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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:** Wissahickon CS  
**Address:** 4700 G Wissahickon Ave  
Philadelphia, PA 19144

# CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY DATA

## Summary Data Part I

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

**Name of School:** Wissahickon CS

**Date of Local Chartering School Board/PDE Approval:** May 2001

**Length of Charter:** 5 years, renewed in 2007, slated to renew 8/12   **Opening Date:** September 2002

**Grade Level:** K-8th Grade   **Hours of Operation:** 8:30 am-3:20 pm

**Percentage of Certified Staff:** 81.6%   **Total Instructional Staff:** 33

**Student/Teacher Ratio:** 12.8/1   **Student Waiting List:** 386

**Attendance Rate/Percentage:** 96.5%

## Summary Data Part II

**Enrollment:** 424 **Per Pupil Subsidy:** Reg. Ed. \$8,773.03 Sp. Ed. \$19,422.86

### Student Profile

<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native:</b>	0
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander:</b>	0
<b>Black (Non-Hispanic):</b>	90.6%
<b>Hispanic:</b>	1.4%
<b>White (Non-Hispanic):</b>	5.6%
<b>Multicultural:</b>	2.3%

**Percentage of Students from Low Income Families Eligible for a Free or Reduced Lunch:**  
73.9%

**Provide the Total Unduplicated Number of Students Receiving Special Services (Excluding Gifted) as of Previous December:** 84

### 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	176	181	181	0	181
Instructional Hours	0	0	963	991	991	0	991

## SECTION I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Educational Community

Wissahickon Charter School (WCS) is a public charter elementary school approved by the School District of Philadelphia on May 7, 2001. It opened September 5, 2002. Initially the school served 250 kindergarten through 5th grade students. Currently in its tenth year, WCS serves 424 students in grades K — 8th Grade.

The WCS is an urban school located in the City of Philadelphia in a mixed residential, retail and industrial area across from Fern Hill Park in Northwest Philadelphia, just off a major road called Roosevelt Boulevard (Route 1). It is in an old industrial building that has been rehabilitated specifically for the school.

Students come from all over the city but tend to reside more often in Northwest and North Philadelphia. As student enrollment is quite stable, WCS has had the fortune to build a strong, warm and supportive school climate for the students that are served.

In addition to a strong instructional program, WCS offers rich opportunities for extending learning or offering activities for the development of the whole child. This is achieved through programs in music, art, library, physical education, afterschool program, intermural sports, and tutoring opportunities.

## **Mission**

The mission of the Wissahickon Charter School will be to provide a community of learning with an environmental focus that stimulates the child's intellectual, social, and character development. It will accomplish this through the following:

- A curriculum that teaches children about the interconnectedness of the physical and human environments
- Service learning centered around environmental themes
- Parents, students, teachers, and administrators as allies in the community of learning
- Peace education to bring about awareness and conflict resolution within the community
- A diverse student body and staff
- Student ownership of learning through empowerment and recognition of diverse learning styles
- Small class sizes
- A physical space harmonious with the natural environment

## **Vision**

As a school, our primary vision is to educate students. We believe that every child has the potential to be proficient in all areas of their academic life. We develop all of our curriculum and instruction with this central vision in mind. Long-term, we aim to prepare students for the academic work ahead of them in high school and the intellectual challenges that come with life beyond school.

WCS uses the three elements of its mission- environmental integration, service learning, and parental involvement- as a means of realizing a longer term vision of student and community success. We believe that introducing students to the environment in developmentally appropriate ways using authentic experiences in nature, results in creating lifelong stewards for the environment. We believe that student work is vastly more meaningful when it is connected to real service that enriches the world. We believe that family involvement in all levels of school life results in students who are more emotionally, socially, and academically healthy. Our vision is to create the mechanisms that will provide students and families with these kinds of experiences such that they can leave here well on their way to becoming healthy members of society.

## **Shared Values**

Through our three-fold mission of environmental integration, service learning and parental involvement, WCS works to see that students understand and internalize the following shared values:

- A pursuit of knowledge and the commitment to achievement of potential
- Self acceptance and respect of self
- Respect and concern for others and their rights
- Social and civic responsibility
- Environmental responsibility

## **Academic Standards**

Wissahickon Charter School's academic standards parallel and are consistent with the PA code 4.12. We are also in the process of aligning our curriculum with the Common Core Standards.

## **Strengths and Challenges**

The tenth year of operation for Wissahickon Charter School (WCS) was incredibly busy and rewarding. Our strategic plan outlines four major domains of focus: Academic Program; Finance and Development; Environmental Mission; and Governance and Employee Care. Major strides were made in each of the four domains.

Our Academic Program goals this year focused on the implementation of a new school-wide literacy program based on the research we conducted last year. This year in Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, we adopted Columbia Teachers College's Readers and Writers Workshop model. For the first time, all of our teachers have a shared language around literacy and the school is using one common mode of assessing reading levels. This shift has meant that teacher collaboration around literacy has seen major growth and we anticipate that it will impact student learning in numerous ways. First, the program is very strong, wonderfully differentiated, and based on solid research. Our students grew as readers this year and 10% made more than a year's growth. Secondly, we believe that as students move up in grades, it will be easier for them to continue to grow as readers since they will not need to learn a whole new model each year.

To support this initiative, we worked to align our resources in such a way to make it a priority. This meant that major funds were put towards professional development. We hired a coach from Teachers College to come each month to do a labsite with our teachers. We also hired our most experienced teacher to serve as a part-time in-house coach for faculty. Finally, the program's success hinges on having a large quantity of leveled books in classes. Over the past year, we have made many purchases of new and used books and we have solicited donations. We've hosted countless 'leveling parties' where we come together and level books to get them into classrooms and kids' hands. This work has paid off in that students are able to choose 'just right' books that are on their reading level and of interest to them.

One challenge we always face academically is what happens for our students in the summer months. In summer, students typically lose three months of reading. The first trimester each year is essentially spent catching students back up to where they were at the end of the previous year. With 74% of our students qualifying for free or reduced priced lunch, we know that summer opportunities are limited. This year we applied for and were granted the opportunity to host the Springboard Collaborative. For the first time, WCS will host over 70 students who are below grade level in reading to come work on reading in the summer months. Springboard has pledged \$20,000 towards the program and we are matching it. Springboard typically helps students make four months of growth in reading instead of the three months of losses. We are excited about the way we have partnered with Springboard to address a major

challenge and we believe it will translate into important gains for our students.

The area of Finance and Development has been busy as well. The school surpassed its Annual Fund goal of raising \$27,000. Parent participation in the Annual Fund was at an all time high, with over 30% of parents making a gift. We received multiple private and government grants, including a Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grant from the Department of Agriculture as well as grants for our Outdoor Program and literacy initiative. With funding being decreased for schools in the upcoming year, we anticipate that our Development work will be more important than ever before and we have worked to enlist several new Board members with expertise in Development.

Of course, next year's budget cuts presented a major challenge for Wissahickon and part of this year was spent planning for projected cuts. Our Business Manager created financial models of our budget with different percentage decreases reflected. The administrative team then worked together to develop plans to address each model. With the decreases that were announced, WCS had to cut some programs and lay off or reduce the hours of a number of employees. Next year, WCS will no longer offer Music or an Honors program. Spanish is no longer being taught in our Middle School. Our Nurse and Accountability and Assessment Manager will now both be part-time. All staff salaries were frozen so no raises were offered for the upcoming year. The work to make and implement these decisions was difficult and it caused some strain and stress on our staff. We are hopeful that next year, we will not have to face similar decisions.

A major project for our year was going through the Charter Renewal and Modification Process with the Charter School Office and Schoolworks team. This project was built into our strategic plan in the domain of Governance. We spent over a year gathering documents and preparing for the renewal. When the time came to host Schoolworks, we were proud that they had no findings for improvement in any of the domains of their assessment tool. It was incredibly affirming of the work we are doing. The Charter School Office was very available to us throughout the renewal process to answer questions and offer support. One challenge in this process was that the date by which time the School Reform Commission would make their decisions kept being pushed back. We were working under some tight deadlines and the delayed decisions made our work difficult. Ultimately, we were granted our renewal as well as our modification request for an additional 500 students. We will not enroll these students next year, but we are beginning work on opening a second site in the future.

