

# INDIANAPOLIS MAYOR'S OFFICE FOURTH YEAR CHARTER REVIEW

## SENSE CHARTER SCHOOL

April 14-16, 2008

The Indianapolis Mayor's Office Fourth Year Charter Review (FYCR) is designed to assess the extent to which a school is meeting the standards for renewal at the mid-point of its charter term. The FYCR Protocol is based on the *Performance Framework*, which is used to determine a school's success relative to a common set of indicators, as well as to school-based goals.

***Consistent with the Indianapolis Mayor's Office Performance Framework, the following four core questions and sub-questions are examined to determine a school's success:***

**1. *Is the educational program a success?***

- 1.1. *Is the school making adequate yearly academic progress, as measured by the Indiana Department of Education's system of accountability?*
- 1.2. *Are students making substantial and adequate gains over time, as measured using value-added analysis?*
- 1.3. *Is the school outperforming schools that the students would have been assigned to attend?*
- 1.4. *Is the school meeting its school-specific educational goals?*

**2. *Is the organization effective and well-run?***

- 2.1. *Is the school in sound fiscal health?*
- 2.2. *Are the school's student enrollment, attendance, and retention rates strong?*
- 2.3. *Is the school's Board active and competent in its oversight?*
- 2.4. *Is there a high level of parent satisfaction with the school?*
- 2.5. *Is the school administration strong in its academic and organizational leadership?*
- 2.6. *Is the school meeting its school-specific organizational and management performance goals?*

**3. *Is the school meeting its operations and access obligations?***

- 3.1. *Has the school satisfactorily completed all of its organizational structure and governance obligations?*
- 3.2. *Is the school's physical plant safe and conducive to learning?*
- 3.3. *Has the school established and implemented a fair and appropriate pupil enrollment process?*
- 3.4. *Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with special needs?*
- 3.5. *Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with limited English proficiency?*

**4. *Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?***

- 4.1. *Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?*
- 4.2. *Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?*
- 4.3. *For secondary students, does the school provide sufficient guidance on and support and preparation for post-secondary options?*
- 4.4. *Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?*
- 4.5. *Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?*
- 4.6. *Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?*
- 4.7. *Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?*
- 4.8. *Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?*

## COMPLETION OF THE FOURTH YEAR CHARTER REVIEW

As part of its oversight of charter schools, the Mayor's Office engages external professionals to conduct site visits of schools in their fourth year of operation. The purpose is to present the school and the Mayor's Office a professional judgment on conditions and practices at the school, which are best provided through an external perspective. The FYCR site visit uses multiple sources of evidence to understand the school's performance. Evidence collection begins before the visit with the review of key documents and continues on-site through additional document review, classroom visits and interviews with any number of stakeholders. Findings provided by the site visit team can be used to celebrate what the school is doing well and prioritize its areas for improvement in preparation for renewal. It is the task of the site visit team to report on the following pre-identified aspects of the *Performance Framework* and to assist the Mayor's Office in its completion of the FYCR Protocol: ***Core Question 4 and all of its sub-questions (4.1-4.8), sub-question 2.3 and sub-question 2.5.***

***Responses to Core Question 1 and all of its sub-questions (1.1-1.4), Core Question 3 and all of its sub-questions (3.1-3.5), and sub-questions 2.1, 2.2 2.4 and 2.6 will be completed by the Mayor's Office.***

The outcome of the FYCR will provide the school with a written report that includes a judgment and supporting evidence on various aspects of the school, based on a rubric of indicators<sup>1</sup> developed for each of the four core questions and sub-questions in the *Performance Framework*. The assessment system utilizes the following judgments:

- Does not meet standard*
- Approaching standard*
- Meets standard*
- Exceeds standard*

**Note:** In the case of the sub-questions under ***Core Question 3*** and ***Core Question 4*** of the *Performance Framework*, there is no rating for *Exceeds standard*. *Meets standard* is the highest possible rating.

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<sup>1</sup> Rubric indicators are subject to revision by the Mayor's Office.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### SENSE CHARTER SCHOOL

<b><i>Core Question 1: Is the educational program a success?</i></b>	<b><i>FINDING</i></b>
<i>1.1. Is the school making adequate yearly academic progress, as measured by the Indiana Department of Education's system of accountability?</i>	<b>Meets standard</b>
<i>1.2. Are students making substantial and adequate gains over time, as measured using value-added analysis?</i>	<b>Approaching standard</b>
<i>1.3. Is the school outperforming schools that the students would have been assigned to attend?</i>	<b>Not Evaluated<sup>2</sup></b>
<i>1.4. Is the school meeting its school-specific educational goals?</i>	<b>Not Applicable<sup>3</sup></b>
<b><i>Core Question 2: Is the organization effective and well-run?</i></b>	<b><i>FINDING</i></b>
<i>2.1. Is the school in sound fiscal health?</i>	<b>Meets standard</b>
<i>2.2. Are the school's student enrollment, attendance, and retention rates strong?</i>	<b>Approaching standard</b>
<i>2.3. Is the school's Board active and competent in its oversight?</i>	<b>Meets standard</b>
<i>2.4. Is there a high level of parent satisfaction with the school?</i>	<b>Exceeds Standard</b>
<i>2.5. Is the school administration strong in its academic and organizational leadership?</i>	<b>Exceeds Standard</b>
<i>2.6. Is the school meeting its school-specific organizational and management performance goals?</i>	<b>Not Applicable<sup>4</sup></b>
<b><i>Core Question 3: Is the school meeting its operations and access obligations?</i></b>	<b><i>FINDING</i></b>
<i>3.1. Has the school satisfactorily completed all of its organizational structure and governance obligations?</i>	<b>Meets standard</b>
<i>3.2. Is the school's physical plant safe and conducive to learning?</i>	<b>Meets standard</b>
<i>3.3. Has the school established and implemented a fair and appropriate pupil enrollment process?</i>	<b>Meets standard</b>
<i>3.4. Is the school properly maintaining special education files for its special needs students?</i>	<b>Meets standard</b>
<i>3.5. Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with limited English proficiency?</i>	<b>Not Evaluated<sup>5</sup></b>
<b><i>Core Question 4: Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?</i></b>	<b><i>FINDING</i></b>
<i>4.1. Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?</i>	<b>Approaching standard</b>
<i>4.2. Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?</i>	<b>Meets standard</b>
<i>4.3. For secondary students, does the school provide sufficient guidance on and support and preparation for post-secondary options?</i>	<b>Not Applicable<sup>6</sup></b>
<i>4.4. Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?</i>	<b>Meets standard</b>
<i>4.5. Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?</i>	<b>Meets standard</b>
<i>4.6. Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?</i>	<b>Meets standard</b>
<i>4.7. Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?</i>	<b>Approaching Standard</b>

<sup>2</sup> The school was not evaluated in comparison to schools students would have attended.

<sup>3</sup> The school did not have school-specific educational goals that were evaluated for the FYCR

<sup>4</sup> The school did not have organizational and management performance goals that were evaluated for the FYCR

<sup>5</sup> The school was not evaluated on access and services to students with limited English proficiency.

<sup>6</sup> This sub-question is not applicable to the school, because it does not serve secondary students.

