

November | 2014

BETTER LEARNING COMMUNITIES ACADEMY

ANNUAL SPONSOR REPORT
2013-2014 ACADEMIC YEAR

**Charter School Operations
College of Education**



University of Missouri



**College of Education
Office of Charter School Operations**

Vision

Challenging all learners to reach their full potential.

Mission

Improve the quality and performance of charter schools in Missouri by collaborating with stakeholders to achieve exceptional educational outcomes for all students.

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SCHOOL BACKGROUND

Better Learning Communities Academy (BLCA) is in the third year of a five-year charter and is sponsored by the University of Missouri. BLCA has the following mission and vision, as set forth in the charter:

MISSION

The mission of Better Learning Communities Academy is to provide each student with a quality education in a safe, supportive and loving environment, which equips them for entrance into the middle school, high school and college of their choice. Better Learning Communities Academy is founded on the premise that by providing every family the option of a quality education for their children, a community of "lifelong learners" and "servant leaders" will be created in the Hyde Park neighborhood.

VISION

Beginning in 2012 every student will be actively engaged in age-appropriate activities that assist and help others in their family, school, neighborhood and community, to cultivate the student into their role of a "servant leader".

By 2015 BLCA will begin its transition from a K-5 school to include a middle school program.

By 2018 BLCA will include a fully accredited, high-functioning middle school.

By 2018 the graduates of BLCA will be academically prepared to attend any college preparatory high school in the St. Louis region.

By 2018 BLCA graduates will model the "lifelong learners" philosophy by creating a "Post High School Education Plan" outlining steps to achieve their future educational goals.

By 2020 BLCA will be the highest performing public charter school in the city of St. Louis with 95% of students who have been at BLCA for at least two years performing at "Proficient" or "Advanced" on the MAP test.



GOALS

The following specific goals are identified in the original charter:

1. Average a minimum of 1.5 years growth in communication arts and mathematics.
2. In the 2012-13 academic year, 60% of students will perform above the AYP targets in communication arts and math on the MAP test.
3. In the 2013-2014 academic year, 70% of students will perform above the AYP targets in communication arts and math on the MAP test.
4. In the 2014-2015 academic year, 80% of students will perform above the AYP targets in communication arts and math on the MAP test.
5. In the 2015-2016 academic year, 90% of students will perform above the AYP targets in communication arts and math on the MAP test.
6. An attendance rate of 90% or higher in the first year, growing to 95% within 5 years.
7. 70% of parents/guardians will participate in a minimum of three Beyond Classroom Learning Experiences each year (1 will be in a Servant Leadership activity).

INTRODUCTION

MU reviews schools within six focus areas (**Appendix A**). These areas were established by reviewing protocols from other states, were generated and refined by the MU Charter Office staff during our first year of sponsorship and continue to be revised, annually. These six focus areas are:

Focus Area I:	Governance
Focus Area II:	Compliance
Focus Area III:	Operations
Focus Area IV:	Culture
Focus Area V:	Academic Outcomes
Focus Area VI:	Finances

The 2014 Annual Report is organized into the six areas outlined above. Each focus area is comprised of several components. The MU Charter School Office personnel collected data via monthly visits to the school and/or meetings of the board, meetings with school administrators, review of documents provided by the administration, classroom observations and survey data provided by the board, faculty, and staff.



FOCUS AREA I. GOVERNANCE

BLCA continues to demonstrate governance growth in its third year. The board engaged in sub-committee work this year to hire a new academic leader and establish criteria and procedures for fund-raising. The board is diverse in background and experience, meetings are orderly, proceedings are efficient and well managed, and committee work has been focused and presented to the Board in a timely manner. Board and administration are utilizing a monthly report to promote communication and the board has provided consistent oversight that has considerably strengthened both the governance and the operational components of the school. The board chair meets weekly with the new academic leader. An evaluation of the new school leader by the board has not been completed, but is planned. Board training and development is an area that needs continued focus and ethnic diversity/local community representation on the board is recommended. Planning for board rotation, recruitment of new members and on-boarding strategies are opportunities for improvement.

