

CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

OCTOBER 30, 2001

Western Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School

School Profile

Local steel mills were once the foundation of Midland, Pennsylvania's economy. The collapse of the worldwide steel industry in the early 1980's left Midland with a dwindling population, an 80% unemployment rate and a significantly low enrollment in the local public schools. As a result, Midland's senior high school (grades 9-12) was forced to close its doors in 1986. Due to a lack of support from surrounding Pennsylvania school districts, high school students in Midland were forced to attended school in Ohio under a tuition agreement. Founded by Midland School District with the support of local parents and community members, the Western Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School (WPCCS) was the ultimate result of a year-long study of educational options for Midland's high school students. Through the planning process it became clear that self-directed, Internet-based education could serve as an alternative for a wide range of students, including Midland high school students. WPCCS opened in August 2000 with the mission of creating a school that was dedicated to the success of students who have not had their needs met in a traditional educational setting.

The WPCCS has historically avoided marketing efforts to attract students. As a result, word of mouth has been the primary means of attracting students. Misinformation from many opponents to cyber schools, however, has motivated the WPCCS to prepare CD ROMs and other materials that respond to media and government questions and clarify misconceptions about cyber charter schools. Thus, the WPCCS marketing strategy is to provide fair, reliable, accurate information to the media, government, general public, students and their families, and other stakeholders. The WPCCS does not have any advertising strategy, campaign or materials.

During its first year of operation in SY 2000-01, 525 students in grades K-12 were enrolled in this cyber school. 996 students are fully processed and enrolled for the 2001-2002 school year, 80 additional student records have been accepted but their files have not yet been processed and there are an estimated 200 additional students awaiting interviews. The WPCCS student population includes students from 196 Pennsylvania school districts. Six of the 96 students who were once enrolled in Midland High School and tuitioned to high school in East Liverpool, Ohio have chosen to enroll in this cyber school. 117 WPCCS students receive special education services and 27 students are listed as being gifted. 41% of the current student population is from a traditional public school while 48% are former home school students. 56% of the students are from the twelve South West Region counties (Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington, and Westmoreland). WPCCS includes students who:

- Believe they have not been challenged at their home school
- Are professional entertainers/athletes
- Have parents who travel
- Are teen mothers



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

OCTOBER 30, 2001

• Have been harassed because of their appearance or religious beliefs.

Even though WPCCS has enrolled students from across the state, all families who have chosen to enroll their son/daughter in this cyber school must be willing to attend a face-to-face intake interview with school staff. This interview is the official start of the enrollment process. A checklist has been created to assist staff members in ensuring that the appropriate information has been gathered from the families (e.g., immunization record, proof of residency, technology form, IEP) and that the information has been given to the appropriate staff members. Prior to beginning school, some students take an initial academic assessment. These assessments are provided by the third party curriculum providers (listed below) and vary depending upon the curriculum selected by the student and parent. In collaboration with the WPCCS staff and their parents, students develop Personal Education Plans (PEPs) by selecting courses from a number of accredited third party curriculum providers. While the four major course offerings are provided by the Calvert School, the University of Missouri, Keystone National High School and the Virtual Classroom, other course providers include, but are not limited to:

Early Childhood (K-2)

- Accelerated Reader Software
- Computer Curriculum Corporation
- Pass Key Software
- Calvert School

Elementary (3-5)

- Accelerated Reader Software
- Computer Curriculum Corporation
- University of Missouri Center for Distance Learning
- Pass Key Software
- Calvert School
- Virtual Classroom

Middle School (6-8)

- Accelerated Reader Software
- Computer Curriculum Corporation
- University of Missouri Center for Distance Learning
- Pass Key Software
- Calvert School
- Virtual Classroom



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

OCTOBER 30, 2001

High School (9-12)

- Accelerated Reader Software
- Computer Curriculum Corporation
- APEX Advanced Learning Online
- University of Missouri Center for Distance Learning
- Pass Key Software
- Keystone National High School
- Virtual Classroom
- High school students may also enroll in online course offered by local colleges (e.g., Beaver Community College)

There are currently 32 Teacher Facilitators (part-time-six hours per week) to support students and their families and seven Instructional Supervisors (full time) to guide the Teacher Facilitators; all facilitators and supervisors are Pennsylvania certified teachers. In addition to this faculty, the current WPCCS staff consists of the following full time employees:

- Executive Director
- Chief Financial Officer/Business Manager
- Technology Coordinator
- Assistant Director/Guidance Counselor
- Curriculum Coordinator
- Admissions Coordinator
- Director of Special Education
- School Nurse
- Six full time clerical staff

Additional part-time staff includes a school psychologist and the school's Chief Administrative Officer. The CAO, who is also the Midland School District Superintendent, dedicates approximately 20 hours per week to the cyber school. The WPCCS also employs eight CENTRE Educational Consultants that are assigned to various management and operations support roles. In addition to these CENTRE employees, there are several subcontractors that are managed by CENTRE. For example, one consultant, a government relations specialist, is contracted by CENTRE to help respond to the myriad of information requests from state officials. Another CENTRE subcontractor is responsible for handling personnel issues. Most contractors are managed by CENTRE.

