

APPENDIX II

PLATO ACADEMY *High Performing Replication Application*

Responses to Concerns and Additional Questions noted on the Florida Charter School Application Evaluation Instrument for Plato Academy High Performing Replication Charter School Application filed August 1, 2012

For any concerns and additional questions raised on the Evaluation Instrument that are not answered below, those have been answered in the school's Charter Agreement.

II. EDUCATIONAL PLAN

3. Educational Program Design:

Concerns and Additional Questions -

- A. The applicant states that part of the school's philosophy is to promote high academic achievement but then identifies a standard of seventy percent of the students being at grade level or above in reading. This expectation is lower than other public schools in the community (Page 27).

Indeed, Plato Academy's philosophy is to promote high academic achievement. The standard of seventy percent of students being at grade level or above in reading is baseline data for the first year of school operation. In addition, the school is targeted to serve students residing in an underperforming school zone which has historically had a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students. Plato Academy has a five-year plan for reaching state and district targeted expectations.

Plato Academy Expectation (Five-Year Plan):

1. 84% of students will be at grade level or above in Reading.
Measured by FCAT (3rd thru 8th), Study Island, and portfolio assessments.
2. 82% of all students will be at grade level or above in Math.
Measured by FCAT (3rd thru 8th), Study Island, and portfolio assessments.
3. 95% of students will advance to the next grade level.

Plato Academy includes SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely) outcomes for student achievement. At Plato Academy, we believe that measuring student achievement outcomes is necessary in preparing our students to succeed in their educational and career pursuits. Upon student enrollment, baseline data shall be collected. Knowing how students respond and perform before the beginning of the year provides a starting point for comparing performance results. Baseline and post-intervention data shall be gathered in the same fashion to ensure validity and reliability. The baseline data collection procedures shall consist of:

1. Knowing if the data actually measures the specific achievement-performance indicator being evaluated:
2. Knowing if achievement-performance data collected is accurate; and

3. Deciding on an implementation timeline, to see if there is observable change in achievement - -
 - performance

Baseline evaluation process during the first year of school operation for all incoming students will be established as follows:

1. Beginning/Incoming Grade Level Verification
 - Data Collection Period - (Projected Time Frame: August 1-15)
2. FCAT or SAT 10 Previous Standardized Performance Evidence
 - Data Collection Period - (Projected Time Frame: August 1-15)
3. Study Island Subject Area Benchmark Assessment – Baseline
 - Data Collection Period - (Projected Time Frame: August 1- 31)
4. Study Island Subject Area Intervention Assessment – Cycle A
 - Data Collection Period - (Projected Time Frame: October 1 - November 30)
5. Study Island Subject Area Benchmark Assessment – Mid Year
 - Data Collection Period - (Projected Time Frame: December 1- January 31)
6. Study Island Subject Area Intervention Assessment – Cycle B
 - Data Collection Period - (Projected Time Frame: February 1 - March 31)
7. Study Island Subject Area Benchmark Assessment – End of Year
 - Data Collection Period - (Projected Time Frame: April 1 - May 31)

The Baseline Expectation for the first year of school operation shall be as follows:

1. 70% of students will be at grade level or above in Reading.
Measured by FCAT (3rdthru8th), Study Island, and portfolio assessments.
2. 70% of all students will be at grade level or above in Math.
Measured by FCAT (3rdthru8th), Study Island, and portfolio assessments.
3. 90% of students will advance to the next grade level.

Plato Academy teachers will possess various quantitative and qualitative data, in order to assess level of student achievement outcome mastery. Each student with the teacher's assistance will design and develop portfolios comprising of both qualitative/quantitative information. Tools of measurement that will be used to measure student achievement outcomes shall consist of cumulative performance and not a segmented or compartmentalized account in each subject area. Pre-and-post standardized assessments, classroom and homework assignments, attendance and participation, behavioral and discipline referrals, and teacher's observational notes, and community letters of references, will also serve as tools of measurement. The portfolio will serve as a condensed version of a student's work quality and applied experience encompassing school-community involvement. In addition, students will be required to complete a pretest/posttest survey, in order to monitor progression towards outcome mastery.

Plato Academy believes in a traditional method of testing, but we also believe that in order to strengthen outcomes, the inclusion of portfolios is imperative in the learning process. Quality education must effectively nurture students with knowledge, skills, and values transferring to other environments. The student portfolio is a collection of school work that offers an effective educational method to evaluate a student's progress in school as well as, surrounding community. It empowers students in a reflective process. In addition, Teachers will utilize previous end-of-year assessment results to assist in validating and correlating beginning-of-the-year assessment data. Teachers will know on a daily basis what each student has mastered, and what needs to be taught to meet expectations with daily-periodic assessments. All core subject areas Math, Reading, Science, Social Studies, and Writing shall be evaluated.

