

# OPEN CHARTER MAGNET SCHOOL

*A Charter School Petition for Renewal*

First Draft Submitted to Los Angeles Unified School District  
on February 11, 2013

5540 WEST 77<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90045

TERM OF CHARTER  
**JULY 1, 2013 TO JUNE 30, 2018**

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## **AFFIRMATIONS AND ASSURANCES:**

The Open Charter Magnet School shall:

- Be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices and all other operations.
- Not charge tuition.
- Not discriminate against any student on the basis of disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code.
- Admit all pupils who wish to attend the school. EC 47605(d)(2)(A). An existing public school that converts to a charter school shall adopt and maintain a policy giving admission preference to pupils who reside within the former attendance area of the school. EC 47605 (d)(1)
- Determine admission by a public random drawing, if the number of pupils who wish to attend the school exceeds the school capacity, and preference shall be extended to pupils who currently attend the Charter School and pupils who reside in the District. EC 47605(d)(2)(B)
- Not enroll pupils over nineteen (19) years of age unless continuously enrolled in public school and making satisfactory progress toward high school diploma requirements.
- Not require any child to attend the Charter School nor any employee to work at the Charter School.
- In accordance with Education Code Section 48200, if a pupil is expelled or leaves the Charter School without graduation or completing the school year for any reason, the Charter School shall notify the superintendent of the school district of the pupil's last known address within 30 days, and shall, upon request, provide that school district with a copy of the cumulative record of the pupil, including a transcript of grades or report card, and health information.

## Element 1: Description of the Educational Program

*“A description of the educational program of the school, designed, among other things, to identify those whom the school is attempting to educate, what it means to be an ‘educated person’ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and how learning best occurs. The goals identified in that program shall include the objective of enabling pupils to become self-motivated, competent, and lifelong learners.”*

*Ed. Code § 47605 (b)(5)(A)*

The address of the Open Charter Magnet School is 5540 West 77<sup>th</sup> Street, Los Angeles, CA, 90045.

The phone number is 310-568-0735.

The contact person is Antoinette Cass.

The term of this charter shall be from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2018.

The grade configuration is K-5.

The number of students will be 410.

The operational capacity is 410.

The instructional calendar will be traditional.

The bell schedule is included in Appendix L.

### *Overview*

The Open Charter Magnet School (the “Open School”) is an innovative and highly successful public magnet school. The Open School was founded by parents in 1977 as the first magnet school in the Los Angeles Unified School District (the “District” or LAUSD), and in 1993 was the first school to be granted Affiliated Charter status. Based on our outstanding student results, we received the prestigious California Distinguished School and the Magnet School of Merit awards in 1997. In addition, our charter has been renewed three times, further highlighting both our students’ success and that of our site-based governance system. In 2001, the Open School was one of three schools chosen in the county of Los Angeles to be the recipient of the Los Angeles Educational Partnership Excellence Award, and received the California Distinguished School award again in 2003 and 2012.

The cutting-edge educational program at the Open School consists of thematic, integrated, and experiential instruction, guided by the needs and interests of each child. Our instructional program is based on the constructivist philosophies of Bruner, Dewey, and Piaget, and is designed by teams of teachers sharing the same “cluster” of students.

Technology is fully integrated into the curriculum and accessible to all students. Parents, teachers, and the administration locally govern the school through a dynamic and successful collaborative structure. Our overall goal is to spark children's love of learning, enabling them to master the skills that will be required of them as lifelong learners and responsible citizens in our ever-changing society. We believe that the constructivist learning environment we have created puts us at the forefront of innovative and creative solutions to the many problems facing education today and gives us a strong foundation as we move towards integrating the common core standards and addressing the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners.

### *Mission Statement*

Open School is a unique, diverse, collaborative, dynamic and joyous community of learners. Every learner will leave Open School empowered and able to direct his/her own learning with enthusiasm and excitement and conduct themselves with integrity, initiative, and kindness.

### *Record of Excellence*

In a collaborative environment focused on student achievement, the Open School has succeeded in providing a high quality educational program for all of its students.

As a charter school we have met the following **academic** goals:

- API growth from 874 to 918 between 2007-2012
- API statewide ranking of 10 and fulfilled all 25 AYP requirements in 2011 and 14 of 17 in 2012
- 82.9% of students scored proficient or advanced in ELA, as compared to our network of schools which average 72%, and the district, which averages 54%
- 82.9% of students scored proficient or advanced in mathematics, as compared to our network of schools which average 75%, and the district, which averages 63%
- 29.2% of English Language Learners were redesignated as Fluent English Proficient in the 2011-2012 school year
- Average attendance rate of 96.8%

As a charter school we have supported **professional development** and served our **community** in the following ways:

- 100% participation in student-led parent conferences
- Collaboration with the Cotsen Family Foundation to support teachers' continuing professional development

- Teachers from all clusters have participated in Writer’s Workshop training at Columbia University, Teachers College in New York City
- Teachers have participated in Reader’s Workshop trainings with Growing Educators
- Our thirteenth conference, *Constructivism in Action*, provided professional development to visiting educators from the local and global community
- National Wildlife Federation Habitat Certification for our campus garden areas
- Continuing relationship with Tree People to maintain our landscaping and educate our students and parents
- Student-led Student Council service learning initiatives including raising funds for victims of the tsunami in Japan, Heifer International, shoe and toy drives, recycling projects, and sending care packages to troops
- Recipient of numerous Wonder of Reading and Reading is the Way Up grants to support innovative school-wide reading programs

### *Educational Philosophy*

There are several key points in the Open School’s educational philosophy. Our philosophical context is derived from Piaget, Bruner, and Dewey in that we view children as naturally curious, motivated learners capable of integrating and categorizing experiences in order to add to their understanding of the world around them. We believe that our students are motivated by their interests, and, through developmentally appropriate practices, should be guided in their ability to construct conceptual understandings from meaningful experiences. Through the use of our thematic and integrated curriculum, our teachers facilitate these experiences for their students, using current research to guide their practice.

John Dewey said, “Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results.” As Dewey states, we believe that learning happens best in context and through meaningful activities. Context enables students to recall, reuse, and connect what is learned to new experiences. A context-driven curriculum builds student interest and enthusiasm while also providing focal points for the infusion of standards. The teaching of basic skills then becomes a tool for student learning rather than the primary goal. Contextual focal points not only lead to a deeper understanding of what is being learned, but also frame unexpected teachable moments as building blocks of a cohesive learning community.

We believe that learning is dynamic and happens best in a community. Teaching teams work together to establish their classroom environments in order to foster interaction and design learning experiences to be as collaborative as possible. There is a real hum of activity and a sense of purposefulness as you walk through the classrooms. This sense of

purpose is not restricted to the classroom environment, but also extends to our garden, art studio, vocal and instrumental music environments, and physical fitness activities. Here teachers and specialists work collaboratively in order to deepen children's connections between the classroom, studios, garden, and playground.

Through the variety of educational experiences provided by the various educational programs, students are expected to take responsibility for, and ownership of, their learning. In this endeavor they are guided and supported by the entire school community.

### *Guiding Principles of the Educational Program-How Learning Best Occurs*

It is our belief at the Open School that we are able to maintain consistently high levels of achievement for all our students through the development and implementation of a comprehensive, constructivist, standards-based instructional program. Our educational efforts stem from a unified vision of learning and a school-wide commitment to pursuing and supporting high levels of excellence and expectation for both teachers and students. Our guiding principles are as follows:

- We are committed to being a community of respect; we respect ourselves, we respect each other, and we respect the environment;
- Instruction is student-centered, hands-on, and project-based;
- Learning is fun, interactive, and meaningful;
- Learning is a social process that happens best in a dynamic, supportive, and effective community;
- We recognize and meet the needs of individual learners;
- Not all learning is classroom-based;
- Making connections to life experiences leads to meaningful and lasting learning;
- Contextual, inter-disciplinary learning is more effective than teaching isolated information;
- Students need opportunities to explore, verbalize, question, think, create, and discover their own answers;
- Students are explicitly taught strategies for life-long learning, including independence, personal responsibility, and goal setting;
- It is important to have the opportunity to both succeed and fail, take risks, and learn from mistakes;



- Students need opportunities to learn using all modalities;
- Allowing students to make meaningful choices within a curricular context engenders ownership of learning;
- Our teachers are professionals who write their own curriculum and are supported in their professional growth;
- Observation, assessment, and reflection are used to guide future instruction;
- We value everyone’s diverse ideas and cultures and honor their contributions as essential components of a successful learning community.

## *Methodology*

Experiential learning in a humanistic environment is created at the Open School by offering a standards-aligned curriculum that is project-based. It is carried out in an open-structured, interactive environment designed to promote multi-sensory, multi-modal approaches to learning. The instructional program supports the children’s ability to act independently and to assume responsibility for their learning, behavior, and the materials they use. The curricular structure encourages students to inquire, investigate, explore, problem-solve, construct, and create. For us, learning is not simply reading a textbook and answering the questions at the end of the chapter. Learning is doing, seeing, questioning, listening, reading, writing, experimenting, analyzing, relating, and most of all applying — applying knowledge in ways that enrich our children’s lives. Throughout the learning process we encourage and expect them to assume responsibility for themselves and their environment.