STRENGTHS

- Board is accountable for operations and academics.
- Board is knowledgeable regarding the school budget.
- Board annually evaluates school leaders as indicated in the organizational chart.
- The board is engaged in short and long term strategic planning with clearly established goals and action plans.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- All board members attend board training opportunities.
- Board members are engaged in a program of development (e.g. High Bar, MCPSA development grant).
- The board has an onboarding process (on-line materials, training) for new board members.
- The board has a development and evaluation plan for new and current board members.

SURVEY FINDINGS

The board survey results (Appendix B) indicate that board functions of “*overseeing financial performance and ensuring financial solvency*” and “*ensuring legal and ethical integrity*” received the highest ratings. No areas were below the “average” range. Areas with the greatest variance in board response included “*strategic planning and goal setting for the school*” and “*evaluating the head of school/academic leader/principal.*”



Board processes that received high ratings include *“running board and committee meetings well (e.g., start/end on time, give members a change to engage in issues, and ensure all voices are heard,” “utilizing board committees effectively and efficiently (committees fulfilling their identified roles and responsibilities)”* and *“selecting and developing the board chair.”* It should be noted that all scores fell into the average, above average and excellent range in this category with low variability in response patterns.

Short-term priorities that emerged include *“developing financial resources to support the school,” “improving financial stability,” “assessing and improving academic performance,”* and *“preparing for renewal of the charter.”*

FOCUS AREA II: COMPLIANCE

All requests for additional information and/or adjustments from DESE are promptly addressed. The Board has utilized services from an external consulting firm to ensure that all inputs required by DESE are met in a satisfactory manner.

STRENGTHS

- Required reports and data submissions are submitted on time and are complete and error-free.
- School files are well maintained.
- School staff meets expectations set forth in state and federal guidelines.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- School administration ensures compliance with Special Education procedures.

FOCUS AREA III: OPERATIONS

Operations for the school are handled both internally and externally. With a new academic leader hired for the 2013-2014 academic year, supports were in place to provide operational oversight to allow the leader to focus her first year on climate and academics. A process for documenting the dispensing of medications, treating injuries, or noting illnesses has been established by office personnel. Several renovations to the building have provided better utilization of space and have improved the operations and learning environment considerably. Clarification of who is in the building, their role and purpose is recommended so both staff and families know who is working in the school. It is imperative that after-school program needs and procedures be referred to personnel that are not hired by the school. A separate location and individual to answer questions, pick



up/receive materials is needed. The school must operate independently from the after-school program.

STRENGTHS

- School administration is well structured and effective.
- The school's daily schedule supports student learning.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- School administration seeks high quality professional development

FOCUS AREA IV: CULTURE

There has been a dramatic shift in the culture of the school during the 2013-2014 academic year. Focused attention on behavioral issues and continued involvement with the parents and families of students of the school has created a culture of respect. The new academic leader has utilized several purposeful and strategic plans to support the teaching staff, included and recognized parent involvement, provided focused academic support to the students of the school and has been zealous in working with both behavioral and classroom management.

STRENGTHS

- The learning environment is safe and orderly.
- Teachers believe that all students can learn.
- All teachers and staff demonstrate respect toward each other and to students.
- Students demonstrate respect to teachers, staff and guests.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Clear communication is evident across all stakeholder groups.

SURVEY FINDINGS

BLCA staff members (Appendix C) reported consistently high ratings in the areas of school environment and culture. Responses receiving highest marks with all respondents marking "strongly agree" included "*the school environment supports students learning,*" "*staff at this school believe all students can learn*" and "*the school's daily schedule supports students learning.*" The only item that fell below 4.0 was "policies/procedures for student behavior management are consistently implemented." The consistently high ratings and low variability across items suggest a cohesive and supportive staff.



Teachers at BLCA (Appendix D) also reported consistently high ratings in the area of school environment and culture. Belief that all students can learn, and high expectations for students learning were the highest scored items on the survey. Scoring 3.3 and 3.2, respectively, were two areas related to student behavior management: *“policies and procedures for student behavior management are consistently implemented,”* and *“policies and procedures for student management are consistently communicated.”* Again, it is duly noted that these scores are between 3 and 4, and some inconsistency would be expected with the arrival of a new leadership team. Although these are areas that need improvement, it is clear from observations across the academic year that the culture of this school is focused on learning and significant progress in developing a culture of learning is evident.

