

SOUTHEAST NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT #10 DETAILED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT & PROFILE



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This supplemental report presents information about the school in three sections:

- Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence's Students (enrollment and demographic information)
- Performance at Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence
- Detailed Description of Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence's Programs and Activities (as provided by the school)

2005

City of
Indianapolis
Bart Peterson, Mayor



SOUTHEAST NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

DETAILED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT & PROFILE

STUDENTS

Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence

A ENROLLMENT AND DEMAND

	2004-05	At Capacity
Grades served	K-3	K-5
Maximum possible enrollment, pursuant to charter	160	240
Number of students enrolled ¹	115	N/A
Number of students on waiting list ²	21	N/A

¹Source: Indiana Department of Education website, based on school's Pupil Enrollment Count reported every October. ■ ²Source: School self-report of data, as of August 1, 2005. ■ N/A denotes "Not Applicable." A school may elect to maintain a smaller overall enrollment than that allowed by its Charter with the Mayor's Office. Actual enrollment may exceed the maximum enrollment stated in the Charter by 10%. It is possible that a school may have a waiting list but not be fully enrolled because waiting list figures are aggregated across grades; some grades may be fully enrolled and have waiting lists while others do not.

Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence

C STUDENTS PASSING ISTEP+ TESTS

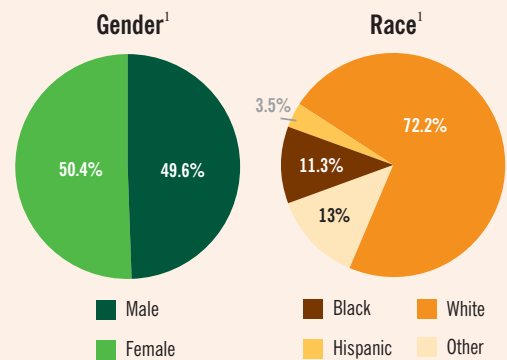
At the Beginning of the Fall Semester

	English '04	Math '04	Both (English & Math) '04	Science '04
3rd Graders	42%	17%	8%	

Source: Indiana Department of Education. See page 9 in the main report for statewide data. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Blank areas denote that Indiana did not offer a particular subject test in that grade for that year; or there were no students in the applicable grade in this school at the time of testing.

Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence

B STUDENT COMPOSITION



	Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence
Free/Reduced-Price Lunch ²	57.8%
Special Education ³	2.6%
Limited English Proficiency ⁴	0.0%

¹Source: Indiana Department of Education website, based on school's Pupil Enrollment Count reported every October. ■ ²Source: School self-report of data. The Indiana Department of Education website lists free and reduced price lunch data only for schools who reported this information in October 2004. This school did not report free and reduced price lunch data to the Indiana Department of Education in October 2004; the Mayor's Office thus collected this information directly from the school for October 2004. ■ ³Source: Indiana Department of Education Division of Exceptional Learners, count reported December 2004. ■ ⁴Source: Indiana Department of Education Division of Language and Minority Programs, count reported March 2005. ■ See main report for comparative data.

PERFORMANCE

The section below describes Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence's (SENSE) performance over its first school year by addressing the common performance indicators in the Mayor's Charter School Performance Framework. The complete Performance

Framework may be viewed on-line at <http://www.indygov.org/eGov/Mayor/Education/Charter/Accountability/2005/home.htm>.

The Mayor's Office conducts evaluations of school performance using a variety of measurement tools, including visits by a multi-member site evaluation team,

independent surveys of parents and staff, and expert analysis of standardized test score data. Each section of the following text notes the specific tools used. Supplemental Report 12 contains a complete description of evaluation mechanisms used to prepare this report.

IS THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM A SUCCESS?

IS THE SCHOOL MAKING ADEQUATE YEARLY ACADEMIC PROGRESS, AS MEASURED BY THE INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY?

Performance on the statewide assessment

Though SENSE students took the state's ISTEP+ exams, they did so shortly after the school opened at the beginning of the school year. As a result, the school's results on the state tests reflect students'

starting levels of academic achievement rather than the school's performance. Because these scores do not reflect on the success of the school's educational program, they are not included here. See ■ **CHART C** for information about the school's ISTEP+ scores in fall 2004.

Adequate Yearly Progress

Information about Adequate Yearly Progress is not available for this school because it just completed its first year of operation.

ARE STUDENTS MAKING ADEQUATE AND SUBSTANTIAL GAINS OVER TIME?

