

PA Learners Online Regional Charter School

School Profile

PA Learners Online Regional Charter School (PALO) was founded by a coalition of ten school districts in Allegheny County and is operated out of the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU) office. The 2001-2002 school year will be this cyber charter school's first year of operation. With a student population that includes students in grades K-12 from across the state, the school's current student enrollment is 196. In order to reach students and parents who might be interested in attending PALO, one thirty second television commercial has aired on local cable channels and an "open house" was held at the AIU. The target population of this school is independent, motivated K-12 students who might also be:

- At risk of failure in a traditional setting
- Pregnant or teen mothers
- Working
- School phobic
- Homebound due to suspension or expulsion
- Home schooled by parents
- Victimized by peers
- Seeking to accelerate their course work
- Gifted and seeking to enrich coursework
- Seeking college credit in high school
- Dually enrolled to take courses not offered by local school district
- Students with special needs post high school through age 21

84% of the current PALO student population were from traditional public schools while 16% were formerly home schooled. 28 students have special needs while 15 are listed as being gifted. The teacher to student ratio at the elementary level is a 1:21 while at the high school level it is 1:28.

Customized Individual Learning Plans (ILP) are prepared for students based upon the student's entry level assessment and information received from the family interview. The school's goal is to provide a balanced program that includes the traditional and the non-traditional, high touch and high tech. BlackBoard.com technology will serve as the primary platform for instruction and the ILPs of students will be developed based upon course offerings and technology of the following curriculum providers:

- Compass Learning

- Class.com
- Apex Learning
- Calvert School
- Pass Key

113 students are currently enrolled in Class.com courses while 65 students are enrolled in Compass Learning. Only 18 students will be using the Calvert program. There is currently no waiting list at the school as the school staff enrolls students as they register.

PALO is operated by 15 full and part-time staff, some of which are AIU contracted employees, to serve PALO students and families. Part-time PALO employees include (estimated number of hours worked per week):

- One Principal (20 hours)
- One Coordinator of Student Services (20 hours)
- Four Elementary Teachers (20 hours)
- Four Secondary Teachers (20 hours)

PALO has also contracted a number of AIU employees including the:

- Business Manager (ten hours per week)
- Director of Special Education (as needed)
- Nurse (as needed)
- Clerical Staff (one FTE)

The school also has an attorney that is available to assist in legal matters. The AIU Assistant Executive Director also serves as the Chief Administrative Officer of PALO. The start-up of PALO, from 10/00 to 3/01, required approximately 40% of this individual's time. This percentage has since decreased. From 3/01 to 8/01 30% of the AIU's Assistant Executive Director's time was used to support PALO while from 8/01 to the present PALO has required 20% of her time. Every member of the PALO teaching staff is certified to teach in the state of Pennsylvania.

The FY02 budget estimates that there will be 235 full time equivalent students enrolled in the school. Revenue and expenditures are estimated at \$6,996 per student in year one. Revenue includes an estimate of \$6,500 for each regular student and \$12,000 for special education students, which is consistent with the average of school districts in Allegheny County. The school was conservative in budgeting estimated revenue for years two through five by not inflating revenue projections. The cost estimate per student decreases each year to a low of \$5,431 in year five. Based on the five year budget presented the school would have a fund balance of approximately \$2 million after five years that would be available to be returned to the school districts.

This section of the report assesses the PA Learners Online Cyber Charter School in the following areas:

- Accountability Methods and Systems
- Governance and Oversight
- Cost Analysis

Accountability Methods and Systems

Evaluation Goal

The goal of the Accountability Methods and Systems evaluation was to assess whether a clearly defined and robust accountability system is in place to support achievement of a quality education.

Summary

PALO entered its first year of operation in September of 2001. Many of the student accountability mechanisms will be a part of the curriculum management systems that are provided by third party curriculum providers. PALO's eight part-time teachers will be responsible for monitoring and documenting student progress and achievement. The school's administration has developed a comprehensive Teacher Evaluation Component that will include individualized growth plans that will be created by each teacher. PALO is supported by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU) and is planning to provide a curriculum that has a firm grounding in the basic principles of mainstream education. For most of the evaluation criteria below, PALO is in the planning stage.

Evaluation Criteria and Findings

The table below identifies the key criteria used to evaluate each cyber charter school and a description of how each school met these criteria.