FOCUS AREA V: ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

The current academic leader has focused on culture and climate this year. NWEA testing was not implemented and utilized as planned, but progress in understanding NWEA and how to use the results will provide a foundation for utilizing this formative assessment next year. During 2014-2015, a continued focus on academics, use of formative assessment data, professional development for teachers and staff in utilizing formative assessments and a focused plan for professional development and teacher evaluation will be essential for BLCA to meet its high standards for academic growth.

BLCA is following the mandated processes for identifying and supporting SPED students. BLCA did receive a Corrective Action plan and all items were completed by January 1, 2014. The Standards and Indicators Manual and DESE website are used for SPED procedures, forms, and compliance. The SPED teacher is full time and responsible for the SPED process. It is noted that the principal is supportive and actively involved in the SPED process.

Staff turnover has impacted services, but the SPED teacher reports a positive working relationship with classroom teachers and is working to deliver “push in services” rather than “pull out” services. There were concerns regarding the effectiveness of the outside agency and this should be evaluated. Inconsistencies in SPED personnel have created challenges this year, so this area needs continued focus and monitoring, and continued professional development for the SPED referral process for all staff. Establishment of a building-wide consistently implemented Behavior Management Program is highly recommended.

Professional development for the principal of the school is needed and should be a primary focus for the upcoming academic year. Staff indicate a continued need for more supplies, training in the area of technology, and continued support in managing behaviors of students.



STRENGTHS

- Teachers feel supported by the administration.
- The SPED program is compliant with state and federal laws.
- Staff follow a mandated process for identifying and supporting SPED students.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Ongoing professional development supports "best practices" and student learning.
- Technology use is evident, of high quality, and supports student learning.
- Delivery of SPED services meets students' needs.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Teachers (Appendix D) at BLCA report the highest survey scores for *"teachers at this school believe that all students can learn"*, *"teachers at this school have high expectations for student learning"*. It should also be noted that high scores with low variability were reported in the areas of:

- *"teachers at this school have high expectations for student behavior,"*
- *"teachers at this school collaborate to improve student learning,"*
- *"teachers at this school feel supported by school administration,"*
- *"the school has a clearly defined, high quality curriculum,"* and
- *"all stakeholders in the school treat each other with mutual respect."*

The lowest score was reported for *"policies/procedures for student behavior management are consistently communicated"*, and scores with wide variability and average to neutral scores included:

- *"school administrators effectively communicate teacher expectations,"*
- *"teachers at this school have necessary instructional materials (i.e. textbook) to support learning,"*
- *"teachers at this school have the necessary technology to support learning,"* and
- *"teachers at this school receive effective administrator feedback and guidance on instructional practice."*

Teacher comments clearly show that school culture is focused on learning, achievement and the importance of education. All teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they were supported by the school administration.



FOCUS AREA VI: FINANCES

Finances are continuously monitored and detailed financials are presented to the Board at every monthly meeting. The need for supplemental funding has been recognized and a plan to seek outside funding has been established by the Board. External funding related to the after-school program needs to be clearly separated from the operations and budget of the school and the use of public funds. As the fundraising efforts increase and monies are secured, a clear separation of these efforts and funds from the after-school program will be required. This may involve a separate advisory board for the after-school program and/or a separate board for fundraising. The annual audit was submitted on time with no material findings.

STRENGTHS

- The school adheres to a balanced budget.
- The Annual Secretary of the Board Report (ASBR) shows an unrestricted ending fund balance that exceeds state minimums.
- Financial records are efficiently maintained.
- Annual Audit

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- The school has sufficient resources to support operations.



Appendix A

Office of Charter School Operations

Evaluation Process and Focus Areas

MU CHARTER SCHOOL OPERATIONS

The MU Office of Charter School Operations, housed in the MU College of Education, provides monitoring and feedback to all charter schools within our portfolio. Our sponsorship role includes:

- Providing oversight on behalf of the State of Missouri;
- Ensuring that the board of directors and the school are in compliance with State of Missouri charter school laws;
- Identifying strengths, areas of improvement, and providing recommendations to the board of directors; and
- Determining school status: to continue operations, to place on probation, to renew a charter of an existing school, or to close a school for non-compliance of state and federal laws and/or not meeting the performance guidelines as specified within the school's charter.