Many of the subcontractors are part of the WPCCS curriculum development effort. The WPCCS intends to serve as a catalyst for developing a new educational platform that can be used by all



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

OCTOBER 30, 2001

public school districts to provide online curriculum. The school has also been considering offering the K12 curriculum to its students once it becomes accredited. Several discussions are underway with various stakeholders, including the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) and other private firms.

The average annual operating cost for FY01 was approximately \$3,900 per student based on the total number of students attending. The actual cost is higher given that many students were not enrolled for a full year. In addition, Midland School District absorbed many of the overhead costs in year one. The budget for FY02 projects a cost range of \$4,632 to \$5,935⁸⁵ depending on the total number of FTE students that actually attend. The total cost for the curriculum packages for students during the 2001-2002 school year is \$1,340 and curriculum costs vary by student. For example, the University of Missouri has a base cost of \$99 per course, per semester (plus books and supplies) while Calvert curriculum caries a cost between \$545 (kindergarten) to \$1,095 (grade 8) per year. These costs do not include technology, overhead costs or management/staff salaries and benefits.

This section of the report assesses the Western Pennsylvania Charter School according to the following areas:

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

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 $^{^{\}rm 85}$ A range of 996 to 1276 students was used for this analysis.



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

OCTOBER 30, 2001

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

WPCCS is the second oldest cyber school in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and is entering its second year of operation. Students and families who are interested in attending this school must attend an in-person interview with the school's staff prior to enrollment. This school has 32 part-time Teacher Facilitators and seven full time Instructional Supervisors that help ensure students are making adequate progress through the curriculum. These instructional personnel use the curriculum management systems of the third party curriculum providers (e.g., Keystone) to assist them in monitoring student performance and also contact the student and/or a parent via phone on a weekly basis. WPCCS has developed clearly documented processes to guide its employees. Documented flow charts have been created for the following processes: initial application, intake, special education intake and the process by which facilitators will monitor the academic progress of students. The instructional and administrative staff of WPCCS plan to continually improve their educational program. For most of the evaluation criteria below, WPCCS 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.



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Student Achievement	Current Status
Ability to measure student engagement and progress	 Upon enrolling in the WPCCS, most students are evaluated by staff through review of transcripts, previous work, and a personal interview. Students participating in the Calvert curriculum, generally students grades 4 through 8, must submit a placement test that is evaluated by Calvert. Juniors and seniors who are eligible to attend college classes at the Community College of Beaver County, a local community college, must also pass Math and English placement tests. Teacher facilitators monitor student progress against the student's Individual Learning Plan/Electronic Education Plan. Students evaluated on a weekly basis by WPCCS teacher facilitators according to: completion of minimum number of hours for individual program, successful completion of written and computer assignments, instructor observations, daily achievement on the computer managed instruction system (if applicable), progress toward acquisition of high school diploma/equivalent, satisfactory completion of college level courses. Student progress is also measured by performance on achievement and standardized tests. WPCCS teacher facilitators use paper forms (e.g., Calvert Progress Report, Missouri Progress Chart) that have been provided by curriculum providers to document their students' progression through his/her coursework. These forms require facilitators to list the name of the lesson and the date the student completed the lesson. Some courses (e.g., Keystone) enable facilitators to track such progress online. The WPCCS' ability to measure student progress is also influenced by third party curriculum provider's assessment capabilities. Students in grades 3-8 may enroll in the Calvert program which requires parents to work with their enrolled child and to submit on a regular basis the worksheets and tests that are part of the program. The Calvert School maintains the records regarding



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Student Achievement	Current Status
	the completion of work submitted and generally tracks progress by giving regular feedback to the parent as the work is submitted. Students in grades 3 through 12 may enroll in the Missouri program that has a series of objective questions that must be answered as part of their elementary program. These questions must be submitted according to a timeline that avoids students finishing all at once at either the beginning or the end of the time allotment. There is no procedure for Missouri to determine who is completing the work or how long it took them to complete the work since all 3 through 8 coursework is subjective and may be submitted online (with the exception of certain writing courses in grades 7 and 8). Students enrolled in the Virtual Classroom receive direct small group instruction in a synchronous manner for a minimum of ten hours per week and they are provided with additional hours of supplementary instruction with an instructor. The Virtual Classroom instructor keeps records of work completed and educational achievement progress. WPCCS students in grades 9 through 12 may participate in the Missouri or the Keystone National High School programs. Neither of these programs have the capability to trace the work of the "real" student although they can report that the particular log on code and password have been used for how long and at what parts of the site. These reports can be retrieved by request of the cyber school. Both Missouri and Keystone provide scores students receive on tests taken. Missouri requires a proctored midterm and final. WPCCS has an agreement with Missouri that the proctored exams are to be sent to the parent who will proctor the first administration of these exams. If the student fails, the second administration must be at a center established by WPCCS. Student performance reviews are documented semiannually. The Executive Director, the Assistant Director/Guidance Counselor, the Director of