<i>Student Achievement</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
<p>1. Ability to measure student engagement and progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students will use electronic portfolios, in the form of electronic folders, to demonstrate their progress. These portfolios will be electronically transferred to the teacher facilitators. ▪ PALO teachers will monitor longitudinal data provided by curriculum management software. ▪ The school also plans to evaluate students by way of annual standardized testing (e.g. Teranova) and the development of minimum competencies that must be accomplished before a student can move to the next grade. ▪ PALO's ability to measure student engagement and progress is also influenced by the third party curriculum provider used by the student. ▪ Compass Learning has an accompanying

<i>Student Achievement</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
	<p>management system that can provide printed reports on student engagement and progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Calvert measures student progress through assignments and tests submitted by the mail but has no way to measure engagement. ▪ Class.com/BlackBoard.com can report how long a logged on person spent in various areas of the curriculum but those reports must be requested by PALO.
<p>2. Documentation of positive trends in all subject areas for students such as beginning of year, monthly and end-of-year online assessments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No student performance results exist as school opens in fall 2001.
<p>3. Documentation of positive trends in student attendance, retention, dropout, and graduation rate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No student results exist as school opens in fall 2001.
<p>4. Ability to measure student authenticity of work (e.g., logs, records of study)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student authenticity will partially be determined by performance on standardized tests (e.g., PSSA, Teranova) proctored by PALO staff members. In addition, teachers will have the ability to bring the students together for traditional testing. Finally, portfolios and assessment embedded within the curriculum also should validate student work. ▪ The school staff strongly recommend that an adult be present to monitor the child's program.
<p>5. Compliance with students taking the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) in accordance with Chapter 4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students will take the PSSA in person throughout four points in Allegheny County. The exam will be proctored by a PALO teacher.
<p>6. Student attendance - compliance with compulsory attendance laws</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student attendance will be tracked by the management software component of the curriculum package. In addition, teachers will monitor student progress and will assign offline learning experiences that will be logged.

<i>Personnel Evaluation</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
<p>7. Teacher experience/certification</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The PALO Principal is a Pennsylvania certified teacher with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration, a Master of Science Degree in Education and a Doctorate in the field of Education. ▪ PALO’s Coordinator of Student Services is a Pennsylvania certified teacher with over 20 years of experience in regular and special and gifted education; also a former principal in suburban Pittsburgh. ▪ All PALO teachers are Pennsylvania certified.
<p>8. Method of performance evaluation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Even though the PALO Teacher Evaluation Component is not yet board Approved, PALO has developed a comprehensive method for evaluating its teachers. This evaluation will be based upon a growth plan that is collaboratively created by the teacher and the school principal. The five key teacher growth plan competencies are: scholarship, instructional design, customer centricity, student assessment and continuous improvement. ▪ When creating his/her growth plan, the teacher must include specific action steps, benchmarks and timelines. Teachers are also required to explain how the identified competency will benefit student learning and describe what evidence will be used to document growth (e.g., exemplary graduate study, submission of article to education journal, customer surveys, log of weekly communication with students/parents). ▪ Electronic portfolios will be created by teachers to document their professional growth throughout the year. This portfolio will be a “purposeful collection of materials” that will provide evidence of a teacher’s knowledge and skills in particular areas. These portfolios will be used by the teacher and principal to evaluate professional growth.

<i>Personnel Evaluation</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed Teacher Evaluation Component has a clearly defined rubric and ratings (e.g., 3=greatly exceeds growth plan) for each of the five competencies. Points from each of the five competencies will be added together to compute the teacher's overall evaluation score. ▪ PALO teachers will also be required to attend multiple levels of curriculum and software training. In addition, weekly meetings with the principal allow for debriefing and explanation of any new procedures.
9. Frequency of performance evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers will be evaluated on an annual basis.
10. Documentation of positive trends in personnel attendance and retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No documentation of positive trends exists as school opens in fall 2001.
11. Personnel attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personnel attendance will be monitored using a weekly spreadsheet.
12. Professional development program and alignment to instructional approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each PALO teacher will have an individualized professional development program that will be guided by he/she growth plan.