4.8. *Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?*

**Meets standard**

## FINDINGS, INDICATORS AND EVIDENCE

# SENSE CHARTER SCHOOL

### *Core Question 1: Is the educational program a success?*

1.1. Is the school making adequate yearly academic progress (AYP), as measured by the Indiana Department of Education's system of accountability?	
Does not meet standard	School has met AYP in less than half of student subgroups for the last two consecutive years.
Approaching standard	School has met AYP in more than half of student subgroups for one of the last two years.
<b>Meets standard</b>	<b>School has met AYP across all student subgroups for one of the last two years.</b>
Exceeds standard	School has exceeded the AYP target in all student subgroups in at least one of the last two years.

**Meets Standard.** Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence (SENSE) achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward statewide academic goals set by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) in 2007, but not in 2006. In addition, the school met but did not exceed all AYP targets in 2007. Thus, the school receives a Meets Standard designation.

Reports provided by the IDOE indicate that SENSE made AYP in 2007, but did not exceed attendance rate targets in 2007 or 2006. In 2007, student performance at SENSE exceeded statewide targets for both English/Language Arts and mathematics for the aggregate (i.e., all students) population as well as disaggregated student subgroups (white students, students who receive free or reduced lunch). The school also met participation rate targets. The IDOE judged the school's attendance rate to have improved over the two-year period toward the 95% target (and thus judged them to have made AYP), but the school did not meet or exceed the 95% target. In such a case, the school is judged to have met AYP, but has not met or exceeded standard for all targets. In 2006 the school exceeded statewide targets for both English/Language Arts, but did not meet the 95% attendance rate standard nor was judged to have made sufficient gains in this indicator by the IDOE.

In summary, since SENSE met the IDOE's standard for achieving AYP in 2007, but did not exceed all AYP targets in 2007 or 2006, it is rated as Meets Standard according to the Mayor's performance framework.

1.2. Are students making substantial and adequate gains over time, as measured using value-added analysis?	
Does not meet standard	Value-added analysis indicates that less than 50% of tested students made sufficient gains.
<b>Approaching standard</b>	<b>Value-added analysis indicates that 50%-74% of tested students made sufficient gains.</b>
Meets standard	Value-added analysis indicates that more than 75%-89% of tested students made sufficient gains.
Exceeds standard	Value-added analysis indicates that at least 90% of tested students made sufficient gains.

**Approaching Standard.** Analysis of data on fall-to-spring gains over four years revealed that an average of 59.4% of students achieved sufficient gains to reach proficiency over time. This percentage is approaching the Mayor's standard of at least 75% of students making sufficient gains.

The value-added analysis uses the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) to determine and predict student gains over time. Student assessment results were analyzed in reading, language arts and mathematics to determine an overall percentage of students that are likely to achieve proficiency on ISTEP+ within two years time (e.g. the percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students making sufficient progress to achieve proficiency by the end of 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and thus able to pass ISTEP+ the following fall). For each student, analysts projected the student's test scores based on the amount of progress that each student made on the MAP test between fall and spring. Analysts then compared that projected score to the score needed to pass Indiana's ISTEP+ exam at that future time (i.e., proficiency score). Finally, analysts calculated the average percentage across all grades (second through sixth), subjects (reading, math, and language), and years (2004-2005, 2005-06, 2006-2007, 2007-2008). The result was a single percentage, which determines the rating for the school according to the established rubric.

In the 2004-2005, 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-8 school years, an average of 61.6%, 69.6%, 47.9%, and 58.2% of SENSE students demonstrated sufficient gains, respectively.

Across the four years of the charter term, an average of 59.4% of students made sufficient gains. This percentage approaches, but does not yet meet the Mayor's standard of 75% of students achieving sufficient gains.

Year	Average Sufficient Gain
2004-2005	61.6%
2005-2006	69.6%
2006-2007	47.9%
2007-2008	58.2%
Multi-Year Average	59.4%

<b>1.3. Is the school outperforming schools that the students would have been assigned to attend?</b>	
Does not meet standard	School's overall performance in terms of proficiency and/or growth is generally lower than that of the schools the students would otherwise have been assigned to attend in each of the last three years.
Approaching standard	School's overall performance in terms of both proficiency and/or growth is generally lower than that of the schools the students would otherwise have been assigned to attend in two of the last three years.
Meets standard	School's overall performance in terms of both proficiency and/or growth is generally as good as that of the schools the students would otherwise have been assigned to attend.
Exceeds standard	School's performance consistently outpaces that of the schools the students would otherwise have been assigned to attend.

**Not Evaluated.**

<b>1.4. Is the school meeting its school-specific educational goals?</b>	
Does not meet standard	School has clearly not met its school-specific educational goal.
Approaching standard	School is making good progress toward meeting its school-specific educational goal.
Meets standard	School has clearly met its school-specific educational goal.
Exceeds standard	School has clearly exceeded its school-specific educational goal.

**Not Applicable.** Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence did not have school-specific educational goals that were evaluated for the FYCR.

***Core Question 2: Is the organization effective and well-run?***

<b>2.1. Is the school in sound fiscal health?</b>	
Does not meet standard	The school presents concerns in <u>three or more</u> of the following areas: a) its state financial audits (e.g., presence of “significant findings”); b) its financial staffing and systems; c) its success in achieving a balanced budget over the past three years; d) the adequacy of its projections of revenues and expenses for the next three years; e) its fulfillment of financial reporting requirements under Sections 10 and 17 of the charter agreement.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one or two</u> of the following areas: a) its state financial audits (e.g., presence of “significant findings”); b) its financial staffing and systems; c) its success in achieving a balanced budget over the past three years; d) the adequacy of its projections of revenues and expenses for the next three years; e) its fulfillment of financial reporting requirements under Sections 10 and 17 of the charter agreement.
Meets standard	The school presents significant concerns in no more than <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) its state financial audits (e.g., presence of “significant findings”); b) its financial staffing and systems; c) its success in achieving a balanced budget over the past three years; d) the adequacy of its projections of revenues and expenses for the next three years; e) its fulfillment of financial reporting requirements under Sections 10 and 17 of the charter agreement. In addition, if the school presents significant concerns in one area, it has a credible plan for addressing the concern that has been approved by the Mayor's Office.
Exceeds standard	The school demonstrates satisfactory performance in all of the areas listed in previous levels.

**Meets Standard.** SENSE has demonstrated adequate fiscal health over the first four years of its charter term. Evidence suggests that SENSE's financial staffing and systems are adequate, its budgeting and financial management process has been sufficient, and it has fulfilled its financial reporting requirements under Sections 10 and 17 of the charter agreement. The school's annual budgeted revenues have generally matched anticipated expenses. It has relied on a line of credit for cash flow purposes over the last two years, but this appears to be due to delays in receipt of local revenue and not inadequate budgeting. In addition, over the last two years the school has exceeded its enrollment targets, strengthening its overall financial position. However, the school has not yet fully addressed all findings from its state financial audit.

The school has been audited by the Indiana State Board of Accounts (SBOA) twice in the first four years of operation – for the period from July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2005 and from July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2007. Each report included an unqualified opinion from the SBOA for the school's financial practices. Each audit report outlined findings related to the school's financial

management and accounting systems, none of which were deemed major. Yet, some of the same findings appeared on both audit reports, indicating that the school had not yet satisfactorily resolved these issues. Repeat findings included that the school: (1) submitted incomplete records for employee service and attendance; and (2) did not present paper copies of checks for the SBOA auditors.

SENSE has established adequate staffing and systems for managing the school's finances. The school contracts with an experienced outside bookkeeping firm for its accounting functions. The SENSE board communicates regularly with the administrative team regarding financial needs and also helps to develop and manage the school's long-term financial goals.

