 25:2 grades K-3 (including TA); 25:1 grades 4-8    **Student Waiting List:** 1,448 (after 2012-13 Lottery)

**Attendance Rate/Percentage:** 95.43%

**Second Site Address, Phone Number and Site Director:**  
N/A

## Summary Data Part II

**Enrollment:** 648 (Year-End)    **Per Pupil Subsidy:** \$8,773 (regular ed.); \$19,422 (special ed.)

### Student Profile

<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native:</b>	0%
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander:</b>	0%
<b>Black (Non-Hispanic):</b>	98.5%
<b>Hispanic:</b>	0.2%
<b>White (Non-Hispanic):</b>	0.3%
<b>Multicultural:</b>	1.0%

**Percentage of Students from Low Income Families Eligible for a Free or Reduced Lunch:**  
77.3%

**Provide the Total Unduplicated Number of Students Receiving Special Services (Excluding Gifted) as of Previous December:** 82 students

### Instructional Days and Hours

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>K (AM)</b>	<b>K (PM)</b>	<b>K (F.Time)</b>	<b>Elem.</b>	<b>Middle.</b>	<b>Sec.</b>	<b>Total</b>
Instructional Days	0	0	181	181	181	0	181
Instructional Hours	0	0	1,176.5	1,176.5	1,357.5	0	1,176.5

## SECTION I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Educational Community

2011-12 marked the ninth year of operation for the Discovery Charter School (DCS), a K-8 urban, Title I schoolwide charter school serving approximately 600 students in grades K-8. The school successfully opened in September 2003, with an enrollment of 400 students in grades K-6. Currently in its first charter renewal term, Discovery has been chartered through the year 2013.

DCS' education program is based on providing students with opportunities for discoveries outside the classroom (i.e. expeditionary learning), providing a challenging core curriculum, integrating the expressive arts into the curriculum, active parent involvement, and continuously using student data to refine our program and guide student instruction. Our innovative educational model has proven effective, with DCS achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for four consecutive years. In June 2012, DCS graduated its 7th class of eighth grade students, all of whom were successfully placed in a range of high schools throughout the city.

The school located in 60,000 square feet of leased space within the Philadelphia Business and Technology Center on Parkside Avenue in West Philadelphia. The facility includes a sound proof music room, library, combined gymnasium and multi-purpose room, and 11,000 square feet of newly-renovated middle school space for our 225 students in grades 6-8. In 2011-12, Discovery

acquired a 3.66 acre site with a 57,434 square-foot building at 4700 Parkside Avenue in the West Parkside neighborhood of West Philadelphia. The school plans to relocate into a renovated and expanded state-of-the-art 75,525 square-foot educational facility at this site in September 2013.

DCS has quickly become a valued neighborhood institution in the West Parkside and Haddington communities of West Philadelphia. The school exists in a neighboring community that is transitioning. Once an economically deprived area, it was targeted as a Federal Enterprise Zone. With the help of federal dollars the neighborhood has transformed with the development of a shopping center, relocation of the Please Touch Museum and expansion of the Mann Music Center.

Discovery's mission to provide learning outside the classroom has been realized through robust partnerships with community organizations. Our students and families have been beneficiaries of partnerships with the Mann Music Center, Please Touch Museum, Philadelphia, Library, Brown's Shop Rite, West Parkside Community Association, Philadelphia Business and Technology Center, Mount Carmel Human Development Corporation, etc. Discovery in turn has provided necessary space for community meetings and employment trainings for the businesses in the community.

The relationship between Discovery Charter School and its larger educational community is a model of demonstrated success in which all stakeholders work together in the best interest of children and families.

Discovery Charter School — "Where education is not just preparation for life, but life itself."

## **Mission**

Discovery Charter School's mission is to engage students in an educational plan that builds from a prior knowledge base, is connected to discoveries outside the classroom, and is supported by values of personal and community responsibility. DCS will prepare children for life by nurturing habits of thoughts and action to last a lifetime.

## **Vision**

The founders' vision for how best to engage children in the learning process and to nurture their success was informed by their experience as educators and community activists. Their vision was also informed by the work of educational researchers who contend that successful schools:

- Validate the knowledge and experience students bring with them to the classroom.
- Teach a core of knowledge in early grades.
- Connect classroom instruction with community-based, experiential learning.
- Provide children with strong foundational values and opportunities to put them into practice.
- Empower children to develop the attitudes, skills, knowledge and behaviors that will make them lifelong learners.

The DCS learning program provides extensive opportunity to make education relevant. Through an expeditionary learning approach, educational concepts are made concrete and reinforce the necessary relationship between actual experience and education.

It is important that the school offers learners a full and challenging standardized education using a progressive staff, modern facilities, appropriate instructional and support technologies, and a rigorous academic curriculum that promotes high achievement and advanced technical skills to support the success of our students in the pursuit of academic excellence.

DCS's vision is worldwide in scope, understanding that new technology is ever changing and will bridge learning in an expanded age of information. DCS views technology as an effective communication tool, capable of enhancing the project based curriculum and productivity of our students and staff. Technological proficiency will enable DCS students and staff to maximize their access to information, enhance problem solving, develop effective presentation and communication skills, and forward the mission of the school.

The school strives to make effective use of educational and productivity software. We have provided every classroom with access to the internet, and teachers are able to include and use this technology as a teaching aide. Video projection systems, interactive whiteboards (e.g. SMARTboards), etc. are available, and the school is working diligently to integrate the new technology into the school's infrastructure.

## **Shared Values**

The school values and is committed to a "holistic" approach to teaching. In addition to the core academic program at DCS there are two additional components utilized to address the whole child. First, *Discovery through Exploration* field trips are held approximately every two weeks. This program component takes three forms: (1) actual field trips to important cultural, historic and other sites; (2) service learning activities; (3) and virtual/technological field trips. Students reflect on their field trips and service learning experiences, both individually and as a group. Teachers in grade-alike teams prepare for these trips by creating an Exploration Learning Outline that includes the following components: site description, topic analysis, relationship of topic to the theme, guiding questions, and standards based learning goals assessments and extensions.

Second, students are exposed to the arts through our Expressive Arts Program facilitated by the staff of DCS. Weekly, children are engaged in activities of dance, drama, music, photography, culinary arts, and fine arts. Students extend and demonstrate their learning by planning and implementing programs such as grade assemblies, debates, skits, performance based presentations, and parent and school wide special programs.

Students rotate through specialty areas of music, art, technology, health and physical education and character development classes. Instruction in these specialty areas occur in all grades, one day per week. A rich array of community partnerships supports the instructional program as well as a thriving afterschool program.

## **Academic Standards**

Academic standards at Discovery Charter School provide a foundation for decisions on curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and they communicate core-learning goals to teachers, parents and students. These standards are guided by the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Chapter 4 Academic Standards.

### **LANGUAGE ARTS:**

By 8th grade, students should be able to perform the following skills, which are aligned to PA Standards:

- Read independently, confidently and fluently at least 25 grade appropriate fiction and non-fiction texts per year.
- Select texts appropriate to both assigned and individually developed purposes.
- Understand the meaning of grade-level vocabulary across all disciplines.
- Interpret texts by: making assertions about texts and supporting those assertions with evidence; comparing and contrasting texts using themes, settings, characters and idea; making extensions to related ideas, topics or information.
- Distinguish fact from opinion and essential from nonessential information in traditional texts as well as in electronic media.
- Make inferences, draw conclusions, and evaluate text organization and content.
- Produce work in at least one literary genre that follows the conventions of that genre.
- Read and understand works of literature.
- Analyze the use of literary elements including characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view, tone and style.
- Analyze the effect of various literary devices.
- Demonstrate relationships between what one reads and one's own intellectual, spiritual, emotional or social life.
- Analyze the techniques of particular media and compare one to the other.
- Use, design and develop a media project that expands understanding.

### **WRITING:**

By 8th grade, students should be able to perform the following skills, which are aligned to PA Standards:

- Maintain a written record of activities, course work, experience, honors and interest.
- Write with a sharp, distinct focus.
- Write well-developed content appropriate for the topic.
- Write with controlled and/or subtle organization
- Revise writing after rethinking logic of organization and rechecking central ideas, content and paragraph development.
- Present and/or defend written work for publication where appropriate.
- Understand writing as a process through which one discovers what he/she is thinking.

### **SPEAKING & LISTENING:**

By 8th grade, students should be able to perform the following skills, which are aligned to PA Standards:

- Listen to others by asking probing questions, analyzing information and taking notes when needed.
- Listen to selections of fiction and nonfiction literature and relate them to prior knowledge, predict outcomes and analyze the selections.
- Speak using skills appropriate to formal speech situations.
- Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations.
- Contribute meaningfully and thoughtfully to discussions.
- Discover a sense of confidence when speaking in discussions or formal presentations.

### **MATH:**

By 8th grade, students should be able to perform the following skills, which are aligned to PA Standards:

- Represent and use numbers in equivalent forms.
- Simplify numerical expressions involving exponents, scientific notation and using order of operations.
- Distinguish between and order rational and irrational numbers
- Apply ratio and proportion to mathematical problem situations involving distance, rate, and time.
- Complete calculations by applying the order of operations.
- Add, subtract, multiply and divide different kinds and forms of rational numbers, including integers, decimal fractions, percents, and proper and improper fractions.
- Create and use scale models
- Use if...then statements to construct simple, valid arguments.
- Construct, use, and explain algorithmic procedures for computing and estimating with whole numbers, fractions decimals and integers.
- Verify and interpret results using precise mathematical language, notation and representations, including numerical tables and equations.
- Estimate the value of irrational numbers.
- Estimate amount of tips and discounts using ratios, proportions and percents.
- Determine the appropriateness of overestimating Of underestimating in computation
- Identify the difference between exact value and approximation, and determine which is appropriate for a given situation
- Develop formulas and procedures for determining measurements.
- Solve rate problems.
- Measure angles in degrees and determine the relations of angles.
- Describe how a change in linear dimension of an object affects its perimeter, area and volume.
- Use scale measurements to interpret maps or drawings.
- Create and use scale models.
- Make conjectures based on logical reasoning and test conjectures by using counter-examples.
- Combine numeric relationships to arrive at a conclusion.
- Use statements to construct simple, valid arguments.

- Construct, use and explain algorithmic procedures for computing and estimating with numbers, fractions, decimals and integers.
- Distinguish between inductive and deductive reasoning.
- Use measurements and statistics to quantify issues.
- Invent, select, use and justify the appropriate methods, materials and strategies to solve problems.
- Verify and interpret results using precise mathematical language, notation and representations, including numerical tables and equations, simple algebraic equations and formulas, charts, graphs and diagrams.
- Justify strategies and defend approaches used and conclusions reached.
- Determine pertinent information in problem solving situations and whether any further information is needed for solution.
- Compare and contrast different plots of data using values of mean, median, mode, and range.
- Explain effects of sampling procedures and missing or incorrect information on reliability.
- Fit a line to the scatter plot of two quantities and describe any correlation of the variables.
- Design and carry out a random sampling procedure.
- Analyze and display data in stem-and-leaf and box-and-whisker plots
- Use scientific and graphing calculators and computer spreadsheets to organize and analyze data.
- Determine the validity of the sampling method described in studies published in local and national newspapers.
- Determine the number of combinations and permutations of an event.
- Present the results of an experiment using visual representation.
- Analyze predictions.

## **SCIENCE:**

By 8th grade, students should be able to perform the following skills, which are aligned to PA Standards:

- Describe concepts of models as a way to predict and understand science and technology.
- Apply patterns as repeated processes or recurring elements in science and technology.
- Apply scale as a way of relating concepts and ideas to one another by some measure.
- Describe patterns of change in nature, physical and man-made systems.
- Apply knowledge and understanding about the nature of scientific and technological knowledge.
- Apply process knowledge and organize scientific and technological phenomena in varied ways.
- Apply the elements of scientific inquiry to solve problems.
- Identify and apply the technological design process to solve problems.
- Explain the structural and functional similarities and differences found among living things.
- Describe and explain the chemical and structural basis of living organisms.
- Describe how genetic information is inherited and expressed.

- Explain the mechanisms of the theory of evolution.
- Explain concepts about the structure and properties of matter.
- Analyze energy sources and transfers of heat.
- Distinguish among the principles of force and motion.
- Explain essential ideas about the composition and structure of the universe.
- Relate earth features and processes that change the earth.
- Explain sources and uses of earth resources.
- Interpret meteorological data.
- Assess the value of water as a resource.
- Apply biotechnologies that relate to propagating, growing, maintaining, adapting, treating and converting liquids into solids.
- Apply knowledge of information technologies of encoding, transmitting, receiving, sorting, retrieving and decoding.
- Apply physical technologies of structural design, analysis and engineering, personnel relations, financial affairs, structural production, marketing, research and design to real problems.
- Identify and safely use a variety of tools, basic machines, materials and techniques to solve problems and answer questions.
- Apply appropriate instruments and apparatus to examine a variety of objects and processes.

#### **Scientific Investigation Skills:**

- Discriminate among the concepts of systems, subsystems, feedback and control in solving technological problems.
- Describe concepts of models as a way to predict and understand science and technology.
- Apply patterns as repeated processes or recurring elements in science and technology.
- Apply scale as a way of relating concepts and ideas to one another by some measure.
- Describe patterns of change in nature, physical and man-made systems.
- Apply knowledge and understanding about the nature of scientific and technological knowledge.
- Apply process knowledge and organize scientific and technological phenomena in varied ways.
- Apply the elements of scientific inquiry to solve problems.
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- Apply biotechnologies that relate to propagating, growing, maintaining, adapting, treating and converting.
- Apply knowledge of information technologies of encoding, transmitting, receiving, sorting, retrieving and decoding.
- Apply physical technologies of structural design, analysis and engineering, personnel relations, financial affairs, structural production, marketing, research and design to real problems.
- Identify and safely use a variety of tools, basic machines, materials and techniques to solve problems and answer questions.

## **HISTORY/GEOGRAPHY**

Students are expected to have experienced and demonstrated personal satisfaction about discoveries made about the world through the study of history and geography. In order to achieve this satisfaction, students must be able to demonstrate the following PA Standards-aligned skills by the end of 8th grade:

- Analyze chronological thinking.
- Analyze and interpret historical sources.
- Analyze the fundamentals of historical interpretation.
- Analyze and interpret historical research.
- Analyze the political and cultural contributions of individuals and groups to Pennsylvania history.
- Identify and analyze primary documents, material artifacts and historic sites important in Pennsylvania history.
- Identify and analyze how continuity and change have influenced Pennsylvania history. Identify and analyze conflict and cooperation among social groups and organizations in Pennsylvania history.
- Identify and analyze the political and cultural contributions of individuals and groups to United States history.
- Identify and analyze primary documents, material artifacts and historic sites important to United States history.
- Analyze how continuity and change have influenced United States history.
- Identify and analyze conflict and cooperation among social groups and organizations in United States history.
- Analyze the significance of individuals and groups who made major political and contributions to world history.
- Analyze historical documents, material artifacts and historic sites important to world history.
- Analyze how continuity and change throughout history have impacted belief systems and religions, commerce and industry, innovations, settlement patterns, social organization, transportation, and roles of women.
- Analyze how conflict and cooperation among social groups and organizations impacted world history in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe.
- Explain geographic tools and their uses.
- Explain and locate places and regions.

## **TECHNOLOGY/COMPUTER SCIENCE:**

Students are expected to have experienced and demonstrated personal satisfaction in discoveries made about technology and the ways in which it can enhance their learning. In order to achieve this satisfaction, students must be able to demonstrate the following PA Standards-aligned skills by the end of 8th grade:

- Apply basic computer operations and concepts.
- Utilize computer software to solve specific problems in a variety of subject areas.
- Operate basic computer communications systems.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION/HEALTH**

Students are expected to have experienced and demonstrated personal satisfaction in discoveries made about the importance of healthy behavior, physical activity and a sense of responsibility for one's physical wellbeing. In order to achieve this satisfaction, students must be able to demonstrate the following PA Standards-aligned skills by the end of 8th grade:

- Describe growth and development changes that occur between childhood and adolescence.
- Describe the basic structure and function of the major body systems.
- Analyze nutritional concepts that impact health.
- Explain factors that influence childhood and adolescent drug use.
- Identify and describe health problems that can occur throughout life.
- Explain the relationship between personal health practices and individual well-being.
- Explain the relationship between health-related information and consumer choices.
- Explain the media's effect on health and safety issues.
- Describe and apply the steps of a decision-making process to health and issues.
- Analyze environmental factors that impact health.
- Identify and engage in moderate to vigorous physical activities.
- Identify and apply ways to monitor and assess the body's response to moderate to vigorous physical activity.
- Describe factors that affect childhood physical activity preferences.
- Identify and describe positive and negative interactions of group member in physical activities.
- Explain and apply the basic movement skills and concepts.
- Create and perform movement sequences and advances skills.
- Describe the relationship between practice and skill development.
- Describe and apply the principles of exercise to the components of health related and skill related fitness.
- Identify and use scientific principles that impact basic movement and skills using appropriate vocabulary.
- Identify and apply sport and game strategies to basic games and physical activities.
- Explain and apply safe practices in the home, school and community.
- Know and apply appropriate emergency responses.
- Analyze the role of individual responsibility during physical activity.