<i>Curriculum</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
13. Instructional approach/teaching methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The instructional approach/teaching style of PALO ultimately varies by third party curriculum provider. ▪ Modules of synchronous curriculum are built into some curricula (e.g., literature circles in Compass Learning) that will be provided to PALO students. ▪ Compass Learning is generally a sequential, computer driven program for K through 8 students. It is used in many schools as a supplemental program for slow or very bright students, allowing them to move forward and backward through a straight-line curriculum. Few schools use Compass Learning as their entire elementary

<i>Curriculum</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
	<p>program. There are auditory components where what is on the screen is read to the student in the primary grades. Visuals are generally interesting. Compass is partnering with PALO to integrate discussion strands and additional interactive components into the basic curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Calvert is a textbook based curriculum where the parent uses the Calvert recommended curriculum to teach the child. PALO teachers will oversee the learning experience and plan to offer suggestions to parents and the Calvert contact teacher in terms of enrichment. ▪ Class.com is a textbook based online program where the student reads instructions and course content, completes questions and submits responses online. There are no teachers provided with Class.com. The PALO teachers will utilize BlackBoard.com to facilitate discussion within the Class.com course and create additional learning experiences that build upon the existing curriculum. ▪ PALO's ultimate goal is to create the school's own curriculum after assessing student, parent and school needs.
14. Process for curriculum development (e.g., research based, purchased)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The PALO curriculum will be purchased from third party curriculum vendors and supplemented by the school's teachers.
15. Evidence of modifications made to instructional program based on tracking performance measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No current documentation of modifications made as school opens in fall 2001.
16. Approval process for curriculum, textbooks and materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PALO invited e-curriculum vendors to present their materials throughout a three week period. Based upon internal discussion with stakeholders, an AIU intern created an evaluation form for its vendor review. ▪ Representatives of the board members were participated in the review. The evaluation team included a team of home school

<i>Curriculum</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
	<p>parents, professional development providers, staff development consultants and a manager of a homeless shelter.</p>
<p>17. Course rigor and alignment of curriculum, instruction and testing to PA standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Compass Learning has provided documentation showing that the curriculum <i>Tomorrow's Promise</i>, in the areas of reading and mathematics grades 3, 5 and 8 are aligned to the PA standards. This program will keep pace with the child's learning level and will provide ample practice opportunities for students having difficulty. ▪ The Calvert School has a traditional program encompassing all elementary subject areas. There is no guarantee that the Calvert program is aligned with the PA standards. The textbooks used with the Calvert curriculum have similar rigor to those used in many public schools in Pennsylvania. ▪ Class.com has a variety of grade 9 through 12 courses that have been written by the Class.com authors. All materials and resources are presented online. Some of the courses are traditional and resemble textbook approaches to instruction. Other courses employ a high degree of rich and varied print and audio resources. The evaluation component that drives learning within the program lacks rigor for some courses while other courses require students to make complex connections and use higher levels of thinking, such as synthesis and analysis. The majority of questions are objective and few of these questions are designed to assess beyond the knowledge or comprehension level. The PALO staff will supplement Class.com in the area of assessment and instruction to ensure that students maximize their learning experience.
<p>18. Developmental appropriateness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The materials within Compass Learning

<i>Curriculum</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
	<p>can be adjusted to the learner's developmental stage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Calvert School has a set curriculum for a specific grade. One textbook set is used by everyone in the program. The parent and PALO teachers may make adjustments for the child. ▪ Class.com has selected typical textbooks that are used nationally to teach subjects in secondary schools. Readers who are having difficulty will have to seek help from the PALO facilitators.
<p>19. Ability to meet individual needs of students (e.g., support students having difficulty with curriculum, challenge gifted students)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PALO selected a multifaceted approach to enable the teacher to create an educational program that is unique to the learner. In addition, online curriculum can be supplemented with offline curriculum. ▪ Compass Learning is able to be adjusted to meet individual needs of students. The curriculum can be adjusted to offer more or less practice opportunities. The child can move back to a prior supporting concept for review if he/she is having difficulty with a new concept and may move ahead as quickly as a student wishes. ▪ Parents may supplement the Calvert program to better meet the learning needs of the child. The Calvert Advisory Teacher provides individual advice to the parent as to how this can best be done. ▪ Class.com provides for little individualization. PALO instructors will be responsible for individualizing instruction and assessment for students.
<p>20. Compliance with state and federal special education requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PALO has established an IEP committee made up of the PALO principal, coordinator of student services, virtual classroom teacher and an AIU special education consultant (this individual may vary based on IU staff availability). ▪ PALO has already exhibited its understanding of the need to meet state and

<i>Curriculum</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
	<p>federal special education requirements. For example, the parents of twins with a neurological disorder initiated the idea of supplementing their childrens' curriculum with the Orton-Gillingham method. PALO's Coordinator of Student Services followed through with AIU staff for record and review and is now in the process of updating the twins' IEPs.</p>
21. Provision of textbooks and supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students receive Dell desktop computers, printer, scanner and headset. ▪ Based upon their course of study, students also may receive additional materials such as textbooks, audio tapes and other pieces of multimedia. ▪ Families are required to provide their own Internet access and the school will reimburse the families at a rate of \$20 per month.