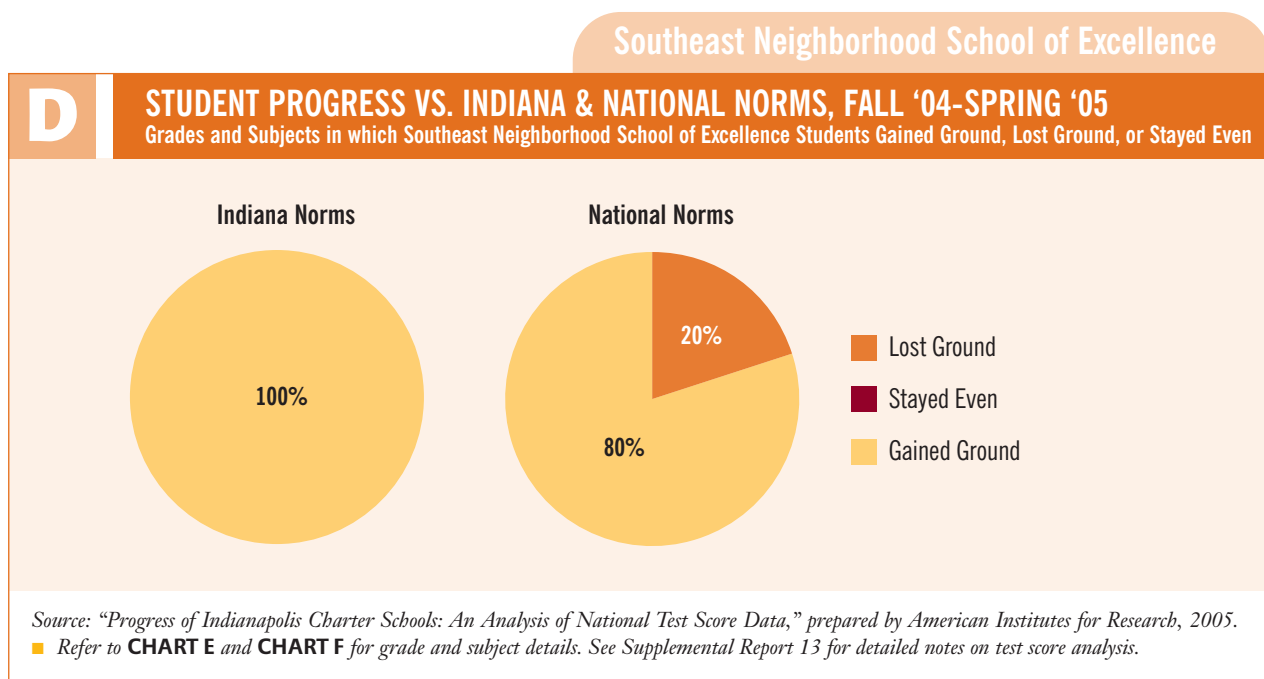
Charter schools administered the highly-regarded Northwest Evaluation Association’s (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test in reading, math, and language in both the fall and the spring. American Institutes for Research (AIR), a major nonprofit research organization, analyzed the results for the Mayor’s Office to answer two questions about how much students learned over the course of the 2004-05 academic year:

- Did students gain ground, lose ground, or stay even relative to their peers nationally and in Indiana?
- What proportion of students made sufficient progress to reach proficiency over time?

Comparative Gains: How much did Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence students improve relative to their peers?

AIR was able to compare the average gains of students at SENSE with those of

students across Indiana (■ **CHART E**) and the US (■ **CHART F**). The figures show where SENSE students gained ground, lost ground, or stayed even relative to their peers. As the pie charts below show, SENSE students gained ground relative to their Indiana peers in all three (100%) grades and subjects (■ **CHART D**). They gained ground relative to their national peers in four out of five (80%) grades and subjects (■ **CHART D**).



Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence

E

ACADEMIC PROGRESS OF STUDENTS

Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence vs. Indiana Norms (IN), Fall 2004 Through Spring 2005

Grade/Subject	Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence Gains vs. IN Gains		Gained or Lost Ground		
	School Gains	IN Gains	Gained Ground	Stayed Even	Lost Ground
2nd Grade Math	14.3	-			
2nd Grade Reading	19.9	-			
2nd Grade Language	19.6	-			
3rd Grade Math	12.4	10.6	1.8		
3rd Grade Reading	10.7	9.0	1.7		
3rd Grade Language	13.6	8.5	5.1		

How to Read this Figure: The fourth row, as an example, under the Grade/Subject column is 3rd grade math. The numbers in that row show that 3rd grade students at SENSE made an average gain of 12.4 points, compared to 10.6 points for the average IN student. These students “gained ground” compared to the average IN student because their average gains were 1.8 points higher.

Source: “Progress of Indianapolis Charter Schools: An Analysis of National Test Score Data,” prepared by American Institutes for Research, 2005. ■ A notation of “-” indicates that no comparison data are available for that grade and subject. Students are said to have “gained ground” or “lost ground” if their average growth differed from that of the norm group to a statistically significant degree. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on test score analysis.

Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence

F

ACADEMIC PROGRESS OF STUDENTS

Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence vs. National Norms (US), Fall 2004 Through Spring 2005

Grade/Subject	Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence Gains vs. US Gains		Gained or Lost Ground		
	School Gains	US Gains	Gained Ground	Stayed Even	Lost Ground
2nd Grade Math	14.3	15.7			-1.4
2nd Grade Reading	19.9	14.9	5.0		
2nd Grade Language	19.6	-			
3rd Grade Math	12.4	11.8	0.6		
3rd Grade Reading	10.7	10.4	0.3		
3rd Grade Language	13.6	9.3	4.3		

How to Read this Figure: The first row, as an example, under the Grade/Subject column is 2nd grade math. The numbers in that row show that 2nd grade students at SENSE made an average gain of 14.3 points, compared to 15.7 points for the average US student. These students “lost ground” compared to the average US student because their average gains were 1.4 points lower.

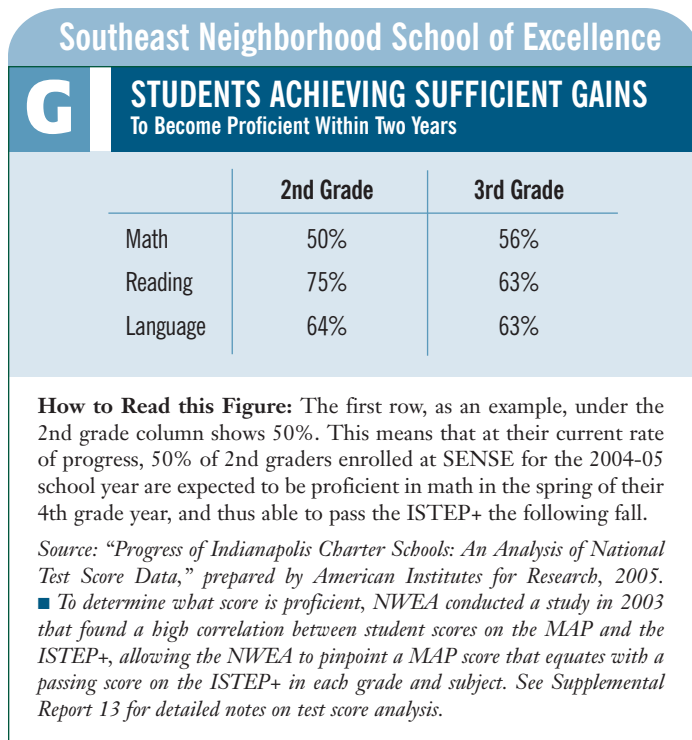
Source: “Progress of Indianapolis Charter Schools: An Analysis of National Test Score Data,” prepared by American Institutes for Research, 2005. ■ A notation of “-” indicates that no comparison data are available for that grade and subject. Students are said to have “gained ground” or “lost ground” if their average growth differed from that of the norm group to a statistically significant degree. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on test score analysis.

Sufficient Gains: What proportion of students is on track to reach proficiency?

AIR projected each SENSE student's future MAP test score based on the gain he or she achieved between fall 2004 and spring 2005. If the student continued to gain at the same rate, would he or she be

proficient in the subject within two years, and therefore able to pass the ISTEP+ the following fall? If so, he or she made "sufficient gains." This year's standard for "sufficient gains" is considerably higher than in last year's report, in which AIR counted a student's gains as "sufficient" if the student would become proficient by

8th grade – a relatively long time horizon for younger students. This year, the analysis projects out no more than two years for any student. AIR calculated the percentage of students who made sufficient gains in each subject and grade. ■ **CHART G** displays the results.



IS THE ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVE AND WELL-RUN?

Is the school in sound fiscal health?

The Mayor’s Office commissioned an outside accounting firm to review each school’s finances. The accounting firm reported that SENSE managed its financial practices satisfactorily during the past year, with no significant problems. Supplemental Report 11 contains financial statements and a summary of the school’s finances.

Are the school’s student enrollment, attendance, and retention rates strong?

The school’s attendance rate was 91.1% in 2004-05 (■ **CHART H**). The school enrolled 45 students fewer than its maximum possible enrollment in 2004-05; the site team recommended that the school take action to ensure that future enrollment targets are reached.

Is the school’s Board active and competent in its oversight?

Governance reviews conducted by the Mayor’s Office in 2004-05 revealed that the SENSE Board of Directors was scheduled to meet monthly, but cancelled two meetings in 2004-05. The school held meetings open to the public and properly posted advance notice of Board meetings. A review of the meeting minutes showed that the Board committees and the school’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO) present reports to the full Board at each meeting. The school should consider including more detail in the Board meeting minutes – particularly on the discussion undertaken by the Board on various school issues – to ensure that the public can understand all business conducted at the meetings. In addition, the language included in the minutes to indicate Board action on an item is not sufficient. Any action taken by

the Board should clearly state the motion made and approved by Board members and report the results of the vote taken.