The last domain of our strategic plan focuses on our Environmental Mission. This year's developments for our mission largely played out in the cafeteria. In 2010-2011, we began hosting our own food program which

included much better tasting and healthier meals. In 2011-12, we worked to align the new model more closely with our environmental mission. Our meals are now served on real plates with real silverware and cups. We began composting all of our food scraps as well. More of our food is now prepared on-site as well—occasionally with items from our own garden. The new model also aligns better with our social mission in that students now eat around round tables which lend themselves to conversations better. Students also now serve as Table Captains and help to set the table and to clean up. This is a rotating job so all students have the experience of being responsible for our cafeteria.

There are many more strengths and challenges that could be outlined but these outline some of the major goals that we focused on as part of the strategic plan. In the fall, we will begin work on a new strategic plan for the next three years.

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

### **Strategic Planning Process**

During the 04-05 school year, WCS completed its first strategic plan that addressed plans for five years, through the 09-10 year. WCS completed its second long range planning process at the start of the 09-10 year. The new plan has been developed to run for three years. It identifies four focus areas and priorities for each of the focus areas. WCS also created a workplan to carry out the strategic plan identifying which staff would be responsible for each activity, and a timeline and necessary resources for completing the plan.

The focus areas and priorities of the plan are:

#### 1. Academic Achievement

- Create a Cohesive Curriculum
- Improve the Literacy Program
- Address Barriers to Learning

#### 2. Finance & Governance

- Secure a Facility
- Enhance Governance
- Develop Resources
- Facilitate a Culture of Giving

#### 3. Environmental Mission

- Define Environment for School and Curriculum
- Create a Healthy Sustainable Lunch Program
- Create Community Partners with Environmental Organizations
- Living the mission

#### 4. Employees

- Competitive salaries for all staff
- Establish health benefit options for all staff
- Attract and retain talented staff by establishing professional growth as central to school's culture
- Attract and retain talented staff by providing quality of life benefits responsive to staff needs

During the 2012/13 school year, one of our projects will be creating our next three year strategic plan.

### Strategic Planning Committee

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Membership Category</b>	<b>Appointed By</b>
Bennaroch, Rebecca	Wissahickon Charter School	Administrator	Kristi Littell
Biagioli, Elizabeth	WCS Discovery Teacher/Outdoor Program Coordinator	Elementary School Teacher	Dean of Administration
Eweel, Isaac	WCS Board	Board Member	Board of Trustees
Gustavson, Leif	Arcadia University	Board Member	Board of Trustees
Heinz, Adam	Community Member	Community Representative	Board of Trustees
Jamal Elliott	WCS	Administrator	Board
Jon Scherer	Parent	Parent	Dean of Administration
Kathy Tench	WCS	Regular Education Teacher	Dean of Administration
Kristi Littell	WCS	Administrator	Board
Michele Ferante	WCS	Special Education Representative	Dean of Administration
Nowicki-Sullivan, Mary	Wissahickon Charter School	Elementary School Teacher	Kristi Littell
Nyce, Juanita	WCS	Administrator	Dean of Administration
O'Shea, Kate	Wissahickon Charter School	Administrator	Dean of Administration
Rice, Charles	WCS Board	Board Member	Board of Trustees
Strain, Amanda	Wissahickon Charter School	Elementary School Teacher	Kristi Littell
Valentine, Dave	Parent and Board member	Board Member	Board of Trustees
White, Aubrey	WCS	Regular Education Teacher	Dean of Administration

Wong, Jennifer	Wissahickon Charter School	Elementary School Teacher	Kristi Littell
Yoder, Anthony	Wissahickon Charter School	Administrator	Kristi Littell

## Goals, Strategies and Activities

### **Goal: I. Math goal**

**Description:** At least 78% of all students will be proficient or advanced in Mathematics, as measured by the 2012 statewide assessment.

#### **Strategy: 4Sight**

**Description:** 4Sight is a test aligned with the PSSA. Content and structure of the 4Sight assessments are both in keeping with PSSA content and structure. It allows for students to practice multiple choice and open-ended problems. It is predictive and provides faculty with data to inform instruction to ultimately help students who are designated as Basic or Below Basic.

#### **Activity: Informing Instruction**

**Description:** Students will take the 4Sight assessment three times during the year. Teachers and instructional leaders will grade all open ended questions. Test results will be provided to teachers as well as time to analyze the results. Data from the practice tests will be used to help teachers determine which skills and concepts are most challenging for students. This will be used particularly to address students who are performing at the Basic or Below Basic level.

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

Kristi Littell	Start: 1/1/2007	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

#### **Activity: Preparation for Testing**

**Description:** Through working on 4Sight, students will familiarize themselves with standardized tests and open-ended math questions. With the testing format already familiar to all students, they will be better able to focus on test content. 4Sight is also a paper and pencil test to make the practice more transferable to the actual PSSA. This will prove especially helpful to those who are performing at the Basic or Below Basic level.

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

Kristi Littell                      Start: 9/1/2011                      -  
Finish: Ongoing

**Status:** Complete

### **Strategy: Math Support Coach**

**Description:** A qualified Math Coach serves as a resource to students, faculty, and families as we seek to meet the goal of having 78% of students attain Proficient status for math on the PSSA. Coach will target students who are designated basic and below basic by the PSSA.

### **Activity: After School Component**

**Description:** The After School Component compliments the day school program. Students receive individualized instruction and small group instruction with materials that are supplementary to "Everyday Mathematics". Students are involved for two hours for four days each week. Most students are enrolled in the program for the school year. But, additional students are added to the program as the need arises. Students who have performed at the Basic or Below Basic level on the PSSA are selected for the program.

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

Kristi Littell                      Start: 1/1/2007                      -  
Finish: Ongoing

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

### **Activity: Individual and Small Group Instruction**

**Description:** Based on an analysis of the data provided by the disaggregated PSSA and 4Sight tests along with local assessment data, flexible groups of students are established based on common instructional needs. Classroom assistants provide additional instructional support in the groups. Classroom learning centers are used to differentiate instruction for students that are not achieving at a proficient level.

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

Kristi Littell                      Start: 1/1/2007                      -  
Finish: Ongoing

**Status:** Complete

## **Goal: READING**

**Description:** At least 81% of all students will be proficient in Reading in 2012, as measured by the annual statewide PSSA assessments.

### **Strategy: 4Sight**

**Description:** 4Sight is a test aligned with the PSSA. Content and structure of the 4Sight assessments are both in keeping with PSSA content and structure. It allows for students to practice multiple choice and open-ended problems. It is predictive and provides faculty with data to inform instruction to ultimately help students who are designated as Basic or Below Basic.

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Kristi Littell	Start: 1/1/2007	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

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

Kristi Littell	Start: 1/1/2007	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** Complete

### **Strategy: Strategy #1: Align Reading/Writing curriculum**

**Description:** One of the priorities in the 2009-11 Strategic Plan is to Develop Curricular Scope and Sequences for the WCS curriculum. This will focus and prioritize our instructional efforts and

ensure that all standards are addressed. Our reading curriculum was inconsistently implemented and had some gaps at certain grade levels. To address these concerns, WCS will adopt the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) approach for all grades.

**Activity: Staff training and coaching on the Teachers College Workshop approach**

**Description:** Staff training and coaching for successful implementation of the Teachers College Workshop approach

Person Responsible	Timeline for Implementation	Resources
Kristi Littell	Start: 9/9/2011 Finish: 6/15/2012	-

**Professional Development Activity Information**

Number of Hours Per Session	Total Number of Sessions Per School Year	Estimated Number of Participants Per Year
3.00	25	35
Organization or Institution Name	Type of Provider	Provider's Department of Education Approval Status
Wissahickon CS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Entity</li> </ul>	Approved

Knowledge and Skills	Research and Best Practices	Designed to Accomplish
Faculty will be introduced to the TCRWP approach along with assessing reading level using the TCRWP assessment. They will receive coaching from TCRWP staff once per trimester & from Wissahickon staff available one day every two weeks.	The TCRWP approach is standards based.	<p><i>For classroom teachers, school counselors and education specialists:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases the educator's <u>teaching skills</u> based on research on effective practice, with attention given to interventions for struggling students.</li> </ul> <p><i>For school and district administrators, and other educators seeking leadership roles:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides leaders with the ability to <u>access and use appropriate data</u> to inform decision-making.</li> </ul>

### **Educator Groups Which Will Participate in this Activity**

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<b>Role</b>	<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Subject Area</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Classroom teachers</li><li>• Principals / asst. principals</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Early childhood (preK-grade 3)</li><li>• Middle (grades 6-8)</li><li>• Elementary (grades 2-5)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading, Writing, Speaking &amp; Listening</li></ul>

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### **Follow-up Activities**

- Team development and sharing of content-area lesson implementation outcomes, with involvement of administrator and/or peers
- Peer-to-peer lesson discussions
- Lesson modeling with mentoring

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### **Evaluation Methods**

- Review of participant lesson plans

**Status:** Not Started — Overdue

## **Goal: STUDENT ATTENDANCE (any school that does not graduate seniors)**

**Description:** Student attendance will meet a 90% threshold and/or show growth.

### **Strategy: Instilling a Love of School**

**Description:** When school is a safe and fun place to learn and when classrooms function as authentic communities, students want to be there and attendance records soar.

