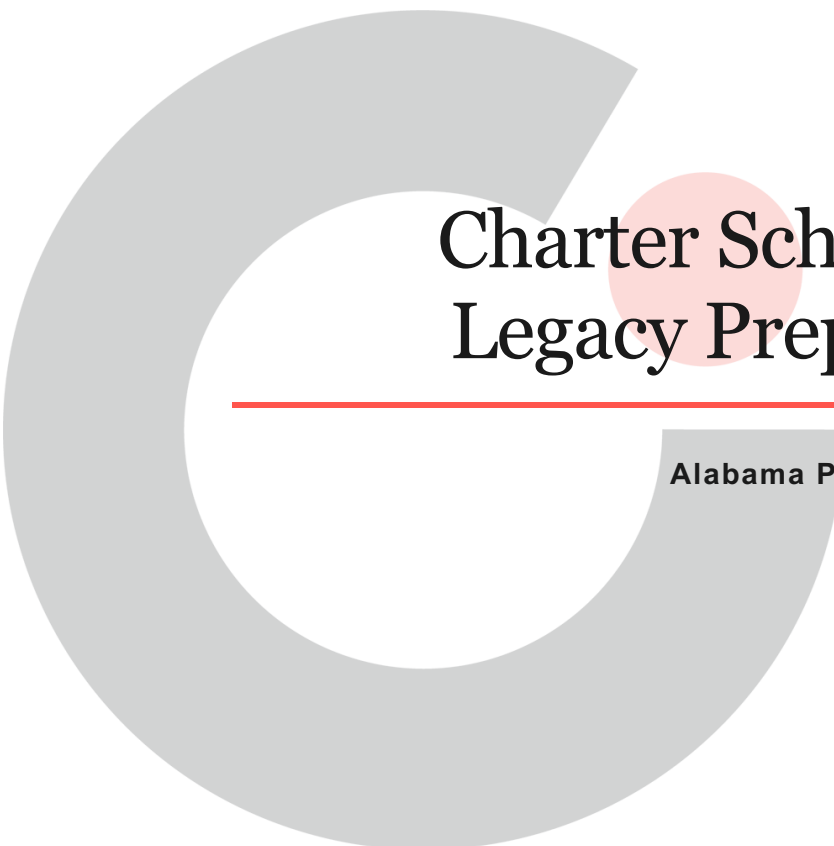




Charter Schools Evaluation: Legacy Prep Charter School

Alabama Public Charter Schools Commission

August, 2023

Section I. Executive Summary

The school has provided an instructional framework and has an adopted curriculum that supports the vision and mission of the school. The Educational Program framework also promotes a positive and culturally inclusive academic environment. Leadership, faculty, and staff need to continue to remain focused on implementing, monitoring, and adapting practices based on performance expectations. As the school grows, consideration should be given to including additional academic and non-academic opportunities for students to become more involved (i.e., Scholars Bowl, Math Team, Science Olympiad, sports/wellness activities, etc.).

All areas of the Operational Plan section meet the established expectations except for professional development and performance management. The evidence did not support that the professional development plan was being fully implemented, monitored, and adjusted based on observational evidence. In the performance management area, goals and targets correlated to the vision and mission of the school, but the evidence did not show that goals were specific, measurable, action-oriented, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). Further, there was limited evidence to support the analysis of individual student progress or student cohorts.

Evidence supports the school's detailed financial plan and completed operating budget. The monthly financial statements and check registers are available on the school's website at <https://legacyprep.org>. Based on the previous independent audit report and the 2022-2023 ALSDE Compliance Monitoring Report, it is imperative that the school adhere to the management of the financial plan processes and procedures as required.

There was not evidence provided in alignment with the rubric assurance calling for a signed conflict of interest statement for every team member and identified board member.