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

	Student Achievement	Current St	atus
2.	Documentation of positive trends in all subject areas for students such as beginning of year, monthly and end-of-year online assessments	Special Education, the Currand the Instructional Supervithe review of student record Facilitator reports. These recurriculum selection for the school year. In WPCCS' first year, only failed to complete their requal to the second year, even the seniors did not complete the 5% of the total 2000-2001 students) failed to complete the 525 students) failed to complete the second year, even the seniors did not complete the s	visors all participate in ls, tests and Teacher views influence the following semester or four of 525 students aired coursework. Ough four of the 20 eir coursework, less than student population (25 of
3.	Documentation of positive trends in student attendance, retention, dropout, and graduation rate	coursework. WPCCS staff reviews all structures submitted all annual reports survey, and graduation survepartment of Education for year. WPCCS has only been in or and, therefore, cannot yet property and the staff of the staff	(attendance, dropout ey) to the Pennsylvania or the 2000-2001 school peration for one year
4.	Ability to measure student authenticity of work (e.g., logs, records of study)	Daily lessons and assignme student or parent, the curric WPCCS facilitator. Thereforecord of almost every step process. Weekly phone conferences between teacher facilitators the teachers' ability to monstudents' work or behavior. facilitator in a three-ring bin At the elementary levels, parenrolled in the Calvert programments and test on a remologs or records of study to Children enrolled in the Missubmit answers to questions online. That is the only record on the Missouri and Keystone are that the log on was connected went within the system. No student off line are kept or extended.	and email contact and students increases itor and document the Notes are kept by the nder. The main the students increases itor and document the Notes are kept by the nder. The main the students increases itor and document the Notes are kept by the nder. The main the students increases itor and document the Notes are kept by the nder. The main the students increases itor and document the nder. The main the main the students increase ito be maintained. The main the main the students increase ito be maintained. The main the



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

	Student Achievement		Current Status
		•	Virtual Classroom instructors maintain records of when they instructed students, who was in attendance, conversations held and progress being made. No records are kept regarding how much time was spent on completing assignments outside of the direct instruction period. In cases where the facilitator has decided to maintain records of work completed and time spent on lesson, a record would be available. This is not a requirement for the WPCCS facilitators.
5.	Compliance with students taking the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) in accordance with Chapter 4	•	WPCCS administers the PSSA exam in accordance with Pennsylvania Department of Education guidelines. Last year, WPCCS administered the PSSA at several locations, including Midland Elementary/Middle School, the Mon Valley, Erie, CCBC, several Community College of Allegheny County campuses, Butler County Community College and in Mount Pocono. Discussions are underway with Sylvan Learning Centers to utilize their testing sites throughout the state for the 2001-02 PSSA testing.
6.	Student attendance - compliance with compulsory attendance laws		Adopted for the 2001-2002 school year, a parent/guardian is required to complete an Excel "Attendance Form" on a weekly basis. The completed form is emailed to the student's facilitator. The parent/guardian of every student must sign an agreement with WPCCS stating that he/she understands that a parent or guardian must be available to the student while working on the WPCCS curriculum. By signing this agreement the parent/guardian also
			agrees that someone will be available at least one a week to receive a phone call from his/her child's teacher facilitator. Parents/guardians who choose not to communicate with WPCCS may be subject to Pennsylvania truancy fine (\$300). Teacher facilitators can also monitor the amount of time a student is "logged on" to some curriculum management systems (e.g., Keystone) and monitor student progress through coursework. If a student fails to complete the coursework over a



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Student Achievement	Current Status
	period of time, WPCCS will contact the home school district and report the student as "truant."