### **Activity: Building Classroom Communities**

**Description:** Faculty will continue to spend time developing the classroom community. Examples of community building activities include morning meetings, cooperative games, and collaborative work. Teachers will receive on-going training in how to develop such communities.

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

Kristi Littell	Start: 1/1/2007	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

**Strategy: Recordkeeping and communication with parents**

**Description:** When parents and teachers/school staff are in communication about absenteeism, student attendance rates increase. This communication brings parents into the school community in such a way that encourages them to make sure their child's attendance rate is as high as possible.

**Activity: Prompt phone calls and notification.**

**Description:** Front office staff call regarding every student absence if the parent has not notified the school by mid-morning. Classroom teachers also communicate with parents about absences, focusing on why the child has been absent and how the teacher can support the family and student to ensure that the child returns to school as soon as possible and as prepared as possible.

**Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Jamal Elliott	Start: 1/1/2007	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

**Goal: STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN STATE ASSESSMENTS**

**Description:** At least 95% of eligible students will participate in required state-wide assessments.

**Strategy: Communication with Parents**

**Description:** WCS will ensure that parents know the dates of state assessments and the importance of their child's participation.

**Activity: Assessment Reminders**

**Description:** Families and students will receive multiple written reminders of the dates of state assessments. Families will all receive a call using our One-Call-Now system to remind them of test dates and strategies to help their child succeed (e.g. a good night's sleep, eating breakfast, etc.). At the end of each set of test dates, all students who were absent will receive phone calls.

### Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources

None Selected	Start: 1/1/2007	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** Complete

### **Strategy: Test Preparation**

**Description:** WCS faculty and administration will work to ensure that students and families feel prepared for state assessments. Preparedness will provide greater assurance that students will attend to participate in assessments.

### **Activity: Student Familiarity with Testing Format**

**Description:** Faculty will use the 4Sight assessment and other tools to prepare students for the format of state assessments. This will make students more comfortable with the assessment, decreasing their anxiety and increasing participation.

### Person Responsible Timeline for Implementation Resources

Kristi Littell	Start: 1/1/2007	-
	Finish: Ongoing	

**Status:** Complete

## **Goal: Technology integration**

**Description:** Students will be exposed to and interact with technology as part of their instruction at WCS. This will have the dual benefit of enhancing their comfort with technology and preparing them for life in a technology-centered world along with enhancing student learning, family engagement, and environmental education.

### **Strategy: Technology Training (Faculty and Staff)**

**Description:** In order to use available technology to its full potential, faculty and staff must be well versed on the use of software and hardware for classroom instruction and class administration.

### **Activity: Technology Training (Students)**

**Description:** Students will receive instruction directly related to the use of technology in the Typing and Technology course as well as during their time in the library where they will learn

about search techniques, databases, and the like. WCS has developed a technology curriculum covering what skills will be acquired at each grade level. Students will also be exposed to technology whenever teachers use it in the classroom.

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

None Selected	Start: 7/1/2009	-
	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**

As our mission states, Wissahickon Charter School believes in student ownership of learning through empowerment and recognition of diverse learning styles. We also believe in a curriculum that teaches children about the wonder of the natural world. We are committed to empowering teachers to be creative designers of their own curriculum utilizing the different resources we provide. We have adopted a standards and inquiry based curriculum and each teacher is provided with and expected to refer to the Pennsylvania standards and assessment anchors in designing their instruction. WCS has selected curricula which aim to address the state standards. Each program we have adopted is research and standards based and allows for optimum inquiry.

#### **READING & LANGUAGE ARTS:**

We have adopted the Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshop approach for teaching reading and language arts. Teachers use a mini-lesson format to teach skills. Students are then provided an uninterrupted block of time to work independently, conference and revise. In addition, we do systematic phonics instruction in grades K-2, using the Foundations program of the Wilson Reading Company.

We assess each child's reading level a minimum of three times a year. The students' reading levels are then used to create guided reading groups, or assign extra services as needed. While the rest of the class is working on centers or independent work with the classroom aide, the teacher works with a small group of students to meet their individual needs. This practice also provides an opportunity to accelerate the academic skill development and learning strategies of students performing below standard. Additionally, we have a Reading Support Teacher who works in the lower grades and several inclusion teachers who meet with small groups of students on a daily basis for additional acceleration.

#### **MATH**

We have adopted Everyday Mathematics by Harcourt/McGraw Hill for grades K-6, supplemented by texts by Marilyn Burns in K-3, and Groundworks in 4-6. Everyday Mathematics is a research and standards based, hands on approach which provides repeated exposures to all content. It allows children's mathematical knowledge to grow from real life experiences. Everyday

Mathematics includes individual/small-group and partner activities. The instructional aide in each classroom can work with small groups of students who need more practice. Additionally, the inclusion teacher helps accelerate the growth of students performing below level. The students also participate in many math games which allow for fact practice. At the end of each unit of learning, students are given an opportunity to do inquiry-based explorations and projects. Our math coach works with teachers in grades 3 — 8 to support direct instruction in the classroom, small group work and after school tutoring of students who need additional help grasping the concepts.

In the Middle School, we use the McDougal Littell Passports to Mathematics program, supplemented by additional problem-solving work from the Groundworks series by Wright/McGraw Hill and Dolciani book series, Mathematics: Structure and Method. We have grouped students homogeneously in the middle school Math program and are offering Pre-Algebra to advanced 7th graders and Algebra to advanced 8th graders. All students will have a minimum of Pre-Algebra when they graduate.

## SCIENCE & SOCIAL STUDIES

The heart of our science & social studies curriculum is inquiry into the outside world by students and teachers, and active engagement to leave the world better than we found it. Over the course of the year, each classroom studies a few carefully chosen "central topics," (see "Central Topics Overview") picked both for their irresistibility to students and the inevitability with which they lead to big ideas and important skills in reading, math, science and social studies. All central topic studies are chosen to address the PA social studies standards and the science standards and assessment anchors.

Often, the central topics we choose are "terrains"—whole environments where social studies and science and math and literacy are still connected. Many of these studies are related to the nearby Wissahickon Valley and its watershed, but others are connected to the urban environment. So, for example, in one such study, a second grade does a comparative study of a supermarket and the local food co-op. Students go to both of these locales to buy lunch and then trace the origin of all the food that made up their lunches. It is a study that draws on the science related to nutrition; the environmental studies related to the pollution created in making and transporting the food; the social studies of production and the organization of work; the geography of local trip to the stores and the global path of the food; the mathematics and economics of pricing; and the literacy skills necessary for researching all of the above.

The central topic or "terrain" studies are supplemented by the Science and Technology curriculum (STC) from Carolina Biological, with kits chosen that complement one's topic study. So, for example, a first grade studying the 60 acre park across the street from us also uses the STC kit on "organisms." STC is also a standards and research based program. STC aims to make science relevant, interesting, and challenging for children. In each unit of study the students address what they already know about the topic, explore the scientific topic, reflect on their findings, and finally apply their new learning to real-life problems. The entire approach is discovery-based. STC helps children foster the development of scientific attitudes, such as curiosity, problem-solving skills, respect for evidence, flexibility, and sensitivity to living things. The students focus on four content areas throughout the year, allowing for in-depth exploration of each topic.