<b>2.2. Are the school's student enrollment, attendance, and retention rates strong?</b>	
Does not meet standard	The school's actual enrollment consistently falls short of target enrollment by <u>10% or more</u> . Student attendance and retention rates are consistently below the school's agreed-upon target rates.
<b>Approaching standard</b>	<b>The school's actual enrollment consistently falls short of target enrollment by <u>1-9%</u>. Student attendance and retention rates are consistently below the school's agreed-upon target rates.</b>
Meets standard	The school is consistently fully enrolled. Student attendance and retention rates are generally at or above the school's agreed-upon target rates.
Exceeds standard	The school is consistently fully enrolled. Student attendance and retention rates consistently exceed the school's agreed-upon target rates.

**Approaching Standard.** SENSE has not been consistently fully enrolled across the four years of its charter term. The school was considerably below its target enrollment in 2004-2005 (28.1%) and slightly below its target in 2005-2006 (11%). In 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, the school has exceeded enrollment targets. The following table displays the target enrollment compared with the school's official fall enrollment reported to the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE). In the fall of 2004 and 2005, the school's official enrollment was 45 and 22 students below target, respectively. In the fall of 2006 and 2007, however, official enrollment at SENSE exceeded the target enrollment by 15 and 13 students, respectively.

<b>School Year</b>	<b>Target Enrollment</b>	<b>Fall Enrollment</b>	<b>Percent Below</b>
2004-2005	160	115	28.1%
2005-2006	200	178	11.0%
2006-2007	220	235	-
2007-2008	240	253	-

Source: Target Enrollment data are from the school's charter. Fall Enrollment data are from the Indiana Department of Education.

Attendance rates at SENSE improved in 2007-08, but have been consistently below the IDOE's target of 95% over the last four years.

School Year	Attendance Rate
2004-2005	91.1%
2005-2006	90.8%
2006-2007	91.9%
2007-2008	94.0%

Source: Indiana Department of Education.

No targets have been established for student retention rates for SENSE. Retention rates were at their highest from the Fall of 2004 to the Fall of 2005 (70%), but this rate dropped and has remained below 70% for the last two years.

Years	Students Enrolled Initial Year	Students Re-enrolled Following Year	Retention Rate
Fall 2004 to Fall 2005	110	77	70.0%
Fall 2005 to Fall 2006	179	112	62.6%
Fall 2006 to Fall 2007	236	165	69.9%

Source: Mayor's office analysis of fall enrollment reports submitted by the school.

In summary, SENSE has not been consistently fully enrolled across the four years of its charter term, but has significantly improved over the last two years. The school's attendance rate improved in 2007-08 compared to previous years, but has been consistently below the state's target for attendance each of the last four years. The school's retention rate has remained between 60-70% for the duration of the charter. In order to meet this standard, the school will need to continue to meet its enrollment targets as it has done over the past two years, improve its attendance rate and enhance its ability to re-enroll students year-to-year.

2.3. Is the school's Board active and competent in its oversight?	
Does not meet standard	The school appears to lack clear, consistent, and competent stewardship. The Board lacks the number of members specified in the by-laws; it is not well-balanced in member expertise; there has been consistently high turnover on the Board unrelated to the term limits stipulated in the Board's by-laws; roles and responsibilities of the Board are not clear; it often fails to achieve a quorum.
Approaching standard	Board membership is not complete; there has been some unanticipated turnover on the Board unrelated to the term limits stipulated in the Board's by-laws; it is reasonably well-balanced in member expertise; roles and responsibilities on the Board are reasonably clear; it is difficult to get a quorum; Board subcommittees are somewhat active; the Board is developing its ability to provide clear, consistent, and competent stewardship.
Meets standard	The Board's membership collectively contributes a broad skill set and fair representation of the community; Board members are knowledgeable about the school; roles and responsibilities of the Board are clearly delineated; Board meetings reflect thoughtful discussion and progress in the consideration of issues; overall, the Board provides consistent and competent stewardship of the school.
Exceeds standard	The Board meets the standard for this sub-question AND: displays exceptional expertise and stewardship, as evidenced by significant Board actions to enhance the school over time.

**Meets Standard.** The Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence (SENSE) Board of Directors is knowledgeable about the school and provides consistent and constant stewardship.

The board's membership collectively contributes a broad skill set and fair representation of the community. There are currently eight board members who bring diverse cultural and professional backgrounds, including a retired judge and former educator, an attorney, business owner, physician, librarian and community development professional. In keeping with the school's mission, the By-laws require one third of the board work in or have relationships in the Southeast community. This is accomplished through the membership of a parent, Director of the Southeast Community LISC, and other community leaders. The board reports significant community involvement including relationships with the Wheeler Arts Community, the neighborhood public library and the Horizon Center.

The SENSE Board members are knowledgeable about the school. In a focus group, board members articulated the priorities of the school, including financial needs and accountability issues such as AYP and attendance. The board reported concerns with student attendance rates, however expressed satisfaction with the variety of incentive programs that school leadership has implemented to address the issue. Board members have a clear understanding of, and support for the mission of the school. Board meetings always include a report from the school leader and the board interfaces regularly with the school leader on an informal basis. The 2007-08 Board minutes indicate that the board has had a quorum on most occasions and that meetings are held regularly.

The roles and responsibilities of the board are clearly delineated. Each board member serves on a committee designed to address school issues and enhance education. The committees meet on a regular basis. A review of board meeting minutes indicated the committees report to the full Board on issues such as curriculum, strategic planning, budget and finance, and community outreach. The curriculum committee, for example, is actively involved with the staff in aligning the science and social studies curriculum with the Indiana state standards.

The focus group and a review of the minutes, indicate that the board engages in thoughtful dialogue that considers school issues. While early accountability reports from the Mayor's office expressed concern about the lack of detail in the board minutes, minutes from the past year are thorough and reflect discussions around school needs and issues, including the possibility of adding a middle school component. Parent focus groups expressed a strong desire for a SENSE middle school.

The SENSE Board has developed a formal evaluation process for the school leader and provides regular oversight of his work. The school leader is evaluated on the school's educational performance, staff selection, finances, communication with the board, and other criteria.

The board has been involved in extensive fund-raising to keep the school's budget balanced. The school leader noted that this is the first year that the school will be carrying over a debt. The board has been active in galvanizing the community and has planned several events such as financial seminars for the community in cooperation with the Annie E. Casey Foundation. In addition, the board is involved in ongoing growth and development. The board and school leadership held a retreat in February and the school leader noted that the event was fully attended, whereas retreats had been poorly attended in the early years of the school. One board member yearly leads students on a neighborhood walk of the community, providing them with information on the history and development of the Southeast area.

In summary, the board is knowledgeable, capable, and works hard to support the school. Meeting standard, the SENSE Board of Directors is active and competent in its oversight of the school.

<b>2.4. Is there a high level of parent satisfaction with the school?</b>	
Does not meet standard	Less than 70% of parents surveyed indicate that they are satisfied overall with the school.
Approaching standard	More than 70% but less than 80% of parents surveyed indicate that they are satisfied overall with the school.
Meets standard	More than 80% but less than 90% of parents surveyed indicate that they are satisfied overall with the school.
<b>Exceeds standard</b>	<b>At least 90% of parents surveyed indicate that they are satisfied overall with the school.</b>

**Exceeds Standard.** Averaged across the last four years, 94.4% of parents surveyed indicated that they are satisfied overall with SENSE. In the spring of each year, an anonymous survey is administered to all parents and guardians of students enrolled at the school by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis (2004 to 2007) and the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University (2008). Over the course of the charter term, in no year did less than 93% of parents report being satisfied overall with SENSE (see chart below).