## **CHARACTER EDUCATION/CITIZENSHIP**

Students are expected to have experienced and demonstrated personal satisfaction in discoveries made about the importance of making a positive contribution/to the community, treating others with respect and acting in ways that reveal an ethical character. In order to achieve this satisfaction, students must be able to demonstrate the following PA Standards-aligned skills by the end of eighth grade:

- Describe and apply strategies to avoid or manage conflict and violence, including effective negotiation and assertive behavior.
- Demonstrate empathy towards others.
- Describe and apply a code of ethical conduct in one's dealing with others.
- Plan and implement service learning projects.
- Conduct conversations and write about ethical issues with appropriate ethics based vocabulary. Articulate and apply citizenship standards at home, in school and in the community.

## **EXPRESSIVE ARTS**

Students are expected to have experienced and demonstrated personal satisfaction expressing oneself creatively and effectively in at least one art form and in relating meaningfully to other areas of one's life. In order to achieve this satisfaction, students must be able to demonstrate the following PA Standards-aligned skills by the end of 8th grade:

- Identify concepts and standards pertaining to the arts as a whole and to individual expressive arts.
- Speak about and write about a wide range of culturally important works of art from variety of traditions.
- Explain the role of the arts in the community.
- Read and respond to non-fiction and fiction through at least one expressive art
- Articulate a personal vision of the relationship between the expressive arts and other disciplines.
- Discover a personal connection between the arts and one's own life.

## **Strengths and Challenges**

### **OUR MANY STRENGTHS**

2011-12 was a year of many successes for Discovery Charter School. We received an Enhancing Education Through Technology grant which enabled us to expand the use of iPads for our expeditionary learning. We expanded our out of school time programming and extracurricular activities via a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grant through Foundations, Inc. We increased our parent involvement and communication, hired a School and Community Coordinator, and launched a "Buying into the Mission" campaign to encourage all stakeholders to work together as a team to raise academic achievement for all our students. In reflecting upon our many points of pride from the past year, our committee identified the following strengths:

### **Getting Results**

As Discovery Charter School entered its second charter term, we did so under the weight of being a school in School Improvement status. However, having to go through the Getting Results Strategic school improvement planning process provided us with an opportunity to think strategically about which reforms we could implement while maintaining the mission of our school. Now, with four years of our second charter term completed, we are proud to say that we have made AYP in each of these four years. 2011-12, was our fourth consecutive year of making AYP. The gains our students in grades 6-8 made in reading in math (meeting performance targets via safe harbor), enabled us to make AYP. Our preliminary PSSA scores follow below:

	Math PSSA		Reading PSSA		AYP Status
	Proficient & Advanced		Proficient & Advanced		
2011-2012	3-5 Span 79.9%	6-8 Span 61.1%	3-5 Span 58.9%	6-8 Span 66.2%	Made AYP
2010-2011	70.0%		62.4%		Made AYP
2009-2010	58.4%		52.4%		Made AYP
2008-2009	61.3%		56.0%		Made AYP — Making Progress
2007-2008	35.9%		43.5%		School Improvement I

As the new method for calculating AYP for charter schools using Grade Spans was just revealed last week, we are still in the process of analyzing our data in a way that will enable us to report our schoolwide growth over last year. However, the chart above shows the significant gains our students have made since our last charter term (2007-08). While we understand that the State proficiency targets will rise again for spring 2012 (90% in math; 92% in reading), our upward trend in student achievement makes us confident about our future performance.

### **Expeditionary Learning — Connecting Learning Outside the Classroom**

Since our opening, curricular trips have been an integral part of the DCS mission. The mission is to engage students in an educational plan that builds from a prior knowledge base and is connected to discoveries outside the classroom. These trips provide students with educational and cultural enrichment that is directly tied to thematic units. Each year, a combination of 175 or more trips are taken from grades K-8 as culminating projects to curriculum units.

In 2011-12, we are proud to say that we placed additional emphasis on our expeditionary curriculum and completed the continuum for connecting learning outside the classroom — at a minimum K-2 traveled within the Philadelphia region, grades 3-5 traveled within the tri-state area, and our middle school students traveled internationally. This year students attended cultural performances, saw science in action at various zoos, and had history lessons where history happened while visiting various historical sites. Our third grade took a day-long trip to New York City. They visited Ellis Island, which aligned with their social studies curriculum in which they were studying immigration. Our fourth graders went on an overnight trip connected to their English Language Arts coursework where they were studying different types of poetry and writing their own poems. Students visited a Poet’s Café, where they met rappers and poets, saw a performance, and were able to recite their own works on the stage. Building on last year’s success, our 5<sup>th</sup> graders traveled the Underground Railroad trail that took them through

Detroit, MI through Windsor, Amherstburg, North Buxton, and Dresden Ontario. This curricular trip was the culminating discovery to a social studies unit. Finally, 46 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students took an 8-day trip to Barcelona and Madrid, Spain, where they were able to walk and talk the words from textbooks they had been studying all year.

Because realizing the mission of DCS is so important, our Board passed a resolution affirming the mission and vision of Discovery Charter School and restating the mandatory expeditionary learning component of our program. When possible, we are adding a virtual trip component using FaceTime on iPads. For example, when our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders were in Spain, our students in grades 3-5 were able to experience parts of the trip electronically. And, in 2011-12, we extended our mission into our students' homes as all students were required to go on family trips and submit reports or projects about their experience to their teachers.

### **Breaking Ground on our New Home**

On March 7, 2012 the entire Discovery family — students, parents, staff, Board members, community partners, civic leaders, and friends — gathered together for a groundbreaking ceremony for our new, permanent facility. With a keynote speech from Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr., the day's festivities celebrated how far we have come in the past decade and how bright our future is. Discovery Charter School has acquired an approximately 57,434 square foot building located on a 3.66 acre site at 4700 Parkside Avenue, Philadelphia, PA. The new site is located in the West Parkside neighborhood of West Philadelphia, adjacent to Fairmount Park, approximately three blocks from our current location. Discovery has begun an \$8M expansion, renovation, and improvement project on this newly acquired facility to ready it for our relocation in 2013-14. Following completion of the planned expansions, renovations, and improvements, the school facility will offer students a state-of-the-art learning environment in an approximately 75,525 square-foot building, including approximately 35 classrooms, a gymnasium, a library, a cafeteria, and administrative offices. We look forward to beginning our next charter term in our new home in fall 2013.

### **Exemplary Special Education Programming**

Discovery Charter School's special education program served approximately 13% of our student population in 2011-12. Discovery has focused on creating a setting where all children are educated in the general education setting for the majority of the day (least restrictive environment) which is the Inclusion model. We have put many of our resources into ensuring that we have the appropriate staff and support, such as inclusion teachers, behavior specialists, wraparounds, teaching assistants, etc., to ensure our students achieve academically. In June 2011, Discovery received its cyclical compliance monitoring review from the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Bureau of Special Education (BSE). In recognition of our strong special education program, Discovery received two commendations following the review as follows: (1) The Charter School is commended for developing a strong parent support group which works in conjunction with the school to provide academic, financial (fund raising) and program support to the school, and (2) The Charter School is commended for its strong system of collaboration between special education, regular education, paraprofessionals and support staff, all of whom are working together for students, but specifically for those at risk.

### **Highly Qualified Paraprofessionals**

While a significant expense, DCS believes that students benefit from the smaller adult to student ratio and the increased opportunities for small group and individualized instruction that our highly qualified paraprofessionals provide. In 2010-11, DCS had 14 teacher assistants/instructional paraprofessionals. These staff members make it possible to implement our inclusion special education model and to introduce intervention programs (e.g. SpellRead, Achieve 3000) into the classroom.

### **Data-Driven Instruction and Interventions**

At Discovery Charter School, we strive to meet the State's increasing targets for reading and mathematics achievement and to, thus, meet AYP. We do so by monitoring student progress on an ongoing basis. The key to academic success as we view it is to set measurable goals and to continually monitor progress toward those goals. At DCS, we use the performance standards as determined by the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment. The school also uses 4Sight, GRADE, and GMADE to evaluate student progress throughout the school year. The combination of diagnostic tests with benchmark assessments allows us to determine the beginning level of each student, analyze areas of deficit, target instruction, and adapt the curriculum accordingly. We feel that these services are particularly important in view of the requirements of the No Child Left Behind legislation that dictate performance levels for all school student subgroups. Ongoing curricular assessments, student support, child find processes, curricular reviews, teacher collaboration, interim reports, and parent conferences all contribute to our being able to continuously direct the school's educational process and programs. We believe that our ongoing progress monitoring and our strategic use of data have been a significant factor in our increasing test scores. Because we believe that assessment data can be a powerful tool in raising student achievement, we began remedying a gap in our assessment schedule in 2011-12 by adding Acuity reading and math as a spring for grades not tested by the PSSA (grades K-2).

### **Parents as Educational Partners**

It is the Board's and administration's belief that it takes a village to raise a child. Parents play an important role in the successful education of their child. At DCS we have developed a comprehensive parent involvement program to keep parents informed and engaged. The school sends weekly newsletters home to parents that provide updates on school-wide test assessments, student activities, parent programming, fundraising initiatives, health information, etc. Parents also have ongoing access to school-wide and their individual children's data via the school's student information system. The school provides traditional parent involvement activities including Back to School Night, parent/teacher report card conferences, an active Home and School Association, celebrations, and volunteer opportunities. However, the school has gone even further to meet all our parents' needs, and provides important parent workshops. Topics have included Response to Intervention and Student Supports, PSSA Skills, Transition Services, High School Planning and Application Support, and mandatory RTI meetings. Additionally, each Home and School Association meeting begins with a presentation by the teachers in one to two grade groups followed by a question and answer period with the parents. Due to the overwhelming success of our parent programming, we created a new leadership position for 2011-12 — a full-time Community and Parent Coordinator. With Ms. Pamela Evans in this position, Discovery was able to work on improving parent communication, partnering with parents on meeting the mission of the school, and developing a stronger family compact.

## AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

In the upcoming year, Discovery will concentrate on improving the following:

- **Improving Reading & Math Achievement** — While DCS made AYP in 2011-12, we only made the math and reading performance targets in the 6-8 Grade Span via safe harbor and the math performance target in the 3-5 Grade Span via the growth model. We did not meet the performance target in the 3-5 Grade Span in reading via any calculation. While we celebrate our success in making AYP and our continued growth, we understand that the state proficiency targets will rise again for spring 2012 (90% in math; 92% in reading). As such, Discovery must continue its successful programming, use data to identify students in need, and provide a comprehensive system of interventions to ensure continued growth, especially in reading in grades 3-5.
- **Improving Discipline via Positive Behavior Support** — In an effort to mitigate behavioral barriers to learning, DCS employs three Student Intervention Specialists to assist in implementing the school's behavioral support program. Each working with a different grade level (K-2, 3-5, and 6-8), the Student Intervention Specialists drive the individualized positive behavior support system employed throughout the school. This system includes Functional Behavior Assessments and individualized Positive Behavior Support plans for each student at DCS, as well as an incentive-based system for good behavior (Brevard's Bucks). While we have had success in implementing this program over the past two years, we believe that both discipline and academics will improve as our program moves from a pilot phase to an institutionalized part of the Discovery Charter School model. Continued professional development, parent training, and progress monitoring will be central in implementing this program with fidelity.

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

### **Strategic Planning Process**

Discovery Charter School has developed a group of administrators, board members, teachers, support staff, and parents who regularly convene to assess the strengths and weaknesses of our program and to analyze our internal and external needs. This group convenes annually to conduct a needs assessment, develop the charter school annual report, develop various multi-year strategic plans (e.g. technology plan, induction plan), develop Getting Results School Improvement Plans (if needed), and establish strategic goals for the upcoming year. In preparation for the 2011-12 school year, Discovery reviewed the following data:

- PSSA spring 2011 test scores for mathematics and reading (grades 3-8), and science (grades 4 and 8), and writing (grades 5 and 8).
- Review of student benchmark data (4Sight).
- Student course grades in core academic subjects as reported by teachers.

- Student behavior, attendance, and tardiness data.
- Review of teacher credentials (i.e., certification, education level, “highly qualified”) and professional development needs.
- Review of teacher observation records.
- Review of State standards and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements.

In 2011-12, this committee convened for its annual goal setting and to develop our Student Services Plan. The group will convene again to review the spring 2012 PSSA results and revise our strategic plan accordingly for 2012-13. Goal-setting and progress monitoring will remain key elements to our plan

Additionally, as Discovery is up for renewal in 2012-13, this committee will begin to meet more frequently in the upcoming months to finalize the five-year plan for the school’s third charter term.

## Strategic Planning Committee

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Membership Category</b>	<b>Appointed By</b>
Bouwman, Amanda	Discovery Charter School	Special Education Representative	CEO
Brevard, Nina	Discovery Charter School (Co-Principal)	Administrator	CEO
Brown, Renee	Discovery Charter School (Board Member & Parent)	Parent	Board of Directors
Cannon, Tamarra	Discovery Charter School (Lead Teacher)	Elementary School Teacher	CEO
Cella, James T.	OmniVest Properties Management, LLC	Business Representative	Board
Evans, Pamela	Discovery Charter School (Community Liaison)	Other	CEO
Felder, Dawn	Discovery Charter School Home & School Association	Parent	Board
Garner, Carl	Discovery Charter School	Ed Specialist - Instructional Technology	CEO
Hudson, Lucinda	West Parkside Community Association (& DCS Board Member & Secretary)	Community Representative	Board
Kelley, Jacquelyn Y.	Discovery Charter School (CEO)	Administrator	DCS Board
Nelson, Crystal	Discovery Charter School (Co-Principal)	Administrator	CEO
Rashad, Qasim	Final Mile Technologies	Business Representative	Board
Stevens, Sean	Discovery Charter School	Board Member	CEO
Woods, Jacqueline	Discovery Charter School	Ed Specialist - Home and School Visitor	CEO
Wortham, Tonia	Discovery Charter School (Site Coordinator)	Administrator	CEO

## Goals, Strategies and Activities

### **Goal: I. Increase Student Achievement in Reading & Mathematics**

**Description:** We will meet the following academic goals for reading and math: Reading: 2011-12 — We will make AYP by achieving 81% of students scoring at or above proficiency; OR by decreasing the percentage of students scoring below proficiency by 10%; OR by achieving our designated growth model score. Math: 2011-12 — 78% of students scoring at or above proficiency; OR we will decrease the percentage of students scoring below proficiency by 10%; or we will achieve our designated growth model score.

#### **Strategy: Devote Adequate Resources Toward Improving Student Achievement**

**Description:** Discovery CS develops a budget that places student needs and educational best practices in the forefront. We continue to make investments in educational resources that are recognized as best practices for raising student achievement. Investments include: standards-based curriculum resources, highly qualified personnel, and strategic use of instructional technology.

#### **Activity: Educational Technology**

**Description:** DCS strives to make effective use of educational and productivity software. We have provided every classroom with access to the internet, and teachers are able to include and use this technology as a teaching aide. Video projection systems, SMARTboards, etc. are available, and the school is working diligently to integrate the new technology into the school's infrastructure. As a means of engaging students, DCS has integrated technology resources into students' IAPs, including calculators, LeapFrogs, computers, iPads, manipulatives, etc. The school employs a full-time Information Technology Director, as well as a multi-media teacher who implements a standards-aligned, multi-media curriculum for grades K-8 as part of their specialty courses.

#### **Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Garner, Carl	Start: 7/1/2013 Finish: Ongoing	\$20,000.00
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**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

#### **Activity: Scholastic's Guided Reading**

**Description:** Implement Scholastic's Guided Reading program in grades K-8 beginning in 2011-

12. Guided reading is small group instruction designed to provide differentiated teaching that supports students in developing reading proficiency. With this program, DCS is provided with a variety of texts to be used in whole-group, small-group, and individual settings. Instruction includes interactive read-aloud and reading workshop minilessons in whole-class groups, literature discussion in small heterogeneous groups, guided reading in small homogenous groups, and individual reading conferences. DCS teachers will receive professional development in Differentiated Guided Reading.

**Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Brevard, Nina	Start: 9/1/2011	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

**Activity: SpellRead**

**Description:** SpellRead is a reading intervention program designed for the most struggling students in grades 2-12, including students two or more years behind in reading, special education students, and English language learners. SpellRead has a multisensory approach to literacy development, which bridges a student’s sound system and oral language to build automaticity and trains the brain to efficiently process language read for understanding. SpellRead is designed for groups of five students with one certified teacher or paraprofessional (who has received professional development in the SpellRead model) in a 60- to 90-minute instructional block. The program combines scaffolded phonics and phonemic awareness activities, active reading, and writing connections. The program has built-in assessment tools. The goal is for students to demonstrate mastery of the sound system, attack unfamiliar words easily, and read with fluency and comprehension. In 2009-10, Discovery adopted SpellRead as a special education intervention as well as for struggling readers through our CSAP program. In 2010-11, DCS first used the program school-wide to support struggling readers.

**Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Brevard, Nina	Start: 7/1/2013	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

**Activity: Standards-Aligned, Research-Based Math Programs**

**Description:** In grades K-5, Discovery uses the research-based Houghton Mifflin Math program, which focuses on skill building, problem solving, and concepts mastery for every level of learning. Discovery chose the program because it provides extensive opportunities for students to practice for every day mathematics and test-taking success, it is adaptable to diverse teaching styles, and it includes built-in assessments to provide ongoing student progress monitoring. DCS Students in 6-8 at DCS use Saxon Math, a more “direct instruction” method for incremental learning of mathematics, to supplement the school’s guided discovery educational program and to develop

fundamental math skills. We chose Saxon math because it develops higher-order thinking skills, encourages students to be more confident problem solvers, and integrates manipulatives for hand-on learning experiences. Additionally, as DCS uses inclusion as its primary special education model, we were drawn to the ease with which Saxon math's special education adaptations can be integrated into mainstream classroom activities. It provides adapted lessons to give students with learning difficulties the support they need.

**Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Nelson, Crystal	Start: 9/1/2003	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

**Activity: Teacher Assistants (Highly Qualified Paraprofessionals)**

**Description:** Central to Discovery's strategic plan is providing more individualized instruction to struggling students. As such, DCS invest considerable resources to staff no less than 12 teacher assistants per year. These teachers support the implementation of Individual Academic Plans and work with a variety of students who may have diverse learning needs, especially in our full-inclusion classrooms. They enable DCS to provide small group instruction and individualized tutoring in alignment with IAPs.

**Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Kelley, Jacquelyn Y.	Start: 9/1/2009	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

**Activity: Updated Elementary School Reading Program — StoryTown**

**Description:** First implemented in 2009-10, DCS uses the StoryTown curriculum in grades one through eight to provide fundamental literacy instruction to supplement the school's guided discovery program. StoryTown offers: explicit instructional strategies for phonemic awareness, phonics and high-frequency words, reading fluency, robust vocabulary, and comprehension skills and strategies; instructional sequences coordinated within the daily lesson plan and by strand of instruction; abundant resources that provide practice opportunities (guided and independent practice activities, decodable books, practice books, small-group instruction, spelling practices books, phonics practice book, and grammar practice books); student materials aligned with instruction; an instructional design that considers time allocation; resources for three types of assessments that inform instruction (Entry-Level Assessment, Ongoing Assessments, Summative Assessments); and technology components that support instruction.

**Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Nelson, Crystal	Start: 9/1/2009	-
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Finish: Ongoing

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

### **Strategy: Discovery Learning**

**Description:** Discovery learning as an innovative teaching method, encouraging students to find real-world connections between the classroom and their world. Students interact with the world by exploring and manipulating objects, wrestling with questions and controversies, or performing experiments. As a result, students may be more likely to remember concepts and knowledge discovered on their own. Discovery learning enhances DCS' ability to raise student achievement by encouraging active engagement, promoting motivation, promoting the development of creativity and problem solving skills and providing a tailored learning experience.

### **Activity: Expeditionary Experience**

**Description:** As the culminating activity of a curricular unit, DCS students participate in an expeditionary experience to connect their classroom curricula to the outside world. While all grades benefit from the abundant educational resources within the City, part of our discovery learning mission is to expose students to place and opportunities they would not necessarily have otherwise. In K-2 students participate at least on experience outside of the City of Philadelphia. In grades 3-5, students participate in at least one experience outside of the state. And, between grades 6-8, students will have an opportunity to participate in an international expeditionary experience. Students complete journals related to their expeditionary learning and, in the upper grades, must report on their international expeditionary experience to the DCS Board.

#### **Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Kelley, Jacquelyn Y.	Start: 7/1/2013	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

### **Strategy: Explicit Test Preparation**

**Description:** Discovery will prepare students for the PSSA by exposing them to items that they will find on the PSSA in the format that they will appear on the PSSA. This way the students will be accustomed to the PSSA when they sit for the test.

### **Activity: Classroom-Based PSSA Prep**

**Description:** As part of our strategic plan to move students from below basic to proficient, every student will participate a weekly professional test preparation skills-building period on Fridays. Additionally, each classroom will have testing vocabulary displayed daily (e.g. word walls, words of the day, etc.)

### Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources

Brevard, Nina	Start: 7/1/2013	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

### **Activity: Study Island**

**Description:** DCS implements Study Island, a web-based program aligned to the PSSA, schoolwide (K-8) for individualized student instruction in reading and math. Study Island is specifically designed to help students master the content specified in the Pennsylvania Assessment Anchors. Study Island's focus on the Assessment Anchors enables students to improve their performance in all skill areas tested on the PSSA. The program includes Pennsylvania-specific lessons and questions with immediate feedback and automated instruction. DCS uses Study Island year-round in its RTI after school and Saturday tutoring. Additionally, during the second marking period (the one directly before the administration of the PSSA), the Media Arts special classes schoolwide are a forum for students to use Study Island. This guarantees that every student is spending at least one hour per week on Study Island and PSSA preparation.

### Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources

Brevard, Nina	Start: 9/1/2009	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

### **Strategy: Identify Students in Need of Support, Prove & Monitor Student Progress**

**Description:** Discovery will regularly assess students on reading and math benchmarks during the year to ensure academic progress, identify students in need of intervention/support. Multiple data sources will be used to identify barriers to learning. The school will monitor student progress and adjust instruction and interventions accordingly.

### **Activity: 4Sight**

**Description:** Discovery will administer the Pennsylvania 4Sight Benchmark Assessment 4-5 times annually to all students in grades 3-8. 4Sight Benchmark Assessments are valid, reliable and aligned to the PSSA and provide an estimate of student performance on the PSSA, as well as PA Academic Standards and Assessment Anchor level data to guide classroom instruction and professional development efforts. Assessment data will be calculated expeditiously and shared with reviewed with teachers during cluster meetings.

### Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources



**Description:** The purpose of Discovery’s Comprehensive Student Assistance Program (CSAP) is to identify at-risk students who are having school-related problems and to intervene and refer these students to appropriate school and community resources. Headed by the Pupil Service Coordinator, team members are trained to identify problems, determine whether or not the presenting problem lies within the responsibility of the school and to make recommendations to assist the student and the parent. When the problem lies beyond the scope of the school, the CSAP team assists the parent and student so they may access services within the community. The CSAP team implements the PDE-identified 4-step SAP process: referral, team planning, intervention and resources, and support and follow-up. A student may be referred (by teachers, parents, or any adult in direct contact with the child) to the SAP team for academic, behavioral or social/emotional concerns that interfere with success in school.

**Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Kimbrough, Jacqueline Start: 7/1/2013 -  
Finish: Ongoing

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

**Activity: GMADE/GRADE**

**Description:** DCS administers Pearson Education’s Group Reading and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) was four times a year in grades K-8. GRADE evaluates reading readiness for kindergarteners including: Phonological Awareness, Early Literacy Skills, and Phoneme Grapheme. GRADE assesses vocabulary (word reading, word meaning, vocabulary), comprehension (sentences, comprehension, passage comprehension), and oral language (listening comprehension). GRADE meets No Child Left Behind by diagnostically assessing essential elements of reading. For math, DCS also administers Pearson Education’s Group Mathematics Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE) four times per year in grades K-8. GMADE evaluates Kindergarten through 8th grade on math concepts and communication, operations and computation, as well as processes and application. GMADE meets the NCTM’s Principles & Standards for School Mathematics and new Curriculum Focal Points by diagnostically assessing core skills in the following three areas: Concepts & Communication, Operations & Computation, and Process & Application. Together, GMADE and GRADE allow DCS to quickly score these normative assessments to make decisions on student placements, analyze strengths and weaknesses, plan instruction, and monitor growth from grade to grade.

**Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Wortham, Tonia Start: 7/1/2013 -  
Finish: Ongoing

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

**Activity: Home Visits**

**Description:** The Pupil Service Coordinator, along with one of the Student Intervention Specialists will make home visits to further assess a student's needs if it is determined necessary through the CSAP process. Reasons vary — from frequent attendance or lateness issues, fleas or other health concerns, or if there is reason to believe a student and their family are homeless.

**Person Responsible    Timeline for Implementation    Resources**

Kimbrough, Jacqueline    Start: 7/1/2013    -  
Finish: Ongoing

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

**Activity: Progress Monitoring**

**Description:** The key to the success of Discovery's strategic plan is in the discussions teachers have at weekly grade team meetings regarding the Individual Academic Plans, the progress students are making in attaining their IAP goals, and the revisions and adaptations that must be made to the plans. DCS instructional staff are committed to looking at and internalizing student assessment data, analyzing the data, and determining how to use this data to increase student achievement. Progress will be charted each week and will be communicated to parents each Friday through the school's student information System and discussed with parents at each report card conference.

**Person Responsible    Timeline for Implementation    Resources**

Nelson, Crystal    Start: 7/1/2013    -  
Finish: Ongoing

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

**Strategy: Provide High-Quality Interventions and Student Services**

**Description:** Discovery will develop and maintain a high-quality Student Services program, ensuring struggling students (those with IEPs or identified in the RTI or CSAP process) have adequate interventions to improve academically.

**Activity: Acuity**

**Description:** In 2011-12, Discovery introduced Acuity as a one-time assessment in the spring for our grade levels not assessed by the PSSA (i.e. grades K-2). Acuity for Grades K—2 will help DCS familiarize students with the increased rigor of the Common Core using a set of diagnostic assessment components. Delivering support for interim assessment and a process of formative assessment, Acuity will allow DCS to guide instruction for early learners. Resources support accurate evaluation of younger students and deliver instructional activities to help us provide tailored instruction. And Acuity acquaints our students in the early grades with the skills and concepts of the Common Core and help prevent learning gaps throughout the grades.

### **Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Brevard, Nina	Start: 7/1/2013	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

### ***Activity: After School & Saturday Tutoring***

**Description:** Discovery runs an after-school tutoring program for grades 3-5 on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:00 to 6:00 and a Saturday tutoring program for students in grades 6-8 from 9:00 a.m. to noon. Discovery teachers use Achieve 3000, an online reading intervention that provides differentiated reading instruction for each student. Students are leveled from their first log-on and the program is aligned to state-standards and specifically tailored to improve their reading levels. The school uses Study Island's online program for math, which is differentiated by grade level.

### **Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Brevard, Nina	Start: 7/1/2013	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

### ***Activity: Counseling***

**Description:** Referrals are made to the school counselor through the Rtl process, by the teacher, parent, the student, the student's IEP, or through the Student Assistance program. When an obstacle has been identified, the Guidance Counselor (contracted), Pupil Services Coordinator or one of the Student Intervention Specialists may provide individual or group counseling in such areas as personal and social development, educational planning and/or coping with specific life situations, or other social-emotional issues.

### **Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Kimbrough, Jacqueline	Start: 7/1/2013	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

### ***Activity: KeyMath***

**Description:** Discovery has added KeyMath-3 Essential Resources as a comprehensive math intervention program for our special education population. Using a companion diagnostic assessment, KeyMath allows DCS staff to access effective and engaging intervention materials tailored to individual student learning needs. The program covers three content areas: foundational math concepts, operational skills, and problem solving and includes ten instructional strands. The program employs many instructional techniques including modeling, hands-on exploration with manipulative, open-ended questions to engage students in critical thinking, scripted lessons, problem-solving activities, etc. Progress-monitoring tools allow us to easily and frequently evaluate student learning.

**Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Brevard, Nina	Start: 7/1/2013	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

***Activity: Mentoring (Girls Mentoring & Boys to Men)***

**Description:** Girls in 5th through 8th grade participate in Girls Mentoring and boys in 6th through 8th grade participate in Boys to Men. These student support groups are run by teachers and behavioral support specialists twice a week (girls Monday and Wednesday, boys Tuesday and Thursday) and for Saturday excursions (i.e. feeding homeless). These programs provide a safe environment and positive support system for middle school students.

**Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Brevard, Nina	Start: 7/1/2013	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

***Activity: Response to Intervention (RTI)***

**Description:** RTI integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems. With RTI, Discovery identifies students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitors student progress, provides evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identifies students with learning disabilities. At DCS, our RTI program serves our students in grades 3-8 who receive special education services or who scored Basic or Below Basic on the reading and/or math PSSA the year prior. The program combines afterschool and Saturday tutoring, mentors for RTI students, Individual Academic Plans (IAP) for all non-special education RTI students that are updated and distributed each report period with report cards. Additionally, parents and students together must attend three mandatory meeting per year to review previous assessment results and set goals, to review strategies and techniques for preparing for the PSSA, and, at the close of the year, to evaluate

whether objectives were met via 4Sight, GMADE/GRADE and class grades and to determine summer placement if needed. The goal of the RTI program at Discovery is to move students from Below Basic to Proficiency.

**Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Wortham, Tonia	Start: 9/1/2009	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

**Activity: SpellRead**

**Description:** SpellRead is a reading intervention program designed for the most struggling students in grades 2-12, including students two or more years behind in reading, special education students, and English language learners. SpellRead has a multisensory approach to literacy development, which bridges a student's sound system and oral language to build automaticity and trains the brain to efficiently process language read for understanding. SpellRead is designed for groups of five students with one certified teacher or paraprofessional (who has received professional development in the SpellRead model) in a 60- to 90-minute instructional block. The program combines scaffolded phonics and phonemic awareness activities, active reading, and writing connections. The program has built-in assessment tools. The goal is for students to demonstrate mastery of the sound system, attack unfamiliar words easily, and read with fluency and comprehension. In 2009-10, Discovery adopted SpellRead as a special education intervention as well as for struggling readers through our CSAP program. In 2010-11, DCS first used the program school-wide to support struggling readers.

**Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Brevard, Nina	Start: 7/1/2013	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

**Activity: Student Intervention Specialists**

**Description:** Along with driving the school's positive behavior support program, the school's intervention specialists work with at risk or students in need of emotional support (per their IEPs). They provide behavior support, social skills instruction, and mentoring in an effort to mitigate behavioral barriers to learning.

**Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Brevard, Nina	Start: 3/1/2010	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

### **Activity: Teacher Assistants (Highly Qualified Paraprofessionals)**

**Description:** Central to Discovery's strategic plan is providing more individualized instruction to struggling students. As such, DCS invest considerable resources to staff no less than 12 teacher assistants per year. These teachers support the implementation of Individual Academic Plans and work with a variety of students who may have diverse learning needs, especially in our full-inclusion classrooms. They enable DCS to provide small group instruction and individualized tutoring in alignment with IAPs.

#### **Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Kelley, Jacquelyn Y.	Start: 9/1/2009	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

### **Strategy: School-Wide Support and Prevention Services**

**Description:** Discovery will ensure programs are in place to provide ongoing student support and prevention services.

### **Activity: Mentoring (Girls Mentoring & Boys to Men)**

**Description:** Girls in 5th through 8th grade participate in Girls Mentoring and boys in 6th through 8th grade participate in Boys to Men. These student support groups are run by teachers and behavioral support specialists twice a week (girls Monday and Wednesday, boys Tuesday and Thursday) and for Saturday excursions (i.e. feeding homeless). These programs provide a safe environment and positive support system for middle school students.

#### **Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Brevard, Nina	Start: 7/1/2013	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

### **Activity: Positive Behavior Support**

**Description:** In an effort to mitigate behavioral barriers to learning, DCS employs three Student Intervention Specialists to assist in implementing the school's behavioral support program. Each working with a different grade level (K-2, 3-5, and 6-8), the Student Intervention Specialists drive the individualized positive behavior support system employed throughout the school. This system

includes Functional Behavior Assessments and individualized Positive Behavior Support plans for each student at DCS, as well as an incentive-based system for good behavior (Brevard's Bucks).