In the Middle School, a heavy emphasis is put on lab work and field work. The students go on many trips and have been to local universities to perform labs in their state of the art facilities. The scientific process is heavily focused on and the students design some of their own experiments.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

The WCS Social Studies curriculum is based on the state standards and allows students the opportunity to do project-based learning. Students participate in shared reading using a big book in the lower grades, or sets of student books that are based on the history standards. Students then explore the content areas with in depth explorations and projects. The WCS Social Studies curriculum also allows for additional content-based practice in Reading and Writing. In the Middle School, the History standards are addressed through the use of text books and comprehensive research projects.

## WRITING

WCS has adopted the Fountas and Pinnell Writing Workshop approach to writing. The State standards and student needs are used to determine what mini-lessons will be taught. The students are then given choice to determine what genre and topic they would like to explore. The workshop approach to writing actively engages students in the writing process because it makes the writing relevant to their own lives. Each grade is also assigned three different writing genres which they must teach explicitly and practice. The students are then given a prompt to complete which becomes part of their permanent portfolio.

## SERVICE LEARNING

The mission of WCS incorporates not only an environmental curriculum, but also service learning projects. Specific grades have been targeted to choose, devise, and implement an environmental service learning project. This approach gives students ownership over the project and an opportunity to perform in-depth explorations of real life problems.

## DISCOVERY

WCS strives to integrate an environmental theme throughout the school's curriculum. This goal is realized both in each classroom and through the school's Discovery Program, a weekly lesson that is specifically focused on nature. The Discovery teacher works with classroom teachers to write three trimester-long units that complement the classroom curriculum but also use nature as the unifying concept. Classes are co-taught by the Discovery teacher and the classroom teacher and involve hands-on activities and trips to Fernhill Park (the park across the street from the school). Discovery units range in topic from Mapping to Animal Adaptations to Local Geography.

## ART

WCS boasts an extensive arts program in which the students receive 1 to 2 class periods of fine arts instruction each week. The art teacher strives to integrate classroom themes and objectives into the art curriculum. Students are also exposed to styles and themes of different artists and art periods. For example, when the second graders were studying balancing and weighing, they created Alexander Calder mobiles in art class. When the first graders were studying mapping, they made three-dimensional topographic maps with objects from nature included. Each class takes at least one art field trip each year, organized by the art teacher. WCS also offers an after school mural arts program for third through eighth graders.

## MUSIC

The Music Teacher works with each classroom one to two times per week in grades K-5, and it is offered as an elective in grades 6-8. During music students learn to identify and experiment with the fundamentals of music, including tempo, rhythm, and pitch. Primary students play

cooperative musical games and use movement to express how music makes them feel. Older students explore the ways in which music inspires them creatively. Students compose rhythms, lyrics, and even whole songs. Students also listen to and learn about different styles of music and different types of instruments both in America and around the world. Additionally, music class is be used to enhance specific topics being studied in class, and teachers are encouraged to work together to coordinate lessons. Budget cuts for the 2012-13 school year have required us to eliminate music from our instructional program. We are actively seeking music enrichment opportunities for our students.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Students attend PE class one to two times a week for 45 minutes. They are instructed in health, sports, team-work, cooperative games, and physical fitness. The teacher addresses the state standards and also the needs of the students, We have a full time PE teacher who also runs an after school sports program.

## TECHNOLOGY

The Technology Curriculum Coordinator works with teachers to integrate the use and knowledge of technology into classroom subjects and projects. Typing instruction is begun in grade 3, with students required to be able to type a specified number of words per minute before moving on to tutorials in software applications. The technology coordinator helps bring teachers and students great ideas into technological reality. Students use programs such as Word, Mavis Beacon, and KidPix, as well as a number of skill-building and problem-solving games. Students use the Internet for guided research as well as specially designed Webquests to bring classroom topics to life. Each teacher has adopted specific technology standards which to address in her/his classroom.

## OVERALL

Our mission at WCS is to create "student empowerment and ownership of learning through learner-directed projects and recognition of diverse learning styles." The curriculum we have adopted lends itself to create such an environment for children. WCS prides itself on the quality of our teaching faculty and support staff. Without strong educators it is difficult to maximize learning in a student-empowered environment. As such WCS employs very rigorous hiring, induction and professional development programs.

### Student accountability & support

Inspired by schools that have a "data room" where they display data on each child, we chose to make our "data room" a virtual one. To do this we created "data rich class lists"--a spreadsheet that summarizes data on all aspects of a students' academic and social progress across years. On this list we also include lists of current interventions or enrichment programs that a student is involved in, and the data to show whether that program has been a success. (see "Class list Meetings")

The Lower School and Middle School Director along with the Director of Learning Supports, hold meetings periodically during the year with each grade teacher to review data on each child from our "data rich class lists", and consider whether particular interventions (e.g. small group work with math or reading coach) or enrichment activities (e.g. honors classes). Then, at the following meeting new data is reviewed to see whether the intervention or enrichment is productive, and, if not, to change what we're doing.

Beginning in 08-09, we increased academic accountability for students who--for whatever reason--were chronically not doing schoolwork that their teachers deemed them able to do. We began an after school study hall, which we named "Make Up Time" to stress that it is a logical consequence for time wasted in school rather than a punishment. Students who were falling behind could be assigned to Make Up Time for a week's period to make up the work that they had failed to complete, and to have a quiet, time to complete their homework. For students with more persistent problems, they could be put on Academic Probation Level I or Academic Probation Level II, the latter having the distinction of including the threat of expulsion, should they not improve. When a student was put on academic probation, if they had not recently been the subject of a Comprehensive Support Team (CST) meeting, one would be scheduled to look at what interventions had been tried in the past, and what should be done at that time.

In 09-10 we implemented re-designed report cards. To increase accountability of students and to communicate more clearly to parents, we have separated the students "achievement" grades from their "effort" grades on our report cards. In this way, it will become evident when a student of high ability might not be putting forth adequate effort, despite relatively high achievement marks. Similarly, separating the two allows a teacher to be honest about a low-achieving students' ability while still honoring them if they put in a great deal of effort. These report cards also include a higher degree of break-down by skill area, with the lowest grades having the highest degree of breakdown and higher grades having a cumulative grade to satisfy the requirements of high school admissions.

#### Recruiting and Hiring Qualified Faculty

Hiring for the school is conducted by a personnel committee. This committee meets regularly to review personnel needs, research and draft recruitment and retention policy, screen resumes and conduct interviews. The teaching vacancies and needs for the following year are identified in early February. Ads are placed in the major newspapers as well as flyers distributed to local colleges and universities. We maintain a list serve of minority individuals who have volunteered to put out job postings into their network as a way to move closer to having a staff that is more diverse. We have also posted on PAreap. Resumes are screened by the personnel committee using an established rubric and individuals scoring 13 or above on the rubric are invited to come into the school for a teacher open house and group interview. Following the open house, the committee targets individuals to come into the school for an interview and demo lesson in the targeted grade. Hiring recommendations are made to the Board of Trustees for approval.

#### Teacher Induction

The induction committee is comprised of the CEO, Lower School Director, Middle School Director, Dean of Students, Librarian, Environmental Educator, Director of Learning Supports and two classroom teachers.

Goals and competencies expected out of our program include: Understanding the WCS curriculum; exposure to various strategies for classroom management including the Responsive Classroom approach; introduction to WCS policies, procedures, facilities and resources; understanding of the evaluation process and mentoring program; understanding of the student code of conduct.

Upon hiring, teachers are asked to do a self-assessment of strengths and areas needing support. Teachers spent a full two weeks prior to the beginning of the year in induction activities. A plan is developed with the teacher and CEO to support the teacher and to address

areas of concern. Each new teacher at the school is assigned a mentor who works with the teacher on an on-going basis. The full description of our induction program is on file at the PDE.

### Professional Development

WCS believes strongly that professional development is key to the continued success of our instructional program. We devote significant time throughout the year to focus on exposing our faculty and teaching staff to new ideas and teaching strategies. Our calendar follows an innovative professional development schedule modeled after the School District of Philadelphia's calendar. We engage in regular professional development one Friday afternoon each month for 3-hour increments. We have found that frequent professional development opportunities allow us to address issues as they occur and to build on prior learning. In addition, we have built into our year two weeks of professional development before school starts in the fall and 2-3 days after school is dismissed. We also have a full day of professional development after our winter break.

Beyond that, we offer three funding cycles each year for faculty and staff to attend off-site professional development sessions. Teachers receiving funding are often asked to do turn-around training to share what they learned with colleagues at WCS.