One of the fundamental means through which the Open School implements its constructivist approach is through “cluster” teaching. A cluster consists of a multiage grouping of students that is team-taught by two teachers in an open-structured environment made from two connected classrooms. Subject areas and disciplines are integrated and interrelated in a rigorous curriculum organized around a school wide environmental theme of Interdependence: Human Interaction with the Environment. This trans-disciplinary curriculum connects subject areas to central concepts or key ideas. Skills, activities, and projects are linked through higher order processes used to construct meaning, solve problems, and discover relationships. Our thematic approach, which is not textbook-based, puts the teacher in charge of the curriculum and its materials, and allows students’ interests to help guide lessons and activities so that students connect their knowledge and understanding at a deeper level.

Teachers in this type of learning environment have a multitude of roles. Before learning begins, they spend a great deal of time creating the structure that enfolds and supports not just the projects, but also the climate and culture of the classroom. Teachers must create a theme, a “big idea,” that will link together what is to be learned and that will provide engaging and meaningful reasons for the learning to take place. Assignments and projects are then designed to both fit within the theme and that support California’s

Common Core standards. These experiences further the students' acquisition of skills and concepts as well as deepen their understanding of the theme that ties them together. The focus is not simply on learning about something, but also questioning it, thinking about it, and using what has been learned in a meaningful way. Such a curricular approach not only conveys information but, perhaps even more importantly, sparks a love of learning and a problem-solving, ever-adapting approach to the world.

As students are actively involved in their own learning, the process is inherently individualized. While every student is held accountable for mastery of the academic standards, the way in which these standards are achieved may vary from student to student. Teachers scaffold and support learning where necessary so that each student achieves her/his highest possible degree of success. Our Resource and Gifted and Talented Education programs ("GATE") are integrated into the classroom environment with the support of our Resource Specialist and GATE Coordinator. Our Student Success Team meets weekly to help guide teachers in designing accommodations and strategies to meet the needs of individual students.

Learning at the Open School takes place through a variety of organizational patterns: teacher-directed lessons to small groups, students' independent activities, whole class instruction, small cooperative group activities, and one-to-one instruction. Since we believe that learning happens everywhere and from everyone, our groupings are flexible and designed to accommodate the goals and needs of the activity. In most circumstances, our groups are heterogeneous in nature so that a broad variety of perspectives, learning styles, and experiences are represented. If a teacher is working on a specific skill, however, groups might be organized around the degree of mastery of that skill. Students who are conducting research on a given topic might organize themselves into groups based on who is interested in a specific area of that topic.

Technology is fully integrated into our instructional program, as we view computers as a basic learning tool, much like a pencil or box of crayons, that gives both students and teachers valuable ways to explore, deepen, extend, and communicate skills and ideas. Students use computers and iPads to gather and share information, as well as practice and develop a variety of academic skills. Teachers use technology to design many of their projects, assignments, and handouts. Technology projects go far beyond researching on the Internet and typing stories, as our students create things such as podcasts, animations, and video games to enrich their learning experiences.

### ***What It Means to be an "Educated Person" in the 21st Century***

As our world is changing rapidly, with innovations in science and technology, it is difficult to predict what our students will need to know and be able to do to be successful in college and their careers. Not only will they need basic academic information and skills, but they will also need to be able to effectively interact with people and information. Students will need to be able to ask thought-provoking and insightful questions, find, communicate, organize, and apply information, collaborate, take initiative, assume leadership, take responsible risks, manage their time, work across disciplines, be creative, and use critical thinking and problem solving skills. Our

curriculum and methodology allows us to foster and develop all of these academic and personal skills in our students.

Our schoolwide emphasis on student responsibility for learning goes hand in hand with the expectation that students be independent thinkers and learners who are respected for their inquisitiveness and encouraged to solve problems creatively. Student independence is achieved through a consistent emphasis on literacy, writing throughout content areas, inquiry across the curriculum, a strongly developed grasp of basic skills, a hands-on science program, and an analytical approach to problem solving. The integrated use of technology further empowers students as they confidently access, assimilate, and share multiple sources of information and present what they have learned in a variety of ways.

Classroom projects and group assignments provide our students with many opportunities to practice clear communication and collaboration, allowing them to develop essential teamwork skills. Teachers do more than just provide opportunities for students to work together; they also facilitate the students' learning of effective ways to question, support, learn from, and extend each other's thinking and ideas.

Our curricular focus on thematic instruction provides our students with a framework with which to access what they are learning and connect it across subject areas. As citizens of the 21st century, our students will have the facility to apply knowledge and experiences from one context to another, a key element for effective problem solving in unanticipated situations. The emphasis on the complexities in the ways issues, information, and events are represented provides our students with experiences in exploring multiple perspectives. These experiences serve as foundations for further strengthening students' ability to analyze information in order to make wise decisions.

The schoolwide environmental theme of Interdependence: Human Interaction with the Environment sets the tone for responsible stewardship of our planet. Hands-on experiences and in depth inquiry personalize the children's relationship with their surroundings and shared responsibility creates respect for and a commitment to the environment. We hope that our students will continue to interact with the environment in a manner that is flexible, purposeful, and creative. The healthy sustenance of our planet depends upon citizens who are cognizant of the Earth's fragility and conscious of its underlying physical and biological principles.

Graduates of the Open School will carry with them many empowering experiences preparing them to be responsible members of their communities. These experiences will help establish the students' deeply rooted self-concept as autonomous, productive, lifelong learners, who are part of a larger, interconnected, interdependent global society. We strive to develop civic-minded thinkers with an ability to respectfully challenge their communities to bring about change.

We are proud of the educational legacy that the Open School provides for all stakeholders in our school community. The collaborative nature of our community, from teacher partnerships to student teams, and parent involvement, serves as a model for our students' future contributions and community participation. Together, we take our commitment to

educating citizens for the 21st century seriously and feel that our school's climate and its programs demonstrate and celebrate our dedication to this goal.

## **Core Curriculum and Standards Integration**

Modern cognitive research has found that students learn best when they are given the opportunity to actively incorporate what they are studying into their own experiences, concepts, and understanding of how the world works. We believe that learning how to think and learning subject matter content are not separate processes and are best developed within an authentic context. In a thinking curriculum, skills are best acquired in the context of meaningful learning experiences that build on a child's interests. Our program is hands-on, student-centered, experiential, and provides for greater depth of understanding in a wide range of knowledge areas.

Common Core content standards are explicitly embedded in our thematic teaching curriculum. The standards for mathematical practices and language arts are at the heart of our teaching methodologies. The standards guide instruction within each cluster without mandating curricular and instructional practices. We will transition to, and implement, the Common Core Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessments according to LAUSD established timelines.

Our focus is on depth over breadth of knowledge, and our thematic, integrated curriculum affords the opportunity to address content and performance standards in an exciting and efficient manner. Teachers in each cluster develop a curriculum map for the year, including standards, projects and writing applications related to their theme across content areas (see Appendix B). The projects allow us to address multiple standards in a logical and meaningful context, rather than merely in a linear fashion. We identify standards and benchmarks embedded in the curriculum by deconstructing our units and projects into their most basic components. Assessments are linked to key standards to help guide instruction, shape the content of our developing electronic portfolios, and chart a student's growth over time.

The following section provides a description of each core content area with examples of how instructional strategies are embedded into the standards based curriculum.

### ***Reading***

A primary goal of the reading program at the Open School is to encourage students to value reading as a source of information and personal pleasure. Students' love of reading encourages their growth as readers and writers. We provide students with a variety of opportunities to read meaningful, self-selected literature that is at either their independent or instructional level. Many classrooms incorporate aspects of the Reading Workshop curriculum designed by Columbia's Teacher's College. Curriculum in the early grades builds a strong foundation in phonics and phonemic awareness, utilizing strategies such as daily chants/songs, making words through manipulating word cards, and oral blending. In the upper grades, comprehension and decoding strategies are taught with increased sophistication, as students are now reading to learn instead of learning to read. The mini-

lesson model is utilized in many classrooms as well. Children are presented with a lesson and then given the opportunity, through extensive time on text, to hone their reading skills.

Within lessons and projects related to their cluster theme, teachers use a variety of instructional strategies such as whole-group read aloud, small reading groups, literacy centers, listening centers, individual and partner reading conferences, and literature circles to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of all students. At Open School our reading program is fueled by an embedded school wide love of reading. Our annual Read-a-thon event has the students and staff reading for thousands of hours within a three weeks period. Programs like this instill a love of reading and enthusiasm to read outside of the classroom, creating lifelong readers and lifelong learners.

### *Writing*

The writing program at the Open School is modeled after the Writing Workshop curriculum developed by Columbia University. Most of our teachers have been to Columbia's Teacher's College for formal training in Writing Workshop. Teacher collaboration in which standards-based units of study have been developed is the basis for our strong writing program at Open School. Through Writing Workshop lessons teachers teach different genres and provide opportunities for modeling, discussing, writing, conferring, and publishing. Mini-lessons within writing instruction incorporate literature to teach content, voice, and grammar.