<b>School Year</b>	<b>Percent Satisfied</b>
2004-2005	100%
2005-2006	93%
2006-2007	94%
2007-2008	93%
Multi-Year	94.4%
Weighted Average	

Note: "Percent Satisfied" includes "very satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied" responses which were on a five-point scale that also included "satisfied", "somewhat dissatisfied", and "very dissatisfied".

Source: Confidential survey results administered by the University of Indianapolis (2004 to 2007) and Indiana University (2008).

<b>2.5. Is the school administration strong in its academic and organizational leadership?</b>	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas with no evidence of a credible plan to address them: a) the leadership has insufficient academic and/or business expertise; b) turnover in leadership has been high and/or damaging to the school; c) roles and responsibilities among leaders and between leaders and the Board are generally unclear; d) the school's leadership does not appear to actively engage in a process of continuous improvement; it has made few mid-course corrections in response to problems.

Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas with no evidence of a credible plan to address it: a) the leadership has insufficient academic and/or business expertise; b) turnover in leadership has been high and/or damaging to the school; c) roles and responsibilities among leaders and between leaders and the Board are generally unclear; d) the school's leadership does not appear to actively engage in a process of continuous improvement; it has made few mid-course corrections in response to problems.
Meets standard	The school's leadership a) has sufficient academic and/or business expertise; b) has been sufficiently stable over time; c) has clearly defined roles and responsibilities among leaders and between leaders and the Board; d) actively engages in a process of continuous improvement which has led to some mid-course corrections.
Exceeds standard	The leadership displays exceptional academic and business expertise. Leadership turnover has been manageable and appropriate. Roles and responsibilities among leaders and between leaders and the Board are clear. The leadership has established exemplary processes to engage in continuous improvement which have led to significant enhancements to the school over time.

**Meets Standard:** There is sound academic and organizational leadership at SENSE charter school.

The SENSE leadership team provides effective business and academic expertise. In focus groups, teachers, parents and board members describe the school leader as expert in business and education. Board members note his prior experience as a school leader in Virginia. The board, school leader and teachers express confidence in the knowledge and ability of the Education Director. The administrative team meets weekly to discuss school and student needs/issues. The leadership team has remained stable over time; the Principal/CEO having been with the school since its inception. The Education Director has been at SENSE since year two.

Leadership has clearly defined roles and responsibilities - among leaders and between school leaders and the board. The school leader serves as CEO, CFO and school Principal. The Education Director works specifically with academic issues and teacher development. The school Counselor handles issues of discipline. The roles of other school leaders (e.g. the Title I Director) have also been clearly defined. In focus groups, the board, teachers and leadership all reported and demonstrated clarity around roles and reporting.

Administration and teachers describe an effective process of distributive leadership that involves a variety of committees to support decision making. For example: the Title I Steering Committee; a Strategic Planning Team; and a Leadership Team comprised of representative teachers from each grade level who meet regularly with leadership to discuss teacher concerns and issues.

Strong leadership, effective distribution of personnel resources, and board and parental involvement has led to an exemplary process for ongoing school improvement and numerous mid-course corrections. The following are among the many school improvement and corrections efforts at SENSE:

- Implementation of a school-wide focus on increasing the attendance rate in response to failure to make previous year's AYP based on student attendance statistics.
- Applying for and receiving school-wide Title I status in 2007-2008 to more adequately address the literacy needs of the students.
- Replacing the Core Knowledge Curriculum with new science and social studies curriculums.
- Adding a 6<sup>th</sup> grade in the 2007-08 school year.
- Adding the Indiana Reading Assessment (IRA) to the school assessment plan.

- Adding a new gymnasium within the school building.
- Adding the English as a New Language (ENL) program.
- Developing a school-wide writing process with teacher-developed assessment rubrics.
- Contracting with Sylvan Learning Center to offer additional educational services to Title I students.

In summary, the school leadership, board and staff continuously develop significant enhancements to the school for the purpose of better serving student needs.

<b>2.6. Is the school meeting its school-specific organizational and management performance goals?</b>	
Does not meet standard	School has clearly not met its school-specific organizational goal.
Approaching standard	School is making good progress toward meeting its school-specific organizational goal.
Meets standard	School has clearly met its school-specific organizational goal.
Exceeds standard	School has clearly exceeded its school-specific organizational goal.

**Not Applicable.** The school did not have school-specific organizational and management performance goals that were evaluated for the FYCR.

***Core Question 3: Is the school meeting its operations and access obligations?***

<b>3.1. Has the school satisfactorily completed all of its organizational and governance obligations?</b>	
Does not meet standard	School presents significant concerns in two or more of its organizational and governance obligations as specified in the Compliance and Governance Handbook, with no evidence of a credible plan to address them: a) maintenance of adequate “compliance and governance binder” containing all required documents; b) completion of criminal background checks on all board members; c) transparency of meetings and decision-making in accordance with open meetings obligations; d) maintenance of adequate board minutes.
Approaching standard	School presents significant concerns in one of its organizational and governance obligations as specified in the Compliance and Governance Handbook, with no evidence of a credible plan to address it: a) maintenance of adequate “compliance and governance binder” containing all required documents; b) completion of criminal background checks on all board members; c) transparency of meetings and decision-making in accordance with open meetings obligations; d) maintenance of adequate board minutes
Meets standard	School has substantially completed all of its organizational and governance obligations as specified in the Compliance and Governance Handbook, including: a) maintenance of adequate “compliance and governance binder” containing all required documents; b) completion of criminal background checks on all board members; c) transparency of meetings and decision-making in accordance with open meetings obligations; d) maintenance of adequate board minutes. Any concerns are minor and the school presents a credible plan to address them.

**Meets Standard.** SENSE completed all of its organizational and governance obligations as specified in the Compliance and Governance Handbook. During the school year, the school’s leader was responsible for maintaining the compliance binder and documents, which have been submitted in a timely manner. The school also documents that background checks are conducted for all board members. SENSE complies with public access and open door policy by posting

notices of board meetings. Board meeting minutes are always kept and have been sent to the Mayor's Office in a timely manner.

<b>3.2. Is the school's physical plant safe and conducive to learning?</b>	
Does not meet standard	The facility requires <u>much</u> improvement in order to provide a safe environment that is conducive to learning. Significant health and safety code requirements have not been met AND/OR the school <u>lacks</u> many conditions such as the following: a design well-suited to meet the curricular and social needs of its students, faculty, and community members; a size appropriate for the enrollment and student-teacher ratios in each class; adequate maintenance and security; well-maintained equipment and furniture that match the educational needs of the students; and accessibility to all students.
Approaching standard	Significant health and safety code requirements are being met, but the facility needs <u>some</u> improvement in order to provide a safe environment that is conducive to learning. It <u>partially</u> – but not fully – provides conditions such as the following: a design well-suited to meet the curricular and social needs of its students, faculty, and community members; a size appropriate for the enrollment and student-teacher ratios in each class; good maintenance and security; well-maintained equipment and furniture that match the educational needs of the students; and accessibility to all students.
Meets standard	Significant health and safety code requirements are being met AND the facility generally provides a safe environment that is conducive to learning, based on conditions such as: a design well-suited to meet the curricular and social needs of its students, faculty, and community members; a size appropriate for the enrollment and student-teacher ratios in each class; good maintenance and security; well-maintained equipment and furniture that match the educational needs of the students; and accessibility to all students.