Topics we covered in WCS sponsored professional development sessions included:

- For new staff: Data on our students, Special Education, Classroom management, Service Learning
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshop
- Integrating environmental education into our curriculum
- Use of the 4Sight assessment
- Cross-grade collaboration
- Using SmartBoards in the classroom
- Working with students and families

## **Rigorous Instructional Program - Attachments**

- Induction Letter
- Professional Education Report approval letter

## **English Language Learners**

Currently, all WCS students speak English as their primary language. If a student enrolls whose primary language is not English, the student takes the mandated English as a Second Language(ESL) assessment and the teacher uses this data to inform the instructional program. A certified ESL tutor for the student is hired. The tutor works one on one with the student. The tutor selects curricula and materials for the student to address his/her specific needs. The Director of Learning Supports approves and procures said materials in conjunction with the Middle or Lower School Director.

## **English Language Learners - Attachment**

- ELL Program Policy

## **Graduation Requirements**

WCS includes grades K-8. It does not offer a diploma.

## **Special Education**

### **Instructional Strategies**

Many of our identified students require a significant amount of accommodations and modifications to be included in a regular education classroom. The learning support teachers differentiate classroom assignments as well as balance individualized attention in a resource setting. Non-identified students are included in small groupings, special education teachers have taught simultaneously in the classroom and regular education teachers have consistently provided specially designed instruction.

Current goals:

- Maintain 100% timeline compliance for new evaluations and annual IEPs.
- 85% of special education students receiving Wilson Reading Program interventions, will move at least one step.
- Create a protocol for screening and follow up interventions for kindergarten students.

### **Inclusion**

All faculty at Wissahickon Charter School act as advocates for the least restrictive environment. We strongly believe that the best place for a child is with typically developing peers. We support our children with special needs in a multitude of ways, including a thorough exploration of supports prior to a special education referral. Our Child Support Team ensures that the problems that a child is having are clearly defined. We then call upon a variety of resources to develop strategies. These resources will always include the child's parent and other school community members with knowledge of the child.

### **Collaborative Teaching**

Learning Support teachers and classroom teachers meet regularly to plan and assess differentiated assignments. During class time, they also teach collaboratively. As indicated on a student's IEP, pullout time is also provided.

### **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**

The determination of whether a student is eligible for special education is made by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. Least Restrictive Environment and the continuum of services are discussed with the IEP team prior to making the placement determination. Wissahickon Charter School's philosophy is that each has a right to the least restrictive placement first. Aside from the support of the child's special education teacher, many classrooms are staffed with either full or part time aides. This allows opportunity to provide small group instruction, one-to-one support as well as other modifications and accommodations specified on the IEP. We follow the order of the IEP in determining the educational placement and frequency of services. If the team begins to discuss placement prematurely, the LEA redirects the group.

## **Special Education - Attachment**

- Special Education Policies 2011-2012

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart I

Teacher	FTE	Type of class or support	Location	# of Students	Other Information
Anne Zumbo	1.00	Learning Support	Wissahickon Charter School	23	None
Julia Salamone	1.00	Learning Support	Wissahickon Charter School	16	None
Fatimah Johnson	1.00	Learning Support	Wissahickon Charter School	15	None
Mia Rotondo	1.00	Learning Support	Wissahickon Charter School	19	None

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart II

Organization	FTE	Type of class or support	Location	# of Students	Other Information
Abington Speech Pathology Services, Inc.	.8	Speech therapy	Wissahickon Charter School	37	None
Therapy Source	.04	Physical Therapy	Wissahickon Charter School	3	None
Pediatric Therapeutic Services	.1	Occupational Therapy	Wissahickon Charter School	6	None

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart III

Title	Location	FTE
Michele Ferrante-Supervisor	Wissahickon Charter School	1.00
Anne Zumbo- Teacher	Wissahickon Charter School	1.00
Julia Salamone-Teacher	Wissahickon Charter School	1.00
Fatimah Johnson-Teacher	Wissahickon Charter School	1.00
Mia Rotondo-Teacher	Wissahickon Charter School	1.00
Jennifer Goren	Wissahickon Charter School	.75

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart IV

IU, Public Agency, Organization, or Individual	Title/Service	Amount of Time Per Week
Pediatric Therapeutic Services	Occupational Therapy	4 hours
Therapy Source	Physical Therapy	1.5 hours
Abington Speech Pathology Services, Inc.	Speech Therapist	32 hours
Dr. Stefan Dombrowski	Psychological Services	3.5 hours

## SECTION IV. ACCOUNTABILITY

### Student Assessment - Primary

Test/Classification	K	1	2	3	4	5
PSSA	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
PASA	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
4Sight Pennsylvania Benchmark	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

### Student Assessment - Secondary

Test/Classification	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
PSSA	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
PASA	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
4Sight Pennsylvania Benchmark	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No

### Student Assessment

a. WCS made AYP for the 2011-2012 school year. In math, our 3-5 all student group made the goal based on growth in the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced and our 6-8 all student group made AYP based on the growth model. In reading, our 6-8 all student group made AYP by the growth in the number of students scoring proficient or advanced on the assessment. Since our founding, WCS has made AYP in seven out of ten years and three of the last four.

The school is using a variety of disaggregated test scores to identify curricular gaps and to adjust instructional practice. Many members of the school staff are using multiple assessments to make informed decisions regarding methods, materials and strategies. Assessments give a clear picture of which curricular areas have not proven successful for student learning and thus need to be modified.

In addition to the PSSA, Grades 3-8 used the 4Sight Benchmark Assessment for the first time in the 2011-12 school year. The assessment was given at three points during the school year. First and second grade students have taken the Acuity Predictor III assessment in the past but we were not able to offer it in 2011-12 since it was not offered through the Philadelphia School District. We are exploring alternative assessments for our first and second grade students in 2012-13 and subsequent years.

Our literacy instruction, using the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project approach, relies on providing students with texts at their precise reading level. Students are assessed at least three times during the year with the Teachers College assessment which aligns with Fountas and Pinnell.

The school's grading procedures allow for teachers to look at tests, quizzes, classwork, participation, projects, portfolios, performance tasks and any other valuable evidence to evaluate students each trimester. Students receive feedback from their teachers on how they are performing and how to improve upon their levels of performance. Feedback occurs throughout the trimester with students in class and formally for parents twice a trimester. Parents receive both interim reports and end of trimester report cards.

Multiple assessments are frequent, rigorous, authentic, and aligned with Pennsylvania Department of Education Standards to gauge student learning. Professional development for teachers includes time for them to review the state's assessment anchors along with testing data. This helps them as they plan whole group and individual instruction. The students maintain binders or folders that serve as organizers for their work.

In reviewing student work, both self-checking techniques and teacher review are noted. Within unit plans, all teachers have noted performance tasks as well as "paper-pencil" type assessments (e.g. tests, quizzes). Students are taught tools for evaluation of their own work as well as their peer's work.

Effective and varied instructional activities are aligned to individual student needs. Through teacher collaboration, instructional techniques are shared/designed/discussed. Time for such collaboration is built into each week for grade team teachers. Further, in fifth through eighth grades, students change classes. For these grades, collaborative planning is especially critical because teachers can share their instructional practices as they relate directly to the same group of students.

In addition to grade team collaboration, cross-grade collaboration helps teachers to use assessments to inform their teaching. Each student keeps a portfolio of work that follows him/her throughout their time at WCS. Teachers meet at the end of the year to discuss students leaving their classroom with the teacher(s) that will have the student for the following year.

In addition to peer collaboration, the Lower School Director, Middle School Director, and Director of Learning Supports collaborate with and evaluate faculty on a regular basis. Lesson plans are turned in each week. The respective supervisor makes comments on them, checks to be certain that the faculty member is keeping to the scope and sequence, and returns them to faculty. Further, supervisors observe in class frequently both formally and informally. Through all of these mechanisms, they are able to show faculty how assessment data can inform teaching practices.

b. Students will be evaluated in basic reading skills upon enrollment. Any child who is clearly not performing at grade level at enrollment or has been determined by his/her teacher shortly after enrollment to be underachieving will be evaluated to determine the cause or causes and an individual remedial plan will be drawn up.