The students use rich teacher-selected literature to model writing that spans all genres and uses various writing techniques. Students have opportunities daily to practice writing strategies taught in this authentic way. Students are given opportunities to write from different perspectives and for different purposes throughout the day, across content areas, within thematic projects and skills-based lessons, to develop both fiction and non-fiction writing skills. Many of the students' writings are based on personal experience. They develop their writers' voice and style while writing about their own personal experiences. Teachers provide differentiated support to students during individual conferences centered on their writing and individualized writing conventions and techniques.

### *Mathematics*

The goal of mathematics instruction is to produce students who are fluent with numbers, who have gained mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills, and have developed a strong math vocabulary and skill base. At Open School, we develop students' abilities to make sense of problems and persevere to find solutions, reason abstractly and quantitatively, construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of themselves and others. Our students maintain in-depth mathematical discussions and derive many avenues for arriving at the same destination. They become competent and adept at solving problems in various, yet equally concrete ways.

Teachers use a variety of curricular resources, including various manipulatives, to meet the needs of their students. Using these resources, teachers develop standards-aligned

curriculum that provides learners with opportunities to develop mathematical skills and understanding through daily routines, such as calendar discussions and activities, as well as projects and lessons related to cluster themes. Instructional strategies include whole group direct teaching to introduce concepts, math centers to reinforce skills and concepts, and small groups to differentiate instruction. Literature is incorporated to promote learning connections and to build mathematical vocabulary.

Our goal is that our students will have a balanced combination of mathematical understanding and procedural precision. Through the utilization of mathematical tools and solid mathematical reasoning skills we create this balance.

### *Science*

The implementation of our standards-based science curriculum is driven by the constructivist belief that students learn best in an inquiry-based, hands-on, investigative environment that builds upon the knowledge of previous learning. Our students work in cooperative groups to advance through the stages of the scientific process. It is through these cooperative groups that our students learn how to work together to solve a problem.

Our school wide theme of Human Interaction and the Environment lends itself to our scientific curriculum. Through our cluster themes, children are continuously learning about living things and their environments. Every cluster incorporates science into their overarching theme. The children learn the true meaning of interdependence, as they see how science is infused into all aspects of life.

Teachers utilize a variety of resources, including FOSS Kits and other science materials, to develop a comprehensive curriculum, aligned to their theme, that includes the essential skills and knowledge students need to be scientifically literate. Throughout their school experience, students continually develop investigative and experimentation skills and utilize technology in their learning. Many of our field trips are directly linked to our science curriculum, affording our students the opportunities to have as many hands-on scientific experiences as possible. These personal, first-hand experiences are then utilized to enrich the students' writing in Writing Workshop. We take every opportunity to connect curriculum to our students' daily experiences.

### *Social Studies*

The Social Studies curriculum is based on a holistic approach to develop students' critical understanding of history and their own identity. Teachers utilize literature from around the world, non-fiction resources, and primary resources to foster a culturally sensitive perspective rooted in civic-mindedness. Instruction is aligned to the classroom theme, providing opportunities for students to explore and celebrate history, community, diversity, and multiculturalism. Students apply what they have learned in simulations and classroom-based projects.



## *Curricular Design: Cluster Configuration and Thematic Instruction*

Every cluster uses a constructivist approach to integrated thematic instruction. Within this context and the school-wide theme of Human Interaction and the Environment, each has a unique emphasis based on a theme developed by its teaching team. Themes guide curricular organization and subject area content, providing a framework for meaningful implementation of California's Common Core standards. Each Cluster sets their own daily schedule in accordance with district guidelines for instructional time allocations. Our schoolwide bell schedule adheres to the number of minutes of instruction set forth according to California Educational Code. (See Appendix M)

### **Sample Daily Schedule**

Every cluster sets their own schedule according to the cluster's curricular needs, while adhering to State instructional minutes guidelines.

8:15 First Bell

8:20 Instructional Bell

8:20-10:25 Language Arts, Science, and/or Social Studies

10:25-10:45 Recess

10:45-12:15 Math and Music

12:15-12:58 Lunch

12:58-2:45 Science, Physical Education, and/or Art

2:45 Dismissal

Evolving individual Cluster themes are discussed in turn below.

All of our clusters gather information and develop their curricular program from a plethora of resource books, textbooks, academic literature, and many internet sources. As teachers create their Common Core aligned curriculum, they require the flexibility of gathering information from many sources. Our teachers are lifelong learners; therefore they constantly search for new materials that will enhance the learning of their students and the quality of the curriculum. These instructional resources include, but are not limited to:

#### Language Arts:

- Houghton Mifflin Literary Readers
- The Wright Group
- Phonics Practice Readers from the Modern Curriculum Press
- Core Literature
- Columbia Writing Workshop: Units of Study for Primary Writing
- Columbia Writing Workshop: Units of Study for Upper Grade Writing

- Junior Great Books
- Scholastic Readers
- Student Authored Stories (Typed by Teachers)
- Thinking Maps: Tools for Learning
- Mountain Language
- Evan Moor- Daily Language Review
- Scholastics: 25 Mini Lessons for teaching Writing
- Making Big Words
- Scholastic's Children's Dictionaries
- Harvey Daniels in Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student Centered Classroom
- Susan Zimmerman in Mosaic of Thought

Mathematics:

- Scott Foresman: California Mathematics
- Evan Moor: Daily Word Problems
- Marilyn Burns: Math By All Means, A Collection of Math Lessons, About Teaching Mathematics, Math and Literature,
- Math Investigations: Dale Seymour
- MathSteps
- Various Marcy Cook Collections
- Aims
- Harcourt Brace
- Touch Math
- EnVision
- Hands on Equations



- Everyday Calendar Counts
- Math Their Way
- Cuisenaire
- Mathland

Science:

- FOSS Kits
- GEMS Guide
- “Start to Finish” Series by Lerner Publications
- California Dairy Council
- AIMS
- Scott Foresman

Social Studies:

- Exploring Council – Jack Zimmerman
- Voting and Elections by Dennis Frandin
- Life in a California Mission by Sally Senzel Issacs
- Internet Simulations
- American Family Albums- Oxford University Press
- Teacher Created materials
- Second Step

**Green Cluster (Kindergarten & First Grade)**

Cathy Furer and Kim Masumiya

The Green Cluster theme is: “Who Am I? Discovering Myself And My World.” The curriculum focuses on self-discovery and how we are connected to the world around us. During the first part of the year the children begin learning about themselves, their senses, and their bodies. They begin to express themselves in our writing program, based on the Columbia Writing Workshop, through projects such as “Who Am I?”, “All About

Me” booklets, and personal narratives about the summer and fall seasons.

Later, the students’ view is expanded to include their families, their culture, and other cultures of the world community. They write family stories and begin to use their “poet’s eyes” as a lens to see the world. We end the year by learning about the environment and how we influence, and are influenced by, it. We learn about life cycles by studying silkworms from eggs through adult moths, and keep scientific journals on this process.

As children develop beginning reading skills, math awareness, and problem solving skills, they also develop as learners and friends. We start each day with Morning Calendar. It is a time to gather together and get ready for the school day. Children develop listening and math skills through calendar activities, celebrating the Student of the Day, and our phonics program. Some of the skills they are exposed to include learning the days of the week, ordinal numbers, patterns, the number line, the concept of odd and even, place value, equation writing, expanded notation, mental math, math terminology, counting by tens, fives, twos, ones, and palindromes, addition, subtraction, and beginning algebra.

Shopping Day is an example of a constructivist project that we have created with the help of our students. We culminate our money unit by creating a shopping mall in our classroom, complete with stores, student-designed store fronts, actual inventory, and parent shopkeepers. The children shop throughout our Green Cluster Mall with real money. They conduct transactions and have to make change from the coins that they are given.

Green Cluster emphasizes group cooperation and individual responsibility towards the group. Our activity-based program has many options from which children can choose, encouraging them to become independent, life-long learners. Our emphasis is on early literacy and critical thinking and problem solving skills. We use a variety of approaches to guide and inspire children to develop a love of learning.

## **Silver Cluster (First & Second Grade)**

Suzanne Dellinger and Tina Wada

Silver Cluster’s theme is Caterpillars to Calendar: Discovering the Patterns and Cycles in the World Around Us.

We cook with the children to provide a rich curricular experience as well as a mutually shared experience to use as a writing vehicle. Every fall, we complete a detailed study of apples which includes comparing and contrasting the many varieties of apples, dissecting the apple, printing with the apple, seeing how the blossom becomes fruit, and finally cooking applesauce or apple crisp. Thus, when it is time to write about the apple unit, every child has a multifaceted experience from which to draw to inform and color their writing.

Our math teaching includes games to help children explore and construct the relationship between numbers. We play many games so children have many opportunities to witness and touch the patterns numbers make as they are combined, pulled apart, and recombined. We also like to use natural materials, gathered from the yard (leaves, acorns, seeds, etc) so the relationship between the outdoors and the mathematical world becomes easy to see.

