

Section A Responses to Critical Questions

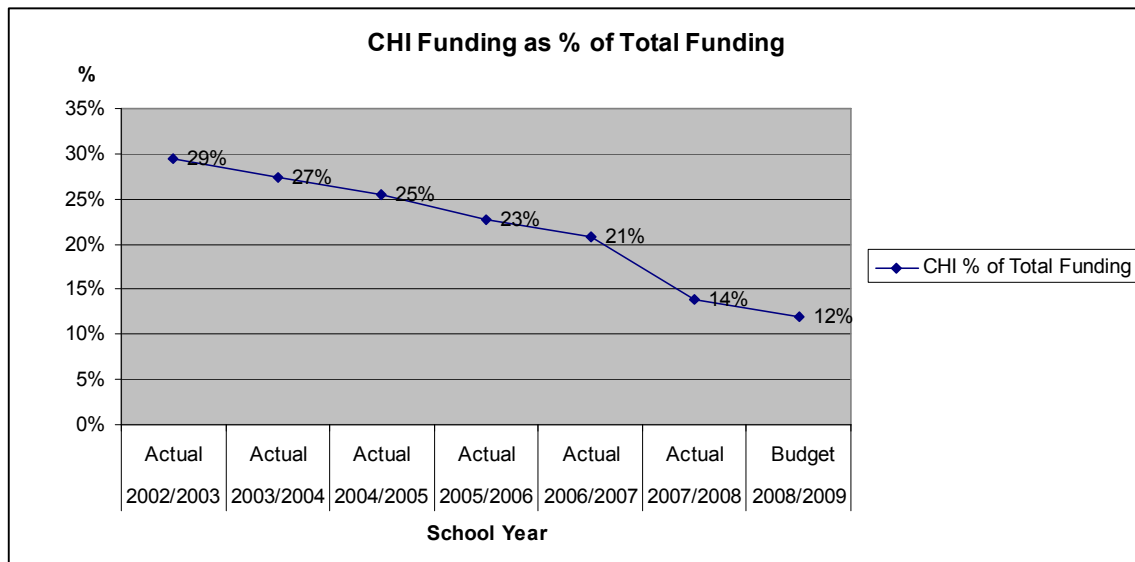
Core Question 2: Is the organization effective and well run?

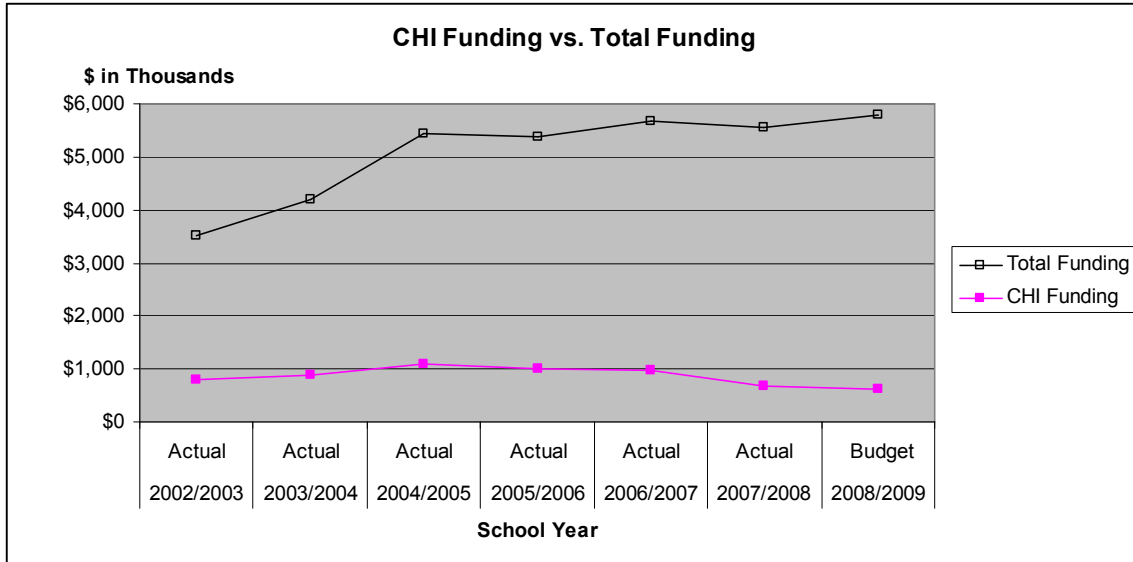
- **2.1: Is the school in sound fiscal health (*specifically, what is the long-term sustainability plan for the school*)?**

We believe the school exceeds standard in this area.