#### **Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Bey, Bilal	Start: 9/1/2011	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

## **Goal: II. Increase Parent & Community Engagement**

**Description:** Each year, DCS will increase the percentage of parents who attend parent programming and/or volunteers as measured by parent sign-in sheets at meetings/workshops, parent attendance at report card conferences, and number of parent volunteers that contribute at least 10 hours per year in service. The number of community partners will increase each year.

### **Strategy: Increase Parent Involvement and Improve Communication**

**Description:** It is the Board's and administration's belief that it takes a village to raise a child. Parents play an important role in the successful education of their child. At DCS we have developed a comprehensive parent involvement program to keep parents informed and engaged.

### **Activity: Community and Parent Coordinator**

**Description:** DCS employs a full-time Community and Parent Coordinator. With regard to parents, the Coordinator is responsible for: (1) Managing parent communication to cultivate a positive view of our school by keeping parents informed about instructional goals, policies and school events, using website/SIS, meetings, and newsletters; (2) Recruiting and training parent volunteers (e.g. cafeteria assistance, safety aides, classroom assistants, expeditionary experience trip chaperones, etc.); (3) Coordinating parent education that teaches parents how to continue the learning process at home (e.g. workshops on homework methods, PSSA skills, special education, RTI, etc.); (4) Serving as a liaison between parent groups and administrators (e.g. Home and School Association, Title I Parent Advisory); (5) Assisting in parent fundraising to support student activities, and (6) Continuously evaluating the effectiveness of parent programming, determining parent need for and interest in future activities, and assessing parent satisfaction with the school program. With regard to the community, the Coordinator is responsible for: (1) Managing current community partnerships; (2) Recruiting community volunteers; (3) Cultivating new community partnerships specifically with regard to our expeditionary experiences, expressive arts programming, and out-of-school time activities; (4) Identifying potential community donors of services and/or funds; (5) Developing high interest community programming, and (5) Continuously evaluating the effectiveness of community programming and measuring feedback from our community partners to enable us to make needed improvements.

### **Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Kelley, Jacquelyn Y.	Start: 7/1/2013	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

### ***Activity: Home School Association***

**Description:** Parents will be invited to join Discovery Charter School's Home and School Association (DCSHSA) to enhance the educational opportunities for our children, and to provide another means through which parents can gain information about DCS and its programs. Home and School Association membership, and active participation, will provide an opportunity for parents to become involved in their child's school experience. Each meeting begins with a presentation by the teachers in one or two grade groups followed by a question and answer period with parents.

### **Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Brown, Renee	Start: 7/1/2013	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

### ***Activity: Implement a variety of communication methods with parents***

**Description:** Parent/teacher communication is vital to the educational success and experience of Discovery children. Together, they form a team that focuses on each child's needs, concerns, and growth. Discovery works to maintain constant quality communication with our parents and all parents are invited to participate in the educational process with inquiries at any time. Parents are welcome to observe in their child's classrooms as long as arrangements are made in advance with their child's teacher (and have the appropriate clearances). We have a Community and Parent Coordinator responsible for managing parent communication to cultivate a positive view of our school by keeping parents informed about instructional goals, policies, and school events. The school uses the school website and school information system (SIS), meetings, letters, and weekly newsletters to ensure parents and students have access to all of the schools instructional opportunities.

### **Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Brevard, Nina	Start: 7/1/2013	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

## **Activity: RTI Parent Involvement**

**Description:** All parents of students participating in the RTI program are required to participate in three mandatory parent meetings. In October, parents meet with RTI staff, teachers, and administrators to explain the PSSA and benchmarks, review individual student results, and set goals for their child's Individual Academic Plan. In January, the parent meeting focuses on strategies and techniques for preparing for the PSSA. In May, we review 4Sight results, GMADE/GRADE results, and classroom grades with parents to determine if their child met his/her IAP objectives and determine if summer placement is necessary.

### **Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Wortham, Tonia	Start: 9/1/2009	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

## **Statement of Quality Assurance**

Charter school has met AYP.

There are currently no supporting documents selected for this section.

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

### **Rigorous Instructional Program**

*What curriculum does your charter school utilize?*

The major tenets of Discovery Charter School's education model are as follows:

- Activity Based Units of Study
- Budgeted Discoveries Outside the Classroom
- Character Building
- Community Oriented — Family Focused
- Shared Decision Making Management
- Holistic Teaching/Learning Environment

With that in mind, Discovery has a self-designed curriculum that was carefully constructed to align with the discovery learning model at the school (e.g. promoting inquiry, problem-solving, hands-on learning, etc.), to meet Pennsylvania State Standards, and to be developmental appropriate for the range of student ages and abilities we serve. The founders believed it was necessary to develop a curriculum which is comprised of three distinctive yet complimentary components. The components are Discovery through Exploration: Field Trip Program, Academic Curriculum, and Expressive Arts.

- **Discovery through Exploration: Field Trip Program**

The instructional practices of The Discovery Charter School are influenced by Jerome Bruner's discovery learning or guided discovery model, particularly in the areas of science, social studies and the arts. Discovery learning highlights the learner's interests, self-motivation and self-regulation. It encourages students to make guesses based on incomplete information and stimulates them to find their own means of solving problems. Teachers "set up" the eventual discoveries by offering basic information and some details without giving students too much information. In discovery learning, students do the work. They determine the best ways to organize new and familiar information for efficient future transfer. Teachers provide students with problems and puzzles to stimulate them to discover the underlying structure of the subject matter. Left to "fill in the gaps," they determine ways to organize the information for encoding, storage, and eventual recall in the most personally comfortable and efficient way.

Expeditionary experiences in the form of trips are an integral part of the DCS mission and educational program. Specifically, the mission is to engage students in an educational plan that builds from a prior knowledge base and is connected to discoveries outside the classroom. These trips provide students with educational and cultural enrichment that is directly tied to thematic units from the school's academic curriculum. Each year, students in grades K-8 participate in approximately 175 trips that are tied to academic content and are aligned to state standards. In grades K-2, the discovery learning takes place within Philadelphia and Pennsylvania. In grades 3-5, students have an opportunity to participate in curricular trips outside of the state. And, between 6th and 8th grade, students will have an opportunity to participate in an international tour (e.g. in 2009-10 DCS students spent two weeks in South Africa).

In 2011-12 the emphasis was on providing a full continuum of expeditionary field trips for connecting learning outside the classroom. For example, our third grade took a day-long trip to New York City. They visited Ellis Island, which aligned with their social studies curriculum in which they were studying immigration. Our fourth graders went on an overnight trip connected to their English Language Arts coursework where they were studying different types of poetry and writing their own poems. Students visited a Poet's Café, where they met rappers and poets, saw a performance, and were able to recite their own works on the stage. Building on last year's success, our 5th graders traveled the Underground Railroad trail that took them through Detroit, MI through Windsor, Amherstburg, North Buxton, and Dresden Ontario. This curricular trip was the culminating discovery to a social studies unit. Finally, 46 7th and 8th grade students took an 8-day trip to Barcelona and Madrid, Spain, where they were able to walk and talk the words from textbooks they had been studying all year.

- **Academic Curriculum**

The guided discovery approach is supplemented by more expository and "direct instruction" strategies in the area of reading as prescribed by Harcourt's StoryTown series and in the area of math as prescribed by Saxon and Houghton Mifflin Programs. The strategies employed in these programs have been proven effective in preparing students for the kinds of learning experiences required for more student-centered approaches. The StoryTown Series (K-5), McDougal Littell's Elements of Literature (6-8), Saxon Math (6-8), and Houghton Mifflin Math (K-5) all have approaches that include important components of extensive student practice, problem solving and critical thinking, as well as sustained attention to the early development of fundamental literacy or math skills. Without these fundamentals, the kinds of independence

required by meta-cognitive and constructivist approaches is impossible. Both programs include opportunities for whole-group, cooperative learning group and individualized instruction. In 2011-12, we also added Scholastic's Guided Reading program in grades K-8. For social studies, DCS uses TCI's Social Studies Alive, and Discovery Works is used for science. All program elements are national standards-based and are aligned with Pennsylvania standards. In addition to the standard curriculum, Discovery has developed a curriculum for music, multi-media, health, physical education, and character education.

- **Expressive Arts**

Content in the arts serve as the foundation for an extensive Expressive Arts program. Every other Friday afternoon, the school is transformed into a place where the arts take center stage. Students rotate through a range of expressive arts activities in the areas of visual art, music, dance, drama, media, and culinary arts. These activities provide opportunities for the development of creativity and provide direct connections to the formal academic curriculum.

***Do you have documentation that shows that your curriculum meets the Chapter 4 content standards and all requirements?***

The academic curriculum meets Chapter 4 content standards and all other requirements as indicated in this chapter. Documentation is presented in various ways through our standardized curriculum, consistent evaluation through pre mid and post testing, as well as successful AYP scores and parental involvement. In addition, when coordinating the curriculum, a committee was formed which reviewed the curriculum to ensure it was aligned with the PA Standards.

Pennsylvania state standards are utilized on a daily basis and are at the core of all curriculum planning. Teachers of all subjects including (art, music, physical education and multi-media), begin with the standards when outlining the expectations for what students at their grade level will master. The RELA programs, as well as the math programs were chosen because of their alignment with the standards, as well as their richness of content, high expectations and developmentally appropriate practices. Field trips must be aligned with the current theme and state standards that will be addressed by the inquiry. Teachers regularly review standards to ensure mastery of concepts taught and revise/modify instructional programs based on that review.

The curriculum committee, comprised of both teachers and administrators, are responsible for the ongoing monitoring of this alignment, including continuing assessment of the ways in which specific benchmarks are being met by student performance and as a result, what curricular modifications need to be made for better alignment with the standards.

A copy of Discovery's curriculum by grade is attached to this report. This document will provide evidence that our curriculum meets Chapter 4 content standards.

***How is the curriculum organized to meet the developmental and academic needs of students?***

The Discovery Charter School curriculum (see attached) was designed to align explicitly to the PA Standards and skills, which are based on what students should know in different grades. Additionally, when selecting curriculum materials, DCS ensured that the programs we adopted were nationally- recognized and research-based with demonstrated success in raising student achievement.

Additionally, the Discovery Learning model matches cognitive development. This instructional approach is consistent with the ways that people learn and develop. For example, Jerome Bruner identified three stages of cognitive growth, similar to the stages identified by Piaget. Bruner believes that children move from an Enactive stage to the Iconic stage and finally to the Symbolic stage. In the enactive stage, the child represents and understands the world through actions — for understand something is to be able to manipulate it, taste it, throw it, or break it. At the iconic stage, the child represents the world in images — appearances dominate. At the final level, the child is able to use abstract ideas, symbols, language, and logic to understand and represent the world. Discovery Learning allows students to move through these three stages as they encounter new information. First, the students manipulate and act on materials; then they form images as they note specific features and make observations; and finally, they abstract general ideas and principles from these experiences and observations. When students are motivated and participate in the discovery project, discovery learning leads to superior learning.

***How does the charter school promote in-depth and inquiry-based teaching and learning?***

The very instructional model employed at Discovery Charter School — discovery learning — is recognized as one of the preeminent inquiry-based instructional technique. As mentioned previously, Discovery learning is an inquiry-based, constructivist learning theory. Real life scenarios are given to the learner where they face the challenge of solving these problems on their own. The learner uses what they know as well as previous experiences to draw upon conclusions for solving and learning. Students interact with the world by exploring and manipulating objects, wrestling with questions and controversies, or performing experiments. As a result, students may be more likely to remember concepts and knowledge discovered on their own. Discovery learning promotes the development of creativity and problem solving skills.

***What strategies does the school use to accelerate academic skill development, content knowledge and learning strategies of students performing significantly below standards in literacy and mathematics skills?***

Discovery regularly assesses students on reading and math benchmarks during the year to ensure academic progress, identify students in need of intervention/support, and provide targeted instruction and interventions to meet student needs. The school will monitor student progress and adjust instruction and interventions accordingly.

Discovery administers the Pennsylvania 4Sight Benchmark Assessment 4-5 times annually to all students in grades 3-8. 4Sight Benchmark Assessments are valid, reliable and aligned to the PSSA and provide an estimate of student performance on the PSSA, as well as PA Academic Standards and Assessment Anchor level data to guide classroom instruction and professional development efforts. Assessment data will be calculated expeditiously and shared with reviewed with teachers during cluster meetings. Additionally, DCS administers Pearson

Education's Group Reading and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) was four times a year in grades K-8. For math, DCS also administers Pearson Education's Group Mathematics Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE) four times per year in grades K-8. Together, GMADE and GRADE allow DCS to quickly score these normative assessments to make decisions on student placements, analyze strengths and weaknesses, plan instruction, and monitor growth from grade to grade.

One of the key strategies employed for students performing significantly below standards in literacy and mathematics skills is our RTI program. RTI integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems. With RTI, Discovery identifies students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitors student progress, provides evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identifies students with learning disabilities. At DCS, our RTI program serves our students in grades 3-8 who receive special education services or who scored Basic or Below Basic on the reading and/or math PSSA the year prior. The program combines afterschool and Saturday tutoring, mentors for RTI students, Individual Academic Plans (IAP) for all non-special education RTI students that are updated and distributed each report period with report cards. Additionally, parents and students together must attend three mandatory meeting per year to review previous assessment results and set goals, to review strategies and techniques for preparing for the PSSA, and, at the close of the year, to evaluate whether objectives were met via 4Sight, GMADE/GRADE and class grades and to determine summer placement if needed. The goal of the RTI program at Discovery is to move students from Below Basic to Proficiency.

Additionally, Discovery's CSAP program provides an avenue for identifying at-risk students who are having school-related problems and for intervening and referring these students to appropriate school and community resources. Headed by the Pupil Service Coordinator, team members are trained to identify problems, determine whether or not the presenting problem lies within the responsibility of the school and to make recommendations to assist the student and the parent. When the problem lies beyond the scope of the school, the CSAP team assists the parent and student so they may access services within the community. The CSAP team implements the PDE-identified 4-step SAP process: referral, team planning, intervention and resources, and support and follow-up. A student may be referred (by teachers, parents, or any adult in direct contact with the child) to the SAP team for academic, behavioral or social/emotional concerns that interfere with success in school.

Students whose academic needs appear to be deemed too severe for the regular curriculum can be referred for a special education initial evaluation. Discovery Charter School offers full-time special education services for those students who qualify as well as resource room support for those students needing part-time academic support.

All teachers are required to utilize the intervention programs which have been incorporated into all of the curriculum programs. The intervention programs are lessons and activities which have been modified to accommodate struggling learners. In addition, an adaptive learning environment has been established in each classroom. The A.L.E. is an interactive learning station which is designed to accommodate the needs of slow learners or those who learn differently from the class population. The A.L.E. is equipped with audio and visual tools as well as modified stories with pictures. Calculators, rulers, and counting blocks are also available in the A.L.E.

Finally, we continue to make investments in educational resources that are recognized as best practices for raising student achievement. Investments include: standards-based curriculum resources, highly qualified personnel, and strategic use of instructional technology. For example, after piloting SpellRead in 2009-10 as an intervention for special education students and students participating in CSAP, DCS adopted the program schoolwide in 2010-11 and beyond for struggling students including those performing two or more years behind in reading. SpellRead has a multisensory approach to literacy development, which bridges a student's sound system and oral language to build automaticity and trains the brain to efficiently process language read for understanding. SpellRead is designed for groups of five students with one certified teacher or paraprofessional (who has received professional development in the SpellRead model) in a 60- to 90-minute instructional block. The program combines scaffolded phonics and phonemic awareness activities, active reading, and writing connections. The program has built-in assessment tools. The goal is for students to demonstrate mastery of the sound system, attack unfamiliar words easily, and read with fluency and comprehension. In 2011-12 we added Achieve 3000, an online reading intervention that provides differentiated reading instruction for each student as an intervention for the RTI program.

***What types of teaching strategies are used to actively engage students in the learning process?***

Discovery learning is well-regarded as a teaching method that encourages active engagement. Children love being in charge of their own learning; it gives them the sense of self worth. It makes the learning more desirable and attainable. Teachers give a problem to their students (and provide students with contextual data or information) and set their students free to solve it on their own, discovering as they go. This method highlights the learner's interests, promotes motivation, autonomy, responsibility, independence, the development of creativity, and problem solving skills. It also provides a learning experience tailored to each child.