We study nature year round by observing and discussing the plants and animals in our gardens. We observe our environment daily so that the children begin to notice the subtle and obvious changes that occur throughout the year. We teach them to pay attention, so they can realize that the acorn buried by the squirrel in October morphs into a tiny oak seedling in February, if you are watching and remembering. We learn about predator/prey relationships when the ominous shadow of the red-tail hawk appears every time the rabbits are let out of their cages.

The nature studies culminate in a student field guide. Each spring their writings about the many different life forms of our ecosystem are studied individually and published collectively. One creature is chosen by each child to formally study after they have casually observed a variety of animals. Research, observation, Linnean classification, and zoological illustration are some of the methods used by our students to gain expertise on their animal.

We serve a diverse population of students coming from many Los Angeles communities, so our holiday celebrations are tailored from year to year to reflect our current group of students. We have celebrated Ramadan, Succot, Dia de Los Muertos, Hanukkah, Christmas, Easter, Passover, and Kwanzaa, to name a few. We notice the similarities and differences between cultures as we learn about their customs.

At the end of each day, we gather for a shared writing experience. As we recount and reflect upon the events of the day, many writing skills are introduced and practiced. The daily writings are compiled weekly into a newsletter that is distributed to each child. The students and their families then have access to a diary of meaningful events for further, familiar, reading practice at home.

We sit in council circles with the children weekly. Based on a Native American tradition, our students hone their speaking and listening skills while learning to take turns and treat one another's ideas with respect and kindness.

### **Red Cluster (First & Second Grade)**

Ariel Roth-Hernandez and Danielle Davis

Red Cluster's theme is "From Start to Finish: Learning About Growth and Change in Ourselves and in the World Around Us." We believe the best place to start is with activities that help students internalize the concepts of cycles, processes, and sequencing. Our units and field trips support these ideas.

This theme is the concept around which we design the bulk of our social studies and science curriculum. Using an excellent book series called "From Start to Finish" from the Lerner Publishing Company, as well as supplemental books, physical materials, multimedia presentations, and live specimens, we give our students the opportunity to observe, describe, and create change and growth in a variety of ways.

Our students have raised frogs, butterflies, moths, ladybugs, and chickens to learn about life cycles, metamorphoses, habitat, co-dependence, and survival. In the "From Egg to Chicken" unit, student monitor fertile eggs daily and help care for baby chicks once they hatch. Content-based literature and a "From Egg to Chicken" webquest serve to supplement their learning in this unit.

We have observed, planted, and/or harvested corn, cotton, pumpkins, and peanuts to understand plant parts, life cycles, and uses. In our "From Peanut to Peanut Butter" unit, we place the peanut plant in a historical context, teaching about George Washington Carver, his roots, and his remarkable contributions to agriculture and food production.

In social studies, learning about processes helps our students understand how people meet their needs using raw materials and changing them into useful items. Concepts of natural resources, workers, factory-versus handmade, transportation, assembly lines, machinery, distribution, and sales are explored in units such as "From Wax to Crayon" and "From Cotton to T-Shirt."

In order to build inquiry and research skills, throughout the year children learn about sequencing. They first sequence pictures and puzzles. Later, they learn how to read and comprehend non-fiction texts by being guided through a study of non-fiction components, such as tables of contents, indexes, headings, captions, photographs, etc. Additionally, students learn how to write sequential stories incorporating transition such as first, next, after that, and finally.

The culminating project is a unit in which we teach the children how authors **start** with an idea and **finish** with a real book. The children are placed in small groups based on interest and are guided through the process of writing and illustrating their own "Start to Finish" books. During our end-of-year Share Party, our young authors read their books to their parents and celebrate their achievements. The book is the embodiment of what the children have learned throughout the year. It is a proud day for teachers, parents, and students alike.

## **Orange Cluster (Second & Third Grade)**

Anne Granick, Tracey Maye, Dena Vatcher

Orange Cluster's theme is **Discovering Diversity**. The yearlong curriculum is developed around the unifying concepts of cultural diversity and human similarities. These are the

constant themes that tie together and thread through most of our units of study.

As a culminating project to our yearlong study, the students create a multicultural museum within the classroom. The class will brainstorm, research, design, display, and build the various elements needed to establish a museum that celebrates some of the diverse cultures that contribute to American society. They will develop the physical layout, the necessary staff, the factual information to be displayed, the aesthetic decoration of the interior, persuasive advertising, and proper business procedures. When the museum is operational, visitors are invited and the students take on the museum staff roles that they have created in order to effectively convey their knowledge of the cultures represented in the exhibits.

In order to access new knowledge about the cultural information to be included in exhibits, heterogeneous groups of children perform the roles of cultural anthropologists and museum curators, researching diverse ethnic backgrounds. Each group focuses on a specific ethnic group (Chinese Americans, African Americans, Irish Americans, Korean Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, or Jewish Americans) that they explore in a variety of ways. They read, research, view, listen, and observe several aspects of the culture in order to create a museum exhibit to teach others in the school community what they have learned. In the course of the unit, each group practices communication skills as they perform, share, and demonstrate projects and creations that explain what they have discovered about their cultural group. We also create exhibits based on several discussions throughout the year about the society we live in -- the United States of America -- and how it is formed by all of the cultural groups students have studied.

Science is integrated into their studies and is a part of the museum as well. For example, students investigate the physics of sound as they invent, design, and build an instrument and write about the role their instrument would play in a cultural setting. They learn about geology, rocks, and minerals, and then investigate the materials used to make the world's monuments. As we study plants, they look at how plants are used in family and cultural recipes and traditions.

The year culminates in a Grand Opening of the museum where each group will serve as docents and discuss their projects and knowledge with visitors from school, students' families, and the outside community. Through educating one another about their various cultures, our students help to build an atmosphere free of misunderstanding and discrimination and develop an appreciation for the differences and similarities between various cultures and a respect for the multicultural community they create.

## **Indigo Cluster (Second & Third Grade)**

Jason Boze' and (Vacant Position)

Indigo Cluster is a place where environments are not only studied by students, they are something created by teachers and students to facilitate a daily habitat in which every

student flourishes, regardless of their level. Prisms and Pyramids is the name of the multi-year curriculum.

The “Prisms” and “Pyramids” themes of Indigo cluster alternate and are centered around both A: our earth and her amazing biomes as well as B: the solar system in which we exist, respectively. The themes serve as the backdrops and settings. The students are encouraged to engage and bring their own experiences and prior knowledge to the class as they interact with the various aspects of the themes for optimal learning and engagement. This is further actualized through multiple entry points and a flexible structure that includes whole group, small group, peer and individual learning opportunities.

Students choose which biomes (or planet during the “B” year) we study first, usually based on greatest interest. We continue throughout the year until each biome has been explored. Research is done in teams. Students study both teacher and student generated questions related to the biomes. Their findings are presented in the forms of dioramas, maps, graphs, video and power point presentations, written reports, art projects, games and creative writing. The reading program, Readers’ Workshop, supports the students at their independent reading level and also gives small reading groups chances to further explore topics together. Likewise, almost all of the mathematical concepts as well as the standards are tied into their interests in the themes.

We focus on the interrelatedness of life and nature, which is the reason that our day begins with a chance to share and be heard in our community circle. Besides the listening and public speaking skills that are fostered through community circle, trust and acceptance become commonplace.

It is through the environment that is created using a constructivist approach that encourages both buy-in and individualized instruction. The curriculum encourages student goal setting, peer learning opportunities and choice.

## **Yellow Cluster (Third & Fourth Grade)**

Denise Benjamin and Regina Jeffery

Yellow Cluster’s design-based theme is We All Create. The idea of building things as a way of developing skills and concepts runs throughout our curriculum, with the ultimate goal being the planning, designing, and building of a small-scale city of the future on a three-dimensional model that sits in our classroom. Cooperative learning groups known as neighborhood teams each design and build one-fourth of the model city. Our classroom management structure also reflects the city structure, as each child completes job applications, collects references, and is hired as a city commissioner (e.g. Human Resources, Building and Safety) and becomes an advisor in one aspect of city planning. Employees are paid for their classroom jobs in Yellow Cluster currency. They also earn bonuses, pay monthly rent for their land parcel, and are charged fines for breaking the student-designed rules. Elections are held for students who wish to hold leadership positions as mayor, assistant mayor, city clerk and city attorney.

To begin the year, each student does research to choose an object that represents his or her commission and then designs and builds a child-sized replica of this object. Students must learn geometry and measurement to build a costume that looks like their object and fits them. Other classroom subjects are also examined through the lens of objects. For example, students create personal timelines based on objects that tell their own personal stories. The student then wears their object costumes in a show that is performed for the school community. The show always has a connection to the social studies we are learning (e.g. California, Los Angeles, or United States history) or to an important city idea or problem that we have been discussing.