Annual Comprehensive Evaluation Components

MU provides evaluations for its charter schools on an annual basis. The evaluation has three components. The first component of the evaluation process is an annual site report comprised of six focus areas. MU provides an on-site evaluation and interviews key stakeholders, usually in the second semester of the school year. The second component is an annual report submitted by the school based on the criteria established in the charter, any data collected internally, response and action plans developed based on the MU site report and performance goals for the upcoming school year based on state academic findings as reported in MSIP 5. Last, a final letter regarding school status is submitted to the school early in the new academic year and a performance contract is developed as per RSMo 160.405.1.



FOCUS AREA 1: GOVERNANCE

Effective governance comprises one of the most challenging areas for charter schools. The federal and state regulations and laws are complex, and the knowledge needed to successfully navigate a K-12 environment within such regulatory environments is challenging. Moreover, the research suggests that governance continues to be a crucial area in the overall success of charter schools. Policy and empirical questions affiliated with not-for-profit boards still require continued analysis. Essentially, the mixture of the need for sound business practices, a highly regulated industry and the human dynamics encompassed in the enterprise of human learning combine and contribute to an environment that is dynamic, fluid and difficult to navigate. It is essential that boards of charter schools be knowledgeable, responsible and effective in their role.

1.A: The board is effective in its governance and oversight of the school.

- 1.A.1: The board is accountable for operations and academics.
- 1.A.2: The board is knowledgeable regarding the school budget.
- 1.A.3: The board annually evaluates the president/executive director/head of school/management company as indicated in the organizational chart.
- 1.A.4: The board is engaged in short and long term strategic planning with clearly established goals and action plans.
- 1.A.5: The board chair is actively involved in the governance and oversight of the school.

1.B: The board is engaged in professional development.

- 1.B.1: All board members attend board training opportunities.
- 1.B.2: Board members are engaged in a program of development (e.g. High Bar, MCPSA development grant).
- 1.B.3: The board is engaged in a minimum of one strategic planning meeting/retreat annually.

1.C: The board has a plan for recruitment, onboarding and development of board members.

- 1.C.1: The board has a plan for recruitment.
- 1.C.2: The board has materials and information to share with prospective board members.
- 1.C.3: The board has a procedure in place to review prospective board members.
- 1.C.4: The board has an onboarding process (on-line materials, training) for new board members.
- 1.C.5: The board has a development and evaluation plan for new and current board members.



FOCUS AREA 2: COMPLIANCE

Compliance requirements for public schools are numerous, detailed and require consistent attention to detail. Areas such as Title I, Special Education and the collection of state required data, are highly regulated areas that can create difficulties in terms of program delivery, school finance, operations and legally required benefits to students. Thus, it is imperative that charter schools establish a process and clearly defined procedures for the reporting of data and adherence to requirements.

Equally important is the establishment of positive relationships with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and local resources to provide support and learning opportunities to ensure that compliance is handled legally, promptly and effectively. Areas that continue to surface in both state and federal reviews and areas on non-compliance indicate that the current operational processes are not effective in these areas and need immediate attention.

2.A: School administration ensures compliance with all DESE and MU reporting requirements.

- 2.A.1: Student attendance rates promote student learning.
- 2.A.2: Required reports and data submissions are submitted on time and are complete and error-free.
- 2.A.3: School administration ensures compliance with Title I processes and procedures.
- 2.A.4: School administration ensures compliance with Special Education procedures.

2.B: School facilities meet health, fire, and safety regulations.

- 2.B.1: The school has an annual fire inspection.
- 2.B.2: The school has an annual health inspection.
- 2.B.3: The school has adequate restroom facilities.
- 2.B.4: Safety and emergency procedures are clearly displayed in all classrooms and public areas.
- 2.B.5: The school provides documentation of regular safety drills.

2.C: School files are well maintained.

- 2.C.1: Personnel files.
- 2.C.2: Student files.
- 2.C.3: Health records.
- 2.C.4: Attendance records.



2.D: School staff meets expectations set forth in state and federal guidelines.

- 2.D.1: The administration seeks 100% highly qualified staff; justification for 20% not HQT is provided to the sponsor.
- 2.D.2: Criminal background checks are documented for all board members and staff.
- 2.D.3: Child abuse registry checks are documented for all board members and staff.