**Meets Standard.** SENSE's facility meets all the health and safety code requirements and provides a safe environment conducive to learning. The facility's design, size, maintenance, security, equipment, and furniture are currently adequate to meet the school's needs. The school is accessible to all including people with physical disabilities.

<b>3.3. Has the school established and implemented a fair and appropriate pupil enrollment process?</b>	
Does not meet standard	The school's enrollment process does not comply with applicable law AND/OR the school exhibits one or both of the following deficiencies a) a substantial number of documented parent complaints suggest that it is not being implemented fairly or appropriately; b) the school has not engaged in outreach to students throughout the community.
Approaching standard	The school's enrollment process complies with applicable law but exhibits one or both the following deficiencies: a) a substantial number of documented parent complaints suggest that it is not being implemented fairly or appropriately; b) the school has not engaged in outreach to students throughout the community.
Meets standard	The school's enrollment process complies with applicable law; there are minimal documented parent complaints suggesting that it is not being implemented fairly or appropriately; AND the school has engaged in outreach to students throughout the community.

**Meets Standard.** SENSE's admission and enrollment practices meet the requirements of Indiana's charter school law. The Mayor's Office has received no complaints from parents regarding the school's enrollment practices. The school conducts extensive outreach to parents

citywide, including advertisement in newspapers, tours by parent ambassadors, job fairs, distribution of brochures, and word of mouth.

The Mayor's Office receives copies of SENSE's enrollment policies and marketing plans. Since its inception, the school has held an admissions lottery when the number of applications received exceeded the number of open seats at the school. The school lottery system gives preference to siblings of current students, as allowed by law.

<b>3.4. Is the school properly maintaining special education files for its special needs students?</b>	
Does not meet standard	The school is not fulfilling its legal obligations regarding proper maintenance of special needs students' files, and requires substantial improvement in order to achieve compliance such as the following: individualized education plans are up-to-date, student evaluations or re-evaluations have occurred within the appropriate timeframe, files contain the relevant required information, such as, file log sheet, parent consent form, documentation of case conference notification to parents and other conference participants and signatures of attendees at case conferences. A school does not meet the standard if any individual education plans have not been updated within the appropriate timeframe.
Approaching standard	The school is not yet completely fulfilling all of its legal obligations proper maintenance of special-needs students' files, and requires <i>some</i> (but not considerable) improvement to fully achieve conditions such as the following: individualized education plans are up-to-date, student evaluations or re-evaluations have occurred within the appropriate timeframe, files contain the relevant required information, such as, file log sheet, parent consent form, documentation of case conference notification to parents and other conference participants and signatures of attendees at case conferences.
Meets standard	The school is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding special-needs students, as indicated by conditions such as the following: individualized education plans are up-to-date, student evaluations or re-evaluations have occurred within the appropriate timeframe, files contain the relevant required information, such as, file log sheet, parent consent form, documentation of case conference notification to parents and other conference participants and signatures of attendees at case conferences.

**Meets Standard.** SENSE currently meets the standard established for proper maintenance of students' special education files.

In order to evaluate this question, expert analysts conducted a file review in the spring of 2008 of the school's special education files. All files were found to be in compliance and to contain up-to-date Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Case conferences had been held within the required one year time period. All files contained documentation regarding initial referrals, parent consent, findings from evaluations, parent notification of rights and case conference details, appropriate test and testing accommodations, and current case conference information. All case conferences and triennial reviews are being completed in a timely fashion. In some instances, parents gave permission for the case conference without their participation or the parent participated by telephone (but ultimately agreed with and signed the findings from the case conference), and in one instance the general education teacher participated by telephone.

<b>3.5. Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related To access and services to English as Second Language (ESL) students?</b>	
Does not meet standard	The school is <u>not</u> fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ESL students, and requires substantial improvement in order to achieve conditions such as the following: appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.
Approaching standard	The school is <u>not yet completely</u> fulfilling all of its legal obligations regarding ESL students, and requires <i>some</i> (but not considerable) improvement to fully achieve conditions such as the following: appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.
Meets standard	The school is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ESL students, as indicated by conditions such as the following: appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.

**Not Applicable.** SENSE was not evaluated on this indicator as a part of the Fourth Year Charter Review.

***Core Question 4: Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?***

<b>4.1. Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?</b>	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum does not align with the state standards; b) the school does not conduct systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school does not regularly review scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) the sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas does not focus on core (prioritized) learning objectives; e) the staff lacks understanding and/or consensus as to how the curriculum documents and related program materials are used to effectively deliver instruction; f) there is a lack of programs and materials available to deliver the curriculum effectively.
<b>Approaching standard</b>	<b>The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum does not align with the state standards; b) the school does not conduct systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school does not regularly review scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) the sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas does not focus on core (prioritized) learning objectives; e) the staff lacks understanding and/or consensus as to how the curriculum documents and related program materials are used to effectively deliver instruction; f) there is a lack of programs and materials available to deliver the curriculum effectively.</b>
Meets standard	The school: a) curriculum aligns with the state standards; b) conducts systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school regularly reviews scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) has a sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas that is prioritized and focuses on the core learning objectives; e) the staff understands and uniformly uses curriculum documents and related program materials to effectively deliver instruction; f) programs and materials are available to deliver the curriculum effectively.

**Approaching Standard:** The school has curricula and supporting materials. It is not clear, however, that the curriculum is being implemented uniformly, especially in mathematics.

The school is striving to ensure that all enacted curriculum meets Indiana State Academic Standards. In focus groups teachers described Indiana standards as the primary learning objectives. The standards are posted at the entrance to every classroom.

SENSE uses Open Court curriculum for language arts, Everyday Mathematics for math at all grade levels and newly adopted curricula for both science and social studies. These prepared curricula are sequenced topically across grade levels and content areas. However, in order to guarantee coverage that is prioritized and focused on the core learning objectives (Indiana standards) all adopted curriculum is reviewed and aligned with standards and then Time and Content sheets are developed to help teachers pace and assess instruction.

All of the student assessment information (see section 4.3) is computerized and available to teachers. This system allows teachers and leadership a process for tracking mastery of state standards and provides access to individual and classroom achievement on each standard. Curriculum review is ongoing and both math and language arts have been fully reviewed for alignment with standards and topic sequence.

The school has a fluid and ongoing process to review the curriculum and identify gaps based on student performance. At the beginning of each school year, teachers prepare pacing guides for math and language arts (which are posted outside of each classroom). The pacing guides provide a framework for the Education Director to develop quarterly Time and Content sheets outlining the academic standards for math, language arts and special subjects, such as Spanish, art, music and physical education. Teachers and school leaders report that the Time and Content sheets are integral to the coverage of standards, because they provide a tracking mechanism for teaching and assessing standards. Teachers track how often standards are taught and document that information daily. Each quarter, the Education Director reviews the tracking information and student assessment results (providing information on student mastery of individual standards) to develop the Time and Content sheets for the next quarter. Standards that need to be re-taught are incorporated into the new Time and Content sheets.

Teachers and leadership report that all teachers are guided by Time and Content sheets which ensure curricular alignment with state standards. This alignment is specific to all math and language arts standards (science and social studies are in development). Teachers use Time and Content sheets to pace instructional delivery and to make certain that standards are taught and assessed. Daily agendas and/or activities were posted in 7 of 13 classrooms. Teachers use supplementary materials to enhance or further align curriculums with standards and to meet student needs.