B. The school may want to consider switching from using Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives to Webb's Depth of Knowledge model that aligns better with FCAT 2.0 and CCSS (Common Core State Standards).

We have considered a modification from Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives to Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) model, but we feel that the combination of PEAK, Socratic Principles of Thinking, Aristotle's Modes of Persuasion, and Bloom's Taxonomy is ideal and have been fully integrated effectively, these theoretical concepts evoke equality of human thought and spirit, recognizing no racial and socio-economic distinction. All add operational guidance to assessments, curriculum, and instructional methods thus, ensuring optimal levels of achievement. Students work hard to learn what is being taught, if they see importance in either learning the content, or in satisfying the needs of others they value. When students experience feelings of safety, success, love- belonging, freedom-independence, fun-enjoyment, and valued purpose, they will become inspired to reach their potential. They will have the ability to look beyond their challenges, and witness that which can be discovered and fulfilled. Believing in an "I CAN" attitude, rather than an "I CAN'T" is paramount for achievement to occur.

One of the main reasons that the Socratic method is successful at Plato Academy is that it requires higher-order thinking. If we compare the mental processes involved in the Socratic method with those of Bloom's Educational Objectives, it is clear that students are working at a higher level of creative thinking when they participate in a Socratic discourse (dialogue or discussion), for example, than when they are passively lectured. In addition, Bloom's original taxonomy of six levels of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation integrates effectively with the Aristotelian Modes of Persuasion: Logos (logic/knowledge), Ethos (ethics/skill), and Pathos (emotion/affect).

In a new look at Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, we can see how knowledge and comprehension are combined, as being able to remember and understand – hence Webb's Depth of Knowledge - and how synthesis is exchanged for the creative process, to be creative, one has to synthesize past ideas and concepts in order to develop something new and original. By demanding higher-order thinking skills (analysis, creativity, and evaluation) through Socratic dialogue, students develop meta-cognition, exercise different memory systems, and pay close attention or become active rather than passive participants in their unique thinking processes, as well as those of others.

Indeed, when students are lectured to in class or left on their own to interpret, at best they manage to gain basic knowledge about core concepts, which in some instances transforms into actual comprehension, as opposed to rote memorization. However, unless they are asked to do something with acquired information, students will never reach Bloom's mid-stage of applying new concepts during a lecture, let alone be able to analyze it. True synthesis of information (knowledge) only comes after a student or individual can analyze a variety of different

perspectives or situations in which the concept exists, as in how a certain math concept is manifested in many different contexts or examples. If synthesis is truly reached, then the student or individual can potentially produce a creative product (thought- EUREKA) and evaluate the concept for its intrinsic worth, utility, or reward. In the Socratic Method the student is protagonist of his or her own learning process, guided by the teacher's carefully chosen questions to reach new ideas. Indeed, the Socratic method is recognized as best practice in many schools, most notably many prestigious law, medical, and research institutions around the world. The Socratic method is not merely designed to assist students simply learn facts and memorize lessons; rather it is successful because it focuses more on the "Whys" of information rather than the "Whats."

4. Curriculum Plan:

Concerns and Additional Questions -

- A. It is unclear if the school intends to replicate the curriculum of the high performing school by utilizing all same books and resources as Plato Academy of Clearwater since McGraw Hill series was the only materials identified. This will need to be clarified before a final charter is recommended (Section 4).

Indeed, Plato Academy shall replicate the curriculum of the high performing school by utilizing all same books and resources as Plato Academy of Clearwater. The utilization of *McGraw-Hill* textbooks, e-learning integration tools, innovative teaching methods, and the Socratic method of teaching, our students will gain a thorough command of reading, mathematics, science, writing, social studies and language arts throughout their years at Plato Academy. Please note that the curriculum shall be replicated, but the tools and resources utilized shall be based on the availability, compatibility, and integration capability within the educational design.

One of our major goals at Plato Academy (K-8) is our desire to prepare our students for further education, careers and life. In order to accomplish this goal this requires a process of expanding our student's knowledge base in each succeeding grade, building on the proceeding core curriculum and progressing through Plato Academy's educational programs. Plato Academy's Core curriculum in the core academic areas support the belief: **"Our Students Are Worth Whatever It Takes."**

Believing in this philosophy, Plato Academy's curriculum challenges the academic standards that allow our students to achieve their highest potential, while meeting the requirements of the Florida Next Generation Sunshine State Standards and National Common Core Standards. At Plato Academy, all students will meet State and National Standards, because our teachers will instill the love of learning into each student by giving them the opportunity and strategies to explore new ideas, concepts and succeed to their fullest capabilities.