FOCUS AREA 3: OPERATIONS

Successful operations are vital to the success of a public charter schools. Sound business practices, the challenges associated with start-up enterprises, and the attention to the complexities of school policies and adherence to state and federal law require keen attention and expertise, or the willingness to secure the needed expertise to ensure that the operations side of the school enhances and supports the desired learning outcomes. It is imperative that charter school boards and administration carefully consider the operational side of the school, and that policies and procedures are in place for hiring, evaluation, ordering of materials and supplies, and the day-to-day needs that are required for a school to run smoothly and efficiently.

3.A: School administration is well structured and effective.

- 3.A.1: Administrators are certified as appropriate.
- 3.A.2: Administrators demonstrate good leadership skills.
- 3.A.3: Day-to-day operations are handled smoothly and efficiently.
- 3.A.4: Administrative and staff roles are clearly defined.

3.B: School administration seeks high quality professional development

- 3.B.1: All administrators are engaged in targeted professional development.
- 3.B.2: Leadership opportunities are provided for quality teachers.



FOCUS AREA 4: CULTURE

School culture has been defined in numerous ways, broad and narrow, and has more recently been the focus of intense study, with the development of instruments to “measure” this construct. Regardless of how this term is defined, what is clear for charter schools is that, for optimal success, all stakeholders embrace a specific mission and vision that is based on a set of values, assumptions and “ways of operating” that become part of the collective fabric of the organization. As this is unique and important to the overall success of the school in meeting the original goals set forth in the charter, this area is included in the overall review process.

4.A: The school’s mission, vision and values drive the school and all stakeholder groups

- 4.A.1: The mission, vision and values are developed and drive decision making.
- 4.A.2: The mission, vision and values can be articulated by all stakeholder groups involved with the school.

4.B: The school environment supports student learning.

- 4.B.1: The learning environment is safe and orderly.
- 4.B.2: Teachers believe that all students can learn.
- 4.B.3: All staff have high expectations for student learning and behavior.
- 4.B.4: Behavioral plans are clearly articulated, consistent and understood by all stakeholder groups.
- 4.B.5: Staff collaborate and work together to meet students’ needs and support student learning.
- 4.B.6: Instructional materials are displayed to facilitate student learning.
- 4.B.7: The school’s daily schedule supports student learning.

4.C: High standards of professional behavior are exhibited by all staff.

- 4.C.1: Leaders in the school are recognized for their expertise.
- 4.C.2: Teachers and staff fulfill clearly assigned responsibilities.
- 4.C.3: Teachers and staff can clearly identify the instructional leader(s).

4.D: All stakeholders in the school treat each other with mutual respect.

- 4.D.1: All teachers and staff demonstrate respect toward each other and to students.
- 4.D.2: Students demonstrate respect to teachers, staff and guests.
- 4.D.3: Clear communication is evident across all stakeholder groups.



FOCUS AREA 5: ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Teaching and learning are the core components of a successful school. With continued emphasis on accountability at both national and state levels and the adoption of new State Standards and testing, it is imperative that schools invest in a clearly defined, high quality curriculum, engage in individualized plans for each learner, consistently utilize assessment tools that are reliable and valid, engage all members of the teaching team in the use of assessment data to maximize student success, and effectively meet the needs of learners with special needs.

5.A: Teachers feel supported by the administration.

- 5.A.1: All staff have a clear understanding of their job responsibilities and expectations.
- 5.A.2: Teachers receive effective feedback and guidance on instructional practice.
- 5.A.3: Beginning teachers are supported through a Mentoring Plan.

5.B: The school has a clearly defined, high quality curriculum.

- 5.B.1: Curriculum is aligned to state standards.
- 5.B.2: Curriculum aligns with the theme described in the school charter.
- 5.B.3: High quality instructional materials are available to support the curriculum.
- 5.B.4: Goals and objectives are clearly articulated.

5.C: Instructional practices, including the use of technology, meet the needs of all learners.

- 5.C.1: Teachers utilize good instructional strategies in lesson delivery.
- 5.C.2: The Title I Plan is effective in supporting students' needs.
- 5.C.3: Ongoing professional development supports "best practices" and student learning.
- 5.C.4: Technology use is evident, of high quality, and supports student learning.

5.D: Assessment is used effectively to support student learning.

- 5.D.1: Data is used to guide instruction.
- 5.D.2: Classroom assessments are effective in assessing learning and students' needs.



5.E: The school has an effective special education (SPED) program.

