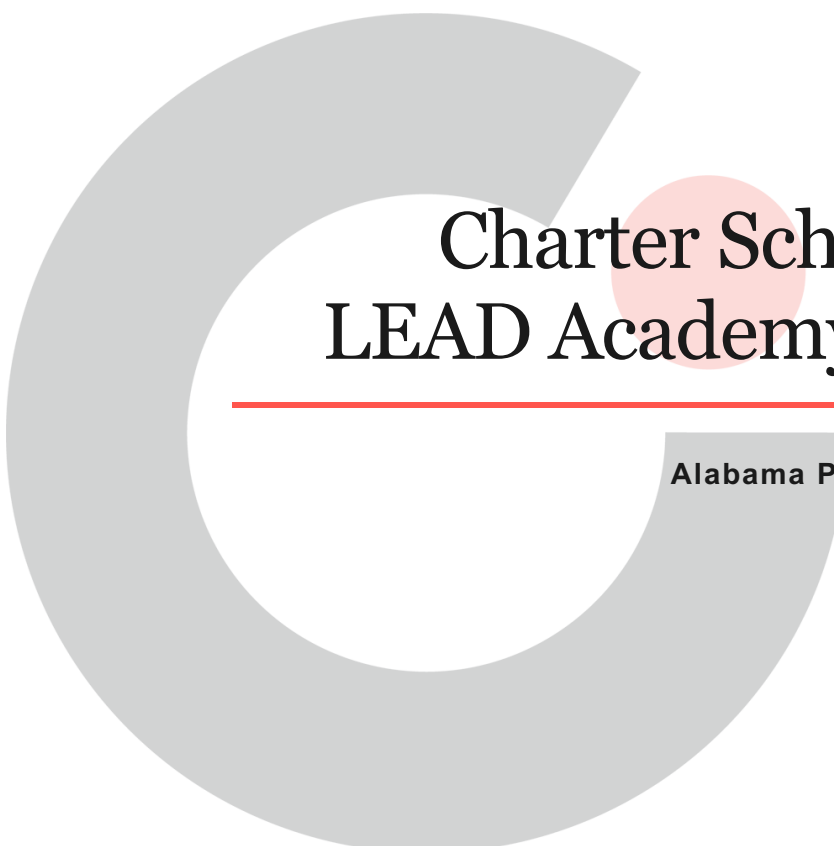




Charter Schools Evaluation: LEAD Academy Charter School

Alabama Public Charter Schools Commission

June, 2023

Section I. Executive Summary

The LEAD Academy Charter School Educational Program was awarded a score of seventy-three points out of one hundred and three points. The Educational Program received seventy-one percent overall. The institution has adopted a curriculum for each academic area. Each of the adopted curricula provides a scope and sequence; however, there was no evidence to suggest that planning is centered on skills and the progression included in grade-level and content standards (e.g., curriculum guides, deconstructed standards aligned to resources, lesson plan format and/or lesson plans, formative assessment data for progress monitoring). Leadership, faculty, staff, and students must continue to press hard and remain focused on implementing, monitoring, and adapting practices based on performance expectations. While the school does offer limited activities for students to become engaged and be recognized, consideration should be given to including additional academic and non-academic opportunities for students to become more involved (i.e., Scholars Bowl, Math Team, sports/wellness activities, etc.).

The institution's Operation Plan received fifty out of a possible seventy-four points. The score for this section is sixty-eight percent. The institution received excellent ratings in the governing board, staffing, and facilities. Areas included in the Operational Plan that the institution will need to revisit for improvement are Professional Development and Performance Management. Evidence related to these areas was insufficient. A fully developed and implemented Professional Development Plan will provide communication and guidance to stakeholders in expectations related to instructional planning and delivery and all stakeholders' individual and collective performance. Additionally, a fully developed, implemented, and monitored continuous improvement plan would provide a comprehensive guide to the school related to what has been planned, what has been implemented, what has been effective, and what needs to be focused on next.

The Financial Plan received fifteen out of twenty points yielding an overall score of seventy-five percent. Evidence supports the careful attention given to funding and planning for the school. Monthly financial documents are readily available on the website at <https://www.leadacademyal.org/>.

The Overall Alignment and Viability area received ten out of fifteen points, reflecting a sixty-seven percent rating for this area. Based on the evidence provided, there were no significant concerns about the school's financial stability or the leadership's capacity. Developing, communicating, implementing, and monitoring a comprehensive improvement plan will provide clarity for all stakeholders in relation to practices, programs, plans, and expectations.

LEAD Academy Charter School received one hundred forty-eight out of one two hundred twelve points resulting in an overall score of seventy percent. While the institution has made foundational plans in relation to day-to-day operations and is to be commended for all that has been done to open the school, the areas related to student performance and instructional expectations will need to be fully addressed for there to be cohesiveness in implemented practice. The areas of Professional Development and Performance Management are critical in determining overall school and individual student success. These areas should be comprehensive in design, aligned to the vision and mission, communicated to all, implemented to fidelity, and monitored for success.