A primary concern identified by the governance review was a lack of participation in Board meetings and school activities by some Board members in 2004-05. The school experienced some leadership challenges in 2004-05 and would benefit from more engaged Board members. The Board members’ poor attendance at monthly meetings indicates that they are not actively contributing to the school’s success. In addition, Board committees cancelled meetings throughout the school year and should make a commitment to meet regularly and report to the full Board at monthly meetings in the 2005-06 school year. The school may benefit from recruiting additional Board members with specific expertise to replace members who do not attend meetings.

Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence

H

ATTENDANCE RATE IN 2004-05 SCHOOL YEAR

	Attendance Rate
Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence	91.1%
Indianapolis Public Schools	94.2%
All Indiana Public Schools	95.9%

Source: Indiana Department of Education website, preliminary figures.

Is there a high level of parent satisfaction with the school?

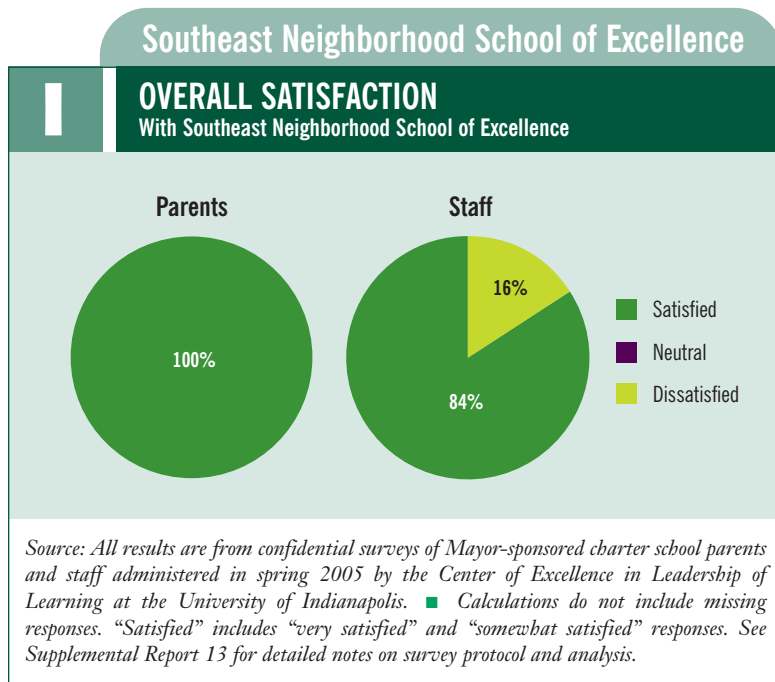
Every parent surveyed (100%) indicated that they were either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with SENSE, as shown in **CHART I**. Consistent with those findings, all parents surveyed also say that they are likely to recommend the school to others, and nearly all (98%) plan on returning to the school in 2005-06. SENSE staff survey results show a slightly lower level of school satisfaction: 84% rate their school satisfaction level as “very

satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied;” 63% say they are likely to recommend the school to others; and 79% report that they plan to return next year (**CHART J**).

CHART K shows how well parents and staff rated specific features of the school. The top-rated features for both parents and staff are highlighted in blue; the lowest-rated features are highlighted in crimson. With few exceptions, staff satisfaction ratings were lower than parent ratings. Both parents and staff, however, rated the quality of instruction highly –

87% of parents and 90% of staff rated it as “excellent” or “very good.” Access to computers received the lowest rating from both parents (46%) and staff (12%).

Parent participants in a focus group with the site visit team reported very high levels of satisfaction with the school. The team noted that parents were particularly pleased with the small class sizes and individual attention, specifically noting that their children “were learning” and “respected themselves and the school.”



Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence

J PARENTS AND STAFF WHO ARE LIKELY TO...

	Parents	Staff
Recommend the school to friends and colleagues	100%	63%
Return to the school next year	98%	79%

Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school parents and staff administered in spring 2005 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis. ■ Calculations include “extremely likely” and “very likely” responses. Calculations do not include missing responses. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis.

Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence



PARENTS AND STAFF EVALUATION

Excellent/Very Good Responses of Select Features

	Parents	Staff
Overall quality of education	91%	83%
Quality of teaching/instruction	87%	90%
Curriculum/academic program	84%	79%
Individualized student attention	85%	79%
Access to/use of computers and other technologies	46%	12%
School material and supplies	73%	39%
Classroom management	83%	58%
Student-teacher ratio/class size	86%	63%
Services provided to special needs students ¹	75%	44%
Support services (e.g., counseling, healthcare, inc.)	57%	22%
Opportunities for parental involvement	88%	42%
Communication about student learning/achievement	82%	67%
Communication about meeting the school's mission	79%	39%
Teacher professional development	82%	22%
Faculty/teachers	84%	82%
School administration	80%	47%
School board	79%	46%
School facilities	64%	21%
Food service	74%	33%
Transportation services	85%	44%
Enrollment/admission process	73%	39%
School size	79%	42%
School safety	84%	47%
School location	82%	21%

■ Highest Percentages of Excellent/Very Good Responses

■ Lowest Percentages of Excellent/Very Good Responses

Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school parents and staff administered in spring 2005 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis. ■ Individual features with the highest percentage of excellent/very good responses are highlighted in blue; features with the lowest percentage of excellent/very good responses are highlighted in crimson. "Excellent" and "very good" responses are on a five-point scale (scale also includes "good," "fair," and "poor"). Calculations do not include missing and "don't know" responses. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis. ■ ¹Special needs students include those for whom English is a second language or who have disabilities, academic difficulties, etc.

Is the school administration strong in its academic and organizational leadership?

The site team noted that “teachers in general saw themselves as not involved in decision making and perceived the ‘administrative team’ as the ‘decision makers.’” The site team suggested that the

school develop an organizational chart and job descriptions that clearly specify roles, responsibilities and relationships.

The site visit team also found that teachers had concerns with their level of input into important school policies, such as the school calendar, dress code, and staff evaluation criteria. One recommendation

by the team was that “the CEO should develop an explicit process (e.g., propose written procedures, appoint a teacher group to recommend a process, etc.) to involve teachers in relevant issues and decisions and/or to ensure on-going communication and/or review of important school processes and procedures.”

IS THE SCHOOL MEETING ITS OPERATIONS AND ACCESS OBLIGATIONS RELATED TO:

organizational structure and governance obligations; physical plants that are safe and conducive to learning; fair and appropriate pupil enrollment processes; reasonable and safe transportation options available to eligible students; and legal obligations related to access and services to special needs and English as a second language students?

SENSE satisfactorily met its obligations in 2004-05 in complying with relevant laws and regulations and in providing access to students across Indianapolis. Neither the Mayor’s Office’s internal systems nor the expert site visit team indicated any significant concerns related to these obligations.

In 2004-05 SENSE did, however, experience some challenges in satisfying reporting and compliance requirements. The school did not make payments into the Public Employees Retirement Fund (PERF) on a timely basis each quarter during the school year. The school resolved the payment issue by the end of the fiscal year and the PERF accounts for all SENSE employees who participate in PERF were up-to-date by the mid-July deadline for fourth quarter payments.

SENSE also experienced some difficulty in ensuring that non-licensed teachers applied for and received emergency permits from the Indiana Professional Standards Board (IPSB). One teacher who began working at the school in August 2004 did not receive her emergency permit until February 2005. In this instance, the school did not appropriately oversee the teacher’s inquiries to the IPSB and ensure that the correct steps were taken for her to receive either a reciprocal license or an emergency permit. In December 2004, the Director of Education at the school began managing the process of ensuring that the teacher secured an emergency permit. Once the Director of Education intervened, the

Mayor’s Office was kept up to date on progress toward the emergency permit and was informed as soon as the teacher secured the emergency permit in February 2005.

In addition, SENSE did not submit the signed hard copy of the September 2004 count of Average Daily Membership (ADM) to the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) by the deadline of October 1, 2004. In addition, the September ADM report counted kindergarten students as one student instead of one-half as required by law. The school had to amend the report submitted to the IDOE after the deadline. SENSE also had difficulty meeting the IDOE reporting requirement to submit the second count of ADM on December 1, 2004 in a timely manner. A second ADM report was due to the IDOE on December 15, 2004, yet the school did not submit the second report correctly until January 2005.

By the end of the school year, the school had brought the compliance binder, which contains all of the school’s governance, management, and organizational documents and is reviewed by the Mayor’s Office on a monthly basis, up to date with the exception of providing Board members’ resumes.

The school would benefit from realizing the importance of meeting reporting and compliance requirements – particularly those for regulatory agencies like the IDOE and PERF – and making it a priority in 2005-06. In order to do this, the school may consider developing better systems that

ensure timely and accurate reporting to regulatory agencies.

At the request of the Mayor’s Office, the Division of Exceptional Learners at the IDOE conducts on-site reviews of the special education services provided by Mayor-sponsored charter schools completing their first year of operation. According to Robert Marra, Associate Superintendent of the IDOE in the Division of Exceptional Learners, “overall [SENSE] is providing appropriate services for its special needs students. Staff members have shown that they are committed to serving all students, including those with disabilities. The areas for attention identified at the school are fully correctable; for example, the school needs to ensure appropriate documentation and procedures for the Individualized Education Plans as required by law. As well, better and timelier support from the statewide charter school special education cooperative is key.”