	Personnel Evaluation	Current Status
7.	Teacher experience/certification	 All Teacher Facilitators and Instructional Supervisors are Pennsylvania certified teachers.
8.	Method of performance evaluation	 Staff will be evaluated on a combination of measures including customer satisfaction and self evaluation. Customer (parents and student) satisfaction-Families were surveyed last year at a Saturday Seminar and a revised form is being developed for this school year. Self evaluation-During the school's first year of operation staff members provided a self-evaluation during their annual reviews. A new self-evaluation form is being developed for the 2001-2002 school year. All staff evaluations are conducted by the CAO and Executive Director. These individuals are assisted by the immediate supervisor of each person being evaluated. Instructional supervisors evaluate facilitators on an annual basis (academic growth is included in metrics). Administrators will be evaluated semiannually on a merit based system based upon their personal achievement of goals and objectives established with Charter School Board of Directors.
9.	Frequency of performance evaluation	 WPCCS generally relies upon the PA DEBE333 form for evaluations that have criteria that govern the frequency of performance evaluations. For example, new teachers must be evaluated twice annually, while experienced teachers need only be evaluated once annually. Annual-Customer satisfaction and informal feedback from parents and students Annual-Self evaluation Annual-Supervisors evaluate facilitators on an annual basis (academic growth included in metrics)



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Personnel Evaluation	Current Status
10. Personnel attendance method	 Teacher facilitators submit time sheets on a bi- weekly basis. Time sheets are signed by Instructional Supervisors.
11. Documentation of positive trends in personnel attendance and retention.	 WPCCS has been in operation for one year and, therefore, has not focused on documenting trends. Only one of the seven full time employees from last year has left the school, however, to relocate in Massachusetts for personal reasons.
12. Professional development program and alignment to instructional approach	 All teacher facilitators and supervisors are currently classroom teachers in public schools (except one who teaches at a catholic school) and are required to meet PA certification requirements. This may include PDE seminars, conferences and provider trainings. Instructional Supervisors and other staff members must also comply with Act 48 and maintain appropriate credits. WPCCS developed a facilitator's handbook for the 2000-2001 school year that is generally aligned to its instructional approach. The handbook includes: The mission of WPCCS A description of the facilitators role:

Curriculum	Current Status
13. Instructional approach/teaching methods	 The instructional approach varies according to the curriculum provider that is included as a part of the student's Individual Learning Plan (e.g., Virtual Classroom, Calvert, Missouri, Keystone). The primary instructional approach used by teacher facilitators is to deliver a computer managed distance-learning program via the students personal computer.



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Curriculum	Current Status
	 Learning may also be supplemented with self-paced software, predetermined websites and college level distance learning courses at a local community college. Facilitators are available online or via telephone conferencing, as needed, to supplement the technology with personalized coaching. A synchronous transfer model, using the Virtual Classroom technology, is currently used to educate 75 students (as of September 24, 2001) in all of their courses of study. This approach enables teachers and students to interact on a real-time personal basis.
14. Process for curriculum development (e.g., research based, purchased)	All of the major curriculums are purchased from
15. Evidence of modifications made to instructional program based on tracking performance measures	
16. Approval process for curriculum, textbooks and materials	 The Curriculum Coordinator chairs a Curriculum Advisory Committee, which includes the Chief Administrative Officer, the Executive Director, the Director of Special Education, and the Asst.



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Curriculum	Current Status
	Director/Guidance Counselor. This committee makes recommendations to the Board of Directors for formal approval. The committee continually seeks to provide accredited and established curricula. The school continually works to evaluate and re-evaluate its providers. For example, in the school's first year of operation it offered Class.com. Based on student and parent feedback, WPCCS no longer offers this program.
17. Course rigor and alignment of curriculum, instruction and testing to PA standards	There is no documentation that any of the programs (Calvert, Missouri, Keystone or Virtual Classroom) used by Western are aligned to the PA standards. All programs involve textbooks as the base curriculum. The rigor is dependent upon the selected textbooks. Virtual Classroom gave some documentation that their literature courses are based on a broad array of books from different genres.
18. Developmental appropriateness	 The Calvert program appears to be age appropriate for the elementary learner. A variety of modalities can be used by a parent to educate the child. None of these involve online instruction. The Missouri elementary program appears age appropriate as far as the textbooks that have been selected for the program. A variety of additional modalities can be used by a parent to educate the child. None of these involve online instruction. Virtual Classroom uses age appropriate textbooks in dealing with their grade 4 through 12 students. In a case where the text is too difficult for the student accommodations can be made by the direct Virtual Classroom instructor. Missouri and Keystone use age appropriate textbooks for their grade 9 through 12 courses. If the text is too difficult for the student, no accommodation is made.
19. Ability to meet individual needs of students (e.g., support students having difficulty with curriculum, challenge gifted students)	 Teacher facilitators monitor student progress on a weekly basis and are able to supplement the curriculum as necessary. The parent is expected to offer additional support for children having difficulty with the elementary