Section II. Educational Program

Powerful Practices

Legacy Prep Charter School has several powerful practices in place regarding its educational program. The adopted curriculum and framework for instructional delivery align with the school's vision to provide an "exceptional educational experience in our scholars' lives that readies them to establish their legacy, prepared and inspired to create a life full of opportunity, choice, connection, and meaning." The school strives to provide an instructional curriculum and practices that are designed to facilitate student learning through inquiry, practice, problem-based learning, and exploration. The English language arts curriculum is *The Science of Reading*, based on the 5 pillars of literacy, has a heavy focus on phonemic awareness, phonics decoding, and opportunities for practice and application of reading and writing skills for comprehension that aligns with the Alabama Department of Education English language arts standards and the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP) expectations. The adopted math curriculum is *enVision Math* which focuses on conceptual understanding and procedural fluency. The school also uses the 5E Model of Instruction for science. In addition to the core academic curriculum, the school has also implemented a framework for service learning that is integrated with

classroom instruction giving students an opportunity to apply what they learn through volunteering or performing acts of service.

A big focus at Legacy Prep is individualized learning for students. In this vein, personalized learning plans are created for all students. In addition to these plans, the school has a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for students who are not meeting academic and/or behavioral goals. The school has also developed and implemented a Special Education plan that meets all state and federal accountability standards. Furthermore, the school has a fully developed and detailed EL (English Language) Plan for students with English language challenges to learning. This supportive learning environment is further supported by student survey data that revealed 89% of students reported, "...teachers help me learn things I will need in the future." And 85% of students reported, "My teachers use different activities to help me learn."

Along with the above-mentioned implemented curriculums, frameworks, and processes, Legacy Charter also has a professional development plan for teachers. The plan's components outline staff goals, details for the professional learning to be provided, and ongoing professional learning opportunities. The plan includes the development of professional learning communities (PLCs), individual professional development support, weekly embedded professional learning opportunities, and the use of train the trainer model for the turnaround of professional practices. According to Legacy Prep, the school also provides professional development to support the Alabama Literacy Act, dyslexia screening, and strategies to address the social-emotional needs of students.

Improvement Opportunities

The evidence and information provided for the adopted curriculum and instructional goals are not clearly aligned with the Alabama College and Career Ready Standards. Furthermore, the lesson plan format did not reflect the instructional frameworks referenced in the documentation and evidence provided for curriculum and academic goals. Also noted in the evidence review was a lack of observational or walkthrough data to support the monitoring and expectations for implementing the adopted curriculum and framework for instructional delivery. While there was a plan for extensive professional learning opportunities for staff, the evidence did not support the fact that the professional learning plan has been fully implemented.

According to the spring 2022 ACAP data, there has been some academic growth; however, students are performing below the state average in English language arts, math, and science. Also of note, all data sources and analyses provided were grade-level summative data. While NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) data for the fall of 2022 was provided, there was no evidence to support any student data analysis based on individual students. Documents reviewed referenced weekly data meetings to analyze student formative and summative data, however, no evidence was found to verify that this practice is being implemented.

Section III. Operations

Powerful Practices



A review of evidence and artifacts shows that Legacy Prep has a detailed District Operating Policies manual that includes a description of the composition of the governing board and their primary roles regarding the school's operation. The policy manual includes a Code of Ethics Policy and a Conflict-of-Interest Policy.

The shared evidence did not include an organizational chart; however, the school's website clearly communicates the organizational structure through the school team directory. The team directory includes individual names and titles, from the district team to the support staff. A separate tab for the Governing board directory includes the role of each of the seven board members. According to the Operations Workbook, Legacy Prep's Governing Board comprises 33% of members who are parents of students who attend or have attended the school for at least one academic year. Parent board members are identified on the school's website. The roles and responsibilities of the governing board are included in the submitted evidence and are aligned with the Alabama Public Charter School Commission's (APCSC) guidelines.

Legacy Prep has posted copies of its Title I and Parent Engagement Plans on its website. There is also a copy of the school's three-year continuous improvement goals. Further, they have submitted documentary evidence in the workspace of the student handbook, employee handbook, Title I parent meetings, a parental involvement plan, and a staff professional development plan.