The year continues as the building of the city further informs the curriculum. Grade level standards are incorporated into hands-on city-related projects. For instance, as students study aspects of California history, they might plan exhibits for a California History Museum that will be built in the city. Science is used in our building as we study such things as energy and motion and electricity so that we can plan energy sources and transportation in the city. Reading and research are tools for planning and decision-making. Students write various texts, from paragraphs to brochures inviting people to come to our city. Technology is used in a variety of ways to guide and extend classroom learning and projects. Instructional units, discussions, walking trips, speakers, readings, current events, family conversations, and field trips form shared experiences, which, scaffolded by curriculum and skills, provide and frame a memorable project-centered experience.

## **Blue Cluster (Fourth & Fifth Grade)**

Lillian Peralta-Alba and Neena Mann

Students in Blue Cluster learn the importance of being part of a community and how to be responsible to one another. Using the theme Patterns of Change, we describe, analyze and find patterns in what we see happening in the world around us. We look for these patterns in the literature we read and in the historical concepts that we study. These patterns help us develop a deeper understanding of what we are studying as well as help us make connections to the past in order to predict future patterns.

Blue Cluster stresses independence, work quality, and time management skills as students study our environment and our state's and country's history through simulations. Our curriculum encourages children to make appropriate choices, both academically and interpersonally. Students participate in whole group, small group, interest groups and cooperative group lessons. They learn to lead each other in a variety of settings and for a variety of purposes. They show leadership by taking ownership in a shared responsibility classroom. Through real world simulations students develop problem solving skills and conflict resolution.



They learn to analyze, infer, and make judgments as they write from the perspective of a character they have studied in literature. Students learn to look at the world through the eyes of a poet, rather than a scientist, in our Writing Workshop where they learn to show and not just tell in their writing. They learn to write from the heart instead of listing ideas.

Through investigations, students learn the many possibilities to problem solving in scientific and mathematical situations. While exploring scientific Life, Physical, and Earth Science topics, students use the scientific process skills of asking questions, making observations, gathering information, representing data, and drawing scientific conclusions based on their observations.

Using technology, students are encouraged to reach beyond the walls of the classroom to gain insight and knowledge from the sources this media makes available to them. Students explore webquests and create graphic presentations on Power Point, Comic Life, or Pages to publish their research or creative writing projects. Students also use stop motion animation as a vehicle for visually representing a story.

Blue Cluster students participate in additional weekly music program in which they learn how to use percussion instruments and compose original pieces that are performed as part of a final production. Students learn self-management, teamwork, and how to express their creativity in their small and large group ensemble.

## **Purple Cluster (Fourth & Fifth Grade)**

Jackie Herst and Kira Walker

Purple Cluster's curriculum centers around the overarching theme, What Makes Us Human? This question is woven throughout the various content areas with an emphasis on the human capacities to change culture, affect the environment, and our ability to plan. While all subjects are explored, there is a strong emphasis on Science and Engineering concepts and practices.

The culminating project varies from year to year. One year the students function as Investigators and Detectives, reading and writing mysteries and engaging in inquiry science investigations. The culminating project that year is a Science Symposium in which each student presents a science research project. Students also combine their knowledge of mysteries and environmental studies to create an original eco-mystery.

In the alternate year students act as Engineers and Inventors, engaging in engineering problem solving processes and presenting their results in an Invention Convention. Each student presents an invention that they designed to address a specific problem. They also research and write a report on an inventor of their choosing.

Connecting both years is an emphasis on environment, particularly the role that water plays in human society. In our classroom we have a working model of a river that provides learning opportunities in both science and social studies. Our grade levels cover



both California and early American history and we alternate our historical focus between the two years as well. When we focus on California, we study the Los Angeles River. We tour the river and study the ways people have used the river over time. Together with support from the Friends of the Los Angeles River (FOLAR), the students design recreational space around the river. They also engage in model bridge construction. During the year that we study American History, the river becomes the Missouri River, thus creating connections to the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Our theme and various projects are the tapestry upon which we weave the skills and concepts that 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students are expected to learn. Through these projects the students must apply their knowledge and skills in reading, writing, science, math, language, history and art. The projects also develop collaborative skills and provide motivation and enthusiasm for learning among all types of learners.

## **Unique Features of the Open School Academic Program**

The Open School has developed a comprehensive academic program that provides students with the skills they need as well as the scaffolding to incorporate them into their knowledge base. The next section details specific attributes that have contributed to the Open School's academic achievement. These have helped us to bridge the achievement gap between students who underachieve and those who succeed.

### *Technology*

The Open School has always been at the cutting edge of educational experimentation. In 1986, our passion for innovation captured the attention of Apple Computer when the company chose the Open School as the home for its renowned "Vivarium" program, a comprehensive research project designed to explore ways of using technology to enhance the learning process. To facilitate the program, Apple donated nearly two hundred computers. Working together with the team from Apple, the school opted to integrate the computers into the classrooms rather than setting up separate computer labs. During the seven years of Apple's involvement at the Open School, computers became integrated into the curriculum as fully as books, pencils, and paper.

Although the Vivarium project was phased out in the early 1990's, the use of technology and a culture of experimentation continues to flourish at the Open School and remains at the heart of what defines and distinguishes our program. Students use computers for everything from journaling and story publishing to creating a variety of multimedia presentations and video games.

After Apple's project ended, substantial funding from grants and other sources has been dedicated to updating and expanding the use of technology in the curriculum. Currently, we have one computer for every two to three students, using both in-class desktop computers and mobile laptop carts, as well as two carts of iPads that are shared school-wide. Our technology plan emphasizes technology as a tool to be used by all students on a regular basis to support, amplify and clarify the curriculum. Our Technology Team and

our Technology Consultant work together to regularly coach our staff, support our infrastructure, and provide for ongoing staff development.

The three fundamental philosophical principles for using computers at the Open Charter School are:

- Computers are used as a knowledge medium rather than an instructional delivery system.
- Computers are used to create mental bridges between hands-on knowledge and symbolic knowledge.
- Technology is driven by the curricular needs and classroom use. Computers serve as an amplifying medium for the concepts brought forth from the curriculum.

One of the distinguishing features of the school is its model approach to providing computer technology to children. Consistent with our constructivist approach, we are not content to merely have enough computers to ensure ample access for each student. Rather, we insist on developing a curriculum and approach that truly uses the technology as a learning tool.

As such, when students are using technology, they are always using it to support a curricular goal. Our plan for what students will be learning in each grade range is as follows (the grade levels are grouped to match our cluster configurations):

#### Green Cluster (K-1)

- Students will begin to become familiar with the different parts of the computer (i.e. keyboard, mouse).
- Students will start to learn how to use the keyboard to type their writing and learn how to use some special keys such as the space bar and the shift key.
- Students will use the mouse to draw on a computer and their finger to draw on an iPad.
- Students will, with support, save their work.
- Students will use a variety of applications to support and extend their learning.

#### Red & Silver Clusters (1-2)

- Students will be familiar with the different parts of the computer (i.e. keyboard, mouse).
- Students will begin to be familiar with navigating the desktop to open applications and documents.
- Students will continue to learn how to use the keyboard to type their writing.

- Students will begin to learn how to use menu items to customize their writing.
- Students will use the mouse to draw on a computer and their finger to draw on an iPad.
- Students will save their work independently.
- Students will use preset webquests to do research and other activities related to the curricular topics.
- Students will use a variety of applications to support and extend their learning.

#### Indigo & Orange Clusters (2-3)

- Students will know how to turn the computer off and on the correct way.
- Students will become familiar with navigating the desktop and server to open applications and documents.
- Students will use the keyboard to type their writing.
- Students will use menu items to customize their writing.
- Students will save their work independently.
- Students will use preset webquests to do research and other activities related to the curricular topics. They will, with support, begin to do internet searches for information.
- Students will begin to explore multimedia options for presentation of information.
- Students will use a variety of applications to support, present, and extend their learning.

#### Yellow Cluster (3-4)

- Students will turn the computer off and on the correct way.
- Students will navigate the desktop and server to open applications and documents. They will know how to check if they are on the right network and will, with support, make adjustments as needed.
- Students will use the keyboard to type their writing. They will be able to type a half page to a page in one sitting.
- Students will use menu items to customize their writing.
- Students will save their work independently.
- Students will use preset webquests to do research and other activities related to the curricular topics. They will begin to do more independent internet searches for information.

- Students will, with support, use digital cameras and iPads to record experiences.
- Students will use a variety of multimedia options to present information and experiences.
- Students will use a variety of applications to support, present, and extend their learning.

#### Purple & Blue Clusters (4-5)

- Students will turn the computer off and on the correct way.
- Students will navigate the desktop and server to open applications and documents. They will check to make sure they are on the right network and will make adjustments as needed.
- Students will use the keyboard to type their writing. They will be able to type one to two pages in one sitting.
- Students will use menu items to customize their writing.
- Students will save their work independently.
- Students will use preset webquests to do research and other activities related to the curricular topics. They will do more independent internet searches for information.
- Students will use digital cameras and iPads to record experiences.
- Students will use technology to interact and communicate with others.
- Students will use a variety of multimedia options to present information and experiences.
- Students will use a variety of applications to support, present, and extend their learning.

