

**Plato Academy
2007 Evaluation Report**

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Evaluation of Pinellas County Charter Schools: Plato Academy

Introduction

Each year an evaluation is conducted of Pinellas County Charter Schools to provide an independent assessment of student outcomes. For the 2007-2008 school year, six schools are included in the evaluation. These six schools include three schools serving kindergarten or elementary aged children, one school serving an expanded middle school population (grades 4-8), and two schools serving high school populations (grades 10-12). Two additional schools will be included in planning activities, with their inclusion in the evaluation report anticipated for the 2008-2009 school year.

The evaluation study was designed to assess charter school progress and accomplishments in student performance. The purpose of the evaluation activities were two fold. The first activity was centered on consulting with each of the schools as they requested to assist in the development of a set of operational goals and objectives for the school year. The emphasis was on the development of feasible, realistic goals relating to student outcomes. The most important goals would be those associated with student performance in academic areas. The schools might also include more general or long term goals regarding operating procedures, school atmosphere and environment, or parent involvement. Significant emphasis was placed on the development of standards that reflected the unique character and values of the individual school and that might provide helpful feedback for their continued success. Participation by the schools was voluntary, and was intended to provide support for their own efforts to establish their goals and outcome measures. The final decision regarding the specification of goals and objectives, the selection of assessment measures, and the schedule of assessments remained with the school.

The second purpose of the evaluation was to provide an independent assessment of the degree to which students made satisfactory academic progress during the school year. Where data exists, student performance was assessed by reviewing both Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) results and any tests selected and utilized by the school. For students in grades K-3, the common assessment was used in lieu of the FCAT. Several schools also provided additional measures of student achievement which are also incorporated into the report.

Instruments

Instruments selected by the schools for student assessments included the Stanford 9 or 10, and the Metropolitan 8. Each of these tests is designed to measure accomplishment of learning objectives for curricula from kindergarten through the end of grade 12. The test includes content areas for a range of subjects, with the basic battery including reading, mathematics, language, spelling, listening, and study skills. Scaled scores are directly

comparable across all administrations of the test and across all grade levels. Grade level equivalents (GLE) equate student performance to nationally normed samples of students tested throughout the school year. Using this measure, a student may be tracked across each grade throughout his or her school career. Scaled scores and GLEs for this report were obtained from the *Stanford Achievement Test Series, Ninth Edition, Fall Norms Book, and Spring Norms Book* (Harcourt Educational Measurement, 1997) and from the *Metropolitan8: Metropolitan Achievement Test, Eighth Edition, Fall Multilevel Norms Book and Spring Multilevel Norms Book* (Harcourt Educational Measurement, 2001). The results of the Metropolitan 8, and the Stanford 9 were obtained from the schools either as data files or as copied datasets.

FCAT data was obtained from the school district as part of an integrated file for all schools. This data was supplemented where necessary from data published for the district and individual schools available on the state supported web site at <http://fcats.fldoe.org/> and from data supplied by the schools themselves. To ensure consistency in reporting, data promulgated on the state website was given preference over the integrated data file provided by the district where available. Common assessment data was not available on district or state databases and was retrieved from individual school records.

Where available, historical performance data for students on the FCAT was utilized to develop preliminary tests of trends over time in student performance for individual schools. Data for these analyses originated from the district and from data maintained from previous evaluations.

Additional data was provided by some of the schools including parent surveys, graduation rates, and counts of credits earned.

Plato Academy, Analysis of Student Performance.

Plato Academy serves students in grades K through 5. District records indicate a total school population of 182 active students for the 2007-2008 school year. Goals identified for the school for the year included the following: 85% of students will be at grade level or above in reading as measured by the common assessment, 75% will be at grade level or above in math as measured by the common assessment, 80% of parents will express satisfaction with the school as measured by student and parent surveys, 90% of students will advance to the next grade level.

It should be noted, that as compared to the previous year, the goals for the 2007-2008 school year are ten percent higher for both reading and math performance. The goals for parent satisfaction and student advancement remain the same.

Plato Academy relied on the FCAT and the common assessment to assess student performance for the school year. The FCAT was available for grade 3 through 5 was administered in the spring of 2008. Progress on the common assessment was recorded several times throughout the school year for K-2nd grade.

Table 2.1 provides the proportion of students in each grade and for the total school who scored level 3 or above on the FCAT Reading and FCAT Math. A score of 3 is considered to be performance on grade level. As seen in the table, the 2007-2008 goals were met for both reading and math in grades 3 and 4. The goal of 85% was not met for the fifth grade in math. This is the first year for a fifth grade class in this charter school.

Table 2.1: Plato Academy, Percent of Students in Each Grade Scoring 3 or Above on the 2008 FCAT.

FCAT	Reading	Math
All grades:	90.9%	88.3%
3rd grade	88.9%	97.2%
4th grade	100.0%	100.0%
5th grade	84.2%	57.9%

Tables 2.2 through 2.4 provide historic and current year results of the FCAT assessment for Plato Academy students in reading and math. The tables provide the proportion of students in the state, district and the school who scored 3 or above in reading and math. As seen in the table, the proportion of students attaining a level 3 or above exceeds the state and district average for reading in all grades, and for math in grades 3 and 4. It may be noted that district values are provided for all curriculum groups combined and are thus a conservative measure of expected performance.

As reflected in the table, the goals for Grade 3 reading and math were met, with over 90% of the students scoring level 3. For the 4th grade, 100% of the students scored level 3 or above. In Grade 5, the proportion of students scoring 3 or above exceeded state and district averages for reading, but were below state and district averages for math.