Improvement Opportunities

While Legacy Prep's organizational structure information could be inferred through its website, no document or artifact evidence was submitted that provided a clear organizational structure chart. Roles and responsibilities for the Governing Board are explicitly laid out through the provided board policies and procedures; however, no clearly defined expectations are included for personnel related to academic planning and instructional delivery. The existing Staff Handbook included expectations in alignment with the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics but did not include information for developing or submitting daily instructional lesson plans, nor was information related to monitoring instructional expectations included in the provided evidence.

Numerous documents were submitted; however, after a thorough review of the provided evidence, it was noted that most did not represent the implementation of stated policies, procedures, or plans for professional learning or performance management. The components of the professional development plan outline goals for staff, details for the professional learning to be provided, and ongoing professional learning opportunities; however, there is a limited description of the plan's core components and how the implementation of expectations will be measured. There is also limited information on staff capacity in collecting, analyzing, and using student performance data. Academic goals and targets are clear and based on ACAP summative data; however, there is little or no description in terms of specific measures or actions that will be taken to determine if progress towards goals is being made.

Section IV. Finance

Powerful Practices

Legacy Prep's financial manual outlines how they report financial and accounting information to the Alabama Department of Education (ALSDE) according to its specifications. Legacy Prep has recently begun using the NexGen system to report in a format that meets the ALSDE requirements. The financial manual also details the processes and procedures that the governing body, head of school, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), and all staff and faculty must adhere to.

The school adheres to accepted accounting principles and documents and follows internal control procedures outlined in the Financial Manual. Also noted, the school conducts an annual independent audit of the school's finances via a certified public accountant. According to the evidence provided and a review of the school's website (<https://legacyprepal.org>), monthly financial statements and check registers are current and posted. Additionally, the school posts an annual financial report by cost center, fund source, and program at the end of each fiscal year.

The fiscal year (FY) 2023 budget is posted on the school's website and has been reviewed for this evaluation. Board agenda evidence shows that two public budget hearings were conducted prior to the budget approval. Legacy Prep Charter School funds are maintained in a qualified public depository subject to the Security for Alabama Funds Enhancement Act (SAFE) requirements.

Improvement Opportunities

An audit report provided as evidence for the timeframe of October 1, 2019 - September 30, 2021, found several instances of noncompliance with state and local laws and regulations and other matters. The findings included failure to implement internal controls and noncompliance with established policies and procedures related to expenditures and the use of credit cards, noncompliance with approved policies for receipting and depositing of all money collected, failure to maintain the proper composition of its Board and to ensure that members of the Board complete and update the required disclosure forms during their terms, failure to ensure that all money collected on behalf of the school is recorded in the school's accounting records and deposited in the school's bank account, noncompliance with its approved finance policy regarding the recording and tracking of grant money received and its failure to maintain appropriate accounting records and supporting documentation to ensure grant money is spent in accordance with purposes identified by the grantors, and failure to maintain supporting documentation of amounts paid to employees as stipends and bonuses. The audit report also details charges against the former Chief Executive Officer and Head of the School resulting from payments made from the school's checking, money market, and credit card accounts for which the public purpose could not be documented or identified.

Legacy Prep did include a statement of response detailing corrective actions to be taken to address the findings of the audit report. However, during ALSDE Compliance Monitoring for 2022-2023, documentation revealed numerous expenditures by Legacy Prep for items or services not considered for allowable uses for Federal funds. In addition, invoices and receipts were not provided to support the purpose of expenditures made with Federal funds. Also noted were numerous expenditures made by Legacy Prep for items or services that were allowable but were not included in the approved application for ESSER (Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief) II and ARP (American Rescue Plan) ESSER funds.

While the school's financial manual includes an annual independent audit of the school's finances via a certified public accountant, the only audit report provided as evidence was for fiscal year (FY) 2020. The findings of that report are outlined above.

Section V. Alabama Continuous Improvement Plan (ACIP)

Powerful Practices

The evidence clearly shows that some thought and planning have gone into developing a school improvement plan based on student data. This was noted in the ACIP workbook, the State of the School PowerPoint presentation, and the Title I Schoolwide Diagnostic for ACIP. A three-year continuous improvement plan is also available on the school's website.