#### *Visual and Performing Arts*

The Open Charter views the arts as essential to the education of all students. Each of the arts disciplines (dance, music, drama, and the visual arts) encompasses a rich body of knowledge that enables students to understand their world in ways that support and enhance their learning in other subjects. Students learn in an in-depth way how to see what they look at, hear what they listen to, feel what they touch, and understand more clearly what they integrate into their own experiences.

Study of the arts helps all students exercise their cognitive reasoning and makes their experiences more joyful. Students' cognitive skills, such as language fluency and reading comprehension, are enhanced as they talk and write about works of art they have viewed, created, and performed. When students talk about works of art and performances, they engage in the process of analysis. When they discuss relationships between works of art,

they synthesize perceptions and information about those works and their own experiences.

Of equal importance is how the arts help students gain insights into other cultures. Through the arts, students are able to discern their own lives and cultures more clearly. The arts help us to communicate with one another across language and cultural barriers.

The three fundamental philosophical principles for arts education at the Open School are:

- The visual and performing arts have an intrinsic value and are indispensable in every student's education. They inspire self-confidence and help keep students interested in school.
- The arts assist students in learning other subjects and disciplines and can improve student performance in other subject areas. The arts engage a wide variety of students, especially those who make strong interpersonal connections through the arts.
- Through their exposure and knowledge of art forms, students can experience and enjoy the arts throughout their lives.

Our comprehensive arts education program has two components: (1) subject specific arts instruction in visual arts and music, and drama; and (2) instruction integrating arts within other core subjects.

While we believe that the visual and performing arts need to be well integrated into the curriculum, we also believe that students need to be exposed to specialists skilled in the arts. Students need to understand the essential elements, knowledge, and skills of the arts disciplines. Our arts specialists offer students weekly instruction in the visual arts, music and orchestra. Below you will find the scope and sequences which are constantly being enhanced and developed by the art and music specialists and teachers. There are also occasions when our art and music specialists collaborate to show how visual art and music can be interdependent.

### **Visual Art:**

**(K-1)** Green Cluster has been works with markers to draw lines that show emotion. Students experiment with watercolors and texture in painting (using yarn and paint together). They learn to draw animals such as puffins (with markers and colored pencils). They make pieces inspired by artists such as Van Gogh with oil pastels, or Claude Monet with cut paper. They work on figure drawings (drawing quick sketches of students in different poses). They work on actual and simulated texture, learning the differences in art. They use clay and create actual texture on the surface of their clay model.

**(1-2)** Red and Silver Clusters learn about the color wheel by using tempera paint with tissue paper. Students learn to mix colors, create tints and shades by adding white or black to make lighter or darker shades with tempera paint. They learn to draw animals

with colored pencils and markers. They also learn to draw Marc Chagall styled “Self Portraits with Palette” using color pencils and graphite on paper.

**(2-3)** Orange Cluster makes clay leaf bowls (pressed from actual leaves from campus). Students experiment with charcoal and positive and negative spaces. They learn about nature drawing in the field by drawing outside while viewing actual nature and working with scale and perspective. They create India ink paintings of Willow Trees, working with different methods of using a paintbrush.

**(2-3)** Indigo Clusters students work on realistic animal drawings with colored pencil. They experiment with clay, creating and glazing clay animal heads, and they make tissue paper flowers inspired by Georgia O'Keefe. Students also draw Henri Rousseau style self-portraits, while drawing the same background of his artwork themselves. Using scale and perspective, they embed their self-portraits using colored pencil and graphite into this background.

**(3-4)** Yellow Cluster draws self-portraits with colored pencil and graphite. They also learn about architecture with Frank Gehry and I.M. Pei. Each student designs and sketches a building of the future. They construct their buildings of the future made out of found materials, cardboard, and paper mache. They look at Frank Gehry and I.M. Pei buildings for inspiration. They combine different dream images with their own dreams to create Dream Scape artwork with chalk pastel inspired by Marc Chagall.

**(4-5)** Blue and Purple Clusters work on contour line drawings and contour line sculptures with wire. They create self-portraits and mask designs with chalk pastel on paper. They also work on story collage/graphite replication, drawing a collage with shading, using the range of graphite pencils - light to dark. They create one and two point perspective drawings as well. Blue Cluster students also work on a stop-motion filmmaking project.

## **MUSIC:**

**(K-1)** Green Cluster learns about melodies, high and low pitches, as well as major and minor chords, while singing songs about the seasons and special days year round. Green Cluster students focus on the exploration of melody and voice by singing and listening to music.

**(1-2)** Red and Silver Clusters learn about melodies, high and low pitches, as well as major and minor chords, while singing songs about the seasons and special days year round. They also learn about the four families of instruments, how they make sound, and how composers use these instruments.

**(2-3)** Orange and Indigo Clusters learn about the four families of instruments and focused on the major instruments in the orchestra and the sounds they make. Students practice the skills of being a composer, writing notes on staves and composing melodies with instruments.

(3-5) Yellow, Blue and Purple Clusters learn about the life and music of J.S. Bach, then composes and performs duets based on his style of music. Students also learn about minimalism, a new style of music. Then, compose and perform their own minimalist pieces on xylophones.

In addition, integrating the arts and other core subjects strengthens the achievement of instructional goals. Building connections through the arts gives students opportunities to understand and discover relationships between and across the disciplines. Integration of the arts provides opportunities for thinking, feeling, and doing that enable students to perceive ideas or concepts through different lenses. By discovering and using authentic connections between subjects, students gain deeper understanding; they learn that various disciplines offer a different perspective on similar issues, ideas, concepts, or events from distinct perspectives and apply different methodologies to that analysis.

### *The Learning Garden*

The main goal of the garden program at the Open School is to deepen children's understanding of the natural world. Originally inspired by the Life Lab Curriculum developed in Santa Cruz, California, the garden program now takes its curriculum from a variety of outside sources and integrates the themes that take place in each individual cluster.

The Life Lab Garden program continues to be an integral part of the science curriculum at the Open School. Our garden — an outdoor lab that includes a pond, fruit trees, cactus garden, California wildflower garden, herb garden, vegetable beds, a rose garden, an insect and butterfly garden, animals, a greenhouse, tool shed, and worktables — has been and continues to be the center for students' hands-on instruction about how animals, plants and environments are interconnected. Students design and carry out experiments, maintain a weather station, and keep summaries of their activities in lab journals. They gather data about dynamic processes happening in the garden, which they process statistically as graphs, maps, and written reports. Through this hands-on gardening experience, students strengthen their observation and classification skills and see natural patterns such as the food chain, the seasonal cycles of growth, watershed study, decomposition, and soil differences in their real-life context.

In addition to the main garden area, we have separate sections representing the four main ecosystems of California. These were planned through collaboration with Tree People and Mia Lehrer and Associates and continue to be refined and planted. Our students are involved in the care and maintenance of all the gardens on our campus. The purpose of the students maintaining the gardens is not just to take ownership and pride in the campus, but also that they may experience important teachable moments such as the life cycle of plants.

Our garden specialist works with the cluster teachers to integrate garden science with other subjects. Students learn math by calculating germination rates, estimating seed production, measuring garden beds, and mapping the natural ecosystems. Art is



incorporated when the students create botanical illustrations in a scientific way. Students learn about the cultural significance of plants in different time periods throughout history. Students keep garden journals that include record keeping of their experiments and reflections on their experiences in the garden. Below you will find the scope and sequences which are constantly being enhanced and developed by the garden specialists and teachers.

**(K-1)** Green Cluster investigates spider webs and explores leaves, looking at leaf sizes, shapes, colors, fragrances and purposes. They learn about worms, looking at their anatomy, physiology, and how they are useful in a garden.

**(1-2)** Red Cluster plants Red Ranunculus bulbs in the new bulb garden at the front of the school, as they study deciduous plants and different plant survival strategies based upon specific environmental conditions. Red Cluster works with the entire school on the creation of the new garden behind the Library. They spend a lot of time in the main garden with the animals, and learn about plant anatomy structure and function. Red Cluster also explores plant relationships with pollinators.

**(1-2)** Silver Cluster becomes familiar with garden tools and how to use them safely and efficiently. They study seeds by observing seeds of every shape, size, color and flavor. The students identify seeds that they know and they explore mystery seeds. They dissect seeds to learn about their composition and to learn about the various ways seeds are dispersed, as well as planting many seeds.

**(2-3)** Indigo Cluster learns about cleaning up and weeding the garden, applying mulch and planting winter crops in the greenhouse. The students interact with garden insects, rabbits, pond creatures, and tortoises. They also study leaves and seeds, exploring them with all of their senses and learning about their purposes to plants.

**(2-3)** Orange Cluster plants Orange Watsonia bulbs as they study deciduous plants and different plant survival strategies based upon specific environmental conditions. They spend a lot of time in the main garden with the animals, and learn about plant anatomy structure and function. They explore plant relationships with pollinators.