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Curriculum	Current Status
20. Compliance with state and federal special education requirements	programs presented by Calvert and Missouri. Calvert does offer additional parent support as needed. Virtual classroom offers additional direct instruction is students are having difficulty. In all cases, gifted student can expedite their instructional pace and take more courses. There is minimal support offered by the Keystone or Missouri to students having difficulty with the courses in these programs. Western does have supplementary remedial programs available for students having difficulty (PassKey, Computer Curriculum Corporation and Leopard Lessons Classroom Connect Quests) and also provides additional support through its teacher facilitators. Gifted students have the opportunity to take courses at community colleges. WPCCS has a full time staff member that has been assigned the role Director of Special Education. This full time staff member is responsible for ensuring that the WPCCS complies with all laws and regulations with respect to special education. The current Director of Special Education does not have a background in special education but has a significant amount of experience in education. WPCCS has a documented Special Education intake process that clearly describes the process for enrolling a new student with a known IEP and also the process for evaluating an existing student who is in need of testing. WPCCS uses a number of forms to ensure the Special Education Intake Process runs smoothly. These forms include: Permission to Evaluate Invitation to Participate in the IEP Meeting Comprehensive Evaluation Report Notice of Recommended Assignment Individual Education Program (IEP) Courses have been custom-designed by WPCCS staff to meet the individual needs of students. A special education course has been designed for a



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Curriculum	Current Status
	student with spina bifida, voice recognition equipment and software have been used to assist a blind student and special software has been used to teach mildly retarded students.
21. Provision of textbooks and supplies	 Even though the technology is provided to students free of charge, students and parents are required to sign a lease agreement. For SY2002, students receive the following technology: a Gateway computer (limited laptop computers issued), printer, ISP (or up to \$20 of home Internet bill paid) and books that correspond with their curriculum (e.g., Keystone textbooks). All full time instructional staff were given Gateway laptops. Teacher Facilitators in the Midland area work out of the Midland office and use desktop computers in the school office. All Teacher Facilitators from Midland School District (who are also Midland teachers) also have Gateway laptops from Midland at their disposal; their computers have the same software as their cyber students. Those that do not have full access to the computers and telephones at the Cyber School offices, where they spend at least three hours each week, are provided with laptop computers.

Level of Interactivity	Current Status
22. Ease of use of system interface	 There is little elementary system interface for Calvert or Missouri except when taking some exams if the student elects to do so. Keystone's system is more complex and offers additional options for help or support (chat room upon appointment, library, message centers). Some items may cause students who are not computer savvy to have more difficulty at first. Once those problems are addressed by the facilitator, the Keystone site is generally easy to use. The Missouri system offers easy access to the instruction needed to complete your course work. Virtual classroom offers an interesting array of synchronous learning opportunities. There is a training CD-ROM for students to practice with the



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Level of Interactivity	Current Status
	technology so that it eventually becomes transparent in the learning process. The direct instructor is available to overcome difficulties.
23. Methods of student/teacher interaction	 Students are able to contact WPCCS Teacher Facilitators and support staff/teachers from curriculum providers (e.g., Keystone National High School) via phone and email if they are in need of assistance. WPCCS teacher facilitators contact students and their parent/guardian by phone on a regularly scheduled night. These weekly evaluations can help strengthen the student's self-assessment skills. All calls to students are logged by Facilitators in an off-line "Phone Contact Log." The date/time, phone number of student, comments and result of the conversation are documented. Each student has a contact log that is dedicated to them so as to keep clear documentation of a Facilitator's contact with his/her 20-30 students. An "Email Contact Log" is used to document email contact in the same manner. Facilitators keep all logs for their students in one binder. If a student is experiencing academic difficulty, the teacher completes a form that documents the work completed, curriculum, software and problems reported. The facilitator's Instructional Supervisor reviews and signs these sheets on a weekly basis. Parent teacher interaction also varies by the third party curriculum provider used by the student. The parent interacts with the Calvert Advisory Teacher and then interacts with the Calvert Advisory Teacher and then interacts with the Child. Virtual Classroom teachers interact with students in groups of two to six for a minimum of ten hours of direct instruction and ten supplementary hours. This is done through a software system called Centra. Teachers and students talk in small group in real time. They can all hear each other and share written work by way of whiteboards or scanning
24. Frequency of student/teacher	written material into the computer.Regularly scheduled weekly phone contact and