Section II. Educational Program

Powerful Practices

The mission of LEAD Academy Charter School is to *provide innovative programs designed to spark curiosity, maximize learning potential, and continuously improve student achievement by empowering them with 21st-century skills*. The institution has adopted a curriculum for all content areas that are aligned with the Alabama College and Career-Ready standards and provides educators with a guide for planning and delivering instruction. Additionally, the institution implements a Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) instructional focus to promote student engagement and increase learning potential through real-time skills application. Primary School students (PreK – grade three) receive daily instruction in all content areas in a self-contained classroom. On average, the class size for students in grades one through three is 21:1. Students attending the Intermediate School receive daily instruction through a departmentalized approach. Students in fourth grade rotate through three teachers assigned to content-specific areas. Students in fifth and sixth grades rotate among five teachers, and students in seventh and eighth grades rotate among five teachers. All students, PreK through eighth grade, are provided weekly mental health lessons, weekly art instruction, weekly library instructional support visits, and daily physical education instruction. Daily intervention opportunities are built into the schedule as small group instructional time and extended time during the school day. Behavioral expectations and consequences for students are communicated through the parent/student handbook.

School performance standards are communicated through the Employee handbook and are aligned with Alabama State Department of Education expectations. Teachers are expected to deliver bias-free instruction using the adopted curriculum. Based on information included in both the employee and parent/student handbooks, grading procedures are aligned to traditional grades of “A”, “B”, “C”, “D”, and/or “F” with the grading scale aligned to the traditional practice of an “A” being an earned average of 100 to 90, a “B” being an earned average of 89 to 80, a “C” being an earned average of 79 to 70, a “D” being an earned average of 69 to 60, and an “F” being an earned average of 59 and below.

On average, students attending LEAD Academy Charter School are in school for 179 days and have 28 holidays scheduled throughout the academic year. Faculty and staff receive nine professional learning and/or in-service days throughout the academic year. The average instructional day for students begins at 7:55 AM and ends at 3:00 PM, with school doors open to receive students beginning at 7:30 AM and closing at 3:30 PM.

The school offers interscholastic competition opportunities through middle grades basketball and cheerleading. The institution also recognizes students that achieve all A’s and/or A’s and B’s through the honor roll recognition program. Additionally, supplemental services for special education, gifted, and English language (EL) students are provided, as well as medical support through the school nurse and social-emotional support through the school mental health counselor. Students receiving special education services are provided instruction based on the student’s Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

Improvement Opportunities

While the institution has provided documentation of the overall school design and instructional program, there is limited evidence to support the implementation of the adopted practices. For



example, evidence supported a framework for instructional planning in relation to the adopted instructional curriculum. Still, it did not specify resources and/or provide a scope and sequence for standards to be taught. There was limited evidence to support implementing and monitoring any instructional practices. There was eleot® classroom observation data; however, observational data reported that eight observations had been completed. While the adopted curriculum provided information related to the scope and sequence of implementation, there was no evidence to support daily instructional planning via lesson plans and/or observational feedback.

Student performance data analysis included as evidence was limited to school and district state report card information. There was no classroom and/or individual content performance data to indicate the use of data for instructional purposes. Alabama State Department of Education Report Card results for the 2021-2022 academic year are provided below.

Alabama State Department of Education Report Card Information (2021-2022 Academic Year)				
Institution	Report Card Area	Earned Percentage	Grade	Improvement Status
LEAD Academy Primary	Academic Achievement	33.96	50/F	Comprehensive Support and Improvement School
	Academic Growth	55.80		
	Chronic Absenteeism	23.66		
LEAD Academy Intermediate	Academic Achievement	32.77	68/F	Comprehensive Support and Improvement School
	Academic Growth	72.28		
	Chronic Absenteeism	16.53		
LEAD Academy Charter District	Academic Achievement	33.05	53/F	No Status
	Academic Growth	68.20		
	Chronic Absenteeism	20.81		

Additionally, there was no evidence to verify services and support for at-risk students other than the time slots for intervention included in teachers' daily schedules. The inclusion of more extensive data related to what is being offered and data analysis to determine the effectiveness of support offered would have been beneficial in scoring for this area. Likewise, student recruitment and enrollment information was limited to what was included in the handbook and on the school website, <https://www.leadacademyal.org/>.

Section III. Operations

Powerful Practices

Several areas of powerful practice emerged in a review of evidence provided by the institution and a review of the school website, <https://www.leadacademyal.org/>. The established governing board meets the configuration of including 20 percent of its board with parents. As evidenced by the website and information provided by the institution, there are seven board members, with two members listed as parents. 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. The area of

the Governing Board received an excellent rating according to information provided and included in the Alabama Public Charter School's rubric.