The site team reported that “evidence indicates and staff reports that the school is meeting all legal and contractual issues.” Three quarters (75%) of parents reported being satisfied with services provided to special needs students, as did 44% of staff surveyed. Given the departure of the special education teacher, the team recommended that the new hire in this area work closely with classroom teachers in developing strategies to support special needs children and others who need extra attention.

IS THE SCHOOL PROVIDING THE APPROPRIATE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS?

Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?

The expert site visit team commended SENSE in this area, noting that “all constituents know and support the mission of the school, which is to be a vital part of the neighborhood community. Teachers report that they are a cohesive and supportive group dedicated to the mission of the school and to ensuring student learning.” Parent participants in the focus group also conveyed a strong understanding of the school's mission.

In response to the survey, 79% of parents rated communication about meeting the school's mission either “excellent” or “very good.” Only 39% of staff members, however, provided the same responses.

Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?

The site visit team commended the school for adding special classes in art, music, and physical education to the core curriculum. Some teachers raised concerns with the team about the effectiveness of the Everyday Math curriculum. The team suggested that SENSE consider reviewing the program's effectiveness and/or providing additional professional development so that staff consistently implements the curriculum.

As indicated in ■ **CHART K**, 84% of SENSE parents and 79% of staff rated the curriculum and academic program as “excellent” or “very good” – this was one of the higher-rated features by both parents and staff at the school.

Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?

Of the parents surveyed at SENSE, 82% rated communications about student learning and assessment “excellent” or “very good,” while 67% of staff responded similarly. In observing classrooms, the expert site visit team

found that “the majority of teachers were providing learning experiences in which all students were focused on performance and receiving corrective feedback on their work.” The school leader informed the team of plans to improve instruction by changing the length of the school day and the school year, in response to the school's realization that many students entered the school significantly below grade level.

Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?

The expert site visit team had several commendations about the positive climate at SENSE, including: “SENSE classrooms were orderly and well managed;” “students were articulate, engaged, confident in their ability to learn, and expressed feeling safe and comfortable in the school;” and “parents and students reported that teachers were ‘great’ and that they ‘go above and beyond’ in order to help students learn.”

While the team noted that the school has sponsored several effective programs to increase parent participation (e.g., Family Fun Nights and Dads and Doughnuts), both parents and staff reported that parents are generally not involved in substantive ways. For example, the team indicated that there is limited parent presence in classrooms. The team recommended that the school find ways to encourage and increase meaningful parent involvement. The survey results suggest that staff may feel this need more acutely than parents, as 88% of parents surveyed said that opportunities for parental involvement are “excellent” or “very good,” as compared to just 42% of the staff.

As part of the site team interviews, the team learned of a few recent incidents of fighting among students and disrespect shown to teachers. The team noted that “there was disagreement regarding appropriate school policies and procedures for handling these incidents. It should be a priority to ensure that all constituents have consistent information

regarding school standards, consequences and procedures for discipline.”

Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?

Parents gave favorable responses on the survey on two school features related to teaching – individualized student attention (85%) and class size (86%). To a slightly lesser extent, staff reported being satisfied with individualized student attention (79%) and class size (63%).

According to the expert site team, both parents and teachers “love” the small class sizes. The team added: “as the school increases its enrollment and class size it will be important to ensure that parents, teachers and students are prepared for this change and that teachers have strategies for continuing to provide high levels of individual attention and support to students.”

Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?

When asked how satisfied they were with the school's communication about student learning and achievement, 82% of SENSE parents responded “excellent” or “very good.” Similarly, 79% of parents were satisfied with communications about the school's mission. A lower percentage of staff positively rated communications about student learning and achievement (67%) and about the school's mission (39%).

The site team also reported that parents stated that they do not always receive adequate information regarding the dress code, school services, and child-specific issues. The team remarked that “the school might develop a better understanding of parent information needs and ways to ensure parents receive needed information.” The team added: “it should be a priority for the CEO to establish communication and a climate that is characterized by trust and open communication.”

Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?

The expert site visit team found that the school is working to establish community partnerships and hire staff to address “the holistic needs of students (e.g., counseling, and physical health).” For example, if funding allows, the school plans to add a full-time counselor in fall 2005.

Staff reported to the site team that their understandings often differ regarding school-wide policy and guidelines for discipline and suspension. The team

suggested that the school review and revise written disciplinary procedures and ensure that staff members implement these policies consistently.

The expert site visit team also found that staff had questions about their employment at the school: “the large majority of teachers communicated very high levels of concern regarding their conditions and terms of employment...

While teachers reported a strong commitment to and interest in remaining at the school, they reported that they did not feel ‘comfortable’ asking questions

about the terms and conditions of their employment.” The team recommended that the administration develop employment policies and procedures as well as “criteria, procedures and guidelines for teacher evaluation,” to address staff concerns.