- 5.E.1: The SPED program is compliant with state and federal laws.
- 5.E.2: Staff follow a mandated process for identifying and supporting SPED students.
- 5.E.3: Delivery of SPED services meets students' needs.

FOCUS AREA 6: FINANCES

Financial stability is critical and is one of the key factors that prevents a school from achieving its mission and vision. Due to the need for start-up funding, building needs, and the high costs associated with a new business venture, the early years of a charter school, especially for schools growing by one grade level annually, can be very challenging. Oversight of finances is crucial, is a primary focus for the Governing Board and must be monitored carefully, transparently and publically at federal, state and local levels.

6.A: The school budget supports student learning.

- 6.A.1: The school has sufficient resources to support operations.
- 6.A.2: The school adheres to a balanced budget.
- 6.A.3: The Annual Secretary of the Board Report (ASBR) shows an unrestricted ending fund balance that exceeds state minimums.

6.B: Financial records are efficiently maintained.

- 6.B.1: Monthly financial statements are an effective accountability measure.
- 6.B.2: Monthly financial statements are clearly presented to and reviewed by the Board of Directors
- 6.B.3: The board has established a system of checks and balances to ensure that all fiscal issues are carefully monitored.

6.C: Annual Audit

- 6.C.1: The annual audit, with documented Board approval, is submitted on or before December 31 per state regulations.
- 6.C.2: The annual audit meets regulatory requirements established by DESE.
- 6.C.3: The findings of the audit are published within 30 days following receipt of the audit, as per regulatory requirements.
- 6.C.4: The audit does not include any material findings.



**Appendix B
Better Learning Communities Academy
April 2014 Board Survey Results**

Based on responses from all seven board members.

BOARD FUNCTIONS

Charter boards fulfill a number of roles for the schools they support. Please rate your board on the following key responsibilities by circling one of the ratings on the scale.

Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
1 2 3 4 5

Question	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Clarifying the school's mission and vision	3-5	4.1	.690
2. Strategic planning and goal setting for the school	2-5	3.9	.900
3. Resolving key strategic or policy issues	3-5	4.0	.816
4. Developing the financial resources needed to support student performance and school success	3-5	4.1	.690
5. Overseeing financial performance and ensuring financial solvency	4-5	4.7	.488
6. Understanding charter school law	3-4	3.6	.535
7. Ensuring legal and ethical integrity	3-5	4.4	.787
8. Tracking and assessing academic performance of the school based on the mission, vision, and charter goals	3-4	3.3	.488
9. Developing the school's Executive Director/CEO	3-5	4.0	.577
10. Evaluating the school's Executive Director/CEO	2-5	3.8	1.095
11. Developing the Head of School/Academic leader/Principal	3-5	4.1	.690
12. Evaluating the Head of School/Academic Leader/Principal	2-5	4.0	1.00

COMMENTS: Major Themes

- Great school leader, in her first year, and a competent staff. The highest priority is a fiscal one and we simply need better funding.
- Significant progress since last year. Regular testing takes place; data is being used by the teachers to increase academic performance.



- BAFC is used for many of the CEO functions – we do not have a Business Manager; they are doing an outstanding job.
- Paul Doerrler will lead the evaluation in the next few months.

BOARD PROCESSES

Effective charter boards have processes that maximize their operations, thus optimizing the effectiveness of the school community. Please rate the processes of your board by circling one of the ratings on the scale.

Poor **Below Average** **Average** **Above Average** **Excellent**
1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

Question	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Identifying, cultivating, and integrating new board members based on the needs of the school (background, diversity, expertise, etc.)	3-4	3.6	.535
2. Providing charter school orientation and training for new board members	3-4	3.4	.535
3. Utilizing board committees effectively and efficiently (committees fulfilling their identified roles and responsibilities)	4-5	4.6	.535
4. Reviewing board meeting agendas and related materials in a timely manner in preparation for meetings	3-5	4.4	.787
5. Running board and committee meetings well (e.g., start/end on time, give members a chance to engage in issues, and ensure all voices are heard)	4-5	4.9	.378
6. Selecting, developing and evaluating the board chair	3-5	4.7	.756
7. Selecting, developing and evaluating school leaders	3-5	4.1	.690
8. Utilizing data to make strategic and operational decisions for the school	3-5	3.9	.690
9. Monitoring fiscal operations, including developing and approving a budget monitoring expenses, and optimizing cash flow for all funding and expense streams,	4-5	4.3	.488
10. Ensuring the board and school are in compliance with all required laws and policies (conflict of interest, background checks, whistleblower, non-discrimination, records, insurance, etc.)	4-5	4.3	.488