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Level of Interactivity	Current Status
interaction	 supplementary contact as necessary. Teachers confer weekly with students and parents via phone and email to discuss student progress. The frequency of student/teacher interaction also varies by third party curriculum provider. The parent is expected to maintain a daily instructional schedule for the Calvert and the Missouri elementary programs. The Virtual Classroom teachers meet virtually with the students a minimum of ten hours per week. There are no minimum student/teacher interaction times for the Keystone and the Missouri programs. Any interaction within the Keystone program occurs via email. There is no planned interaction as part of the Missouri program outside of writing courses.
25. Methods of family/teacher interaction	 Upon enrolling a student in WPCCS, parents are included in the initial face-to face interview where the student's ILP/PEP is developed in collaboration with the WPCCS staff. Every parent enrolling a student in WPCCS is also required to sign a terms sheet in which they agree to: Be available to the student while the student is working on WPCCS curriculum (one hour per day per subject). Maintain contact with WPCCS, including a weekly scheduled telephone call from WPCCS and other times. During weekly telephone calls, a WPCCS staff member will review the student's weekly progress with the parents. Prior to the call, a facilitator will review the student's tests, quizzes and other submissions for the week. Areas of strength and weakness will be reviewed and corrective action will be proscribed, if necessary. Ensure that students complete each semester of work in 18 weeks. Take proper care of WPCCS equipment and materials and ensure that it is returned within two weeks of withdrawal or graduation.



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Level of Interactivity	Current Status
26. Frequency of family/teacher interaction 27. Methods for teacher collaboration 28. Interactivity of instructional content	 The terms sheet that parents must sign also states that if the parent/guardian chooses not to communicate with WPCCS he/she may be subject to Pennsylvania truancy fine (\$300). Parents will also take part in weekly student teacher phone conferences and monthly progress reviews. The WPCCS staff is available to parents on an as needed basis, via phone or email, to provide parents with technical support, listen to concerns and also to answer questions. WPCCS teacher facilitators will have contact with families at a regularly scheduled time on a weekly basis. Teacher supervisors meet in person with facilitators on a weekly basis. All staff attends an in-person meeting once a month. Teacher facilitators provide three office hours a week at the WPCCS office and three hours a week from their homes. Exploring online meetings this school year. The Calvert and Missouri elementary curriculum can be made interactive by the parent. Calvert has
	 can be made interactive by the parent. Calvert has many subjective questions as part of the lesson progress. Missouri requires that students complete objective question only as the requirement to complete a grade. Virtual Classroom is expected to be an interactive curriculum. Discussions are held during the direct instruction period and students must demonstrate what they have completed in terms of projects and written work as they deal with instructional concepts. The secondary programs of Keystone and Missouri are mainly a process of reading the material and answering the questions.



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Student Development	Current Status
29. Student services	 WPCCS offers a school psychologist and guidance counseling. Health Services- The WPCCS provides height, weight, physicals, dental examinations, and related health services. As documented by the health services brochure, WPCCS has a full time school nurse that is available to perform all health screening required for students attending public school in Pennsylvania (e.g., height and weight, vision, hearing and scoliosis). The school nurse also keeps track of all student health records. The school dentist and doctor conduct physical screenings in Midland. WPCCS will pay for these exams if students are unable to make the trip to Midland. WPCCS also offers a range of special education services and tutoring.
30. Opportunities for student socialization	There are no specifically designed opportunities for student socialization. As documented by the school's CD-ROM, many students do participate in extra-curricular activities participated in prior to enrollment (e.g., youth groups, sports teams, dance class).
31. Physical education requirement	 WPCCS provide instructions and a form to parents explaining how their child can meet the state physical education requirement. Students are required to participate in physical activity that is both organized and supervised (e.g., YMCA activities, dance classes, self-defense classes, organized sports). Students in grade K-6 are required to complete 36 hours throughout the year while students in grades 7-12 must complete 72 hours. While WPCCS did not use a standard form to document physical education last year, they intend to do so this year. Parents are responsible for listing the supervised activity/provider, date, hours and supervisor signature and providing this information to the WPCCS teacher facilitator. WPCCS has contracted with the Beaver County YMCA to design a program which will allow local



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Student Development	Current Status
	students to fulfill their 36 (K-6) to 72 (7-12) requirement. Negotiations will continue with similar providers statewide.
32. Extra-curricular activity offering	 The Board of Directors has launched a pilot project with the Beaver County YMCA to provide physical education instruction to students. If the pilot is successful, agreements will be sought with other YMCA's throughout the state. The WPCCS pays a flat annual rate of \$80 per student. This gives access to all YMCA programs. The YMCA tracks the students' activities and forwards periodic reports to the WPCCS that documents the time and activities. The WPCCS does not typically play an active role if students decide to participate in extra-curricular activities in their home school district. There have been instances, however, where the local school district refused to allow the student to participate and the WPCCS had to explain the legislation to the home school district.
33. Cyber charter school teacher – student ratio	■ The WPCCS maintains one teacher facilitator for every 20-30 students. Teacher Facilitators work six hours per week. Approximately three hours are for planning while three are for contacting their students on a weekly basis.