Legacy Prep states that they have reviewed each critical initiative to measure its impact. During the weekly data meetings, grade levels analyze formative and summative data. These data come from unit assessments, MAP data, and quarterly data. ACAP summative data is also disaggregated and used to determine goals, strategies, and activities for the school's ACIP. It was noted that the goals stated in the school's academic plan align with the vision and mission of Legacy Prep and directly address the ACAP data results.

Improvement Opportunities

A review of the evidence has shown that Legacy Prep has some powerful practices regarding a school-wide continuous improvement focus; however, the evidence does not show that a plan has been fully developed with specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, and time-bound (SMART) goals. While the plan exists and does provide measures of success, there was also limited data to support the progress monitoring of the plan. Further, there was no clear description of how the school will evaluate the progress of individual students, student cohorts, or the school.

While much of the information provided supports the vision and mission of the school in addressing student needs, there was no clear evidence for the support of teachers implementing instructional expectations. As stated in this report, observational or walkthrough data was lacking to support the monitoring and expectations for implementing the adopted curriculum and framework for instructional delivery.

VI. Conclusion

A review of over seventy-five documents and the Legacy Prep website was conducted concerning the school's processes, programs, and practices. Evidence does support that the school has made some progress toward established goals. The school has developed and adopted numerous policies and procedures to strengthen the overall operation of the school. The evidence does not support that there is ongoing monitoring of procedures, practices, and plans. While the school collects and reviews multiple data sources, consideration should be given to collecting and analyzing classroom observation data to ensure the implementation of the adopted curriculum and instructional expectations.

VII. Evaluation Results

Requirement	Points Awarded	Points Possible	Requirement	Points Awarded	Points Possible
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM			OPERATIONAL PLAN		
Educational Program Overview	3	4	Organization Structure & Partnerships	5	7
Curriculum & Instructional Design	15	20	Governing Board	10	15
Student Performance Standards	3	4	Staffing Plans	3	4
HS Graduation Requirements (HS Only)	N/A	N/A	Professional Development	3	7
School Calendar and Schedule	2	4	Performance Management	3	7
School Culture	15	20	Facilities	10	10
Supplemental Programming	2	4	Startup & Ongoing Operations	10	15
Special Populations and At-Risk Students	10	15	Operations Capacity	3	4
Student Recruitment & Enrollment	3	4	OPEARATIONAL PLAN TOTAL RATING POINTS	47	69
Student Discipline Policy & Plan	3	4			
Family & Community Involvement	3	4			
Educational Program Capacity	15	20			
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM TOTAL RATING POINTS	74	103			

Continue to the next page

Requirement	Points Awarded	Points Possible	Requirement	Points Awarded	Points Possible
FINANCIAL PLAN			OVERALL ALIGNMENT & VIABILITY		
Financial Plan & Financial Management Capacity	15	20	Overall Alignment & Viability	10	10
			Experienced Operators if Applicable	N/A	N/A
FINANCIAL PLAN TOTAL RATING POINTS	15	20	OVERALL ALIGNMENT & VIABILITY TOTAL RATING POINTS	10	10

Conflicts of Interest	Yes/No
The description of the board's ethical standards and procedures for identifying and addressing conflicts of interest does not exist or is lacking sufficient detail: • Code of Ethics Policy • Conflict of Interest Policy	No
The applicant has provided a signed, conflict of interest statement for every: • Applicant team member • Identified board member	No

The APCSC Application Rubric notes, "The applicant has provided a statement of Assurance agreeing to requirements should approval be granted."

Non-High Schools

Section	Points Awarded	Points Possible	Percent
Educational Program	74	103	71.8%
Operations Plan	47	69	68.1%
Financial Plan	15	20	75.0%
Overall Alignment & Viability	10	10	100%
SECTIONS TOTALS	146	202	72.3%

Section VII. Evaluation Organization

Cognia is a global organization with 128 years of education and continuous improvement expertise. We are the world's largest improvement network, with approximately 30,000 members in the United States of America and 90 other countries. Our overarching goals are to support schools' improvement efforts through organizational effectiveness, emphasizing improving outcomes for all learners. We continue to expand our support and partnering with schools, districts, and states across the globe beyond just the traditional approaches to education.