Upon enrollment, all students will be assessed to determine their basic competency levels along with, in the case of the youngest students, their developmental and social levels. Assessment upon enrollment will include contact with parents regarding each child's unique history and experiences. School staff will review all entering assessment results and plan for the needs of individual students. A multi-dimensional approach at home and at school will be developed for under-achieving students.

## **Student Assessment - Attachments**

- 2011-12 reading levels
- 2011-12 PSSA

## **Teacher Evaluation**

### **Main Features of the school's teacher evaluation plan**

Full-time teaching staff (including assistant teachers and those who do some teaching as part of their job such as the librarian and counselor) are evaluated annually by either the Lower School Director, Middle School Director, or Director of Learning Supports in both formative and summative ways. The data for formative evaluation comes from beginning of the year interviews by the Lower and Middle School Directors during which teachers self assess and set goals for the coming year, periodic classroom visits and "walk throughs", and weekly review of lesson plans. Dialogue and feedback between the Directors and teachers occur through email and face-to-face conversation.

The data for summative evaluation draws on data from the formative evaluation, as well as a formal observation. Formal classroom observations begin in the fall with new teachers and teachers who may need on-going support, and continue throughout the winter and spring with other faculty. In preparation for the formal observation teachers fill out a pre-observation report and self assess using a rubric aligned with the form used by the evaluator for the observation. Once the pre-observation form and rubric are filled out, the teacher meets with the Director for a pre-observation conference. The Director then observes the lesson, fills out an observation form and the same rubric that the teacher filled out, and conducts a post-observation conference with the teacher. The observation write up includes both specific comments on the particular lesson, but also more general comments based on the context what the Director has observed throughout the year.

**List entities/individuals who are responsible for teacher and staff evaluation.**

The Lower and Middle School Directors and Director of Learning Supports evaluated the faculty at WCS. Each teacher met with one of these Directors to review the observations and evaluation. Follow up conferences and observations were conducted to monitor progress and enhance instructional support. Informal observations and feedback were provided regularly throughout the year by the Directors. Individual coaching and full faculty trainings were implemented in response to identified needs. The Director of Learning Supports has an administrative certificate. The Lower School Director is in the process of obtaining an administrative certificate.

**Describe training for the evaluators, particularly in the areas of special education and instructional techniques unique to the mission of the charter school.**

The current evaluators participated in the following trainings:

1. The Middle School Director, Lower School Director, and Director of Learning Supports have participated in numerous Teachers College Reading and Writing Project training sessions. These include workshops held both at Columbia and at WCS. The focus of programs ranges from reading and writing in the content areas to administrative training in overseeing the program to specific work around training teachers to implement the program.
2. The Lower School Director attended a week-long Responsive Classroom training program. The Middle School Director has attended both Developmental Designs I and Developmental Designs II.
3. The Director of Learning Supports makes use of local training programs through Pattan.

4. The Director of Learning supports has special education supervisor, principal, & instructional II certificates. The Lower School Director has her Instructional II certificate and is working towards her principal certificate. The Middle School Director we have hired for next year has her principal certificate as well.

## Teacher Evaluation - Attachment

- Teacher Evaluation

## SECTION V. GOVERNANCE REQUIREMENTS

### Leadership Changes

WCS continued with the same CEO and principal for the 2011/2012 school year, Kristi Littell and Jamal Elliott respectively. Dave Valentine continued as the Board Chair for the 2011/2012 school year. Liza Hawley continued as the Board Secretary.

### Board of Trustees

<u>Name of Trustee</u>	<u>Office (if any)</u>
David Valentine	Chair
Leif Gustavson	
Charles Rice	
Liza Hawley	Secretary
Isaac Ewell	Vice-Chair
Leslie Wood	
Adam Heinze	
Angela Elleman	
Ellen Lutz	
Richard Binswanger	
Jennifer Biedel	

### Professional Development (Governance)

Every Board Member was officially sworn in and informed of their responsibilities in a rigorous board induction process that includes multiple interviews, an overview of the Sunshine Law, distribution of a board handbook, and an overview of our budget.

Legal Counsel for the school (Latshe, Davis, Yohe, and McKenna) regularly inform the school about legal requirements and practices surrounding governance and operation of the school and requirements under the Sunshine Law. Required and informative updates are regularly distributed to both Board and Staff of the school.

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

The Board of Trustees meets one Tuesday each month to conduct the business of the school. Meeting dates and times are advertised in two major newspapers per the requirements of the Sunshine Law. Minutes of each meeting are distributed and available to the general public. Board members frequently visit the school and a number are parents of students at the school.

The Board of Trustees has supported the Executive Team's engagement with the School District of Philadelphia on matters concerning the school. The school has always enjoyed a positive relationship with the School District. Frequently the SDP is consulted on issues surrounding Special Education, reporting requirements, transportation, assessment and peripheral services.

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

- 2012-13 Board of Trustees Members and Meetings

## **Community and Parent Engagement**

It is important to the school's mission that active parent engagement is requested and received.

The board regularly and enthusiastically encourages parental involvement in board related activities. Board meetings are posted on our website as well as included in our monthly calendar distributed to all students each month.

A parent survey, conducted in March, assessed satisfaction and areas for improvement with the school. A few of the findings from the survey related to parent engagement are summarized below.

- 91.1% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that WCS does a good job of monitoring my child's progress and communicating that progress with me.
- 85.9% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that WCS is open to suggestions and involves parents in making decisions
- 92.3% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that WCS kept them informed of events, meetings and other activities as well as how they can help to improve the achievement of their child.

Wissahickon Charter School has a family involvement program called "Three-Hour Power." The expectation is that each family will give three hours of volunteer time per trimester to the school. Examples of activities include attending Wissahickon Parent Partnership meetings, chaperoning field trips, volunteering in the library, signing up as a class parent, or stuffing envelopes for the annual fund mailing.

The school regularly hosts Discover Wissahickon Open Houses. These events are a chance for community members to visit the school and learn about the wonderful work that is happening at the school. These open houses are separate from prospective parent open houses and are geared towards engaging the community and encouraging support of the school.

The Dean of Administration and the Dean of students met regularly throughout the year with the President of the Wissahickon Parent Partnership (WPP).

## **SECTION VI. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

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

Throughout Wissahickon Charter's history, goals and initiatives have been determined through a collaborative strategic planning process. Staff and volunteers are at work to implement new goals and realize new visions for our future. This year has included a huge push to fully develop and implement the necessary infrastructure for development activities at the school. Below is a list of accomplishments:

- Encouraged parent participation in the Annual Fund through educational materials and a presence at school-wide events. Participation increased from 3% in 2009-10 to over 33% in 2011-12.
- Engaged Grandparents Day committee who planned and hosted more than 140 grandparents, family members and caregivers.
- Increased the Annual Fund from \$24,667 in 2010-11 to over \$30,000 in 2011-12.
- Hosted monthly Discover Wissahickon open house events and other events.
- Submitted 20+ grant proposals.
- Wrote and sent regular Developing News e-newsletters and other email blasts highlighting WCS programs and opportunities for giving.
- Deepened and implemented our board engagement process through Individual Development Plans (IDPs).
- Made new/deeper connections with community partners.
- Developed and monitored volunteer log as a way to engage volunteers in the ongoing life of the community.
- Continued developing systems that foster efficient, meaningful donor stewardship and communication with all constituencies.
- Led the Board of Trustees and school leadership in hosting Around the Kitchen Table Fundraising Dinners to raise money and awareness for the school's Outdoor Program.

Wissahickon Charter School continues to secure external recognition for its work through a series of highly competitive grants that will greatly enhance our learning community. Below are examples of some of the grants we have received this past year.

- The Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation continues their support of Wissahickon Charter School through a \$7,500 grant to help fund an Outward Bound expedition for 8th grade students.
- The Department of Agriculture awarded Wissahickon Charter School a grant of \$29,330 to provide students with fresh fruit and vegetable snacks three times each week. For 2012-13, WCS has received this grant again in the amount of \$28,860.
- The Lomax Family Foundation awarded Wissahickon Charter School \$10,000 to be used for professional development in our literacy program.

Donors continue to be excited to support programs that extend Wissahickon Charter's environmental mission. Contributions for the outdoor program, organic garden, and food program are increasing in number and amount as individuals and foundations learn about our eco-centered learning community.

Over the next year, Wissahickon Charter School will continue to develop a culture of giving internally and externally and build an infrastructure to support that work.