At Plato Academy (K-8) the purpose of teaching, we believe, is not solely to master factual material, but also *to teach the student how to think, and to encourage him/her to think*. The use of the PEAK Teaching for Excellence Model will assist in increasing the motivation, engagement, to think and learn, because it is an effective integration of research-supported approaches to our Socratic Method of instruction and Aristotle's modes of persuasion, and assessment principles, strategies, and techniques that have

consistently made positive differences in leaving no child behind.

The PEAK Model integrates the effective works of the nations' leading educators, researchers, authors, school systems, and classroom teachers into a comprehensive approach with proven results. Plato Academy PEAK teachers or educators will utilize effective processes integrating our Socratic Method of Instruction, Aristotle's Methods of Persuasion, and Blooms Taxonomy of Educational Objectives driven curriculum then delivers it in a fashion and in an environment that empowers learners.

The school's curriculum consists of: Art, English (Language Arts-Reading-Writing), Greek, Health, Math, Music, Physical Education, Science, and Social Studies. The curriculum is disseminated by the research-supported PEAK *Teaching for Excellence* educational model which has been adopted for closely being aligned to the school's mission of providing students opportunities to reach their fullest potential, to attain high academic standards, and to experience a love of learning. PEAK engages students in the learning process. Teachers are immersed in what they are teaching and motivate students to learn the curriculum content, thus establishing an effective learning environment. The engaging instruction builds continuous feedback opportunities; a student's mind can reflect, plan, infer, interpret, and apply acquired knowledge. The first building block is effective administration with a clear vision of what is desired, and focus on the efforts of getting there. The second building block critical to "Leaving No Child Behind" are successful decision screens.

PEAK's decision screens are a set of *Six Teaching for Excellence Key Indicators* which consist of:

1. Safety;
2. Success;
3. Love-Belonging;
4. Freedom-Independence;
5. Fun-Enjoyment; and
6. Valued Purpose.

The Key indicators are used by administrators and teachers to screen the curriculum content, learning culture, and to provide a comprehensive approach to ensure achievement encompasses four critical factors:

1. Context,
2. Content,
3. Process, and
4. Technique

Our mission is then, transformed into a "real-world experience." Unconditionally embracing these key indicators assist in fostering a successful learning culture for years to come. Establishing a thriving successful learning environment allow educators to effectively synthesize lessons and apply Socratic Principles of Thinking & Aristotle's Modes of Persuasion. Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives assist teachers to then, define goals and identify the degree students understand and use concepts, demonstrate particular skills, and have their values, attitudes, and interests influenced. Determining the levels of student expertise and expectation within the curriculum is critical, because this will allow for:

- A clear set of objectives based on overall goals, standards, and expectations;
- Required demonstration standard completion;
- Differentiated instruction matched to learner needs;
- Assessment techniques;
- Ongoing coaching;
- Greater value placed on learning quality than on learning speed;

- Context embedded, ongoing practice;
- Incremental skill development;
- Forgiveness/coaching until standards are met;
- A focus on individual mastery objective; and
- Celebration of standard mastery.

B. It is unclear what is meant by the following statement: “The Plato Academy (K-8) Core Curriculum is not documents distributed by our school to the teachers, parents, and students.” This will need further clarification before a final charter is recommended (Page 36).

The statement is stated in such a manner in order to inform the reader (audience) that the Plato Academy curriculum is not based purely on what is written in static form (documents), but it takes on a dynamic evidenced-based educational framework (living-breathing process). It requires ongoing and sustained professional development and leadership that shall continuously guide and enhance content, instruction, and assessment.

It fosters improvement in achievement, prepares students for the world of work, instills a lifelong love of learning, and identifies content/instruction that students must experience. The technical assistance supported by the Plato Academy Advisory Lead Team is designed to provide teachers with tools to assure that essential subject matter is taught, and knowledge-skills attained. The Team analyzes both content and instruction, identifies gaps, and refines required areas.

The Plato Academy curriculum is aligned with the mission by providing concrete details for teachers to assist students in reaching State/National Standards. It assists teachers to integrate essential concepts and skills into learning opportunities. The curriculum is about teaching and learning; it provides examples of powerful instruction clearly tied to classroom assessments. It provides a comprehensive picture addressing pedagogy, content knowledge, and assessments which raise student expectations and alter teaching behaviors that positively impact achievement.

The curriculum establishes the urgency to set higher expectations and infuse more challenging and meaningful instructional content, by requiring student knowledge enhancement in each succeeding grade, building on the preceding, and progressing through the program without the need for remediation. In addition, the curriculum focuses on higher order skills, providing students with opportunities to learn with emphasis being placed on knowledge-skills that addresses content that students need, in order to flourish in a world marked by an evolving workforce and rising global competition.

5. Student Performance, Assessment and Evaluation:

Concerns and Additional Questions -

A. Specific goals need to be stated quantitatively in section 5A. This will need to be addressed before a final charter is recommended (Page 56).