COMMENTS: Major Themes

- Hope to get more testing data now that students are moving into the middle grades.; there has been a dearth of such information; believe we were misled by the reading “experts” who set up a program and tested the first year.
- Board members have attended MCPSA educational programs.
- Facilities and long-range planning; finances and development committees provide expertise and guidance to the board.
- The search committee did an excellent job identifying our new principal and engaging the board, staff and parents in the process.
- BAFC and board members are providing mentoring to Angela.
- Board members are very engaged and have a broad range of experience. For example, Kirk Mueller is leading our fundraising efforts; Paul Doerrer oversees reporting and compliance; Ann Anderson is very involved in monitoring finances.



SHORT-TERM PRIORITIES

Part III of this survey is designed to help boards identify where they may require future support, training, or guidance. Please indicate for each of the following potential goals whether you consider them low, medium or high priority.

Low Priority
1

Medium Priority
2

High Priority
3

Question	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Clarifying the organization’s mission, vision and strategic goals	1-3	2.3	.756
2. Evaluating board performance to ensure continuous improvement	1-2	1.7	.488
3. Developing, adding or replacing board members	1-3	1.9	.690
4. Developing, adding or replacing school leaders	1-3	2.1	.900
5. Developing financial resources to support the school	3-3	3.0	.000
6. Improving financial stability	3-3	3.0	.000
7. Assessing and improving academic performance	2-3	2.9	.378
8. Developing strategies for recruiting and retaining high quality teachers and staff	2-3	2.4	.535
9. Meeting all legal and policy requirements (specify needs below, if desired)	1-3	2.3	.951
10. Planning for facilities	3-3	3.0	.000
11. Considering expansion or replicator schools	1-3	2.0	1.00
12. Preparing for renewal of the charter	2-3	2.9	.378

COMMENTS: Major Themes

- Highest priority has been supporting new school leader.
- Academic progress has continually been stressed by the board.
- With board support, the school leaders has assembled a strong teaching staff and established a positive learning environment.
- Board members have actively participated in board and committee meetings.
- BAFC has completed reporting timely, provided mentoring for school leader and are knowledgeable consultants for special education.



19. All stakeholders in the school treat each other with mutual respect.	4-5	4.5	.577
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Part II: Describe the culture of your school – MAJOR THEMES

CULTURE & FOCUS ON LEARNING

- The culture of our school is family based and neighborhood friendly. Our school also has 90% of African American students enrolled. Also very open to new things and ideas that can enhance the improvement of the children as well as their parents.
- I think the culture of the school is great. They have meeting to me with the teachers about what they like what they didn't like about the week. They talk about things to change the classroom. If they need to talk about a certain topic longer until they feel comfortable moving on. I think the culture is diverse any race, could attend BLCA we accept all kind. It's a great school.
- Students will constantly be encouraged to meet the highest academic standards and focus on excellence without excuses. Attainment of Grade level Expectations and the achievement of Goals set in a student's ILP (which are based on attaining the academic skills set in the curriculum) will be utilized to determine promotion.

Part III: Additional comments – MAJOR THEMES

- BLCA has been successfully accomplishing goals.



Appendix D

Better Learning Communities Academy

April 2014 Teacher Survey Results

Based on responses from 10 teachers with 1 – 46 years of teaching experience and one to three years at BLCA.

Part I: Please answer the following questions using the 5-point scale below:

5 **4** **3** **2** **1**
strongly agree **agree** **neutral** **disagree** **strongly disagree**