In the 4th year report, the school received a ‘Meets Standard’ rating in regard to the fiscal health of the school. This rating was influenced by organizational and fiscal support provided to the Academy by Christel House International (CHI). CHI is an Indianapolis-based, not-for-profit charity currently supporting five learning centers/schools around the world. CHI is funded through corporate and individual contributions, including significant contributions from its founder- Christel DeHaan. CHI is committed to the financial support of affiliated schools through funding general and administrative expenses as well as operating shortfalls. The Academy’s association with CHI, offers the school unique resources and support. Despite this, the Academy has continued to work successfully in establishing itself as a more fiscally independent entity.

Over the last four years, Christel House Academy has continued to reduce its reliance on funding from Christel House International—as shown in the graphs below:





In the event CHI funding was significantly cut, nonessential programming would be targeted for reduction. At the present time, there are no essential operational expenses that could not be met without this additional funding. Because of CHI's commitment to ensuring the viability of robust programming at the Academy, it is extremely unlikely that the funding provided to the Academy will drop below 10%. The financial strength and stability of CHI is reflected in its audited financial statements that are available for review at www.christelhouse.org.

• **2.2: Are the school's student enrollment, attendance, and retention rates strong?**

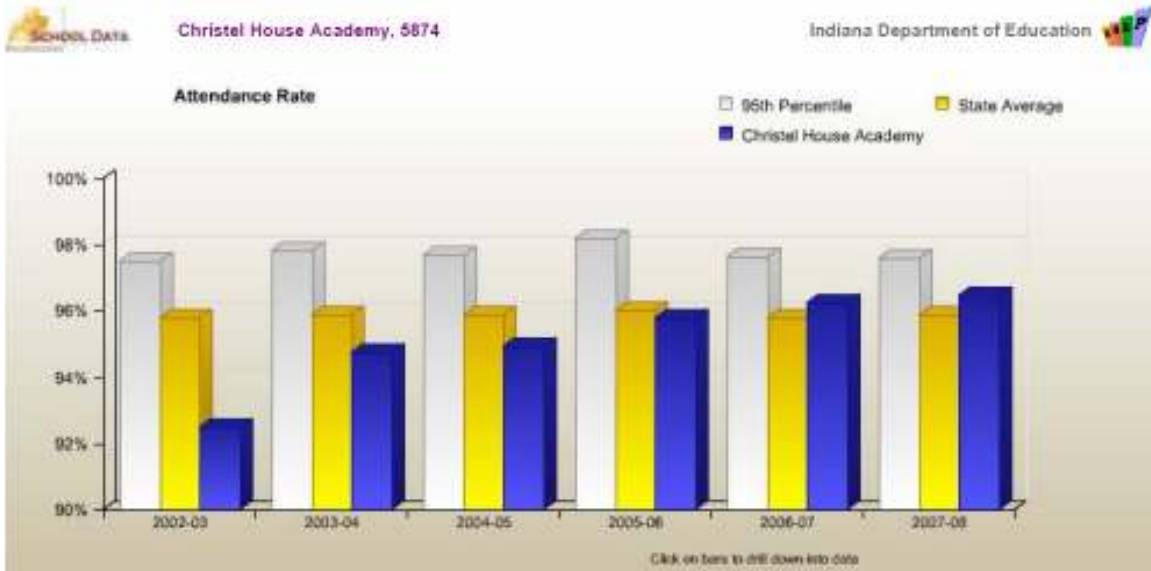
Christel House Academy now meets standard in this area.

In the fourth year report, the school was determined to be 'approaching standard' in this area. The report highlighted the school's shortfalls in meeting enrollment targets in 2003, 2004 and in 2005, when the shortfall shrank to under 5%.

Over the last 3 years, the school's enrollment and retention rates have increased. In the 2007 school year, the school met its enrollment target and had 100 students on its waitlist at the opening of school. In the 2008 school year, the school was within 98% of its enrollment target and had 162 students on the waitlist. Filling openings at higher grade levels presents the biggest challenge to meeting the school's enrollment target. As student retention rates continue to improve, there will be fewer openings in higher grades, and therefore the enrollment target will be more easily met.