The following student achievement outcome plan indicates the projected progress towards attaining optimal student achievement expectations within a five-year period.

2013-2014

BASELINE SCHOOL YEAR

1. 70% of students will be at grade level or above in Reading.
Measured by FCAT (3rdthru8th), Study Island, and portfolio assessments.
2. 70% of all students will be at grade level or above in Math.
Measured by FCAT (3rdthru8th), Study Island, and portfolio assessments.
3. 90% of students will advance to the next grade level.

2014-2015

1. 75% of students will be at grade level or above in Reading.
Measured by FCAT (3rdthru8th), Study Island, and portfolio assessments.
2. 75% of all students will be at grade level or above in Math.
Measured by FCAT (3rdthru8th), Study Island, and portfolio assessments.
3. 90% of students will advance to the next grade level.

2015-2016

1. 78% of students will be at grade level or above in Reading.
Measured by FCAT (3rdthru8th), Study Island, and portfolio assessments.
2. 78% of all students will be at grade level or above in Math.
Measured by FCAT (3rdthru8th), Study Island, and portfolio assessments.
3. 90% of students will advance to the next grade level.

2016-2017

1. 81% of students will be at grade level or above in Reading.
Measured by FCAT (3rdthru8th), Study Island, and portfolio assessments.
2. 81% of all students will be at grade level or above in Math.
Measured by FCAT (3rdthru8th), Study Island, and portfolio assessments.
3. 95% of students will advance to the next grade level.

2017-2018

1. 84% of students will be at grade level or above in Reading.
Measured by FCAT (3rd thru 8th).
2. 82% of all students will be at grade level or above in Math.
Measured by FCAT (3rd thru 8th), Study Island, and portfolio assessments.
3. 95% of students will advance to the next grade level.

7. English Language Learners:

Concerns and Additional Questions -

- A. The applicant should revise the requirements of Exiting ELLS from ESOL Program to align to the state-approved district criteria.

Plato Academy will have an ELL Committee that will review student cases. When a student is making progress and is currently making expectations consistently the ELL committee may meet to dismiss the student using the state criteria for dismissal. Currently the process is as follows, however when the District/State inform Plato Academy of changes to this process the process then is updated to reflect the most current process.

1. Current ESOL state exit criteria process:

1a. Exit on the basis of the state exit criteria met: As soon as ESOL Office receives the 2013 CELLA and FCAT Reading scores, the testers will finish the exit process at each school for students that meet all of the exit criteria. They will fill out the Exit Form, send Exit letter to the parent, ask DMT to help with making a copy of the letter to be filed, and they will help school DMTs to enter the information in Focus (LF code, exit date and basis of exit).

1b. ELL Committee may meet to exit the students that are highly functioning and with 2013 high test scores that did not meet all of the state exit criteria from the chart attached...if such decision would be in the best interest of students.

2. Extension of ESOL Services:

Process: LY students that have been in ESOL for 3 or more years from DEUSS (Date Entering U.S. School) or ESOL entry date if DEUSS date is not available, need to have the online CELLA + ELL Committee for extension of services within 30 days and before the DEUSS anniversary date.

We can use 2013 CELLA and FCAT test scores + ELL Committee instead of the online CELLA for LY students in ESOL for 3 years or more with DEUSS dates June-September 30 for extension. The testers will receive the list of students that need to be extended from ESOL Office. They will prepare the ELL Committee paperwork for ELL Chairs on time.

3. ELL Committee Form: This form explains the reasons why the committee met, the parent invitation, required 5 state criteria to follow of which at least 2 need to be met for the committee decision to be made, and required signatures.

Students that are dismissed from ESOL services will be monitored for 2 years to ensure they continue to make grade level progress (LF). They do not receive any services or accommodations during this time. If the student begins to have difficulty they can be placed back into the ESOL program by the ELL committee following state criteria. After 2 years if the student is making adequate progress they will be fully dismissed from the ESOL program (LZ).

- B. The applicant needs to provide additional information concerning the function and identify the members of the school's ESOL committee.

The ESOL committee's function is to monitor ESOL students in accordance with district standards and the committee is comprised of the Administrator, ESOL Coordinator and teacher (a minimum of 3 professionals are required); translator is included if necessary and the student's parent is always invited to participate. The ELL Committee's function is to monitor academic achievement for ELL students, implementation of Academic Plans, making entry/exit decisions (override scores), extension of ESOL instruction beyond three years, monitor ELL student progress, assessing appropriateness of instructional programming, parent concerns, discipline concerns, possible retention, referral to other services/programs.

The School follows the District specified guidelines for exit and extension meeting as necessary and are advised by the District ESOL Department of when these meetings must take place.