<i>Level of Interactivity</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
22. Ease of use of system interface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Compass Learning is easy for a student to use but when used in the home, the parent has to be fairly computer savvy to make sure little instructional time is lost. ▪ Calvert School provides only online tests if the student/parent elects to submit them online. Otherwise, they can be submitted by mail. ▪ Class.com is relatively easy to use. It is a matter of reading simple paragraphs of directions/explanations and then completing the assigned work. There are tools provided through BlackBoard.com (supplemental to Class.com) where the PALO facilitator may set up messaging boards, email, virtual classes and discussion chat rooms. Courses that include a lot of audio and visuals cause the system to become slow.
23. Methods of student/teacher interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PALO teachers will have their own voicemail, email addresses and phone

<i>Level of Interactivity</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
	<p>availability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Physical sites will be identified within the physical facilities of the ten founding member school districts so that learners will have the opportunity to meet face-to-face with their teacher and other students. ▪ Compass Learning and Class.com do not have teacher/student interaction components. PALO teachers plan to provide opportunities for interaction. ▪ Subjective questions posed by Class.com must be corrected by the PALO teacher facilitator. The PALO facilitator is the main source of student /teacher interaction. ▪ The Calvert Advisory Teacher interacts with the parent and the parent interacts with the child. The PALO teacher will also interact with the parent and Calvert.
<p>24. Frequency of student/teacher interaction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PALO teachers will be working from home, and will have scheduled “office hours” where they will be available in the evening. ▪ Students may also contact teachers on an as-needed basis via email or voicemail. ▪ Student/teacher interaction with Compass Learning beyond email messages may be sent through the BlackBoard.com system, as well as discussion strands that will be created within Compass. ▪ There is no student/teacher interaction with Compass Learning beyond email messages that may be sent through the BlackBoard.com system. ▪ Class.com does not provided any student/teacher interaction. The PALO teachers will utilize BlackBoard.com to create the learning experience – integrating Class.com into the learning process. ▪ The parent using Calvert is expected to teach the child on a daily basis.
<p>25. Methods of family/teacher interaction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents and students will be assigned to a team of teachers rather than having one teacher assigned to a student. These teams

<i>Level of Interactivity</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
	<p>can be used as a resource for parents when trying to supplement their child's instruction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Virtual PTA organized by PALO and a Parent Advisory Board will be instituted by the end of the 2001 calendar year. ▪ The method of communication for weekly contact between the family and the teacher will vary depending upon the communication medium of the family's choice.
26. Frequency of family/teacher interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher-family contact will be made at least once a week. At present, teachers are interfacing with parents and students more than once a week.
27. Methods for teacher collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers will be grouped in teams according to their area of expertise (e.g., elementary, high school) to increase collaboration.
28. Interactivity of instructional content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Compass learning engages the child in some interactive learning where auditory non-synchronous prompts are provided and the child responds by using the computer. ▪ Many of the Class.com courses do not have high levels of interactivity although occasional courses require student interaction with the content. The interactivity will be derived from the PALO teacher who will utilize BlackBoard.com. Teachers will add assessment and assignments. ▪ The parent instructs the child to interact with course content in particular activities that are threaded throughout the Calvert curriculum.

<i>Student Development</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
29. Student services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PALO is currently exploring student services including telementoring, career planning and university experiences.
30. Opportunities for student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student will have the opportunity to develop

<i>Student Development</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
socialization	<p>social skills via apprenticeships and mentoring with business partners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may participate in field trips based on local district policy. It is the parent's responsibility to make contact with their district of residence to determine the times and dates of proposed field trips.
31. Physical education requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents will select appropriate physical education programming and will track their child's participation in the program. A signature of the person who is overseeing the program will be required. Families can be reimbursed for up to \$225 for the physical education program (e.g., YMCA membership).
32. Extra-curricular activity offering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to an interview, the ten founding member school districts will "do whatever it takes" to provide extracurricular activities for students. Parents must provide transportation for their child.
33. Cyber charter school teacher – student ratio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PALO's teacher to student ratio varies depending upon the child's grade level. The student to teacher ratio at the elementary level is a 1:21 while at the high school level it is 1:28. Each teacher works 20 hours per week. The Principal and Coordinator of Student Services, both part-time employees working 20 hours per week, are also available to indirectly support student instruction.