In addition to our increased demand as reflected by waitlist numbers, student retention rates have also increased. In the 2008 academic year, 87% of the students have returned from the previous year. This is a 78% improvement from the school's first recorded retention rate in 2002.

Using data from the Indiana Department of Education's ASAP system; the following graph shows the significant improvement in student attendance over time and in relation to the state average and schools in the top 5% of the state.



The school now utilizes the Marion County Juvenile Justice System's Truancy Court for enforcement of State attendance laws. The Academy's staff more closely tracks attendance issues and responds to issues promptly. This change has insured the school's attendance rate remained over the 95% mark for the last three years.

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

- **3.4: Is the school properly maintaining special education files for its special needs students?**

Christel House Academy now meets standard in the area of special education services.

In the fourth year report, the school received an ‘approaching standard’ rating in this area because special education files of some students were missing appropriate documentation. In the report, it is noted that the transition to the ICAN system appeared to have corrected earlier issues.

Since then, the school has fully transitioned to the electronic IEP tracking system provided by the IDOE Center for Exceptional Learners. In the fall of 2008, the Center for Exceptional Learners introduced the ISTAR7 system, replacing ICAN. This change was made to ensure compliance with new special education laws under the reauthorization of Article 7.

As with all new systems, the State has experienced some difficulties in meeting implementation deadlines and the school had to conference some students into special education programs using old paper forms. Since then, the Center for Exceptional Learners has corrected the bulk of the implementation errors and the ISTAR7 system is now being fully implemented at Christel House. Both Special Education teachers have received ISTAR7 training and have been participating in staff development surrounding new SpEd laws.

In the audit of special education records conducted by the Mayor’s office, the audit concluded that the Academy was meeting our obligations. Several minor discrepancies were pointed out and the school’s special education team will work with VSEC to correct those issues.

Understanding the importance of Special Education compliance, Christel House has been a leader in cultivating change within the Virtual Special Education Cooperative arrangement with Ball State University. Last year, Christel House was notified by the Center for Exceptional Learners of a deficiency in meeting timelines for qualifying and conferencing students into Special Education. To rectify this, Christel House ended the agreement where Ball State tested students for Special Education and entered into an agreement with a physiological testing practice. Christel House now fully controls the relationship with this vendor and can provide much tighter controls on ensuring the timelines are met.

While no identified deficiencies were found by the IDOE Center for Exceptional Learners or the Audit conducted by the Mayor’s Office, Christel House’s leadership identified an issue with the VSEC providing related special education

services. In the spring of 2008, Christel House realized that no one from VSEC had been assigned to provide related services for CHA special education students for the following school year. This service had been provided to the member schools by VSEC in the past. To ensure full compliance with the law, Christel House took over control of contracting these related services. Christel House now contracts all its own speech, OT and PT services. By being proactive and contracting our own services, no special education students missed any related service minutes as assigned by their IEP. This is just one example of how Christel House is fully committed to servicing Special Education students and how the school ensures adequate and appropriate services are available to all students.

- **3.5: Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with limited English proficiency?**

Christel House now exceeds standard in this area.

In the fourth year review, the school was found to be ‘approaching standard’ in this area due to teacher licensure issues. In 2006, the school sought Emergency Licensing for its English as a New Language teacher. In 2008, the teacher became fully licensed through Indiana Wesleyan University’s transition to teaching program, and today continues to teach at Christel House.

In addition to ensuring teacher licensure requirements are met, the school has been working with the Office of English Language Learning & Migrant Education in the Indiana Department of Education to ensure all staff is equipped with the necessary skills and tools needed to implement a sheltered language instructional program. Title I funds have been identified to support funding for parental involvement with families who do not speak English as a first language and, using support from a Reading First grant, the ESL Program has received considerable instructional resources to better meet the needs of ELL students. This instructional program is called Treasure Chest for English Language Learners. It follows a research based method of instructional delivery and supports the core reading program, Treasures.

Best practices for English learners involve a number of strategies and techniques that make content comprehensible and provide opportunities for practice using English. Treasure Chest uses supplementary materials to make the lesson clear and meaningful, explicitly links content concepts to students’ background experiences, and uses a variety of techniques to make content concepts clear.