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

I	echnology Supporting Instruction	Current Status
34.	Adequacy of systems to support timely instructional delivery	 There is little technology within the Calvert and Missouri elementary programs. Timely delivery of instruction is the responsibility of the parent as monitored by the WPCCS facilitator. Virtual Classroom delivers instruction through a complex array of real-time voice streaming, whiteboards and pc visuals. The system appears to work smoothly with the Virtual Classroom teachers being readily available in case of problems. Keystone and Missouri systems are able to present print instructions with objective and some subjective assessments for each lesson. Keystone students having problems can easily email their teacher but all problems are addressed in only writing.
35.	System maintenance (e.g., servers)	Provided by third party curriculum providers.
36.	Technical support for students, parents and teachers	 Students and families have several sources for technical support. Gateway provides technical support for computer equipment, all curriculum and support software vendors provide technical support and Stargate (the ISP) provides technical support. In all of these cases documentation is kept by the vendor. WPCCS can provide technical support through the Technology Coordinator (and his staff) and through subcontractor CyberJazz, a network support company. Teacher facilitators are available to provide technical support to students and parents, as necessary. Staff members who work with a student having a technical difficulty complete an offline form documenting the date and time the problem was reported, the problem type (i.e., hardware, software, curriculum, internet, email, other), details and the date the problem was handled.



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Tec	hnology Supporting Administration		Current Status
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	•	Student records, including health records, are managed in an electronic central database, Edunet. Edunet is a Pittsburgh based company that provides services to many PA public schools.
38.	Financial/budget system	•	Edunet is the financial/budget system of WPCCS.
39.	Human resources/payroll system	•	The WPCCS provides its contracted accounting firm with payroll figures. The accounting firm relays this information to Paychex, Inc., the company that issues the paychecks to employees. Other non-payroll human resource issues are managed by a CENTRE Educational Consultants subcontractor.

Relationship with Home School District	Current Status
40. Procedure for notifying home school district of newly enrolled students	 During the school's first year of operation, WPCCS did not provide the home school districts with adequate notification of the students who were enrolling in the school. This lack of communication may have been influenced by an unexpectedly high volume of student interest and the fact that this cyber school was the first in the Commonwealth to enroll students from outside of its surrounding area. For the 2001-2002 school year, the WPCCS has instituted a new procedure for notifying the home school district of newly enrolled students. Upon acceptance into the school's program, WPCCS promptly sends the Superintendent of the district a "Request for Records." This document is signed by the student's parents and a WPCCS official thereby informing the home school district that the student is now enrolled. The home school district of the student must then send the records of the student to the WPCCS.



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Relationship with Home School District	Current Status
41. Partnerships with local school districts	 The WPCCS has offered "partnership" agreements to many Pennsylvania public school districts in order to offer a fixed cost for any student from that district who attends the WPCCS. The school is currently offering year one at a cost of \$5,000 per student. In return for the fixed cost, the local school district would provide services that would offset WPCCS costs. For example, they would agree to be a regional host site for PSSA testing. The WPCCS currently has four partnership agreements: Aliquippa, South Side, Cranberry, and Oil City. WPCCS has invited other cyber charter school start-ups to visit the school facility to provide them with guidance.



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

OCTOBER 30, 2001

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

The Board of Directors of WPCCS is a viable cyber school governance structure that consists of nine voting members and four non-voting members. The WPCCS Board of Directors is made up of the a retired Midland schoolteacher, the vice president of a Midland bank, Superintendents of two local school districts, the vice president of a local community college, an investment advisor, a Midland civil engineer, the owner of a Beaver County technology company and the manager of an education software company. The board meets frequently throughout the year but does not have regularly scheduled monthly meetings. The board may also hold special meetings, as necessary.

Evaluation Criteria and Findings

Governance and Oversight

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

Current Status

on nominations from the floor). The board appoints a Secretary, Treasurer, and Solicitor, as well as independent

An annual organizational meeting is held in the first week

auditor and other employees, as necessary.

1. Documentation and	 The WPCCS Board of Directors consists of nine voting
description of school	members and four non-voting members.
governance organizationa	• The board is responsible for hiring and discharging staff,
structure.	creating and enacting annual budgets. The board also has
	fiduciary responsibility for managing the assets of the
	school and reports to the Midland School District and the
	Pennsylvania Department of Education.
	 Board appointments are made on an annual basis at the
	annual meeting in July – a public meeting for students,
	parents and community members. The Board of Directors
	is responsible for developing school policy and approving
	the annual budget. Board members represent a number of
	Pennsylvania towns. Four of the nine voting members are
	from Midland. The other five members are from Beaver
	Falls, Rochester, Aliquippa (Center Twp.), Beaver and
	Pittsburgh.
	 The board votes on a President and Vice President (based