To develop students' academic, social, technical abilities, and skills, the DCS program mandates that teachers implement a variety of innovative and engaging strategies to narrow the achievement gap and increase academic rigor. Student achievement is heightened through field studies, community connections, participation in the fine arts and world language courses and the utilization of performance-based learning. The active, hands-on approach to learning will be utilized to allow students to better analyze and master the standards.

Additionally, DCS strives to make effective use of educational and productivity software to increase student engagement. We have provided every classroom with access to the internet, and teachers are able to include and use this technology as a teaching aide. Video projection systems, interactive whiteboards, eReaders, etc. are available, and the school is working diligently to integrate the new technology into the school's infrastructure. As a means of engaging students, DCS has integrated technology resources into students' IAPs, including calculators, LeapFrogs, computers, iPads, manipulatives, etc. The school employs a full-time Information Technology Director, as well as a multi-media teacher who implements a standards-aligned, multi-media curriculum for grades K-8 as part of their specialty courses.

***Professional Development***

The Discovery program combines many innovative components — discovery learning, research-based interventions, data-driven instruction, traditional curriculum programs, expeditionary

experiences, integration of instructional technology, special education inclusion, RTI, use of paraprofessionals, etc. Organizing these components into a cohesive and effective educational program has required a considerable and ongoing investment in professional development for teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators. DCS has an approved three-year professional development plan. Each year, the Leadership Team reviews this plan along with our needs assessment based on the previous year's data and develops a focus for upcoming professional development. In 2011-12 the main areas of focus were differentiated reading instruction, writing instruction, assessments and data. A sampling of the professional development various staff members participated in included:

- Guided Reading — Differentiated Reading instruction
- Achieve 3000 — Differentiated Reading instruction
- Proactive Crisis Prevention- turn around training
- ENO Board Training- smart board training
- Practical Ideas to Differentiate Your Writing Instruction ( K-2)
- Working Successfully With the Difficult Young Child: Practical Strategies that Work
- Acuity Assessment — standardized assessment K-2
- Access Billing Training — Leader Services
- Using Six Trait Writing to Maximize Your Students' Writing Achievement ( grades 3-6)
- Mean Girls: Dealing with Today's Girl Bullying and Relational Aggression
- Hands-On Math Equations
- 21st Century Charter Schools: Celebrating the Successes and Confronting The Challenges
- Data- driven Instruction/Strategic Student Intervention and Instructional Planning
- Standards Aligned Assessments and Instruction
- Health and Wellness
- Scope and Sequence Revision/ Summer Reading Development
- 21st Century Learners and Instructional Innovation

A copy of our Professional Development Plan approval letter and our Induction Plan approval letters are attached to this report.

## **Rigorous Instructional Program - Attachments**

- DCS Curriculum
- DCS Professional Development Approval Letter
- DCS Induction Plan Approval Letter

## **English Language Learners**

DCS did not serve any English Language Learner (ELL) students in 2011-12. However, the school has an ELL policy and stays abreast of requirements related to ELL students to ensure that upon enrolling an ELL student the school would immediately be prepared to implement services in compliance with 22 Pa. Code § 4.26.

The purpose of our ELL plan is to increase the English language proficiency of eligible students so that they can attain the statewide academic standards and achieve academic success.

Discovery is prepared to implement a variety of ESL program models, including pull-out, push-in, and sheltered. To determine which educational approach (es) will be used for individual students, multiple factors are considered. These factors include, but are not limited to, English language proficiency data, other evaluation data that may be available, previous school records, teacher recommendations, parent recommendations, Principal/ESL Coordinator input, and SAP plans.

Discovery's ESL program is designed to provide a rich learning environment that is student-centered, developmentally-aligned, and research-based. The program is designed to:

- Facilitate English language acquisition through communication skills of comprehension, listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Ensure an effective and meaningful participation in regular education.
- Facilitate the acculturation process in a complex society that is multicultural by exposing students to the customs, traditions, and expectations of their new environment.

Attached is a copy of our ELL Policy and our PIMS LEP report submitted to PDE.

## English Language Learners - Attachments

- DCS ELL Policy
- DCS PIMS Oct. 1 Enrollment, Low Income, and LEP Data LEA Profile 2011-12

## Graduation Requirements

Not Applicable. We are an elementary school (grades K-8).

## Special Education

Discovery Charter School provides an exemplary special education program, which served approximately 13% of our student population in 2011-12. Discovery has focused on creating a setting where all children are educated in the general education setting for the majority of the day (least restrictive environment), which is the Inclusion model. We have invested significant resources into ensuring that we have the appropriate staff and support, such as inclusion teachers, behavior specialists, wraparounds, teaching assistants, etc., to ensure our students achieve academically.

Hallmarks of Discovery's special education program include:

- **Professional Development:** Discovery provides instructional staff with frequent onsite and offsite training and development in strategies useful in inclusive classrooms, as well as in special education law and compliance.
- **Parental Involvement Resources and Outreach:** Discovery helps parents become aware of what is done to meet their child's needs. They can meet with specialists (speech, audiologists, etc.) at Outreach summits.
- **Technology/Differentiated Instruction/ Appropriate Accommodations/ Modifications:** Discovery provides students with appropriate research-based materials and resources to

ensure academic achievement in the regular education setting. This will include software such as Fast ForWord, Sound reading, e-books, calculators, timers, stress relievers, etc. In 2011-12, Discovery used IDEA funding to invest in iPads for use in the special education inclusion environment.

- **Behavior Health Support:** Discovery provides behaviorally challenged students with research-based tiered intervention support when identified as needing extra support. These supports include a new therapeutic room with student resources so staff can support alternate behaviors in the regular education classrooms.

Various instructional strategies are utilized to educate students who receive special education services. The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) determines the type and level of instruction which is presented to these students. These strategies include but are not limited to the following:

- Extending the learning time to complete tasks, including test/quizzes.
- Pre-teaching difficult and or new concepts for those students who need to be eased into learning new or different things.
- Providing students with adequate wait time as a way to increase the quality and depth of responses.
- Encouraging students to use manipulatives during math. Provide students with an assortment of manipulatives.
- Providing visual support to help students create mental pictures, (i.e. photos, dioramas, models, maps, charts, symbols, pictures, posters, overheads, graphs, drawing, timelines, etc.).
- Always providing instruction in multi-sensory ways (e.g., auditory, kinesthetic, visual). Immerse the student's senses. Teach to his/her strengths.
- Teach to two or more modalities.
- Utilize cooperative, direct and indirect instructional strategies.
- Group students by skills attainment/need for skills instruction. Use flexible grouping practices.

In June 2011, Discovery received its cyclical compliance monitoring review from the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Bureau of Special Education (BSE). The review included interviews of charter school administrative and instructional personnel; review of policies, notices, plans, outcome and performance data, special education forms and formats, and data reports used and compiled by the charter school; and comprehensive case studies, including classroom observations, interviews of parents, students, and general and special education teachers, and student file reviews. In recognition of our strong special education program, Discovery received two commendations as follows:

- The Charter School is commended for developing a strong parent support group which works in conjunction with the school to provide academic, financial (fundraising) and program support to the school.
- The Charter School is commended for its strong system of collaboration between special education, regular education, paraprofessionals and support staff, all of whom are working together for students, but specifically for those at risk.

## Special Education - Attachment

- DCS Special Education Policies

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart I

Teacher	FTE	Type of class or support	Location	# of Students	Other Information
Craig Dacheux	1.00	Primary Inclusive	Discovery Charter School	10	n/a
Amanda Bouwman	1.00	Primary Inclusive	Discovery Charter School	25	n/a
Jill Stalter	1.00	Intermediate Inclusive	Discovery Charter School	14	n/a
Monique Burgess	1.00	Intermediate Inclusive	Discovery Charter School	15	n/a
Ashley Phillips	1.00	Intermediate Inclusive	Discovery Charter School	10	n/a
Julia Arrington	1.00	Intermediate Inclusive	Discovery Charter School	12	n/a

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart II

Organization	FTE	Type of class or support	Location	# of Students	Other Information
N/A	N/A	N//A	N/A	0	N/A

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart III

Title	Location	FTE
Teaching Assistant, Teneshia Stewart	Discovery Charter School	1.00
Teaching Assistant, Aisha Abel	Discovery Charter School	1.00
Teaching Assistant, Indigene Hamlin	Discovery Charter School	1.00
Student Intervention Specialist, Bilal Bey	Discovery Charter School	1.00
Student Intervention Specialist, Greg Cannon	Discovery Charter School	1.00
Student Intervention Specialist, Jamal Griffin	Discovery Charter School	1.00
Resource Instructional Aide, Lori Ballard	Discovery Charter School	1.00
Teaching Assistant, Zingha Clay	Discovery Charter School	1.00
Teaching Assistant, Kenneth Brown	Discovery Charter School	1.00
Teaching Assistant, Dawn Walton	Discovery Charter School	1.00
Teaching Assistant, Omari Alston	Discovery Charter School	1.00
Teaching Assistant, Danon Mckim	Discovery Charter School	1.00
Teaching Assistant, Deanna Johnson	Discovery Charter School	1.00
Teaching Assistant, Christopher Hines	Discovery Charter School	1.00
Teaching Assistant, Brandon Ruff	Discovery Charter School	1.00

Teaching Assistant, Leah Deloach	Discovery Charter School 1.00
Teaching Assistant, Denise Wells	Discovery Charter School 1.00
Teaching Assistant, Nora Elarbi	Discovery Charter School 1.00

## Special Education Program Profile - Chart IV

IU, Public Agency, Organization, Title/Service or Individual		Amount of Time Per Week
Dr. Lawanda Burke,	School Psychologist	0.30
Transitions Today, Inc -- Dr. Kathryn Woods	School Psychologist	0.10
Catapult	Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy	1.0
Therapy Source	Physical Therapy	0.1
Clarke Hearing Center	Hearing Therapy	0.20

## SECTION IV. ACCOUNTABILITY

### Student Assessment - Primary

Test/Classification	K	1	2	3	4	5
PSSA/PASA Reading & Mathematics	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Acuity Reading & Mathematics	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
PSSA Science	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
PSSA Writing	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Group Mathematics Assessment & Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4Sight Reading & Mathematics	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

### Student Assessment - Secondary

Test/Classification	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
PSSA/PASA Reading & Math	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
PSSA Science	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
PSSA Writing	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
GRADE & GMADE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
4Sight Reading & Math	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No

### Student Assessment

At Discovery Charter School, we strive to meet the State's increasing targets for reading and mathematics achievement and to, thus, meet AYP. We do so by monitoring student progress on an ongoing basis. The key to academic success as we view it is to set measurable goals and to

continually monitor progress toward those goals. At DCS, we use the performance standards as determined by the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment. The school also uses 4Sight, GRADE, and GMADE to evaluate student progress throughout the school year. A description of our assessment system follows below.

**PSSA**

In 2011-12, Discovery Charter School made AYP for the fourth consecutive year. This year, a new AYP calculation method was used by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, giving schools who serve more than one grade “span” (i.e., elementary grades 3 to 5 and middle grades 6 to 8) credit for making improvements in those areas, such that if they make their targets in just one grade span, it is the equivalent of making the targets for the whole school. For Discovery, this meant that the improvements made in grades 6 to 8 in Math and Reading allowed the school to make its targets in that grade span, and, by extension, for the whole school. Thus, Preliminary (Pre-Appeals) AYP results from PDE show that the school made all its AYP targets for this year and made AYP for the fourth year in a row.

Previously, in order to determine Adequate Yearly Progress of academics at the school, all grades are compiled into one set of test scores from which overall proficiency levels are calculated for the whole group and subgroups with over 40 students. However, these overall groupings can mask the fact that there is wide variation in academic performance of students from grade to grade and subject to subject. So, while the school as a whole might not have made its AYP proficiency targets, individual grades in the school might exceed those targets. In fact, the new Grade Span calculations for determining AYP targets for charter schools instituted this year mean that improvements in particular grade groups can be just as important for AYP as improvements in the school as a whole. In 2011-12, the gains our students in grades 6-8 made in reading in math (meeting performance targets via safe harbor), enabled us to make AYP. Our preliminary PSSA scores follow below:

	Math PSSA		Reading PSSA		AYP Status
	Proficient & Advanced		Proficient & Advanced		
<b>2011-2012</b>	3-5 Span 79.9%	6-8 Span 61.1%	3-5 Span 58.9%	6-8 Span 66.2%	Made AYP
<b>2010-2011</b>	70.0%		62.4%		Made AYP
<b>2009-2010</b>	58.4%		52.4%		Made AYP
<b>2008-2009</b>	61.3%		56.0%		Made AYP — Making Progress
<b>2007-2008</b>	35.9%		43.5%		School Improvement I

**Acuity**

In 2011-12, Discovery introduced Acuity as a one-time assessment in the spring for our grade levels not assessed by the PSSA (i.e. grades K-2). Acuity for Grades K—2 will help DCS familiarize students with the increased rigor of the Common Core using a set of diagnostic assessment components. Delivering support for interim assessment and a process of formative assessment, Acuity will allow DCS to guide instruction for early learners. Resources support accurate evaluation of younger students and deliver instructional activities to help us provide tailored instruction. And Acuity acquaints our students in the early grades with the skills and concepts of the Common Core and help prevent learning gaps throughout the grades.

#### **4SIGHT**

Discovery students in grades 3-8 participate in the 4Sight benchmark assessment several times each year. In 2011-12, students completed the reading exam four times and the math exam five times. 4Sight is a benchmark assessment tool that enables the school to predict students' reading and math achievement multiple times throughout the year. These predictions allow teachers to take action in the areas in which students need help.

4Sight assessments are one hour tests that mimic the formats, coverage, look and feel of the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). 4 Sight produces scores on key sub-skills designed around our state standards — for example, interpreting text, drawing conclusions, geometry and so on. These scores indicate where administrators need to focus professional development efforts to ensure student success.

After each exam, results were analyzed and teachers were given specific strategies and interventions to ensure students improved in the poorest sub-skills.

#### **GRADE & GMADE**

DCS also uses the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) and Group Mathematics Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE) as pre and post annual testing tools that show a child's growth in reading and math in sub-skill areas over multiple years. These tests are administered three times a year in grades K-2 and twice a year in grades 3-8. GMADE covers math concepts, math operations, computation, and application skills, while GRADE covers vocabulary, sentence comprehension, passage comprehension, and listening comprehension.

Along with our in-house pre and post assessments (GRADE/GMADE), local data is used to track the progress of students who score in the "below proficiency" range and monitor not only their growth over time but the extent of interventions provided each student. State results are used to measure school performance, review strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and gauge progress towards annual goals.

Our 2011-2012 Preliminary PSSA/AYP reports are attached, as well as data from Acuity (grades K-2) and our 4Sight benchmarks results (grades 3-5).

***Please describe features of the student achievement plan and note the usage of teacher observations, surveys, portfolios or other local instruments to measure student progress.***

For ongoing progress monitoring, students will be tested a minimum of three times each year in each subject area so that teachers can assess student academic progress and may redirect their instructional efforts to deficit areas. The combination of diagnostic tests with benchmark assessments allows us to determine the beginning level of each student, analyze areas of deficit, target instruction, and adapt the curriculum accordingly. We feel that these services are particularly important in view of the requirements of the No Child Left Behind legislation that dictate performance levels for all school student subgroups. Ongoing curricular assessments, student support, child find processes, curricular reviews, teacher collaboration, interim reports, and parent conferences all contribute to our being able to continuously direct the school's educational process and programs.

Teachers meet at least once a week in grade teams to discuss the progress of students and to determine if the curriculum needs to be modified or if homogenous placement is needed to accommodate students needs. Referrals are made for students whose academic needs are deemed too severe for the regular curriculum. These students are referred to the Students Support Team (which includes the parent) who will in turn, make decisions about the academic placement of the child/student. Discovery Charter School offers full-time special education services for those students who qualify as well as resource room support for those students needing part-time academic support.

***Describe the strategies and interventions that are in place to ensure that students who are at-risk of failure, or those not making reasonable progress, are being addressed.***

Since 2010-11, DCS has been implementing a robust Response to Intervention (RTI) program. RTI integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems. With RTI, Discovery identifies students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitors student progress, provides evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identifies students with learning disabilities. At DCS, our RTI program serves our students in grades 3-8 who receive special education services or who scored Basic or Below Basic on the reading and/or math PSSA the year prior. The program combines afterschool and Saturday tutoring, mentors for RTI students, Individual Academic Plans (IAP) for all non-special education RTI students that are updated and distributed each report period with report cards. Additionally, parents and students together must attend three mandatory meeting per year to review previous assessment results and set goals, to review strategies and techniques for preparing for the PSSA, and, at the close of the year, to evaluate whether objectives were met via 4Sight, GMADE/GRADE and class grades and to determine summer placement if needed. The goal of the RTI program at Discovery is to move students from Below Basic to Proficiency.