**(3-4)** Yellow Cluster studies seeds, both dissected and planted seeds, and learn about the ways they are dispersed. Students discuss Latin as the language of science and review the basic structures and functions of flowers, fertilization and fruits, which house seeds. They touch on some of the basic differences between monocotyledons and dicotyledons. The students create biodegradable newspaper pots to plant with our winter crops. They plant Yellow Freesia bulbs. They study deciduous plants and plant survival strategies. They spend time in the main garden with the animals and learn about plant anatomy, structure and function. They also explore plant relationships with pollinators.

**(4-5)** Blue and Purple Clusters study seeds for many weeks and observe seeds of every shape, size, color, and flavor. The students identify seeds that they know and they explore mystery seeds. They dissect seeds to learn about their compositions, learn about the various ways seeds are dispersed, and plant many seeds. They discuss Latin as the



language of science and review the basic structures and functions associated with flowers, fertilization and the botanical structure “fruits” which house seeds. They touch on some of the basic differences between monocotyledons and dicotyledons. The students gather their seeds from existing crops in the main garden. They clean, separate and sow the seeds into biodegradable pots, which were created from newspaper. Blue Cluster Students plant Spanish Bluebell bulbs and Purple Cluster students plant Purple Freesia bulbs. They also study deciduous plants and different plant survival strategies based upon specific environmental conditions. They spend a lot of time in the main garden with the animals, and learn about plant anatomy structure and function. They also explore plant relationships with pollinators.

Our Garden program makes science relevant and enjoyable. It reinforces concepts through deep experiences rather than through the rote learning of facts and supports a balanced curriculum in the Physical, Earth and Life Sciences.

### *Physical Education*

The importance of a healthy mind and body is emphasized at the Open School. Our goal is for all students to improve their motor skills, understand good sportsmanship, and gain self-confidence and body awareness as they continue to grow and develop over time.

Our commitment to building a community of respect continues on the field and court. As students learn the rules of games, good sportsmanship is promoted and fair play is explicitly taught. They begin at an early age developing self-control and gross motor skills and then move toward contributing to a team working collaboratively.

With physical fitness comes proper nutrition. Eating the right foods can enhance your performance. Our students incorporate what they have learned from working in the Learning Garden to understanding how food affects the body. It is incredibly powerful and meaningful to plant a seed, watch it grow over time, and understand that the nutrients going into that plant will provide nourishment as a part of a balanced diet. As they have these learning experiences at the Open School, it is our hope that our students will continue making healthy choices and thrive.

In order to prepare our students for California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) sports, teachers and trained coaches start with basic motor skills and build up to more advanced organized sports. In every cluster we prepare our students to be physically fit according to grade level standards.

In Green Cluster (K-1) the class objectives are to learn rules and safety, spatial awareness, movement exploration, and to play games that incorporate locomotive and non-locomotive skills.

In Red, Silver Orange and Indigo Clusters (1-3) we emphasize calisthenics and rules for handball, kickball, tetherball, foursquare and other school sports and activities. We also review good sportsmanship and fair play.

The students in Yellow Cluster (3-4) work on calisthenics and rules for handball, kickball, tetherball, four square, volleyball, basketball, and soccer. At this level we also incorporate Frisbee, flag football, capture the flag, dodge ball, jump rope and double Dutch. We ensure that our older students understand and utilize good sportsmanship and fair play.

In Blue and Purple Clusters (4-5), the students work on calisthenics and rules for soccer, Frisbee, flag football, capture the flag, dodge ball, jump rope, double Dutch, handball, kickball, tetherball, four square, basketball and other school sports and activities. They start fitness with proper push-up and sit-up form, and increase the number of laps they run in preparation for the mile run in the 5th grade physical fitness exam. We ensure that our older students understand and utilize good sportsmanship and fair play.

### *Early Intervention*

While we strongly believe that our thematic, integrated learning environment is conducive to meeting the needs of all students, we also understand that specific student populations have differing needs that must be addressed in varying ways. In order to support all of our students in achieving academic success, we understand that we need to individually identify and closely examine our struggling students in order to design supports and interventions that best meet their needs. As reading is a gateway skill to many aspects of academic success, we have focused many of our efforts on improving students' reading skills and increasing the number of students who are proficient readers.

Each fall, as the teachers are conducting their beginning of the year assessments, they look for students who are below grade level in reading. Each teaching team chooses the assessments they feel best meet the needs of their classroom. Some of the assessments that we use are DIBELS, Zamorano, Basic Phonics Skills Test, the Teachers College at Columbia University Reading Level Assessments, sight word recognition tests, including LindaMood Bell Star Words, and phonemic awareness tests. These assessments and teacher recommendations, along with state testing scores from the previous spring, are used to identify students who need extra support and reading instruction. We share this information and form groups of students who are in need of intensive intervention to improve achievement. Students are then grouped by need and specific interventions are designed to address these needs. Instruction at each level is aimed at the specific needs of the child and is designed to strengthen those skills needed for increased independence in reading.

We currently have three types of pull-out academic intervention groups that support our students' reading progress. The first is our Early Intervention Program that serves kindergarten, first, and second grade students. Two groups of five or six student from each grade level meet four times a week with a learning specialist to practice letter names and sounds, blending of sounds to form words, recognition of common sight words, spelling of regular and irregular words, reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary development. Children are re-assessed at mid-year and at the end of the year, as well as informally monitored throughout the year.

The second program is Intensive Intervention, aimed at second, third and fourth grade students who are still having difficulty with blending and decoding regular and irregular letter patterns, spelling, vocabulary, and reading accuracy. Instruction is based on Orton Gillingham phonetic instruction, which uses a multi-sensory approach to teaching decoding and spelling, and includes intensive instruction four mornings each week for forty minutes each session.

The third program is Targeted Intervention, aimed at fourth and fifth grade students. This intervention program works on using prefixes, suffixes, root words, specific spelling patterns, and the chunking of longer words into syllables to promote the students' ability to read bigger words. Quick Reads and purposeful re-readings are also used to increase reading fluency, especially with science and social studies texts. This program is designed to prepare students for the increased demands of middle school and for the reading of academic texts.

This practice, along with our classroom teaching, allows us to address all aspects of supporting a developing reader. Specific skills are targeted based on identified student needs and individual students receive the differentiated, focused support and encouragement they most need to improve their reading. Our growing library collection and large classroom libraries allow us to put books into every student's hands, so children without access to books at home have equal opportunities to read a great variety of texts. Reading buddies - in which students are paired with others in a lower grade and read together each week - and partners allow students who may not have the chance to read to or with someone at home the chance to do so at school.

Future plans include training teachers and classroom education aides in proven successful intervention programs so that intervention can be provided within the general education classroom, as well as designing a program for students who need additional support in mathematics. Plans also include a database of all interventions provided, better documentation of progress made by individual students, and analysis of which intervention programs seem to be most effective in our school.

### *Character Education*

We are committed to being a Community of Respect. Our students know from the start of school that there is an expectation to "Respect yourself, respect others, and respect the environment." The students at the Open School truly own these words and use them to guide their behavior inside and outside the classroom.

At the Open School, we have created a spirit of community that permeates everything we do and which is demonstrated by the respect, caring, and commitment with which students treat each other. We emphasize to students the importance of our ability to live and work together, to accept and celebrate our differences, and to arrive at mutually satisfactory solutions to common problems.

Both school wide and in the classroom, students help establish the codes of acceptable behavior and are instrumental in fulfilling our schoolwide goal of reducing incidents of name calling, teasing, bullying, and social exclusion.

When a conflict arises, students discuss and solve their own problems, either as a group or one-to-one, with adult guidance as needed. At times, the problem may need to be addressed with the whole group where every student is given an opportunity to speak, and every member of the circle is treated with equal importance. This can be in the form of a community circle, Council, or morning meeting. To help students build a sense of community, teachers give students many opportunities to develop the listening and speaking skills necessary to be able to resolve problems on their own.

Personal growth is also emphasized. Self-reflection and goal setting is established at the beginning of the year to help monitor progress. Students will then evaluate their growth and participate in student-led parent/teacher/student conferences twice a year where they will discuss personal responsibility, work habits, and contributions to the classroom community, review academic progress, and set goals.

As teachers plan lessons, ethics is integrated into the curriculum. Varied primary resources and literature genres are used (i.e., documents, diaries, journals, autobiographies, speeches, nonfiction and fiction, including myths, legends, and historical tales). Through these materials, students discuss multiple perspectives and engage in respectful debates. While learning history and current events/news, students explore concepts of values, judgments, and morality.

Teachers at the Open School design lessons and activities to foster community building. Students start with an understanding of how an individual contributes to the larger group. Learning about themselves through lessons on culture and personal narratives enables students build to self-confidence and discover their unique voices.

Everything that happens at school is a message to students about what we value and truly believe is important. Students culminate from Open School with the experience of having been a part of something greater than themselves. They realize the strength that lies in working together respectfully toward a common goal. Our school is a place where students make connections to one another, and come away informed, involved, empathetic, and compassionate. As reinforced every week at assemblies, “We are committed to being a community of respect.” Every Open School student truly takes these words to heart.