Additionally, the institution's facilities meet the expectations set forth by the governing board and receive a rating of excellent. The institution is in the process of expanding its existing facilities to accommodate its increasing student population.

Included as a powerful practice is the area of *Staffing*. The institution received an excellent rating in this area. Leadership has added a mental health instructor to the staff that provides mental health lessons to all students and services to individuals as needed. Additionally, staffing positions include instructional coaches, a school nurse, a district special education coordinator, and a Director of Federal Programs.

Improvement Opportunities

While the school has provided powerful practices, there are opportunities for improvement in *Professional Development* and *Performance Management*. While the existing school calendar provides for professional development/in-service days and a listing of completed professional development was provided, there was no evidence to indicate that a completed professional development plan based on analyzed data exists. Professional learning data provided included completion of state and federal required training (e.g., ethics training, sexual harassment training, FERPA/Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, IDEA/Individuals with Disabilities Education Act compliance, Internet security, etc.) but does not include learning focused on improving student performance through improving the learning environment. Survey analysis data indicates that the district has plans to address student engagement so "classrooms will become more interactive." Additionally, the aforementioned survey analysis proposes to include teacher training on grading procedures to inform parents better and communicate student progress. Finally, there was no evidence to support a focus on being culturally responsive and competent.

Performance Management is another area that has the opportunity for improvement. The evidence provided did not include any information related to the development and/or monitoring of progress in relation to mission-specific academic and organizational goals. The only evidence provided in relation to performance was the Alabama State Department of Education Report Card information. Additionally, while the school has completed a continuous improvement plan, there is no evidence to support the implementation and/or monitoring.

Section IV. Finance

Powerful Practices

The school has provided an operating budget for the current academic year. The budget includes revenue estimates. Additionally, the school has provided realistic enrollment projections supporting anticipated finances needed for each academic year.

In accordance with state regulations, the institution reports all financial accounting information to the Alabama State Department of Education and provides an approved budget for public review on its website, <https://www.leadacademyal.org/>.

Improvement Opportunities

While the institution meets the Alabama State Department of Education requirements concerning financial obligation, no budget narrative was included in the evidence provided.

Section V. Alabama Continuous Improvement Plan

Powerful Practices

Evidence supports the development of thoughtful and meaningful mission and vision statements. The school has also completed an Alabama Continuous Improvement Plan for 2021-2022. The included plan includes critical areas of focus for student learning, culture and climate, and parental involvement. It has aligned activities and measures of success for each of the critical initiatives.

Improvement Opportunities

While a plan for improvement does exist, the information included in the plan begins and ends at the initial development phase. There was little to no evidence to support the implementation and monitoring of activities included in the plan. For example, the critical initiative *to increase the proficiency in reading and math by 30 percent on state assessment* lists the activity as the Read Well Intervention Program; however, there was no data to support measures of success included in the evidence provided. Other included activities are to implement targeted small group instruction; however, there was no evidence in the form of classroom observation data analysis, formative assessment data analysis, and/or professional development for teachers to support implementation and monitoring of the activity.

A fully developed, communicated, implemented, and monitored comprehensive continuous improvement plan would greatly benefit school, teacher, and student performance.

Section VI. Conclusion

A review of over 30 documents and the institution's website was conducted concerning the institution's processes, programs, and practices. Evidence supports that the school has planned for the overall day-to-day operations of the school; however, the evidence does not support that there is ongoing monitoring of procedures, practices, and plans. While the school provided evidence of student performance, attendance, enrollment, and budgets, there was no evidence to support how the information is used to provide direction for the school. Consideration should be given to collecting and analyzing classroom observation data to ensure the implementation of instructional expectations and the development of improvement efforts for student engagement, learning, and success.

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VII. Evaluation Results

Requirement	Points Awarded	Possible Points	Requirement	Points Awarded	Possible Points
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM			OPERATIONAL PLAN		
Educational Program Overview	3	4	Organization Structure & Partnerships	5	7
Curriculum & Instructional Design	15	20	Governing Board	15	15
Student Performance Standards	2	4	Staffing Plans	4	4
HS Graduation Requirements (HS Only)	N/A	N/A	Professional Development	0	7
School Calendar and Schedule	3	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	50	69
Student Discipline Policy & Plan	2	4			
Family & Community Involvement	3	4			
Educational Program Capacity	15	20			
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM TOTAL RATING POINTS	73	103			

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

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	Yes

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

Section	Points Awarded	Points Possible	Percent
Educational Program	73	103	70.9%
Operations Plan	50	69	72.5%
Financial Plan	15	20	75.0%
Overall Alignment & Viability	10	15	66.7%
Experienced Operators if Applicable	N/A	N/A	N/A
SECTIONS TOTALS	148	207	71.5%

Section VIII. 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 in their 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.