The site visit team also noted that the school’s approach to identifying and responding to teacher professional development needs is unclear. Few staff (22%) surveyed expressed satisfaction with the school’s professional development (■ **CHART K**).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

Source: The information below was provided by the school to the Mayor's Office. It is included here to offer the public a more detailed picture of the school's programs and activities.

Mission, philosophy, and educational program

SENSE is a community-driven neighborhood elementary school. The school was created as a direct result of a community organizing effort initiated by Southeast Neighborhood Development (SEND), a nonprofit community development organization. The founders of the school envision it to be an anchor and source of pride for the southeast side of Indianapolis. The school's culture promotes inclusiveness, enthusiasm, and excellence with a strong emphasis on community connectedness. Service learning activities are used to ensure that students learn about the local neighborhood's community and culture.

"SENSE-ABILITIES"

Each week, Star Students of the Week from every grade are celebrated for displaying the schools' "SENSE-abilities": being truthful, respectful, considerate, and hard-working. Teachers nominate students each week, and the CEO honors one recipient by publicly presenting and signing a certificate, and posting a photograph of the student by the school's main entrance.

While the school is open to all students, it primarily serves the neighborhood in which it is located – nearly 90% of students attending SENSE share its zip code.

Rather than assigning considerable homework, SENSE devotes extra time to reading and math activities during an extended school day which runs from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. An inclusive approach is used in the classroom, with students of varied skill levels and strengths working together. Teachers use differentiated instructional strategies in the classroom to accommodate students' individual learning styles.

The SENSE curriculum is built around the Core Knowledge Sequence, a grade-by-grade series of content guidelines in subject areas such as history, geography, mathematics, science, language arts, and fine arts. Teachers use a variety of additional textbooks and workbooks that complement the Core Knowledge Sequence, and incorporate reading tasks into all subjects. The school uses the phonics-based Open Court Reading Program and Everyday Math in all grades. Everyday Math, developed by the University of Chicago School Math Project, is a structured and sequential program that applies mathematics skills to real world examples. For science, the school uses the Full Option Science System, which primarily uses experiment-based activities to teach scientific literacy and inquiry.

Academic programs and initiatives

• Early Diagnosis of Literacy Skills.

The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) is a rapid diagnostic tool used by teachers at the school to identify students' specific literacy needs. DIBELS measures student proficiency in the building blocks of successful reading skills. SENSE administers DIBELS three times each school year to provide teachers with periodic information on students' progress in developing literacy skills.

• **Spanish.** Starting in Kindergarten, all students receive Spanish instruction three times per week. The school places a strong emphasis on Spanish language skills to help bridge the communications barrier with the many Spanish-speaking residents living in the Southeast neighborhood.

• **Full Day Kindergarten.** The founders of SENSE designed the school to have a full day of instruction for all Kindergarten students, based on research that students living in poverty benefit from the extra academic preparation at an early age.

Parent involvement

• **Family Fun Night.** The school hosted a Family Fun Night in January, where students brought their families to school for a barbecue dinner. Prior to the start of dinner, students showed their parents their classrooms. Teachers shared games, activities, and drills in language arts and math that parents could do at home with their children.

• **Dads and Doughnuts / Dads and Snacks.** To encourage the participation of male adult role models in their children's education, each Wednesday the school's CEO hosts "Dads and Doughnuts" in the morning and "Dads and Snacks" after regular working hours. Dads who attend meet with the CEO and the special education teacher to talk about parenting and the challenges of being fathers to elementary school-aged children.

• **Parent-Teacher Conferences.** Parent-teacher conferences were attended by family members for all 115 students, 98% of whom attended during their scheduled time. All other parents were contacted by phone.

Supplemental programs and activities

• **Presidential Challenge Fitness Awards Program.** Students attend physical education class at the school three times per week. Awards from the Presidential Challenge are used to help motivate students to adopt active lifestyles and to consistently meet fitness goals. Using an activity log, students track their progress towards meeting national fitness goals. At the end of the year, the school issues awards from the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports to students who demonstrate that they met the fitness goals.

- **Jump Rope for Heart.** Many students participated in an American Heart Association program that encourages students to learn about heart disease and participate in physical activities, while fundraising at the same time. Student rope jumpers were sponsored by friends and family and raised \$850 for the American Heart Association.

Community partnerships and donations

- **Student Art Auctioned for Charity.** 3rd grade students at SENSE produced four ceramic art pieces that were auctioned for over \$600 at a fundraiser for Second Helpings, a local hunger relief organization. The entire school visited a Second Helpings facility to learn about hunger in the community. All students also visited the Wheeler Art Center, the sponsor of the auction.