The school regularly reviews scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing. The results of NWEA testing, given four times per year, provides RIT scores and information that is documented and consistently available to teachers enabling them to focus on skill development and content to improve student test scores. The curriculum committee which includes teachers, board members and parents are in the process of reviewing the social studies and science curriculum for alignment to state standards.

The math and language arts curriculum review exposed gaps and problems with coverage in the math curriculum. Though leadership has worked to correct these, teachers consistently report a lack of understanding as to how and when to use the math curriculum. Over 75% of grade level classroom teachers report that they do not regularly use the math curriculum and need additional resources and understanding of how to better provide math instruction. A number of teachers report problems with

the language arts curriculum as well, stating that they often deviate from this curriculum because it often does not meet students' needs.

The Everyday Mathematics curriculum (adopted at the school's inception) has proven problematic in terms of meeting student needs. Leadership and teachers report that gaps have necessitated supplementing and at times "ignoring" the curriculum to provide students with effective instruction and help them master basic concepts. To that end, the school has implemented additional math instruction (enhancements to math curriculum) called "Mastering Math Facts."

In focus groups, teachers describe the Everyday Math curriculum as "too structured," "ineffective," and "does not allow for student mastery" of critical content skills. Five teachers expressed concerns with the pace and lack of appropriateness and drills for students in lower ability levels. Five teachers also reported that the curriculum is too restrictive and inflexible. Time and Content sheets and the addition of Mastery Math Facts are supposed to correct the problems with Everyday Math, as the leadership team recognizes that students aren't being adequately served. However, there is still a lack of clarity among teachers as to how to provide the most effective instruction in mathematics. The majority of teachers report that though the Time and Content sheets provide a framework for covering standards, they still need additional clarity around how the math curriculum is presented at each grade level. Mastering Math Facts is provided to supplement the curriculum, however, teachers report a need for additional resources for supplementing the curriculum. Many teachers expressed a desire for a completely new math curriculum and believe that the school's charter prohibits this action. One teacher stated that she didn't think that the Educational Director understood the limits of Everyday Math.

Teachers and parents report that curricular resources are available, though several teachers stated that these resources were sometimes hard to find. The site team observed well stocked classrooms with books and individual whiteboards, math manipulatives and other resources. However, both leadership and teachers report deficiencies in the area of technology. Although there is a computer room, teachers report that most computers do not have word processing or printing capabilities. Saving items from the computer is difficult as well. The site team did not observe use of technology in classrooms or student use of technology in computer room.

In summary, although the school is striving to develop strong and effective curricula in all subject areas, there are problems with some adopted programs that have not been fully resolved. Despite efforts to attend to gaps and inefficiencies with Everyday Mathematics, the staff reports confusion around the implementation of the math curriculum and struggles to understand and uniformly deliver math instruction.

<b>4.2. Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?</b>	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum is not implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is not focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery lacks the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities lack variety and/or limited use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) staff do not receive feedback on instructional practices.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum is not implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is not focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and

	content delivery lacks the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities lack variety and/or limited use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) staff do not receive feedback on instructional practices.
Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) the curriculum is implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery possesses the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities possess variety and/or use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) supplies sufficient feedback to staff on instructional practices.

**Meets Standard:** Pedagogies at SENSE are consistent with the school's mission.

As described in section 4.1, curriculum and instruction at SENSE is based on the state standards. In focus groups, teachers reported that instruction is focused on state standards and essential skills; the Indiana standards are described as the primary learning objectives. Observations by the site team noted standards are posted at the entrance to every classroom. Pacing guides for Open Court reading and Everyday Mathematics were posted at all classroom doors. The site team observed alignment between the posted pacing guides and content and skills being taught in the classroom.

The pace and content of instruction at SENSE was found to possess adequate levels of rigor and challenge. Higher order thinking through teacher questions and student responses were observed in 70% of classrooms (9 out of 13). For example, third grade students were observed hypothesizing the reasons why a chili pepper is hot. One student surmised that the plant must contain a hot chemical for protection. Other students presented ideas and were encouraged to think further. In a fourth grade class, students were asked to think about and explain the concept of density. Second grade students were asked to consider, "Why do people write poems?" Teachers were heard probing for analysis and elaboration, as when one teacher encouraged further thought, stating: "I am getting too many vague statements" and "Why is the rock grey on the outside and yellow on the inside?" Additionally, the site team observed high levels of student engagement (80 to 100 percent of students engaged) in at least 70% of classrooms. Transitions between classrooms and/or activities were frequent, but in the majority of instances, proceeded quickly and with minimal interruption of instructional time.

The site team observed a variety of instructional activities and strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities, and learning styles. Teachers provided hands-on leaning activities in 50% of classrooms and group work in 6 of 13 classrooms. Students were engaged in independent practice in 10 of 13 classes, often receiving individual assistance from teachers and/or teacher aides, and guided practice was observed in 8 of 13 classes. The site team also observed whole group instruction, with all students engaged in the same direct instruction, incorporating whole classroom discussion of concepts.

Leadership and teachers report that all math and language arts instruction at SENSE is differentiated based upon NWEA scores. Students are grouped by scores in order to individualize instruction. Groups are not static as students retest four times a year. Within the overall groups, students are further divided into subgroups for various activities based on interest, strengths and challenges. The site team examined tests from high and low level ability groups and determined that the learning goals were the same, though expectations for demonstrating mastery differed.

Teachers are observed formally and informally by leadership and peers who provide feedback on instructional practice. Teachers report frequent observations and feedback, though some would like even more feedback on instructional practice.

In summary, SENSE teachers employ a variety of pedagogies to provide differentiated and effective instruction to students, including ability grouping, direct instruction, independent practice, hands on instruction, and guided instruction. These instructional practices are consistent with the school's mission of nurturing academic excellence.

<b>4.3. For secondary students, does the school provide sufficient guidance on and support preparation for post-secondary options?</b>	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) the school's academic program lacks challenging coursework (e.g., Advanced Placement courses, internships, independent study) to prepare students for rigorous post-secondary opportunities; b) lack of high expectations to motivate and prepare students for post-secondary academic opportunities; c) insufficient material resources and personnel guidance available to inform students of post-secondary options; d) limited opportunities for extracurricular engagement and activities (e.g., athletics, academic clubs, vocational) to increase post-secondary options; e) the school does not meet Indiana Core 40 graduation standard requirements.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) the school's academic program lacks challenging coursework (e.g., Advanced Placement courses, internships, independent study) to prepare students for rigorous post-secondary opportunities; b) lack of high expectations to motivate and prepare students for post-secondary academic opportunities; c) insufficient material resources and personnel guidance available to inform students of post-secondary options; d) limited opportunities for extracurricular engagement and activities (e.g., athletics, academic clubs, vocational) to increase post-secondary options; e) the school does not meet Indiana Core 40 graduation standard requirements.
Meets standard	The school: a) has challenging coursework (e.g., Advanced Placement courses, internships, independent study) to prepare students for rigorous post-secondary opportunities; b) has high expectations to motivate and prepare students for post-secondary academic opportunities; c) has sufficient material resources and personnel guidance available to inform students of post-secondary options; d) presents opportunities for extracurricular engagement and activities (e.g., athletics, academic clubs, vocational) to increase post-secondary options; e) meets or exceeds Indiana Core 40 graduation standard requirements.