Additionally, as noted in the Rigorous Instructional Program section of this report, Discovery has implemented reading and math intervention programs for both special education students and students performing below proficiency, including SpellRead and KeyMath. In 2011-12, we introduced Achieve 3000 as an additional reading intervention. As we are lucky to have a large group of highly qualified teaching assistants, we are also able to provide more small group and one-on-one instruction for students in need of additional support. Our staff are also skilled at providing adaptive learning environments. Staff has been provided with ongoing professional development for effective practical strategies and techniques in differentiating instruction. Differentiating instruction will be used to meet the individual learning styles of all students. The Leap Frog School House Program has been instituted in the school. This program utilizes a multi-sensory approach to improve student learning. Students will be provided opportunities to make use of the programs Leap Track assessment and instruction system. It operates according to a four-step process that includes formative assessment, progress reports, targeted differentiated instruction and a feedback book whereby progress is measured and instruction is adjusted. Also, every classroom has access to a mobile laptop unit giving one-to-one computer tutorials for every student.

We also provide opportunities for explicit test preparation. DCS implements Study Island, a web-based program aligned to the PSSA, schoolwide (K-8) for individualized student instruction

in reading and math. Study Island is specifically designed to help students master the content specified in the Pennsylvania Assessment Anchors. Study Island's focus on the Assessment Anchors enables students to improve their performance in all skill areas tested on the PSSA. The program includes Pennsylvania-specific lessons and questions with immediate feedback and automated instruction. DCS uses Study Island year-round in its RTI after school and Saturday tutoring. Additionally, during the second marking period (the one directly before the administration of the PSSA), the Media Arts special classes schoolwide are a forum for students to use Study Island. This guarantees that every student is spending at least one hour per week on Study Island and PSSA preparation. Every student will also participate a weekly professional test preparation skills-building period on Fridays. Additionally, each classroom will have testing vocabulary displayed daily (e.g. word walls, words of the day, etc.).

## **Student Assessment - Attachments**

- DCS AYP At a Glance Report 2011-12
- DCS District AYP Report 2012
- DCS Acuity June 2012 Results K-2
- DCS 4Sight Grades 3-5 2011-12

## **Teacher Evaluation**

**List the main features of the school's teacher evaluation plan.**

The purpose of the instructional staff evaluation process in Discovery Charter School is to provide quality instruction that aligns with school goals and objectives. In addition, this process is designed to promote professional learning that allows educators to continually grow and learn new techniques to improve their instructional practices and methods. Our Teacher Evaluation Plan includes a philosophy which stresses the importance of goal setting, professional development and teacher/administrative collaboration. The plan includes an extensive explanation of our evaluation procedures and supporting documents. Key components of our plan include:

- An outlined induction process for new teachers.
- Ample time for mentoring and support.
- A well defined evaluation time line for both teachers and evaluators that identifies each observation event, when feedback will be given and the evaluation documentation.
- Clear performance measures for teaching, student learning and classroom environment.

In 2011-12, all teachers received two formal observations (i.e. observation of a complete class). One is scheduled and one is unscheduled. Based on the results of the first formal observations, the evaluators determine how many informal observations each teacher should receive. Teachers are made aware of the evaluation process and the evaluation forms during summer professional development. After the evaluation, the evaluator holds a face-to-face post-observation conference with the teacher. If a teacher is determined to be "unsatisfactory," the instructional leadership of the school will develop a Plan for Intensive Assistance with

detailed corrective action steps. Progress toward meeting the goals of this plan is continuously monitored.

**List entities/individuals who are responsible for teacher and staff evaluation AND indicate whether those individuals have administrative certificates.**

In 2011-12, teacher and staff evaluations were conducted primarily by the co-principals (Crystal Nelson and Nina Brevard, with support from CEO Jacquelyn Kelly. All three evaluators are Pennsylvania certified principals holding administrative certificates. Lead teachers support and collaborate with the CEO, principal and assistant principal when an improvement plan must be implemented for struggling teachers. These individuals accompany the principals or CEO when conducting instructional observations for individuals with a developmental plan. Classroom teachers collaborate with the principals in evaluating their own teaching assistants.

**Describe professional development for the evaluators, particularly in the areas of special education and instructional techniques that are unique to the mission of the charter school and support student success.**

Our staff as a whole participates in extensive professional development sessions throughout the year. Specifically, evaluators are provided professional development sessions on the following topics: differentiated instruction, cooperative learning, understanding multiple intelligences, effective evaluation techniques. Special education sessions focus on: Modifying the curriculum to meet student learning needs, differentiating instruction, understanding special education terms and labels, understanding the special education process, DCS' child find process and procedures.

Instructional techniques unique to the mission of our charter school include the discovery learning or guided discovery model. Discovery learning highlights the learners' interests, self-motivation and self-regulation. Teachers "set up" the eventual discoveries by offering basic information and some details without giving students too much information. In discovery learning, students do the work. The teacher acts as the facilitator. Students determine the best ways to organize new and familiar information for efficient future transfer. Teachers provide students with problems and puzzles to stimulate them to discover the underlying structure of the subject matter. Left to fill in the gaps, they determine ways to organize the information for encoding, storage, and eventual recall in the most personally comfortable and efficient way. All evaluators have participated in extensive training in this instructional technique.

Additionally, DCS' special education program makes extensive use of inclusion and co-teaching. As such, our evaluators have participated in various special education training courses offered at PaTTAN, local and national conferences, and in graduate level courses.

A copy of the DCS Teacher Evaluation Plan as well as our teacher evaluation grids is attached.

## **Teacher Evaluation - Attachments**

- DCS Teacher Evaluation Plan
- DCS Teacher Performance Evaluation Forms

## SECTION V. GOVERNANCE REQUIREMENTS

### Leadership Changes

In 2011-12, there was only one change to the Board of Trustees. Ms. Niya L. Blackwell, Esq. joined the Board. Ms. Blackwell is a respected attorney who has worked for the City of Philadelphia since 2000 in a variety of capacities. Presently, Ms. Blackwell is Deputy City Solicitor in the Civil Rights Unit of the City of Philadelphia Law department, where she is a Federal and State Court Civil Rights litigator. Previously, she served as legal counsel for the Philadelphia Police Department and aide to Mayor John F. Street. Ms. Blackwell has a B.A. in Communication Arts from Cheyney University and a J.D. from the New England School of Law. Ms. Blackwell's vast background law, government, and media and external relations will be assets to Discovery Charter School as we plan for our new charter term and facility relocation.

Administratively, there was great stability in the school leadership in 2011-12. As reported in last year's Annual Report, we switched to a co-principal model in 2011-12, where the school previously had one principal and one assistant principal. Ms. Nina Brevard and Ms. Crystal Nelson serve as co-principals, jointly providing instructional leadership to the school.

We also added a community and parent coordinator to our leadership team, and Ms. Pamela Evans assumed this position. With regard to parents, the Coordinator will be responsible for: (1) Managing parent communication to cultivate a positive view of our school by keeping parents informed about instructional goals, policies and school events, using website/SIS, meetings, and newsletters; (2) Recruiting and training parent volunteers (e.g. cafeteria assistance, safety aides, classroom assistants, expeditionary experience trip chaperones, etc.); (3) Coordinating parent education that teaches parents how to continue the learning process at home (e.g. workshops on homework methods, PSSA skills, special education, RTI, etc.); (4) Serving as a liaison between parent groups and administrators (e.g. Home and School Association, Title I Parent Advisory); (5) Assisting in parent fundraising to support student activities, and (6) Continuously evaluating the effectiveness of parent programming, determining parent need for and interest in future activities, and assessing parent satisfaction with the school program. With regard to the community, the Coordinator will be responsible for: (1) Managing current community partnerships; (2) Recruiting community volunteers; (3) Cultivating new community partnerships specifically with regard to our expeditionary experiences, expressive arts programming, and out-of-school time activities; (4) Identifying potential community donors of services and/or funds; (5) Developing high interest community programming, and (5) Continuously evaluating the effectiveness of community programming and measuring feedback from our community partners to enable us to make needed improvements.

Finally, we are sad to report that our beloved Dean of Students Mr. James Young passed away in November 2011.

### Board of Trustees

<u>Name of Trustee</u>	<u>Office (if any)</u>
------------------------	------------------------

Sean P. Stevens	Chairman
Lucinda Hudson	Secretary
Renee Brown	Member, Parent Representative
Otis L. Bullock, Jr., Esq.	Member
Phillip Kelton	Member
Matthew E. Walker	Treasurer
Niya Blackwell	Member
Jacquelyn Y. Kelley	Ex Officio (School CEO)
Albert F. Campbell	Ex Officio

## **Professional Development (Governance)**

Discovery Charter School’s Board of Trustees is committed to staying abreast of developments in the charter school arena and ensuring compliance with the various legal responsibilities of a charter school board. As such, the Board is provided guidance regularly by the school’s legal counsel Alan F. Wohlstetter of Fox Rothschild LLP and by the school’s education management company OmniVest Management, LLC. For example, on February 13, 2012, OmniVest’s Melanie Burke Reiser provided a mini-training on the charter renewal process and the role of the board in 5-year planning for the next charter term. Discovery’s Board has also received training from the LaSalle Nonprofit Center previously on effective board governance.

On June 19-22, 2012, five Discovery Board members attended the 2012 National Charter School Conference in Minneapolis, MN. The conference focused on instruction, governance, leadership, policy, operation, and innovation. Members attended sessions in the governance strand that included the following topics: assessing and improving board governance, recruitment and division of labor on small boards, governing for results, “Finance 101” for board members, working efficiently with school leadership, the renewal mindset, and the board member job and how to do it well. Information learned at this conference was shared with the Board as a whole.

Continued Board training and strategic planning will be of paramount importance in the upcoming months as the Board governs through both a renewal (and development of a five-year performance plan) and major facility construction project and relocation. DCS’ contract with OmniVest Management includes a day-long Board training session tailored to Discovery’s needs. At a minimum, this training will provide Board members with a review of the legal obligations of the charter school Board including due diligence, Sunshine Law, Public Officials Act, Right to Know Law, etc. Additional likely training topics include preparing for the charter school renewal process and strategic planning.

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

The Board of Directors functions primarily as a policy-making body, delegating day-to-day administration to the Chief Executive Officer. The board exercises legal power and responsibility for the school. The purpose of the board is to provide strategic leadership and governance to ensure Discovery’s mission, goals, and values are followed and achieved, and to protect the interests and assets of the school. Its roles and responsibilities include: financial development

and management, fiduciary oversight, and programmatic oversight. The Board is responsible for: coordination of long-range planning and resource development; overseeing and evaluating the work of the principal; setting a framework for the budget process and authorizing the annual budget; approving large resource expenditures, significant changes in program or facility use, and expansion into new program areas; exercising final authority over personnel and faculty issues; and, serving as a court of last resort for resolving complaints.

An affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Board, duly recorded, showing how each member voted, is used in order to take action on the following subjects pertaining to school management: school calendar; adopting textbooks; appointing or dismissing school administrator or staff members; adopting the annual budget; purchasing or selling land; locating new buildings or changing location; creating or increasing indebtedness; adopting courses of study; designating depositories for school funds; entering into major contracts; fixing salaries or compensation of administrator, teachers, or other employees of the charter school; and, entering into contracts with and making appropriations to an intermediate unit or school district for the charter school's proportionate share of the cost of services provided or to be provided by the foregoing entities.

The CEO is responsible for developing the vision and goals for the organization and enabling and ensuring achievement of that vision through goal attainment, fundraising, policy adherence, and staff and Board commitment and delivery. The CEO is responsible for the leadership, strategic vision and growth of Discovery and provides guidance and support for the daily operational management of the school. The primary responsibility of the CEO is to carry out the strategic plans and policies as established by the Board of Trustees including the academic performance and operations and fiscal oversight. In addition to standard areas of school management (i.e. governance, financial oversight, human resources, legal, operations, academic achievement), the CEO will provides leadership in the school's development/fundraising and public and community relations efforts.

The Chairman of the Board meets and collaborates with the Chief Executive Officer regularly. Prior to each board meeting they set the agenda. The CEO and principal have space on the agenda for reports at each monthly board meeting. Meetings are open to parents, staff, and public.

Under the leadership of the Board of Trustees and the Discovery's CEO, Discovery has maintained a collaborative relationship with the school's charter authorizer, the School District of Philadelphia. Representatives of Discovery attended meetings held by the School District of Philadelphia's Office of Charter Schools and by other District offices, including Data Group meetings, special education meetings, and charter school meetings. The school has a history of open communications with the District's Charter School Office and submits required reports and requests for information in a complete, thorough, and expeditious manner. In 2012-13, we look forward to working closely with the District as we go through our comprehensive renewal process and demonstrate our innovative program in action.

***Discovery Charter School Board Meetings 2012-13***

The Discovery Charter School's Board of Trustees will meet at 6:30 p.m. at the school (5070 Parkside Ave, Philadelphia, PA., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor) on the following dates:

- Monday, August 20, 2012
- Monday, September 17, 2012
- Monday, October 15, 2012
- Monday, November 19, 2012
- Monday, December 17, 2012
- Monday, January 14, 2013
- Monday, February 11, 2013
- Monday, March 18, 2013
- Monday, April 15, 2013
- Monday, May 20, 2013
- Monday, June 17, 2013

A copy of our public advertisement of these meetings is attached to this report.

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

- DCS 2012-13 Board of Trustees Meeting Dates -- Sunshine Notice

## **Community and Parent Engagement**

### **Parent Engagement**

It is the Board's and administration's belief that it takes a village to raise a child. Parents play an important role in the successful education of their child. At DCS we have developed a comprehensive parent involvement program to keep parents informed and engaged. The school sends weekly newsletters home to parents that provide updates on school-wide test assessments (e.g. AYP results, explanation of benchmark assessments, PSSA test dates, test taking tips, etc.), student activities, parent programming, fundraising initiatives, health information, etc. Parents also have ongoing access to school-wide and their individual children's data via the school's student information system. The school provides traditional parent involvement activities including Back to School Night (and Annual Title I Meeting), parent/teacher report card conferences, an active Home and School Association, celebrations (e.g. Winter Show, Family Day Picnic), and volunteer opportunities (cafeteria aide, classroom aide, field trip chaperone). However, the school has gone even further to meet all our parents' needs, and provides important parent workshops. Topics have included Response to Intervention and Student Supports, PSSA Skills, Transition Services, and High School Planning and Application Support. Additionally, each Home and School Association meeting begins with a presentation by the teachers in one to two grade groups followed by a question and answer period with the parents. Discovery Charter School has a Parent Involvement Policy and Parent Compact, both of which were developed with parent feedback.

Including parent feedback in the decision-making of the school is also of paramount importance to the school's Board and administration. To that end, the Board includes a parent of a student currently enrolled in the school to serve on the Board. Additionally, Board members themselves set an example for school involvement by being frequent visitors to the school. They are represented and participate in all planned school wide activities and events. They make themselves available to the staff, parents and students. Board meetings are open to the public and, in addition to posting meeting date and times in a local

newspaper, the meeting dates and times are posted in the charter school's main office and on the school calendar so that any parents interested in attending are made aware of upcoming meetings. The school has an incredibly active Home and School Association that meeting regularly to discuss school matters and plan high-interest events and parent-involvement activities for our families. And, as noted above in the Leadership Changes response, in 2011-12 we hired a full-time Community and Parent Coordinator.

Also, when we implement a new initiative, such as our RTI program which we began in 2009-10 and continued in 2010-11 and 2011-12, we ensure that it includes both ample opportunity for parent involvement and opportunities for parents to evaluate the program's success. All parents of students participating in the RTI program are required to participate in three mandatory parent meetings. In October, parents meet with RTI staff, teachers, and administrators to explain the PSSA and benchmarks, review individual student results, and set goals for their child's Individual Academic Plan. In January, the parent meeting focuses on strategies and techniques for preparing for the PSSA. In May, we review 4Sight results, GMADE/GRADE results, and classroom grades with parents to determine if their child met his/her IAP objectives and determine if summer placement is necessary.

In 2011-12 (and continuing into 2012-13) Discovery has implemented campaigns for "Buying into the Mission" and "Working Together to do Better" to encourage all stakeholders to work together as a team to raise student achievement. DCS has been focusing on improving parent communication, partnering with parents on meeting the mission of the school, and developing a stronger family compact.