Table 2.2: Plato Academy Grade 3, Historical Comparisons, Percent of Students Scoring 3 or Above FCAT

Reading												
Grade	2005			2006			2007			2008		
	State	Pinellas	School	State	Pinellas	School	State	Pinellas	School	State	Pinellas	School
3	67	68	na	75	76	93	69	70	100	72	72	90
Math												
Grade	2005			2006			2007			2008		
	State	Pinellas	School	State	Pinellas	School	State	Pinellas	School	State	Pinellas	School
3	68	71	na	72	74	100	74	77	100	76	78	97

Table 2.3: Plato Academy Grade 4, Historical Comparisons, Percent of Students Scoring 3 or Above FCAT
Reading

Grade	2006			2007			2008		
	State	Pinellas	School	State	Pinellas	School	State	Pinellas	School
4	66	64	na	68	68	83	70	70	100

Math

Grade	2006			2007			2008		
	State	Pinellas	School	State	Pinellas	School	State	Pinellas	School
4	67	70	na	69	70	83	71	72	100

Table 2.4: Plato Academy Grade 5, Percent of Students Scoring 3 or Above FCAT

2008

Grade	Reading			Math		
	State	Pinellas	School	State	Pinellas	School
5	67	68	84%	61	62	58%

Table 2.5 provides FCAT results for participating grades for writing (Grade 4) and science (Grade 5). No goals were set for Plato Academy with regard to these segments of the FCAT. As seen in Table 2.5, students in Grade 4 exceeded state and district percentages, while the proportion scoring 3 or above for science was below both state and district averages.

Table 2.5: Plato Academy, FCAT Writing and Science, Percent of Students Scoring 3 or Above

Grade 4, Writing			Grade 5, Science		
State	Pinellas	School	State	Pinellas	School
77	77	86	43	41	28

As a preliminary comparison of student trends over time, two additional comparisons were made. For the 2008 fifth grade class, Table 2.6 compares students returning to the school for a second year (i.e. having attended the fourth grade in 2006-2007 and returning for the fifth grade in 2007-2008), to new students in the school. Students returning to the school for a second year may be expected to have the benefit of two years experience with the charter school. Second, Table 2.7 addresses returning students to determine if those who performed at grade level (score of 3 or above) in their first year, continued to perform at grade level in their second level. As seen in Table 2.6, no differences are apparent in the proportion of new or returning students who achieved level 3 or above on reading and math. The small absolute numbers in the group precludes tests of significant differences in the groups.

In table 2.7, results suggest that students who performed well in 2007 in reading were likely to continue to perform well in 2008 (11 of 12, 92% of those achieving a score of 3 or above in reading in 2007 achieved a score of 3 or above in 2008). A somewhat lower percentage (8 of 11, 73%) of those achieving a score of 3 or above in math in 2007 achieved a score of 3 or above in 2008. Students who did not achieve a score of 3 in 2007 tended to continue the same pattern in 2008. Sample sizes for these comparisons are too small to test for the significance of the results, but may be considered for potential feedback and review.

It should be noted that no tables are provided for returning fourth grade students because 100% of this cohort scored 3 or above in both reading and math in 2006-2007 and in 2007-2008.

Table 2.6: Comparison of New and Returning Students, FCAT Reading and Math.

Grade 5, New and Returning Students Scores on FCAT Reading		
	New Students	Returning Students
Achieved Level 3	4	13
Did Not Achieve	0	2

Grade 5: New and Returning Students Scores on FCAT Math		
	New Students	Returning Students
Achieved Level 3	2	8
Did Not Achieve	2	7

Table 2.7: Comparison of Returning Students 2007-2008, FCAT Reading and Math.

Grade 5: Comparison of Returning Students Passing FCAT Reading, 2007-2008		
	Achieved 2008	Did Not 2008
Achieved 2007	11	1
Did Not 2007	1	2

Grade 5: Comparison of Returning Students Passing FCAT Math, 2007-2008		
	Achieved 2008	Did Not 2008
Achieved 2007	8	3
Did Not 2007	0	4

Common assessment data was also made available for students in grades K-2 for this school. Table 2.8 provides summary statistics of the percent of students Meeting Expectations in these grades in math, writing and reading. As seen in Table 2.8, the school met their performance goal for reading in the lower grades. The goal was also met for Kindergarten in math, but not for Grade 2. Although not reflected in the table, it may be noted that a significant proportion of the students were high performing in reading and math in each of the three grades.

Table 2.8: Percent of Students Meeting Expectations on the Common Assessment: Plato Academy			
Grade	Reading	Writing	Math
Kindergarten	97	100	100
1	97	86	na*
2	97	94	80

*No common assessment given.

Overall, the evaluation of Plato Academy data indicate that students have achieved academic achievements consistent with their stated goals and objectives, and with normative standards identified by the state based FCAT and Common Assessment, with the only exception being performance in grade 5 math.

This school provided additional documentation supporting the accomplishment of objectives associated with student advancement and parent satisfaction. The goal of 90% student advancement was met, with a school-wide advancement rate of 96%.

Advancement rates by grade ranged from a low of 89% (grade 2) to a high of 100% (grades K, 4 and 5). A review of parent surveys submitted by this school indicate a high level of satisfaction among parents regarding the visibility and accessibility of administrators, their child's learning opportunities and progress, and school culture.

Examples of parent feedback include:

"You are doing wonderfully well. Our first year at Plato has been a very positive one!"

"We are very pleased with Plato and would like the school to expand..."

"We are very pleased with Plato, we have seen such a difference in our daughter's learning skills with English and Greek."