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Governance and Oversight	Current Status
	of July and the board meets a number of times throughout the year but does not meet on a regular monthly basis. The board can also hold an executive session, discussion sessions or committee meetings, as necessary. The Chief Administrative Officer, who is also the Midland School District Superintendent, serves as the primary liaison between the WPCCS operations, the WPCCS Board of Directors, and the Midland Borough School District. An Executive Director is employed by the board to manage the daily operations of the school, hire and manage school personnel. This individual participates in board meetings. The Executive Director is held accountable to the CAO. The Executive Director oversees the Assistant Director/Guidance Counselor and the Chief Financial Officer. The Chief Financial Officer oversees many administrative and all financial aspects of the organization; this person has an administrative assistant and oversees the school's Technology Coordinator and hired consultants. WPCCS's Assistant Director/Guidance Counselor assists the Executive Director with daily management activities and is responsible for all issues related to student guidance. The role of this person is also to manage the Curriculum Coordinator, Admissions Coordinator, Director of Special Education, school Nurse and Compliance Coordinator. In addition, all six Instructional Supervisors also report to the Assistant Director/Guidance Counselor. Each Instructional Supervisor is assigned eight Teacher Facilitators to oversee. Each Teacher Facilitator is assigned up to 30 students. Instructional supervisors, therefore, are each responsible for up to 200 students.
2. Experiential make-up of advisory board	 The WPCCS Board of Directors is made up of the a retired Midland schoolteacher, the vice president of a Midland bank, Superintendents of two local school districts, the vice president of a local community college, an investment advisor, a Midland civil engineer, the owner of a Beaver County technology company and the manager of an education software company. There is currently no representation of students' parents on the Board of Trustees.



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

Governance and Oversight		Current Status
3.	Assessment of frequency and extent of input governance units have over instructional policy	 According to the board's bylaws, the board is responsible for determining if the educational programs offered by the school are in accordance with the law. The WPCCS Board does not meet on a monthly basis.
4.	Clarity of legal and procedural requirements	 The board has documented bylaws. According to the board's bylaws, each new member of the board is provided with a copy of the Board Policy Manual, current financial statements and the most recent Strategic Plan.



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

OCTOBER 30, 2001

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

The average annual operating cost for FY01 was approximately \$3,900 per student based on total number of students attending. The actual cost is actually higher given that many students were not enrolled for a full year. The budget for FY02 projects a cost range of \$6,032 per student based on an enrollment of 980 students. The total cost for the curriculum packages for students during the 2001-2002 school year is \$1340 and costs vary by student. For example, the University of Missouri has a base cost of \$99 per course, per semester (including books and supplies) while Calvert curriculum caries a cost between \$545 (kindergarten) to \$1,095 (grade 8) per year. These third party provider costs do not include technology, overhead costs or management/staff salaries and benefits.

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.

	Cost Reasonableness	Current Status
1.	Consistency of financial plan with operating plan	 The budget appears to be consistent with the operating plan.
2.	Average annual operating cost	The average annual operating cost for FY01 was approximately \$3,900 per student based on total number of students attending. The actual cost is higher given that many students were not enrolled for a full year.
3.	Financial, in-kind, and management relationships with partnering institutions	 The CAO, who is also the Midland School District (MSD) Superintendent, dedicates approximately 20 hours per week to the cyber school. A local bank donated a vacant bank building to the Midland School District. The WPCCS leases the building from the school district.
4.	Start-up cost appropriateness and comparison	 WPCCS obtained a \$250,000 loan from Sky Bank in October 2000 as startup/operating capital. This loan was paid in full on 06/08/01, after receiving payment from PDE for LEAS accounts that were overdue. MSD assisted WPCCS in obtaining a loan for computers of \$257,800. This loan is being paid



CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

	Cost Reasonableness	Current Status
5.	Financial soundness of backers	 by MSD at present. The balance due at 6/30/01 was \$79,210, which has been included for repayment in the FY02 budget. The school is a separate entity, but does receive substantial assistance from the Midland School District. This assistance has included start-up funding and administrative support.
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)	 The budget presented for FY02 was rather detailed compared to other schools. Per capita revenue was based on an average of \$6,061 per student. Given the statewide average was \$5,835 in FY01, this amount is reasonable, especially if some students are receiving special education. Teacher salaries average \$40,000 to \$50,000, which is average. Fringe benefits appear to be all accounted for as well. Computer expenses are provided in detail and the cost of computers at \$1,332 are supported by Gateway invoices, which appear reasonable. The school does not show a five-year budget, thus inflation and raises could not be analyzed.
7.	Adequate plan exists for program and fiscal audits	The school has a budget of \$6,500 for an audit, which is in range with what other similar entities pay.
8.	Adequate insurance	The budget includes \$12,000 for liability insurance and the insurance coverage appears to be similar to what other schools are procuring.