### **Community Engagement**

With an emphasis on discovery learning, our students are encouraged to use the world outside our school walls as their classroom. As such, developing sustainable community partnerships that enhance the educational program of the school and provide a forum for our students to contribute to the community is central to the success of our program. Discovery's ongoing community partnerships include:

- Brown's Shop Rite
- Community College of Philadelphia
- Drexel University School of Education
- Mann Music Center
- Mount Carmel Human Development Corporation
- Philadelphia Business and Technology Center
- Philadelphia Mural Arts Program
- School District of Philadelphia
- Philadelphia Zoo
- Please Touch Museum
- St. Joseph's University School of Education
- Universoul Circus
- West Parkside Community Association

When you combine grades K-8, each year DCS students participate in over 175 expeditionary trips in and out of the City of Philadelphia and experienced connecting their classroom to the world. Area organizations that have served as the sites for these discoveries are many, including the Franklin Institute, Kimmel Center, Swarthmore College, Academy of Natural Sciences, Citizen's Park, Lincoln Financial Field, Magical Gardens/Liberty Bell, Philadelphia Underground Railroad Tour, Prince Theatre, Adventure Aquarium, Camden Children's Garden, etc. The structure of our discovery learning program

encourages students to continually broaden the scope of their “community;” in grades K-2 students discover the Philadelphia and Pennsylvania community, in grades 3-5 the community outside Pennsylvania, and in grades 6-8 the international community.

Because our community partners are such a vital part of our educational program and because we want to instill in our students the habits of active and positive community participation, to graduate from 8th grade all students must complete 40 hours of community service between grades 6 and 8. And, our boys and girls mentoring clubs serve as constant reminders of what it means to give back to the community.

As the school begins planning for its third charter term (and consequently developing a five-year strategic plan), DCS will be using a variety of forums for gather stakeholder feedback (e.g. surveys, focus groups, membership on planning committee, etc.), including feedback from our parents and community partners.

## **SECTION VI. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

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

In 2011-12, DCS did not conduct any major fundraising activities. However, the school has an extremely active Home and School Association which organizes parent-led fundraisers. During 2011-12, the Home and School Association sold pretzels every Thursday, held a scented candle sale, organized a Holiday Shoppe, sold Krispy Kreme donuts, and held a very popular sale of Welch’s Fruit Snacks. Through these events, the Home and School Association raised over \$30K, which was reinvested in student activities (e.g. 8<sup>th</sup> grade fees, fees for expeditionary field trips) and family events (bowling party, family picnic, incentives for attendance at parent events). Similarly, the school ran small-scale fundraisers such as dress down days and Box Tops for Education to offset the cost of class trips, graduation fees, and family events such as the school’s annual Family Day Picnic. The school also received some small private donations toward the expeditionary field trips to Canada and Spain and toward the school’s capital campaign. Finally, the school pursued grant funding and partnerships to enhance student program. The school was able to secure a \$40K Enhancing Education Through Technology grant for technology that promotes distance learning and associated professional development. We also are benefiting from a partnership with Foundations, Inc. who received a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grant and is operating a site at Discovery.

In 2012-13, we will continue the strategy of small-scale fundraisers, soliciting private contributions to sponsor students on our expeditionary trips, and aggressively pursuing grant funding. Additionally, with a planned relocation for fall 2013 to our new building, we will develop a strategy for soliciting funds as part of a capital campaign.

### **Fiscal Solvency Policies**

The policy for dealing with unexpected shortfalls or delays in receiving funds is to maintain a cash reserve equal to a minimum of thirty (30) days operating expenses. These funds are kept outside of the School's general operating account in multiple FDIC insured instruments. Historically, the school’s current financial position is very strong with annual revenues continuing to exceed annual expenses.

In 2011-12, our unaudited Preliminary Statements of Revenues, Expenditures, and Fund Balance show a loss of \$800K for the fiscal year. This was due to unanticipated costs associated with the school's new facility acquisition and renovation project. Originally, the school anticipated that their initial contribution to the project would be \$200K but the costs of the renovation changed and the mortgage had a ceiling. As such, the school was required to make a \$1M equity contribution to the construction. That, combined with an unanticipated loss of \$178K in Social Security reimbursement revenue in 2011-12, contributed to the deficit for the year. However, when the audit is completed in summer/fall we anticipated our audited financial to show a surplus of \$250K to \$300K because much of the \$1M will be capitalized as construction in progress.

Nonetheless, the school has developed a fiscally responsive budget for FY 2012-13 to ensure the continued solvency of the organization. Taking into account the discontinuation of Social Security reimbursement revenues to charter schools and the reduction in 2012-13 per pupil subsidies from the School District of Philadelphia for regular education, we were still able to develop a budget for 2012-13 with a net income of \$72K (using fund accounting).

With the assistance of the school's new business management firm (OmniVest Properties Management, LLC), the school has strengthened its internal control procedures to protect the fiscal solvency of the school in 2011-12, including the requirement for dual signatures on all checks, monthly financial reporting to the Board, and segregation of duties. Discovery has an extremely strong statement of financial position.

## **Accounting System**

The school's Chart of Accounts mirrors that of the Pennsylvania State Chart of Accounts for Pennsylvania Public Schools and GAAP Accounting is followed for accrual based budgeting, accounting, and reporting. The school's financial and budgetary reporting is prepared in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and the applicable standards set by the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB), including Statement 34.

In 2011-12, Discovery contracted with OmniVest Management, LLC to provide its back office and fiscal management services. OmniVest ensures that the general ledger structure and account classifications are in accordance with the Pennsylvania Department of Education guidelines. Discovery also utilizes OmniVest Management, LLC's internal controls and procedures, which include annual and monthly budgeting, cash management, general ledger control, monthly financial reporting, and account reconciliation. The accounting software system used is the QuickBooks web-based addition. This software is customized with the Pennsylvania State Chart of Accounts for Pennsylvania Public Schools. The school is 100 percent compliant with the Pennsylvania State Chart of Accounts for PA Public Schools. All of the school's financial and budgetary reporting is prepared in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and the applicable standards set by the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB). The school adopted and implemented the new GASB 54 regulations for 2011-12 school year.

Monthly financial reports are distributed to board members at the monthly board meeting. The reports include the previous month and year-to-date revenues and expenses. These results are compared with the budget. All financial reports are included in the board minutes.

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

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

- DCS Preliminary Statements of Revenues Expenditures and Fund Balance 2011-12

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

The school's Board of Trustees has engaged certified public accounting firm J. Miller & Associates, LLC (1221 Locust Street, #207, Philadelphia, PA 19107) to conduct our audit for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2012. This audit report for fiscal year ended June 30, 2012 is expected to be completed no later than November 2012. Discovery will provide PDE and the School District of Philadelphia with a copy of this audit report immediately upon its completion. A copy of the school's engagement letter with J. Miller & Associates is attached to this report.

To date, the most recent audit available is the audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011. This audit was completed on December 14, 2011 by J. Miller & Associates, and a copy of this document is attached to this report. The "Management's Discussion and Analysis" can be found on pages 2-4 of this document.

Discovery reorganized its financial accounting operations in February 2011, contracting with an external provider of comprehensive financial management services — OmniVest Properties Management. OmniVest is an experienced charter school business services provider, and, in the short time it has worked with the school's Board and administration, the school has already made great strides in improving internal controls. Discovery believes that findings from previous audits will be proven remediated in our audit for FY 2011-12.

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

- DCS Audit Engagement Letter for FY Ending June 30, 2012
- DCS Audit FY 2010-11

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

Not applicable. Discovery Charter School did not receive a state audit in 2011-12, nor did we in any previous years.

## **SECTION VII. FACILITY RESPONSIBILITIES**

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

2011-12 was an exciting year for Discovery with regard to capital planning, as we acquired a facility and land which will become our permanent home beginning in 2013-14.

On March 6, 2012, Discovery Charter School acquired an approximately 57,434 square foot building located on a 3.66 acre site at 4700 Parkside Avenue, Philadelphia, PA. The new site (purchased for \$2.75M) is located in the West Parkside neighborhood of West Philadelphia, adjacent to Fairmount Park, approximately three blocks from our current location. Discovery has begun an \$8M expansion, renovation, and improvement project on this newly acquired facility to ready it for our relocation in 2013-14. The project is being funded by \$13,445,000 in Revenue Bonds. Following completion of the planned expansions, renovations, and improvements, the school facility will offer students a state-of-the-art learning environment in an approximately 75,525 square-foot building, including approximately 35 classroom, a gymnasium, a library, a cafeteria, and administrative offices. Discovery made a \$1M equity contribution to the acquisition and construction project.

As Discovery knew early on in 2011-12 that they were going to try to acquire this new site, capital investments in the current leased facility during the school year were limited to minor repairs and maintenance and some instructional technology purchases (including iPads purchased through IDEA and Title II Enhancing Education Through Technology grant funds).

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

As Discovery plans to relocate into its new facility for 2013-14, the school does not intend to make any significant capital improvements to the current leased facility in 2012-13. Similarly, technology purchases will be limited almost entirely to grant-funded items that can be easily moved to the new facility.

The school will develop a 2013-14 capital expenditure budget for the new facility early in 2012-13 for planning purposes. It is anticipated that this budget will include, installation of IT infrastructure (including phones and network), end-user technology equipment, security equipment and installation, furniture (classroom and administrative offices), etc.

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

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

#### **Fire & Safety**

Discovery Charter School complies with 24 P.S. §15-1517 with regard to holding fire drill not less than once a month. Each classroom has posted directions in case of a fire and all classes have

had training on what to do in case of a fire or other incidences. Specifically, DCS teachers are trained to follow the following safety procedures:

### ***Safety Procedures 2011-12***

Discovery Charter School must provide a safe, orderly learning environment for every child. Our School Safety Plan provides protocols for crisis response situations so that our staff can quickly and adequately provide a safe environment for all students. Our plan has procedures for evacuations, fire drills and building emergencies. All administrators and safety team members will communicate through cell phones and Walkie-talkies.

- **Danger in the building:**

We have established two types of codes for building emergencies. They are Code Blue and Code Red. Code Blue emergencies are when a teacher is in danger, a teacher is ill or when smoke or gas is smelled. A Code Red emergency is when a stranger is in the building. All procedures for these emergencies are posted in all classrooms and offices.

- **If a teacher is in danger:**

First send two students to the nearest adult not in danger.  
Call for the Dean of Students if violence has or is occurring.  
Then send two students to the nearest administrator.

- **If a teacher is ill:**

First send two students to the nearest adult. The adult should then notify the nurse and the nearest administrator.

- **Smells:**

If smells are present (gas, smoke), notify the nearest administrator.  
Administrator will call secretary; pull fire alarm and blow whistle to notify staff to evacuate building.

- **Stranger in the building:**

Teachers are to lock their doors and have the students sit on the floor out of the sight of the observation window. Teachers are not to unlock their doors until they receive notification to let them know it is now safe.

### **Evacuation from the Building:**

Our school has monthly fire drills. Students exit our building from 5 different exits. Students that exit from the rear of the building walk to the back of the parking lot. The students that exit from the front of the building cross 51st street and walk half way up the block toward 52nd Street. Students remain in these areas until the building is safe.

When we have to evacuate the building because of smells or other reasons, students report to the same areas. If we are unable to reenter the building we have three sites that children and staff will report to. All teachers will carry their Evacuation Bags filled with their Roll books, First Aid Kits, Emergency Contact Forms, Activity Sheets and other materials to make the evacuation comfortable.

If we are unable to report back inside the building there are two plans for dismissal. If the area that is used for regular dismissal is safe, our classes will report to that area. If that area is unsafe then our school buses will report to our three evacuation sites to pick up our students. Kindergarten parents will pick their children up at Millennium Baptist Church. Parents of students that do not catch the school bus will be called and notified where they will pick up their child.

The students will be dismissed with a letter informing parents of the purpose and reason for the evacuation. This letter will state the procedures that will follow if we cannot return to our original site. Additionally, information will be forwarded to emergency response agencies as to where students will report if the evacuation exists for more than the one school day.

A copy of Discovery's 2011-12 Certification of Fulfillment of Fire Drill and School Bus Evacuation Drill Requirements (PDE-4101) is attached to this report.

### **Health & Wellness**

A nurse is available to provide health services to students at Discovery daily (36 hours a week). Discovery contracts with the Mid Atlantic Consortium of Charter Schools (MACCS) for these nursing services, which include one nursing paraprofessional (an LPN) who provides the day-to-day nursing services and two overseeing certified school nurses who are at the school as needed. The certified school nurse:

- Provides administrative and clinical oversight of school nursing activities.
- Ensures that all screenings are performed in accordance with state mandates.
- Supplements and reinforce health education curriculum.
- Oversees training of nursing staff.
- Assists in interpreting health needs.
- Provides information related to health issues.
- Assists in budget preparation.
- Prepares and directs staff development presentations in the area of healthcare.

Upon admission to the school, each student is required to submit a physical examination, proof of appropriate immunizations, and dental, audio, and visual screenings. Each student is given an individual file which contains physical, copy of immunization records, screening results, pupil medical history, emergency control form, any professional observations, progress notes, problem list with follow up copy of any nursing care visits, medical administrative release forms, and doctors' prescriptions. Certificates of immunization are kept under separate cover. All student health information is kept in a secured health room at DCS in a locked file cabinet, available to the nursing staff and shall become the property of the charter schools. Records are

reviewed every month by MACCS' certified school nurse to maintain accuracy. The nursing staff and health services agency (MACCS) comply with all federal, state and local law, rules and regulations regarding the confidentiality of medical records created by it or its employees or contractors.

Additionally, through partnerships with local health organization (e.g. Wills Eye Hospital, Logic Vision, Kid Smiles), many of our students have received free vision and dental services.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health's "Request for Reimbursement and Report of School Health Services" for 2010-11 is attached to this report. The 2011-12 report, which is due on September 30, 2012, will be available upon request on or after October 1, 2012.

### **Wellness Policy:**

Finally, Discovery is committed to providing a school environment that promotes and protects children's health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting has been healthy eating and physical activity. As such, Discovery has been implementing a School Wellness Policy since 2007. A copy of this policy is attached to this report.

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

- DCS PDE-4101 Fire Drill Certification 2011-12
- DCS Request for Reimbursement & Report of School Health Services 2010-11
- Lunch and Wellness Program

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

### **Liability Insurance**

For the 2011-12 school year, Discovery Charter School procured liability insurance coverage through the insurance brokerage firm Bradley & Bradley Associates, Inc. as follows:

- Commercial general liability — \$1,000,000 each occurrence/ \$3,000,000 aggregate
- Products-completed operations aggregate — \$1,000,000
- Personal & advertising injury — \$1,000,000
- Damage to rented premises — \$500,000
- Medical expense (any one person) — \$5,000
- Automobile liability — \$1,000,000
- Excess liability/umbrella — \$5,000,000 occurrence/ \$5,000,000 aggregate
- Workers compensation & employers' liability — \$500,000
- Directors & Officers Liability — \$1,000,000

A copy of the ACORD Certificate of Liability Insurance for 2011-12 (valid until September 1, 2012) is attached to this report.

### **Employee Benefits**

Discovery Charter School is interested in the health and well being of its employees and their families. A comprehensive health program is available to all employees and their families at time of hire. We provide group insurance underwritten by a national insurance carrier. At the time of hire employees have the option to accept the insurance coverage, or not, provided they are insured elsewhere. Discovery Charter School will pay the full cost of coverage for the employee and dependent(s). Personal health insurance is provided in compliance with 24 P.S. § 17-1724A (d) (i.e. every employee of the school is provided with the same level of health care benefits as the employee would receive if he or she were an employee of the School District of Philadelphia).

The following benefits are provided, as defined and limited in the literature provided by our insurance company:

- Major Medical and Surgical Coverage
- Dental Care Coverage
- Medical Health Care Coverage
- Dependent's Health Care Coverage

In August 2011, Discovery switched medical insurance providers from Aetna to Independence Blue Cross due to more competitive pricing for equitable coverage. Two medical insurance options were available to Discovery employees — Independence Blue Cross Keystone HMOFlex Plan (Medical and Hospitalization) in which Discovery pays 100% of the premium and the upgraded Personal Choice Flex Plan(which does not require referrals). Dental coverage was provided with Met United Concordia (no change from 2010-11).

Additional insurance coverage provided to full-time employees includes:

Life Insurance: Discovery Charter School provides paid life insurance benefits to all full time employees, after the first year of employment. The amount of the benefit is equal to \$15,000.

Short Term Disability Insurance (STD) — Discovery Charter School provides paid Short Term Disability insurance benefits to all full time employees, after the first year of employment. This type of insurance policy protects the employee if he/she becomes totally disabled because of illness or an accident that is not job related. This coverage includes hospital and medical, surgical, laboratory and x-ray, major medical as defined in the literature by the School's insurance carrier.