- The school has refined the strategic list of funding priorities with the strategic plan. This will help focus the work.
- Board of Trustees members will continue to be developed as resource-development partners. They will provide contacts in the community as well as provide and solicit financial support for the school. Two new Board members are now forming a Development Committee to help initiate larger development projects.
- The school will continue opening the doors of the school for a bi-monthly tour. The goal is to expand the school's circle of friends in the community.
- Individuals, businesses, and foundations will be solicited for support of the school's priorities.
- Gift stewardship will be a high priority for the school as it builds relationships with partners.
- WCS will carefully steward volunteers and parents as key stakeholders and supporters.
- As the school looks to open a second site, development is a huge priority for both the capital expenses and as a way of incubating the future staff. Wissahickon Charter School hopes to work with the Philadelphia School Partnership to secure funding for these efforts.

## **Fiscal Solvency Policies**

A fund balance has been created since the school opened its doors. The balance at the end of the 2011-12 school year was \$295,438. The fund balance was created so the school had a buffer in the event of unforeseen circumstances such as repair of damages to the building, and so payrolls could be met in the event federal funds or local funds had a delay.

## **Accounting System**

The school's chart of accounts mirrors that of the state chart of accounts. GAAP account is followed for accrual based accounts.

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

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

- 2011-12 Preliminary Financials

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

Citrin Cooperman & Company is the schools Audit firm for the 2010-2011 year. The last audit was published on December 13, 2011. The auditor's report expresses an unqualified opinion on the financial statements of the school.

There was one finding in the report. In a review of twenty-five employee files, two did not contain a proper criminal background check. In response to the finding, the school reviewed all employee files and instituted revised procedures to obtain proper documentation in the future.

The auditor's report for the 2011-12 year will likely be finalized in either November or December 2012.

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

- 2010-2011 Auditor's report

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

The school is entering its eleventh year of operation and has not been audited by the State Comptrollers Office.

## **SECTION VII. FACILITY RESPONSIBILITIES**

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

The Charter School leases a facility at 4700 G Wissahickon Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19144.

All furniture and equipment was purchased after obtaining quotations from various vendors.

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

Our strategic plan that has been in operation for the past three years included the important component of securing a permanent home for Wissahickon Charter School. As part of that, WCS looked at what it would mean to leave our current site and relocate. After much analysis and research, the Board of Trustees and school leadership decided to keep the current school at its current location.

In this past year, as part of the charter renewal process, the Board of Trustees determined that the school will set the goal of opening a second site. Through working with Mt. Airy USA, Wissahickon has identified a location for this building in East Mt. Airy. The building will be located across from Awbury Arboretum and next to the Weaver's Way farm--a wonderful location for a school with an environmental mission.

Through the renewal and modification process, Wissahickon was granted a cap of 500 additional students to populate this new site. Currently, we plan on opening this site in September 2014. Mt. Airy USA will serve as the developer of this site and Wissahickon will work closely with them to fundraise and make plans.

This upcoming year we will be engaging in developing a new strategic plan. Planning for the new site will be paramount to the plan and this work will be woven throughout the plan. We anticipate

much more aggressive development work as well as growth work around incubating staff and refining curriculum to be used at the second site.

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

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

WCS complied with all health and safety requirements. We held the requisite ten fire drills. A record of fire drills, dates and conditions is on file at WCS. A fire and safety inspector visited the school and verified compliance with fire safety requirements.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania School Immunization Law Report for the school year 2010-2011 was submitted in October 2011. A copy of the Department of Health compliance report is on file in the administration office at the school. The School Nurse follows up on all immunization and health records for students and copies are on file in her office.

#### **Wissahickon Charter School**

##### **School Wellness Policy**

The Wissahickon Charter School is committed to providing a school environment that promotes and protects children's health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. Therefore, it is the policy of the Wissahickon Charter School:

##### **Health Enhancement and Physical Activity Opportunities**

WCS shall offer health enhancement opportunities that include the components of a quality health enhancement program taught by a K-8 certified health enhancement specialist. Health enhancement shall equip students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for lifelong physical activity. Health enhancement instruction shall be aligned with the Pennsylvania Standards and National Association of Sport and Physical Activity/American Alliance of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance Physical Education Content Standards and Benchmarks.

All K-8 students of the WCS shall have the opportunity to participate regularly in supervised, organized or unstructured, physical activities, to maintain physical fitness, and to understand the short-and long-term benefits of a physically active and healthy lifestyle.

##### **Nutrition Standards**

WCS shall ensure that reimbursable school meals meet the program requirements and nutrition standards found in federal regulations. The District shall encourage students to make nutritious food choices through accessibility and marketing efforts of healthful foods. WCS shall monitor all food and beverages sold or served to students, including those available outside the federally regulated child nutrition programs (i.e., a la carte, vending, student stores, classroom rewards, fundraising efforts). WCS shall consider nutrient density and portion size before permitting food and beverages to be sold or served to students. The Dean of Administration shall continually evaluate vending policies and contracts. Vending contracts that do not meet the intent and purpose of this policy shall be modified accordingly or not renewed.

### **Other School-Based Activities Designed to Promote Student-Wellness**

WCS may implement other appropriate programs that help create a school environment that conveys consistent wellness messages and is conducive to healthy eating and physical activity, such as staff wellness programs, non-food reward system and fundraising efforts.

### **Maintaining Student Wellness**

The CEO shall develop and implement administrative rules consistent with this policy. Input from teachers, parents/guardians, students, school food service program, the school board, school administrators, and the public shall be considered before implementing such rules. A sustained effort is necessary to implement and enforce this policy. The CEO shall measure how well this policy is being implemented, managed, and enforced. The CEO shall report to the Board, as requested, on WCS programs and efforts to meet the purpose and intent of this policy.

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

- Wissahickon Charter School Wellness Policy
- 2010-11 DOH Payment Voucher
- 2011-12 SHARRS request for reimbursement

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

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

1. Aetna Personal Choice
2. Aetna Health Plan
3. Worker's Compensation
4. General Liability
5. Corporate Officers Errors and Omissions
6. Contents Insurance
7. Wage Continuation
8. Life Insurance

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

- 2012 Acord Certificate

## **SECTION IX. ADMINISTRATIVE NEEDS**

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

The School employs 80 staff members, 39 of whom are Professional staff. Of those 39 staff members, 38 worked at WCS the previous year. Two long-term substitute teachers were hired for professional staff members who missed part of the year on maternity leave. Fourteen professional staff members are not returning next year. Staff turnover has been extremely low in recent years so this year is certainly an anomaly. Five of our non-returning staff worked in part-time positions that were eliminated due to budget cuts. Seven staff members left for other opportunities in education that allowed for professional growth, educational opportunities or part-time employment. There was significant turnover in our middle school staff but when we look at the cases individually, it appears to be happenstance more than an identifiable cause. In our efforts to maintain and improve staff retention, WCS offers competitive salaries and benefits as well as flexible spending accounts for medical and dependent care. WCS also houses a day care on-site for employees. The biggest incentive for staff to stay, however, is the culture of the school and the extent to which staff are able to have a voice in school decisions.

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

- 2011-12 HQT ACS
- 2011-2012 PDE 414

### **Student Enrollment**

#### Student Enrollment

a.) It is the policy of Wissahickon Charter School to admit all students regardless of the grade that they are entering by lottery. Students entering / applying for Kindergarten must be 5 by September 1st of the entering year. There were three open houses for prospective parents in the fall and winter of 2011/2012. Applications for all grades were accepted until February 29 of 2012. On March 29, 2012, a lottery was held and 15 students were selected randomly from the 207 applications received. Siblings and children of staff members were given preference and accounted for the other 27 kindergarten slots. 192 students were placed on the kindergarten waiting list. 171 students applied for positions in 1st - 8th grade -- their names were all drawn in a lottery on March 29, 2012 establishing a waitlist for each grade. In February of each year, we ask parents of current students whether they intend on remaining at WCS the following year. There were 9 available spaces for grades 1st - 8th as of July 2011. If a current parent declines a space for whatever reason, the next person on the waitlist will be notified.

For the 2011-2012 school year, there were a total of 426 students enrolled in September. At the close of the school year, 424 students were enrolled. During the 2011-2012 school year, no new students were admitted, and nine students transferred out. None of the students who transferred out were involved in disciplinary proceedings. 362 students are expected to return for the 2012/13 school year. Forty-six students graduated and are leaving to attend high school. Nine students have chosen not to return to the school in the fall.