Question	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. The school environment supports student learning.	3-5	4.3	.675
2. The school environment is safe and orderly	3-5	3.8	.789
3. Teachers at this school believe that all students can learn.	4-5	4.9	.316
4. The school's daily schedule supports student learning.	4-5	4.4	.516
5. Teachers at this school have high expectations for student learning.	4-5	4.7	.483
6. Teachers at this school have high expectations for student behavior.	4-5	4.5	.527
7. Teachers at this school collaborate to improve student learning.	4-5	4.5	.527
8. Teachers utilize effective instructional strategies in lesson delivery to promote student learning.	4-5	4.1	.316
9. Teachers utilize assessments to evaluate student progress and to guide instruction.	3-5	4.5	.707
10. The school has a clearly defined, high quality curriculum.	4-5	4.5	.527
11. Goals and objectives are clearly articulated	4-5	4.2	.422
12. The Title I plan is effective in supporting student needs.	3-5	3.9	.738
13. Staff follow a mandated process for identifying and supporting special education students.	3-5	3.9	.568
14. The delivery of special education services meet students' needs.	3-5	3.5	.527
15. On-going professional development supports best practices and promotes student learning.	3-5	3.8	.789
16. Teachers at this school have necessary supplies (i.e. paper, markers) to support learning	2-4	3.3	.823
17. Teachers at this school have necessary instructional materials (i.e. textbooks) to support learning.	2-5	3.9	.876
18. Teachers at this school have the necessary technology to support learning.	2-4	3.3	.823



19. Students are actively engaged in their learning.	2-5	3.6	.843
20. Policies/procedures for student behavior management are consistently communicated.	2-4	3.2	.789
21. Policies/procedures for student behavior management are consistently implemented.	2-4	3.3	.823
22. Teachers at this school feel supported by school administration.	4-5	4.4	.516
23. School administrators effectively communicate teacher expectations.	2-5	3.9	1.101
24. School administrators effectively communicate student expectations.	3-5	4.5	.707
25. Teachers at this school receive effective administrator feedback and guidance on instructional practice	2-5	3.8	1.135
26. The administrative staff exhibits high standards of professional behavior.	3-5	4.5	.707
27. Administrators exhibit strong leadership skills.	3-5	4.5	.707
28. Good communication exists between all stakeholders.	3-5	3.9	.738
29. All stakeholders in the school treat each other with mutual respect.	4-5	4.5	.527

Part II: Describe the culture of your school – MAJOR THEMES

School Culture

- Here at BLCA there is acceptance of differences. The staff here promotes patriotism. The students are learning about different cultures in our world. The students are learning why they need an education and the importance of education.
- The culture of our school is one in which learning and achievement are becoming the context for schooling. Children have begun to focus on learning and working hard. They are actually learning and take pride in their accomplishments.
- The culture is a very welcoming environment.
- The culture of our school is mainly African American. Our families have many needs in regards to supporting our children’s learning and their success.
- The culture of BLCA is changing for the better. It is my perception management was not a strong point in the past.

Focus on Learning

- BLCA staff persons believe that all children can learn. This belief system is a must for any school whose mission is to educate children at high levels. Teachers on the staff spend time after school getting ready for the next day and preparing extra materials for those youngsters who are struggling.



- This school is determined to make sure all children are successful.
- We strive for academic excellence.
- This educational team is working hard to support our students for academic success. The “team spirit” is contagious and positive results are being achieved.
- An environment where students are expected and challenged to succeed and reach the next level. We are a school who is fine tuning our policies and procedures to help the overall learning environment.

Professionalism

- An attitude of Professionalism is part of our culture. I believe everyone is doing their utmost best for our students to learn and grow.
- I think there are wonderful teachers who have the kids learning and best interest in the forefront of all they do.
- We have students with many needs and the professionals in the building work very hard to meet and/or find ways to meet those needs.

Areas in Need of Improvement

- I feel there are many struggles due to inconsistency in discipline, not enough staffing in areas of concern such as Title I and Special Ed. I feel there needs to be a more of a school community feel. The teachers all work well together but do not feel students are developing ownership or pride in their school.
- We can improve on communication between teachers and staff as well as teachers in every grade level.
- We have academic/behavior challenges.
- The culture of BLCA is still developing. Strong leadership is still needed in some areas to help really establish the culture we expect and agreed upon. The culture that we expect is one that is embracing excellence in our school, community, others, and ourselves. However, that excellence has not yet been reached.

Part III: Additional comments – MAJOR THEMES

- I’d like a raise.
- I think we are all looking forward to next year when we can implement our curriculum and policies more consistently now that we have our “feet wet” after year one of Journeys and our time here. There are gaps to fill, we simply need to look for how to fill them.
- It is a real honor to be at BLCA. The urban challenges are felt each day, yet improvement in student learning is happening. I look forward to a bright future.