**Not Applicable.** This sub-question is not applicable to SENSE, because it does not serve secondary students.

<b>4.4. Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?</b>	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are not accurate or useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are not received by classroom teachers in a timely or useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments lack sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is limited frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are not used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are not accurate or useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are not received by classroom teachers in a timely or useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments lack sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is limited frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are not used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.

Meets standard	The school: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are accurate and useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are received by classroom teachers in a timely and useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments have sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is sufficient frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.
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**Meets Standard:** SENSE effectively uses learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction.

A range of standardized and classroom assessments are used at SENSE, which provide accurate and useful measures of student learning. In focus groups, teachers and the leadership team reported the school uses the Indiana Reading Assessment twice a year for all students in Kindergarten through grade two, providing baseline and growth achievement data. All SENSE students take the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) test four times per year. The RIT scores from the NWEA are used to differentiate ability groups and inform academic needs. Teachers report that they test weekly in Open Court reading/language arts, spelling and mathematics. They also generate regular assessments based upon the Time and Content sheets, which provide instructional information on student mastery of Indiana Academic Standards.

The teacher-developed assessments of state standards (must be 80% to achieve mastery –school wide) and corresponding scores are used to adjust instruction and create additional differentiation of instruction. All teachers receive the results of standardized assessments in a timely fashion. NWEA tests are given via the computer and the results are immediately accessible. Both students and teachers track student scores, which is a very effective incentive for many students who work to increase their scores with each test. Teachers report that formative assessments are used to adjust instruction, re-teach particular content and arrange sub-groups of students who need additional help or enrichment.

A wide variety of assessments are used to inform instructional decisions and to meet different student needs, including, NWEA, ISTEP, Indiana Reading Assessment, classroom unit and formative assessments. Students in Title I receive additional assessment including Word Analysis, Orten-Gillingham, and Sylvan exams. In focus groups, teachers and leadership report student ability groups were assessed differently. Students are assessed frequently in order to maintain flexibility of grouping and meet the needs of students. Student mastery of specific Indiana standards is reported to families quarterly, along with traditional report cards.

The Education Director monitors assessment results regularly and scrutinizes the results in order to develop the next quarter's Time and Content sheets. If students have not mastered a concept during one quarter, it is re-taught the next. Teachers monitor student RIT scores and formative assessments to further develop focused and intentional instruction. The site team observed written and computerized documentation of individual student scores, used frequently by teachers and leadership.

In summary, the school uses standards and assessments very effectively to inform and improve instruction. Students are assessed frequently, both formally and formatively, with the results used to inform instructional decision making at individual levels to meet student needs. This practice is integral to the schools overall educational process.

<b>4.5. Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?</b>	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) hiring processes are not organized to support the success of new staff members; b) inefficient or insufficient deployment of faculty and staff limits instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are not certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) does not relate to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD is not determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is not explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) hiring processes are not organized to support the success of new staff members; b) inefficient or insufficient deployment of faculty and staff limits instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are not certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) does not relate to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD is not determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is not explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.
Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) hiring processes are organized and used to support the success of new staff members; b) the school deploys sufficient number of faculty and staff to maximize instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) is related to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD opportunities are determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.

**Meets Standard:** SENSE has developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively.

SENSE hiring processes are organized and used to support the success of new staff members. There is not a written hiring process, but the school leadership outlined an explicit process that includes several interviews beginning with the CEO and administrative team. Selected candidates are then interviewed by teachers and complete a demonstration lesson before a hiring decision is made. One newly hired teacher reported that she felt well supported and that the orientation process had been sufficient: there has been ongoing communication and support from leadership and colleagues. In focus groups, teachers and leadership outlined the orientation session that takes place prior to the beginning of school. Teachers indicated they know what to expect, even the teacher who was newly hired (two weeks).

The school deploys sufficient number of faculty and staff to maximize instructional time and capacity. The site team observed 18 or fewer students in all classrooms. At the younger grade levels, teachers had assistants in the room. The Spanish teacher provided instruction to all students twice a week. Teachers in special subject areas reported that students take all special classes twice a week, including art, music and physical education. The school currently employs three Title I teachers and contracts with Sylvan to provide additional assistance to students who need extra help in reading.

Students were frequently observed transitioning to different classrooms, for differentiated instruction or to attend special classes such as art or Spanish. These transitions proceeded quickly and smoothly in almost every instance. However, this type of scheduling requires absolute attention to time or, as in one instance, the lag will be problematic for other teachers. The school leader noted and the site team verified through interviews, that all teachers are certified to teach in the areas to which they are assigned. SENSE employs adequate staff to meet student needs including areas of Title I and ESL students.

Professional development is available based on teacher input. In focus groups, teachers noted they have input in professional development decisions. The leadership team describes professional development as teacher generated. A formal survey process has been implemented to identify teacher interests and concerns for professional development. These interests are balanced with work in areas such as understanding data for improved academic performance.

The teacher evaluation plan is explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria. Leadership and teachers report that teachers are formally evaluated twice a year based on a framework with specific domains. Leadership and many teachers also report that informal evaluations provide feedback to teachers on an ongoing basis. However, several teachers expressed a desire for more attention in that regard, including more frequent classroom visits from administration.

Teachers report that they also generate their own self-evaluation and professional growth plans in which they identify one specific domain for focus each year (e.g. classroom management). They then pair with a colleague who indicates a similar "domain," and the two evaluate each other regularly based on the identified domain. In focus groups, teachers expressed great satisfaction with the peer-review process. Each teacher develops personal professional development goals as a part of their self-evaluation and using their goals as a framework, they are allocated \$300 to attend a one day conference of their choosing. Teachers and leadership report that teachers have developed additional time for discussing issues and ideas after school, an informal process called Staff Chats.

In summary, the school employs adequate faculty and staff to meet student needs and implements sufficient processes for evaluation and feedback to teachers. The staff is provided with multiple opportunities for professional development and all teachers report that the processes for self and peer evaluation are particularly beneficial. Leadership and staff are intentional in their focus on student learning and developing strategies for increasing student success.

4.6. Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>both</u> of the following areas: a) significant disagreements exist among stakeholders about the school's mission; b) there is a lack of widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) significant disagreements exist among stakeholders about the school's mission; b) there is a lack of widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.
Meets standard	The school: a) has a mission that is shared by all stakeholders; b) has stakeholders possessing widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.

**Meets Standard:** The SENSE mission is clearly understood by all stakeholders.

The SENSE community shares an understanding of the school's mission. As stated in the *SENSE Student and Parent Handbook*, the mission is:

*Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence, Inc. (SENSE) is a community-driven elementary school that nurtures academic excellence, social development and civic responsibility in every individual.*

In focus groups, parents, teachers, students, and leadership articulated the mission of the school. Students recite the mission daily and most of the students interviewed could recite the school

mission from memory. The school's mission is posted inside and outside of every classroom, in school newsletters, and the student and teacher handbooks.

Stakeholders possess widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission. The board reported a very strong commitment to the SENSE identity as "The Neighborhood School." Teachers, parents and Board members describe school leadership as dedicated. Site team members frequently heard stakeholders describe the Principal as a person "who would do anything" for the school.