Our total enrollment at the start of the 2012/2013 school year will be 454. Our charter modification request which has been approved by the SRC requested a cap of 460 students for the 2012/2013 school year.

**STUDENT ENROLLMENT**

Grade	September Enrollment	# withdrew	#added	June Enrollment	Transferred to:
K	45	2	3	46	Imani Ed. Circ. Charter; out of state
1	47	1	2	47	John B. Kelly
2	49	1		48	Solis-Cohen Elem.
3	48	2	1	47	Private school; out of state
4	47	1	1	47	parochial school
5	47		1	48	
6	49			49	
7	48	2		46	out of state; out of district
8	46			46	
Total	426	9	8	424	

Year	Enrollment goal in application	Actual Enrollment Sept/June	Wait List	Students retained
2002-03	250	258/256	439	2 (0.8%)
2003-04	300	308/306	519	7 (2.3%)
2004-05	350	360/358	590	6 (1.7%)
2005-06	400	408/406	634	
2006-07	400	434/405	560	
2007-08	400	399/399	509	15
2008-09	400	400/401	567	7
2009-10	400	401/401	556	3
2010-11	424	419/412	624	3
2011-12	424	426/424	363	5 definite/3 tbd

b. Student turnover for the 2011-2012 school year was low. Results of the parent survey conducted in March 2012, showed that only 4.8% of parents are not satisfied with the education their child is receiving at WCS. From the beginning, WCS has received applications far in excess of the number of spaces to be filled.

Next year we will enroll 454 students. Our stated enrollment goal for 12/13 is 460 students. This is the closest we could be to our goal while maintaining balance between grades and slightly smaller class sizes for kindergarten and 1st grades.

As indicated above, our student retention rate has been very low. While there are times when we do retain students, we believe that early intervention is the key to ensuring that students can achieve success and perform on grade level.

## **Student Enrollment - Attachment**

- 2010-11 Lottery Guidelines

## **Transportation**

The School District of Philadelphia offers transportation services for all students in the school grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades. All buses are contracted through individual bus companies by the Philadelphia School District Department of Transportation.

WCS requires a bus contract for each student utilizing the service. The contract outlines consequences for not following expected behavior and must be signed by both the student and parent(s). Currently, no WCS special education students require transportation accommodations.

We've improved communication between the contracted bus company and WCS which has helped with correcting and rectifying problems that may arise during the school year. There remains room for improvement in communication and follow-through on writing up incident reports for behavior issues.

We would suggest bus driver training on communication with students and parents as well as handling incidents that occur on the bus. We would also like to see better equipment provided by the bus companies.

## **Food Service Program**

The 2011-12 school year was the second for WCS as an independent School Food Authority. We contracted with Linton's Managed Services as our Food Service Management Company. Meals were prepared daily using fresh ingredients and included options for different dietary needs. This year saw more meals prepared on-site than ever before.

Additional improvements occurred this year to better align our food program with our social and environmental mission. Students ate meals at round tables with a student table captain and staff member. This led to better opportunities for students to have conversations. This also provided the opportunity for staff to connect with students outside of the classroom. On the environmental front, we served all meals using real plates, cups, and utensils this year. All food wastes were composted.

WCS offers free and reduced price meals to eligible students. 74% of students qualify for this program. Students who do not qualify for free or reduced price meals are still given the opportunity to partake in the program by paying full price for the meal. Breakfast and lunch are provided.

WCS is excited to announce that we have been selected for a second year to participate in the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program allowing for fruit and vegetable snacks to be provided to our students everyday.

## **Student Conduct**

- a. We have adopted the Responsive Classroom model of classroom management and community building. This model serves as our social curriculum.

## Guiding Principles

The Responsive Classroom approach is informed by the work of many great educational theorists as well as the experiences of exemplary classroom teachers. There are seven basic principles underlying this approach:

- The social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum.
- How children learn is as important as what they learn: Process and content go hand in hand.
- The greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interaction.
- There is a set of social skills children need in order to be successful academically and socially: cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.
- Knowing the children we teach—individually, culturally, and developmentally—is as important as knowing the content we teach.
- Knowing the families of the children we teach and inviting their participation is essential to children's education.

How the adults at school work together is as important as individual competence:

- Lasting change begins with the adult community.

Teaching Practices The Responsive Classroom approach includes the following main teaching strategies and elements:

- Morning Meeting: A daily routine that builds community, creates a positive climate for learning, and reinforces academic and social skills.
- Rules and Logical Consequences: A clear and consistent approach to discipline that fosters responsibility and self-control.
- Guided Discovery: A format for introducing materials that encourages inquiry, heightens interest, and teaches care of the school environment.
- Academic Choice: An approach to giving children choices in their learning that helps them become invested, self-motivated learners.
- Classroom Organization: Strategies for arranging materials, furniture, and displays to encourage independence, promote caring, and maximize learning.
- Family Communication Strategies: Ideas for involving families as true partners in their children's education.

(description of the Responsive Classroom taken from [www.responsiveclassroom.org](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org))

Responsive Classroom is intended for elementary school teachers. Our middle school students use the Developmental Designs for Middle School program which shares many of the same principles and approaches of Responsive Classroom.

We have found that the Responsive Classroom and Developmental Designs have taught our children to be respectful of fellow community members and increased students' accountability for their behavior. In those instances or for those students that do not respond to this approach, we invoke our Student Code of Conduct to guide our decision making. Our Code of Conduct (attached) was based on the School District of Philadelphia's Code of Conduct.

With all serious offenses we follow due process requirements set out by Chapter 12 of this code. This year, we again consulted with our attorneys to insure that our policies and processes are in compliance.

b. Eighty-eight students were involved in 107 out of school and 69 in school suspensions. No students were expelled.

#### WCS- Interventions

Wissahickon Charter School strives to do what's best for all of our students; even those students who have struggled to adhere to our expectations. We utilize the Response Classroom approach, which focuses on building social skills of the students we serve. In cases where discipline or consequences come into play we try to have the consequence be logical. For example if a student throws food in the cafeteria, they will have to help clean up the cafeteria.

There are times when we have to go beyond the tools given to us by the Responsive Classroom. This occurs when students commit egregious acts that are in direct violation of our code of conduct.

Some things that we do:

- Loss of privileges
- Meetings with parents
- Conversations/Dialogues/ Discussions with Counselor, Dean of Students, and/or other school personnel
- Removal from class
- In school suspension
- Out of school suspension

When a student continues to break rules and not adhere to the Code of Conduct (which we adopted from the School District), we convene a DRC team meeting. The Discipline Review Committee meets to discuss the student's actions, and to figure out what the next steps should be. The student and his/her parent must attend the DRC team meeting. Letters are sent out at least once week in advance and phone calls are made to confirm attendance at the hearing.

Generally students are put on some type of probation that details specific goals that they must meet. The goals are not out of the ordinary realm of what we expect for all of our students. The DRC checks in with student bi-monthly or as needed to chart progress/regress within the probation. If the DRC continues to see lack of improvement, the committee can make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees that the student be expelled. The Board votes and if a majority agree with the Recommendation the student gets expelled.

Parents are informed of what is going on at all times. They are given all opportunities to partner with the school to deal with challenging student behavior.

### **Student Conduct - Attachments**

- 2011-2012 Code of Conduct
- Accountability Plan Flowchart

### **Signature Page**

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

School Year: 2012

The Wissahickon CS 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 Wissahickon CS 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:** Kristina P. Littell **Title:** Co-CEO  
**Phone:** 267-338-1020 **Fax:** 267-338-1030  
**E-mail:** littell@wissahickoncharter.org

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*Signature of the Chief Executive Officer and Date*

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

**Name:** David Valentine **Title:** Board Chair  
**Phone:** 267-338-1020 **Fax:** 267-338-1030  
**E-mail:** learn@wissahickoncharter.org

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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:** Michele Ferrante **Title:** Director of Learning Supports  
**Phone:** 267-338-1020 **Fax:** 267-338-1030  
**E-mail:** michele@wissahickoncharter.org

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*Signature of the Special Education Contact Person and Date*

### Signature Page - Attachment

- 2012 Ethics Act and Charter Operations Assurances