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

SENSE was created following extensive community dialogue initiated by SEND. The Annie E. Casey Foundation provided initial funding for SEND to conduct a community assessment to determine the demand for a neighborhood-based charter school. SEND conducted neighborhood surveys, presented at neighborhood association meetings, held four public meetings on the topic of education in the neighborhood, and organized a forty-volunteer member Neighborhood School Task Force. The results of this assessment led to the submission of the charter school application, and members of the task force incorporated the neighborhood's identified needs into the school design.

The 3rd grade students were featured on the local Fox television morning show, speaking about the project and their works of art.

- **Facility Financing.** SEND received technical assistance and financing from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to acquire and renovate the school's facility. LISC is

the nation's largest nonprofit funder of real estate projects undertaken by community development corporations and other neighborhood-based organizations. LISC assists charter schools around the country with obtaining facility financing by providing planning and acquisition loans, as well as loan guarantees and credit enhancement. SENSE was one of the first charter schools that the Indianapolis LISC office supported.

- **Classroom Computers.** Through the statewide charter school special education cooperative, SENSE received a donation of two dozen classroom computers, as well as classroom audio and visual equipment.
- **Music Equipment.** To help establish the school's music program, Arthur's Music donated musical instruments and has loaned the school sound equipment on several occasions. A friend of a student's family donated a piano, which was transported to the school in a truck loaned by a local gasoline service station.
- **Family Fun Night.** Dinner at the school's January Family Fun Night was donated by Hope International Ministries and Crystal Catering. The evening also served as a fundraising event for Hope International's relief efforts for victims of the Asian tsunami.

Staffing

- **Staff Development.** Prior to the school's opening, all staff was brought together for two weeks of joint activities, including one week of on-site training in Core Knowledge, Open Court Reading, and Everyday Math. During the school year, the 2nd and 3rd grade teachers attended a one-day seminar on how to analyze student performance on the NWEA's MAP.
- **Hiring Experienced Teachers.** To firmly establish the school's culture during the first year of operation, the CEO hired teachers with an average of 8 eight years of teaching experience.
- **Mentor Teacher Training.** The school is paying for one teacher to

study at Ball State University to become a Mentor Teacher. After completing this training program, this teacher will mentor any recently certified teachers hired by the school.

School management

Dr. J.C. Lasmanis, the school's CEO and Head of School, is responsible for hiring staff, fiscal management, school operations and overseeing educational programs. The Director of Education, Jennifer Harasim, is responsible for implementing the curriculum, monitoring instructional practices, organizing standardized testing, and supporting teachers. Ivette Stewart, the school's Office Administrator, manages the school office, business services, and oversees the enrollment process.

The school's founding and opening was facilitated by SEND, a nonprofit community development organization. SEND also renovated and owns the school's facility, which the school leases. SEND's former Executive Director currently serves on the school's Board of Directors and provides community support for the school.

School governance

The SENSE Board of Directors includes a number of representatives of nonprofit and community organizations active in the Southeast neighborhood, such as SEND, the Fountain Square Library, The Salvation Army, and Riley Hospital for Children. Board members also include a special education expert, an architect, a tax consultant, a technology instructor, an attorney, a banker, a scientist, and two parents. The Board's bylaws require at least one-third of the members to be individuals who reside in, work in, or have other relationships with the Southeast neighborhood. The Board's role is to set policy for the school, ensure that the administration complies with all laws, develop an annual budget, and evaluate the CEO and staff. In fall 2004, Board members participated in a weekend retreat facilitated by a local nonprofit governance expert to further define their goals as a Board and refine roles and responsibilities.

Facilities

SENSE is housed in a facility that was constructed in the early 1900s for the Leedy Drum Company. The building was purchased and restored by SEND. During the summer of 2005, SEND renovated an additional floor for the school, adding 60% more space to house four additional classrooms, an indoor recreation space, a music room, an art room, and a media center. The school also received a grant from Keep Indianapolis Beautiful for landscaping improvements. In September 2005, the facility became home to the 21st Century Charter School at Fountain Square, a Mayor-sponsored charter school that

opened in the 2005-06 school year, providing the Southeast area with an additional educational option.

Planned improvements for the upcoming school year

- **Year-Round Calendar.** To reduce the length of the school day without decreasing the amount of instructional time, over the next two years, the school will adopt a year-round school calendar. Instructional sessions and vacation weeks will be more evenly spread out through the calendar year, reducing the amount of time that students will be out of school during any one vacation. The school's

decision was based on research that shows struggling students retain more knowledge with shorter breaks.

During breaks between sessions, the school will offer students remedial workshops and enrichment programs.

- **Spanish Throughout the Week.**

The school plans to hire a full-time Spanish teacher so that every student will be able to take Spanish five days per week starting in Kindergarten.

- **Enrichment Programs.** Before- and after-school enrichment programs will be offered to SENSE students starting in fall 2005.