Parents express love for the school and desire a middle school component so that their older students can continue their education at SENSE. In a focus group, parents unanimously stated that the staff is caring, dedicated, and treats each child as an individual. One hundred percent of the parent focus group expressed support of the school and its mission. One parent stated, "I would put this school above all the parochial schools I have sent my kids to." Parents agreed that the school has high expectations and within the SENSE community, the "quality of life has improved."

Enrollment documents show that the SENSE school has increased its population of English as a New Language (ENL) students and the board and leadership report a concerted effort to increase the diversity of the school population to ensure it reflects the diversity of the neighborhood.

The mission of SENSE is well understood by all stakeholders and it is clear that school leadership and the board continually seek ways to increase the school's connections with the community. SENSE is striving to become **the** neighborhood school and to strengthen the Southeast area of Indianapolis. Moving forward, the school's ongoing pursuit of academic and civic goals for students will ensure that the school continues to enhance the lives of those in the Southeast community.

<b>4.7. Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?</b>	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas with no evidence of a credible plan to address them: a) The school does not have clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior; b) the school's discipline approach does not possess high expectations for student behavior; c) interactions between faculty and students are disrespectful and/or unsupportive and there are non-existing or unclear processes for resolution of conflicts; d) interactions between faculty and administration are unprofessional and/or unproductive.
<b>Approaching standard</b>	<b>The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas with no evidence of a credible plan to address it: a) The school does not have clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior; b) the school's discipline approach does not possess high expectations for student behavior; c) interactions between faculty and students are disrespectful and/or unsupportive and there are non-existing or unclear processes for resolution of conflicts; d) interactions between faculty and administration are unprofessional and/or unproductive.</b>
Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) the school has clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior; b) the school's discipline approach possesses high expectations for student behavior; c) interactions between faculty and students are respectful and supportive and faculty and students are clear about processes for resolution of conflicts; d) interactions between faculty and administration are professional and constructive.

**Approaching Standard:** Most areas of the school climate and culture are conducive to student and staff success. However, teachers report concerns regarding job security and support from administration and, therefore, SENSE received approaching standard on this indicator

The school has clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior. The school behavior plan is outlined in the Family Handbook. Classroom behavior plans vary based upon the teacher's specific rules. Students who diverge from the rules and cannot be redirected are sent to the Refocus Room which is staffed by the school Counselor. The Counselor has specific discipline procedures in place. Situations that warrant additional support are referred to the Principal and Education Director. In focus groups, students reported knowing and understanding the rules of conduct at SENSE.

Teachers and school leadership reported that expectations for student behavior are high and site visit team observations support that view. In focus groups, the majority of teachers described the discipline policy as effective and consistently implemented. However, a few teachers stated that students were sent back into the classrooms too soon after a serious infraction.

Classroom observations conducted by the site visit team demonstrated high levels of student engagement and strong classroom management practices. In the majority of classrooms, 80%-100% of students were engaged or on-task. Behavior expectations were posted in 62% of classrooms and the site team observed clear consequences for misbehavior in 7 of 13 classrooms. The site team observed clear rewards for positive behavior in 62% of classes.

Focus groups with school stakeholders indicated there are respectful and supportive interactions between faculty and students. All stakeholders are clear about processes for resolution of conflicts. The Counselor also reported forming positive relationships with students. "When students are doing fine, I also call them in to see me." The site team observed respectful interactions between faculty and students. For example, teachers redirected students or gave warnings in a quiet and non-threatening manner.

Although interactions between faculty and administration are professional, the majority of teachers report real concerns about communication and trust. In focus groups, teachers expressed fear that they might lose their jobs without benefit of the teacher improvement process that was constructed and approved by leadership. With regard to leadership, one teacher stated that "it's important to stay on their good side." One teacher reported that "you can't be completely open" and another stated often being "afraid to go" to leadership with problems. Several teachers reported that despite what appeared to be good feedback on job performance, there was a reality that one could be dismissed due to funding or for some other reason, without warning. It was generally understood by teachers that, "if you come to work here, you have to be a team player," as the school leader stated. Leadership was generally unaware of the level of concern and uncertainty expressed by teachers, though confirmed that there had been teacher dismissals which likely led to some anxiety among staff.

In summary, high expectations for student behavior are evident at SENSE. Communications between teachers, students and administration are respectful. However, there is a lack of clear communication between faculty and administration that leads to uncertainty among the staff with respect to job performance and job security and affects levels of trust at the school.

<b>4.8. Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?</b>	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) there is a lack of active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) school communication is neither timely nor relevant to the parental concerns; c) student academic progress and achievement reports are not clearly reported and/or misunderstood; d) the school's communication methods are not well-designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of

	parents (e.g., not communicating in parents' native languages, communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at inconvenient times for parents).
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) there is a lack of active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) school communication is neither timely nor relevant to the parental concerns; c) student academic progress and achievement reports are not clearly reported and/or misunderstood; d) the school's communication methods are not well-designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., not communicating in parents' native languages, communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at inconvenient times for parents).
Meets standard	The school: a) has active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) utilizes communications that are both timely and relevant to the parental concerns; c) communicates student academic progress and achievement in reports that are understood by parents; d) the school's communication methods are designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., communicating in parents' native languages, not communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at convenient times for parents).

**Meets Standard:** Communications with students and parents are ongoing, clear and helpful at SENSE charter school.

The school demonstrates active and ongoing communications that are both timely and relevant to parental concerns. These include weekly progress reports for Kindergarten students, emails, phone calls, report cards and newsletters. In focus groups, parents reported frequent communication with staff via emails, phone calls and progress reports. Parents were pleased with the immediate contact from teachers when student issues arise. For example, one parent noted that her son's teacher called because, "my son lost his tooth. She [the teacher] wasn't sure if he lost it at home or at school. I mean, not every teacher would care enough to call a parent just to let them know that her son lost his tooth."

The school communicates student academic progress and achievement in reports that are understood by parents. The school disseminates report cards to parents every quarter. The site team reviewed a sample report card and noted that it is comprehensive, providing details on attendance, personal and social growth, and academic performance. Report cards also list academic standards and show student progress toward mastery of each standard. Report cards and other communications that are not available in Spanish, are translated for parents/guardians by SENSE staff. In addition, the school has regular parent/teacher conferences that are very well attended. The school leader reports that including a few phone interviews, parental participation in these conferences approaches or meets 100%.

The school's communication methods are designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., communicating in parents' native languages, not communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at convenient times for parents). The SENSE newsletters are available in Spanish. The school website includes forms that are in Spanish. The school employs both a Spanish teacher and the English as a New Language (ENL) teacher, full time. In focus groups, board members, teachers and the school leader noted that there is a weekly newsletter which is distributed by the school every week.

To meet the school's mission of focusing on the neighborhood and bringing the neighborhood together, the school and school board have initiated numerous programs including, Doughnuts for Dads, Muffins for Moms, and grade-level dinners. The board includes one parent member who told the site team that within their community, SENSE had changed people's lives for the better.

In summary, evidence collected by the site team through focus groups with stakeholders and document reviews indicates that the school meets standard with regard to providing clear, helpful and ongoing communication with parents.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **FOURTH YEAR CHARTER REVIEW TEAM**

The Fourth Year Charter Review site visit to the SENSE Charter School was conducted on APRIL 14-16, 2008 by a team of educators.

**Dina Stephens, Ph.D.**, Team Leader, Independent Consultant

**Terrence Harewood, Ph. D.**, Team Member, Assistant Professor, University of Indianapolis

**Blanche Ryan**, Team Member, Independent Consultant