Long Term Disability Insurance (LTD) — Full time employees are provided with paid Long-Term Disability (LTD) insurance. Discovery Charter School pays for the cost of this benefit. Should the employee become totally disabled due to a non-occupational illness or accident, he/she will be entitled to receive a benefit equal to 60% of the employee's basic earnings up to \$5,000.00 monthly. Benefits continue up to age 65 and are coordinated with social security disability

benefits. The combined maximum amount of benefits received will never exceed 100% of income. Benefits will begin after short term disability expires.

As of the time of submission of this report, we do not plan to alter our coverage or carriers for 2012-13.

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

- DCS ACORD Certificate of Liability Insurance 2011-12

## **SECTION IX. ADMINISTRATIVE NEEDS**

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

Discovery began the 2011-12 school year with 50 instructional staff members, including 25 regular education teachers, 5 specialty teachers, 6 special education teachers, and 14 teacher assistants/paraprofessionals. The instructional staff was joined by a Leadership Team that consisted of the CEO, two Co-Principals, Human Resources Director, Dean of Students, Site Coordinator, Pupil Service Coordinator, Information Technology Director, and School and Community Coordinator.

Of the 39 2011-12 professional staff members listed on our PDE-414 (attached) who were employed on the first day of school in 2011-12, 34 were returning staff members from 2010-11 (87%). 97.4% of the teachers (all but one) who began the 2011-12 school year remained in their positions for the entire school year.

Discovery is known for its collaborative, team-based decision making process. It is a strength that has kept the core of staff members with us. New staff members are brought on board with a "new" teacher orientation, followed by a week-long Teacher's Academy that involves the entire staff. Continuous support is provided throughout the year in weekly team meetings, bi-weekly "mini" developments, at least six full -day staff development sessions as well as several half-day sessions, peer mentoring, off-site visitations, and participation in national and state conferences. Through these activities we ensure that our teachers know that they are a valued member of our professional learning committee and receive the support they need to develop their skills and continue to contribute to the Discovery Charter School team.

Additionally, it is important to note that in addition to exceeding the Act 22 75% certification requirement (we were 82.8% certified in 2011-12), all of our core content teachers in 2011-12 met the definition of Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) under No Child Left Behind (See attached PIMS HQT ACS).

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

- DCS PDE 414 2011-12 -- Final
- DCS PIMS HQT, Course Instructor & Course Enrollment ACS 2011-12
- DCS Staff ACS LEA Profile\_PIMS 2011-12

## Student Enrollment

In the admission of students, Discovery Charter School complies with § 17-1723-A of the Charter School Law. Specifically, the charter school is open to all resident children in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. If more students apply to the charter school than the number of attendance slots available in a given year, then students are selected on a random basis (a lottery) from a pool of qualified applicants meeting the established eligibility criteria and submitting an application by the our deadline. However, preference is given in enrollment to siblings of students presently enrolled in the charter school. Also, first preference is given to students who reside within the School District of Philadelphia (with 5% of student vacancies reserved for students who live in the community. Current DCS students who intent to return for the next school year must submit an "Intent to Return Form" by April 30<sup>th</sup> each year.

Each year, open enrollment begins on October 1<sup>st</sup> and ends on March 31<sup>st</sup>. For 2012-13, Discovery had openings for kindergarten only. However, the number of kindergarten students exceeded the number of available spots for kindergarten. As such, a lottery was held for all grades on April 16, 2012. The lottery was computer generated by the school's enrollment secretary. In attendance at the lottery were the CEO and technology director. Lottery results are posted on the school's website using unique identification numbers.

Admission for 2013-14 will open on October 1, 2012. All interested parties will be directed to complete an online application. Once the application is received, an electronic confirmation will be sent to the applicant with a unique identification number. This number will be used to track the student's enrollment status online. The 2013-14 enrollment lottery will take place on April 15, 2013.

***If Kindergarten or First Grade is offered, provide a description of the admission policy with age requirements.***

For 11-12, only students who would be 5 years-old by September 1, 2011 were considered for enrollment in the school. Students who meet the age requirements followed the DCS 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.***

	Initial enrollment	Number dropped	Number added	Year End
K	74	2	4	76
1	65	3	10	72
2	74	2	1	73
3	74	2	1	73
4	75	2	0	73
5	72	3	2	71
6	66	1	8	73

7	69	4	1	66
8	71	1	1	71
Total	640	20	28	648

***Provide numbers of students who were required to leave the school (expulsions, other), and the numbers who left voluntarily.***

All withdrawals in 2011-12 were voluntary. Discovery Charter School did not have any expulsions in 2011-12.

## **Student Enrollment - Attachment**

- DCS Enrollment Policy (Excerpt from Student & Parent Handbook)

## **Transportation**

The School District of Philadelphia provides the transportation for eligible Discovery Charter School students as required by Pennsylvania law. Students in grades 1-5 are eligible for bus transportation if they live 1.5 miles or more away from DCS. Students who participate in our Extended Day Program must be picked up by an adult. Students are informed that they are expected to adhere to specific rules of conduct for bus travel. These rules of conduct are in place to provide each child a safe ride to and from school.

Students in grades 6-8 are eligible for a SEPTA Transpass provided by the School District of Philadelphia if they live 1.5 or more miles away from DCS. No middle school students ride the school bus, except for extenuating circumstances approved by the CEO.

DCS understands that any DCS student who receives special education services is entitled to transportation to and from school and to school related activities if his/her IEP Team (which includes the parents) determines that specialized transportation is necessary as part of the child's free and appropriate public education (FAPE). If an IEP lists a specific type of transportation as a "related service" in a student's IEP, DCS will provide this service at the school's expense as we do with the three students mentioned above.

## **Food Service Program**

Discovery Charter School participates in the National School Lunch Program provided by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia (Nutritional Development Association). In 2011-12, 77.3% of the student population qualified for free or reduced lunches. The entire school has the option to participate in the lunch program. Students who attend our before school program receive breakfast, and students who attend our after school program receive snack.

Nutritional Development Association lunch is intended to provide children with 1/3 of the calories, vitamins, and minerals they need for the day. Fat is kept low by offering low or no-fat milk. Only 100% juice is served. Whole grains are used whenever possible. The nutritional menu includes items such as meat, vegetables, baked items and milk. Items are pre-packaged for food safety and for easy service.

## **Student Conduct**

**A.) Describe your expectations for student behavior and discipline. Explain how your discipline policy complies with Chapters 12 of the Public School Code, particularly with respect to due process.**

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Discovery Charter School has adopted its Student Code of Conduct in order to inform students, parents, and school staff of the behavior that is expected from all students to ensure a safe and focused learning environment.

An effective instructional program requires an orderly environment in which students and employees know and abide by the reasonable standard of socially acceptable behavior and respect the rights, person, and property of others. All students in the school are entitled to share in its education and related programs to the extent of their abilities without regard to race, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, or disability. Every student is expected to behave at the school and in school related activities in accordance with the public laws, the Discovery Code of Conduct and lawful directions of assigned staff, and deal fairly and courteously with fellow students, staff and the public.

DCS has adopted the Code of Conduct to inform students, parents, and school staff of the behavior that is expected from all students to ensure a safe and focused learning environment. The Code of Conduct has 14 rules to promote safety, order, and responsible conduct in all school-related activities. It is further divided into three levels. These levels are designed to ensure that fair and consistent disciplinary actions are taken for similar violations and to inform students and parents of the scope of discipline they will face for particular violations.

The Dean of Students, under the supervision of the Principal(s) and the CEO, will bear primary responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Code and for reporting Act 26 violations. Feedback regarding its provisions will be provided through the School Advisory Council, the Leadership Team and the school's annual self-review/needs assessment.

Under the Code of Student Conduct, a student is expected to:

- Work to the best of his or her ability and try to reach the highest levels of success.
- Attend school every day and be in class on time and prepared to learn.

- Contribute to a safe and orderly school climate and show respect toward others.
- Follow the rules of proper conduct, including the student dress code.
- Seek help from the school staff in solving problems that might lead to confrontations with others.
- Treat students, teachers, administrators, and all other staff in a respectful and positive way.
- Accept responsibility for his or her actions.
- Consider the possible consequences of his or her actions to others.
- Report any information that may help prevent danger of injury to people or property.

The Code of Conduct is attached to this report, both as an excerpt from the Student/Parent Handbook and in an easy to read grid format.

## **DUE PROCESS**

The DCS school administration and Board are aware of its obligation for due process as required in Chapter 12 of the Public School Code. Specifically, DCS is prepared to follow the due process procedures below for suspensions of 4-10 days and expulsions:

### ***Due Process for Informal Suspension Hearings***

In suspensions of four to ten days at DCS, parents and students have the right to an informal hearing. The informal hearing is meant to encourage the student's parents/guardians to meet with the CEO or her designee to discuss ways by which future offenses can be avoided.

The steps below are followed to ensure due process:

- The student and the parent/guardian are notified in writing the reasons for the suspension.
- Parents are provided with sufficient notice of the time and place of the informal hearing.
- Students have the right to question any witnesses present at the hearing, and has the right to speak and produce witnesses on his/her own behalf.
- The informal hearing is held within the first 5 days of the suspension.

### ***Due Process Expulsion Procedures***

A Board decision is required to expel a student. Expulsion is exclusion from school for more than 10 days. All expulsions require a prior formal hearing. During the period prior to the hearing and decision of the Board of Trustees in an expulsion case, the student, unless on suspension, shall be placed in his normal class except:

A Board decision is required to expel a student. Expulsion is exclusion from school for more than 10 days. All expulsions require a prior formal hearing. During the period prior to the hearing and decision of the Board of Trustees in an expulsion case, the student, unless on suspension, shall be placed in his normal class except;

1. If it is determined after an informal hearing that a student's presence in his normal class would constitute a threat to the health, safety, morals, or welfare of others, AND,
2. If it not possible to hold a formal hearing within the period of a suspension, the student may be excluded from school for more than 10 school days, if the formal hearing is not unreasonably delayed.

The steps below are followed to ensure due process:

- Notification of the charges will be sent to the student's parents/guardian by certified mail.
- Parents will be provided with sufficient notice of the time and place of the hearing.
- The hearing will be held in private unless the student or parent requests a public hearing.
- The student will have the right to be represented by counsel.
- The student will have the right to be notified of the names of the witnesses against the student, and copies of the statements and affidavits, if any, of those witnesses.
- The student will have the right to request that any such witnesses appear in person and answer questions or be cross-examined.
- The student will have the right to testify and present witnesses on his own behalf.
- A record will be kept of the hearing, either by stenographer or by tape recorder.
- The proceeding will be held with all reasonable speed.
- In the event the student is dissatisfied with the results of the hearing, an appeal may be filed in accordance with the Local Agency Law to the Court of Common Pleas within thirty (30) days of receipt of the Adjudication. If it is alleged that a constitutional issue is involved, the student may be able to file a claim for relief in the Federal District Court. The student and their parents/guardian will be apprised of these rights.

### ***Description of the Due Process Hearing***

At the beginning of the hearing, a duly authorized committee of the Board, or a duly qualified hearing examiner, who need not be a member of the Board, but whose adjudication must be approved by the Board (herein called Hearing Officer) shall inform the student and the student's representative(s) that:

The School's and the student's representatives shall have the right to examine and cross-examine witnesses; the student has the privilege against self-incrimination, but that if the student does testify, he/she shall be subject to cross examination; the charter school has the burden of proving the charges by a preponderance of credible evidence; a transcript of the proceedings shall be maintained and made available to the student's representative upon request; and the hearing shall be private or open to the public, as determined by the student's representative.

The person conducting the hearing shall not have intimate knowledge of the details of the charges to assure an impartial, unbiased hearing of the case.

The Hearing Officer shall inform the parties that:

- The case will proceed by having the school present its evidence through witnesses and other evidence first;
- The school's witnesses shall be subject to cross-examination by the student's representative; and
- The student will then have the opportunity to present witnesses on his/her behalf, subject to cross-examination by the school's representative.

Following the conclusion of the testimony and the introduction of other evidence matters, the parties shall be afforded the opportunity to present oral arguments to the Hearing Officer indicating the reasons why the charges should be sustained or dismissed. The Hearing Officer shall then reach findings of fact upon the charges.

In the event that one or more of the charges is sustained, the Hearing Officer shall then entertain statements from the parties regarding the appropriate penalty outcome. In the event that the parent and/or the student, in an appropriate case, have been served with a copy of the student's past disciplinary anecdotal record in a timely fashion, for consideration at the hearing, such record may be considered by the Hearing Officer in determining an appropriate penalty. The incidents contained within the past anecdotal record shall be subject to proof to the extent that they are denied by the student, as expressed by the student's representative.

The Hearing Officer, upon the conclusion of the portion of the proceeding dealing with penalty determinations, shall make findings of fact and penalty recommendations, if any, to the person or body which designated him/her immediately upon the conclusion of the long-term suspension hearing.

The Board shall make its own findings of fact and penalty decision, by adopting those of the designated Hearing Officer, where applicable, in whole or in part, or by reaching independent findings of fact and penalty determinations. This process shall be concluded at an open public board meeting, reasonable notice of which shall be provided to the parent prior to the meeting.

The Board's decision (Adjudication) will be communicated to the parent within five days of the Board meeting.

#### **DISCIPLINE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS**

Please note that all students are expected to abide by the DCS Code of Conduct. And, in accordance with Pennsylvania law, all students at DCS (including special education students) are protected by due process procedures regarding disciplinary exclusions. However, DCS first determines, when considering a disciplinary exclusion of any student, whether the student is an eligible student under 22 Pa. Code Section 14.1. If the student is an eligible student, then DCS determines whether the disciplinary exclusion being contemplated is a change in educational placement. If we determine that the disciplinary exclusion being contemplated does constitute

a change in educational placement, DCS follows the requirements of 22 Pa. Code Chapters 14 and 342 and IDEA 2004, including requirements for manifestation determinations, functional behavior assessments, and positive behavior support plans.

**B.) Provide the number of suspensions and expulsions by student. (Example: 12 students were involved in 21 suspensions incidents and 1 student was expelled.)**

In 2011-12 there were a total of 33 students involved in 40 suspensions. There were no expulsions in 2011-12.

## **Student Conduct - Attachments**

- DCS Code of Conduct (Excerpt from Student Handbook 2011-12)
- DCS Student Code of Conduct Grid
- DCS Safe Schools ACS and LEA Profile 2011-12

## **Signature Page**

## Assurance for the Operation of Charter School Services and Programs

School Year: 2012

The Discovery Charter School within Philadelphia IU 26 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  
2011 - 2012 Annual Report for Pennsylvania Charter Schools

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Verify that all DATA reports to PDE are complete

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

## **Assurance for Compliance with the Public Official & Employee Ethics Act**

The original Public Official and Employee Ethics Act (the "Ethics Act") was amended and reenacted in 1989 by Act 9 of 1989 and in 1998 by Act 93 of 1998. (See Act 9 of 1989, 65 P.S. §401, *et seq.* and Act 93 of 1998, Chapter 11, 65 Pa.c.s. §1101 *et seq.*) The Act provides that public office is a public trust and that any effort to realize personal financial gain through public office is a violation of that trust. The Act was passed to strengthen the faith and confidence of the people of the Commonwealth in their government. The Act established the State Ethics Commission to administer and enforce the provisions of the Act and to provide guidance regarding the standards established by the Act.

The Discovery Charter School assures that it will comply with the requirements of the Public Official and Employee Ethics Act (the "Ethics Act") and with the policies, regulations and procedures of the Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission. Additional information about the "Ethics Act" is available on the Ethics Commission's website at: <http://www.ethics.state.pa.us/ethics/site/>

**The assurance must be signed by the Chief Executive Officer and Board of Trustees President of the charter school.**

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

**Name:** Ms. Jacquelyn Y. Kelley   **Title:** Chief Executive Officer  
**Phone:** 215-879-8182   **Fax:** 215-879-9510  
**E-mail:** jkelley@dcsschool.com

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*Signature of the Chief Executive Officer and Date*

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

**Name:** Mr. Sean P. Stevens   **Title:** Board President  
**Phone:** 215-879-8182   **Fax:** 215-879-9510  
**E-mail:** seanpstevens@gmail.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:** Ms. Nina Brevard   **Title:** Co-Principal  
**Phone:** 215-879-8182   **Fax:** 215-879-9510  
**E-mail:** nbrevard@dcsschool.com

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*Signature of the Special Education Contact Person and Date*

### **Signature Page - Attachment**

- DCS Annual Report Signature Sheets 2011-12