<i>Technology Supporting Instruction</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
34. Adequacy of systems to support timely instructional delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compass Learning gives immediate feedback to the student. Calvert is a real time, paper and pencil program. It is up to the parent to maintain the pace recommended by Calvert. Class.com courses are designed to be completed within a traditional school year. Additional time can be arranged through the

<i>Technology Supporting Instruction</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
	PALO facilitator. The download time is reasonable as is the turnaround time when responses are entered and feedback is given.
35. System maintenance (e.g., servers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The system maintenance will vary according to the curriculum vendor. ▪ The AIU will share responsibility for PALO's system general system maintenance.
36. Technical support for students, parents and teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The students' first line of technical support is to email their PALO teacher. ▪ PALO then has an AIU technical support contact person. The AIU has a staff of six to eight technical support personnel available to support PALO issues. ▪ The teacher will be provided with technical support for the curriculum via the curriculum vendor (e.g., BlackBoard.com).

<i>Technology Supporting Administration</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
37. Student information system to document information such as: name of family member supervising program, address and telephone number of home education site and evidence child has been immunized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PALO currently uses internal spreadsheets that have been created to track appropriate student information.
38. Financial/budget system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The current AIU financial/budget system is being used.
39. Human resources/payroll system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The currently AIU human resources/payroll system is being used.

<i>Relationship with Home School District</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
40. Procedure for notifying home school district of newly enrolled students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents/guardians have the legal obligation to notify their child's home school district of residence when they intend to enroll in PALO. ▪ Parents/guardians responsible for completing appropriate forms to withdraw students from their local home school

<i>Relationship with Home School District</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
41. Partnerships with local school districts	<p>district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ While no official partnerships have been established, PALO administrators are currently meeting with local school districts to explain the program in more detail while establishing the program as an option for districts. These meetings will continue over the next several months.

Governance and Oversight

Evaluation Goal

The goal of the Governance and Oversight evaluation was to verify the existence of a viable cyber school governance structure.

Summary

PA Learners Online Regional Charter School (PALO) has a governance structure that is based upon a Management Agreement between the PALO Board of Trustees and Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU). This agreement, established under the Public School Code of 1949, contracts all management services to the AIU. PALO's Board is composed of ten superintendents from the AIU and the Assistant Executive Director of the AIU.

Evaluation Criteria and Findings

The table below identifies the key criteria used to evaluate each cyber charter school and a description of how each school met these criteria.

<i>Governance and Oversight</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
<p>1. Documentation and description of school governance organizational structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PALO's Board of Trustees is made up of ten superintendents and is currently responsible for developing school policy, hiring and firing personnel. Members will serve two year terms and may be re-elected or re-appointed without limit. ▪ The elected officers of the Board of Trustees are a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Assistant, Treasurer and Assistant. ▪ The Chair is responsible for executing the Charter, as recommended by the PALO Administration. The designated Chair is also the PALO CAO and Assistant Executive Director of the AIU. ▪ PALO's principal reports to the PALO Board. The principal is also in charge of overseeing the Coordinator of Student Services, the PALO Teachers and all Support Staff. ▪ The Board of Trustees has established a Management Agreement with the AIU to provide a number of services. The relationship between the AIU and PALO is monitored by the Assistant Executive Director of the AIU who is also the CAO of PALO. Administrative employees of PALO (i.e., the principal, coordinator of student

<i>Governance and Oversight</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
	<p>services and support staff) are employees of the AIU who report to the PALO Board while teachers are actual employees of PALO.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As documented by the Management Agreement, all services provided by the AIU are subject to requirements of the Public School Code of 1949, the Charter and board approval. These services include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Educational Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Curriculum – Instruction – Instructional Tools – Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular Programs – Additional Educational Services – Administrative Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Personnel Management – Facility Operation and Maintenance – Business Administration – Transportation and Food Services – Public Relations – Budgeting and Financial Reporting – Maintenance of Financial and Student Records – Admissions – Additional Services (i.e., pre-kindergarten, summer school, academic camps, before and after school programs, vocational training and latch-key programs) – Personnel and Training- The AIU will have authority to determine appropriate staffing levels and have the ability to select, evaluate, assign, discipline, supervise, manage and transfer personnel. The AIU will also provide professional development and support technology to PALO’s instructional personnel on a regular and continuous basis.
<p>2. Experiential make-up of advisory board</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All board members are superintendents within the AIU. One board member is the Assistant Executive Director of the AIU. ▪ There is currently no representation of students’ parents on the Board of Trustees.
<p>3. Assessment of frequency and extent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Starting June 12, 2001, the PALO Board of

<i>Governance and Oversight</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
<p>of input governance units have over instructional policy</p>	<p>Trustees has scheduled meetings for the second Tuesday of each month. An annual meeting will be held once a year and special meetings may also be called at the request of the Chairperson or any five Trustees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The board met twice before the beginning of the school year, as there was not a July meeting. There was a quorum present at both meetings. ▪ Led by PALO’s principal, a Curriculum Advisory Committee was created and members of the board and/or their designee (i.e., assistant superintendent, curriculum coordinator) were invited to participate in the review. The review of the curricula occurred over a five day period. board members, or their designees, attended the evaluation sessions. A form was developed to assist this group in systematically assessing the curriculum options provided by third party vendors. ▪ According to the PALO bylaws, the board has powers to decide all matters regarding the operation and functioning of PALO, including but not limited to the authority to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sign written charters with the boards of Education of School Districts in Allegheny County – Establish and maintain the policies of governing the operation of the School. – Adopt textbooks – Adopt courses of study – Appoint or dismiss school administrators or staff members – Adopt the annual budget and conduct an independent audit
<p>4. Clarity of legal and procedural requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The board has documented bylaws.

Cost Analysis

Evaluation Goal

The goal of this evaluation was to analyze the cyber charter school costs. We have documented the results of our procedures in the table below.

Summary

PALO has developed FY02 budget estimates of 235 full time equivalent student enrolled in the school. Enrollment will increase over five years to 430 FTE students. Revenue and expenditures are estimated at \$6,996 per student in year one. Revenue includes an estimate of \$6,500 for each regular student and \$12,000 for special education students, which is consistent with the average of school districts in Allegheny County. The school was conservative in budgeting estimated revenue for years two through five by not inflating revenue projections. The cost estimate per student decreases each year to a low of \$5,431 in year five. Based on the five year budget presented the school would have a fund balance of approximately \$2 million after five years that would be available to be returned to the school districts.

Evaluation Criteria and Findings

The table below identifies the key criteria used to evaluate each cyber charter school and a description of how each school met these criteria.

<i>Cost Reasonableness</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
1. Consistency of financial plan with operating plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The financial plan appears to have been developed consistently with the operating plan.
2. Average annual operating cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The average annual operating cost is estimated at \$6,996 for year one, which steadily decreases to \$5,431 by year five. This is within the available amounts from school districts based upon amounts provided by the Commonwealth.
3. Financial, in-kind, and management relationships with partnering institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The school is being operated out of the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU) office. ▪ PALO has also contracted a number of AIU employees including the: Business Manager (ten hours per week), Director of Special Education (as needed), Nurse (as needed) and Clerical Staff (one FTE). ▪ The AIU Assistant Executive Director also serves as the Chief Administrative Officer of PALO. The start-up of PALO, from 10/00 to 3/01, required approximately 40% of this individual's

<i>Cost Reasonableness</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
	<p>time. This percentage has since decreased. From 3/01 to 8/01 30% of the AIU's Assistant Executive Director's time was used to support PALO while from 8/01 to the present PALO has required 20% of her time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Costs are included in budget appropriately.
<p>4. Start-up cost appropriateness and comparison</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All start-up costs were paid by the AIU. The AIU contributed start-up costs of approximately \$900,000, which will be paid back over a three year period.
<p>5. Financial soundness of backers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The school receives assistance from the AIU, which appears to be on solid financial ground.
<p>6. Reasonableness and completeness of annual budget/operating expenditures (e.g., Per capita revenues, Special education aid, Other revenue sources, Salary projections, Technology expenses, Curriculum provider expenses, Inflation and raises)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Per capita revenue is reasonable based on FY00 school district revenue amounts from Allegheny County school districts. ▪ Special education revenue is reasonable based on FY00 school district revenue amounts from Allegheny County school districts. ▪ The salary projections are based on averages from around the Allegheny County. Amounts appear to be reasonable. ▪ Fringe benefit rate of 28% is also within normal averages for governments. ▪ Educational software and licensing fees are supported by invoices with vendors and appear to be reasonable on a unit cost basis. ▪ The five year revenue budget is conservative in that it does not inflate per student revenues annually. ▪ Expenditure amounts are inflated over time.
<p>7. Adequate plan exists for program and fiscal audits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are no audit fees in the budget due to an oversight. The school will have to find Between \$5,000 and \$15,000 for these services in their budget.
<p>8. Adequate insurance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School has budgeted for insurance and coverage appears to be standard.