### ***Student Leadership***

To build on our community of respect, our school encourages student leadership through Student Council. Each cluster elects students to act as representatives of the student body. From that group, Student Council officers (President, Vice President, Ecology Coordinator, and Secretary) are determined through school elections.

Students at the Open School have the opportunity to experience the democratic process of an election. Candidates need to demonstrate how they are striving to be model students who will contribute to our school community. Fairness is stressed. As voting time nears, the school is abuzz with lively speeches and enthusiastic campaigning.

Once the Student Council has been established, the group meets every week to discuss school needs and concerns. Members also support and contribute to weekly school assemblies, playground rules, and community relations. Representatives assist with school tours for prospective parents and visitors. Community service projects emerge from Student Council meetings. Oftentimes students who are inspired by an article they have read in class, or a current event, organize a school action. Examples of past efforts include organizing earthquake relief for Japan, raising money for Heifer International, and running a toy loan drive for the Department of Public Social Services.

Student Council is an integral component for ensuring that student voice is recognized. Representatives hone their leadership skills as they work on self-confidence, organization, and public speaking. Our hope is to have our students continue as active participants and future leaders of our community.

### *Student Community Profile*

#### **Whom The Open School Proposes to Serve**

The Open School will continue to be a Magnet school within the District’s Magnet system. As such, we will continue our thirty-five year history of educating a multicultural group of students who are motivated to be at the school and willing to try new things. As a Magnet school, selection of students will continue to come from the Magnet school office under the current enrollment system. The school will continue to serve approximately 410 elementary-aged students.

Total Student Population	Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	Special Education Students	English Language Learners	Latino	White	African American	Asian
(2006-07) 360	19%	11%	10%	15%	39%	25%	20%
(2012-13) 409	15%	9%	5%	14%	40%	27%	19%

### *Magnet Expansion*

As a high-performing Magnet and Charter school with a thirty-five year history of academic achievement, the Open School provides a well-rounded, constructivist, 21<sup>st</sup> Century skill-oriented, educational experience to a diverse population of students. As part of our larger educational plan, we seek to expand the Open School to bring our proven constructivist methodology to middle school-aged children. All stakeholders

wholeheartedly support the goal of extending the Open School to a K-8 span school. Through this expansion, we strive to keep our current students within LAUSD, as historically, approximately half of our culminating fifth graders leave the District in search of similar constructivist learning opportunities. We are confident that we can longitudinally stretch our capabilities to systemically close the achievement gap at the middle school level, as we have successfully done at the elementary level. We also want to provide our unique learning environment to new middle school students whose families are seeking different educational options.

We see great potential in our ability to expand our school site, as well as our grade levels and, ultimately our total school population. Such an expansion would meet the need for evolving educational programs within LAUSD and would allow the Open School to extend our successful project-based learning approach through eighth grade. Our governing council and teaching faculty are in full support of a span school, which we see as an enhancement that will catapult our already high-performing school to even greater heights. We have submitted an expansion application (Appendix D) to the Office of Integration. Open School will submit a material revision to the Charter Division upon expansion approval by the Office of Integration.

### *Subgroups*

While we strongly believe that our thematic, integrated environment is conducive to meeting the needs of all students, we also understand that specific students have differing needs that must be addressed. We strongly believe these needs are best met within the context of the classroom. Programs for our English Language Learners, GATE students, and students with Special Education eligibilities are not isolated, but fully included into the classroom.

### *English Language Learners*

Our instructional approach, which is experiential and rich in context for all students, works particularly well with English Language Learners (ELL) who often rely on context clues to understand the message delivered in a language they are learning. Our school's child-centered environment is likewise crucial for English learners who have the opportunity to learn both English and academic concepts and skills in a low anxiety, high context, and natural way.

Our ELD instruction is developed as an extension of our Reading and Writing Workshop Language Arts Programs. We support students who are learning English in varying ways. We begin by recognizing that our ELD population encompasses a range of students, each with their own particular needs. Therefore, we individualize our ELD instruction to best fit the needs of individual students, just as we do our entire English Language Arts curriculum.

We use many resources that are aligned with the Columbia Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project, along with additional resources. We are a school that uses our resources to assist us in modeling best practices for our ELD students. We strategically



choose our resources based on discoveries about our students' needs from our schoolwide data. We structure our ELD curriculum so that it remains consistent with the District's Master Plan along with Open School's Language Arts curriculum.

As a District affiliated charter school, The Open Charter Magnet School shall implement the provisions of the District's Master Plan for English Learners and comply with all applicable federal and state laws, District policies and procedures related to the implementation of the English Learner Master Plan.

At Open School ELL students receive instruction in English utilizing the techniques of whole language instruction, sheltered English activities, cooperative learning groups, and experiential activities. Primary Language Support for our ELLs is provided by teachers, aides, and other students, as well as parent volunteers. Special attention is placed on the timely redesignation of ELL students.

In an effort to ensure the success of our English Language Learners, we have developed an expanded approach to literacy that includes technology and the arts in addition to the more traditional academic experiences. Research shows that children who are learning English benefit from opportunities to use the arts to assist in developing vocabulary, basic concepts, and reading skills. This approach combines language activities with multimedia, drama, music, and art. The ability of each student to acquire information from a variety of sources, to synthesize their knowledge and to create presentations that reflect his or her understanding of a given subject, is a stated goal at the Open School. By broadening and deepening our definition of literacy, we have raised the standards of literacy for all of our ELL students.

The language that children first learn to speak at home is viewed as a rich part of their culture and is to be cherished and maintained. As we believe that the success of our children is tied to parent participation, it is essential that we communicate effectively with our non-English speaking parents and we make every effort to address the diverse language and cultural issues represented at the school. Korean and Spanish translators are currently available for meetings and teacher conferences. Bilingual parents assist new and prospective parents, providing opportunities for non-English speaking parents to volunteer and participate in school events. By involving parents fully we have established an environment that supports the home and, in turn, the students.

### ***Underachieving Students/ At Risk***

We believe that all children can learn and, more specifically, can benefit from participation in a powerful thinking curriculum that energizes all segments of the student population. We know that the quality of the instructional program and expectations of teachers strongly influence a child's learning. We have a strong commitment to helping underachieving students reach their fullest potential. Our aim is to develop support that is not merely remedial in nature, but that enhances and enriches the development of a child's academic skills. Our goal is to close the achievement gap prevalent among African American, Latino, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Comparing our Academic Performance Index (API) Growth Report from 2007, which was the data

used during our last charter renewal, to 2011, highlights our success in advancing towards this goal.

	African American	Latino	Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	English Learners
2007	829	Not available	817	Not available
2011	892	889	872	902
Growth	+63	+52 since 2010	+55	+58 since 2010

We utilize a variety of in class and pull out intervention strategies to meet the needs of our students. Differentiation and individualization allow us to target a student’s specific needs. Topics such as phonemic awareness, conventions of writing, comprehension skills, math facts, and other specific skills are targeted as needed. Graphic organizers and thinking maps are used to support students as they move towards independence and deeper understanding.

We use a variety of grouping strategies that ensure all students gain access to our rich, meaning-centered curriculum. In the course of any given day, a student moves through a succession of work constellations designed by the teacher for whole class, individual, and small group settings. The particular grouping strategy depends on the learning goal at hand. Research has shown that students of different academic levels often benefit from working together in small groups to reach common learning goals because they can watch and learn from the ways other students approach new learning tasks.

Our Student Success Team meets weekly and provides a great deal of assistance to teachers and parents who are looking for ways to help students learn more productively. Our goal is to intervene early to prevent learning problems from developing by helping students before they acquire an inferior self-image. The team includes our Resource Specialist, the school psychologist, grade level teacher representatives, the child’s teachers, and her/his parents or guardians. The end result of the meeting is a list of suggested accommodations and ways in which both teachers and parents can support the student’s growth. The team reconvenes as needed to track the student’s progress.

***Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students***

Socioeconomically disadvantaged students are a significant sub group at the Open School. We have many programs, including character education and nutrition, to address their special needs and associated risks. Our school nurse screens for obesity, asthma, and



other health risks particular to socioeconomically disadvantaged student populations.

Our academic program provides both in and out of classroom opportunities so that all students have enriching experiences that provide both context and knowledge for classroom projects. Along with our specialist programs, each Cluster takes a minimum of two field trips per year to venues such as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Fowler Museum, the Los Angeles Zoo, the Los Angeles Opera, the Los Angeles County Outdoor School, San Diego’s Safari Park, and the Catalina Island Marine Institute. As technology is so well integrated, students without computers at home have many opportunities to become comfortable and competent with using technology for academic purposes. Together these opportunities allow us to create unifying and enriching school-based experiences for all of our students, regardless of their socio-economic background.

### *Gifted and Talented Students*

The needs of our Gifted and Talented Students (GATE) are also addressed in an inclusive way, consistent with our individualized instruction philosophy. The guidelines for GATE instruction call for differentiated instruction, instructional strategies that suit the nature of gifted students, ample opportunities for higher-level conceptual thinking, and time for gifted students to work together.

Our ultimate goal is to provide all students with access to a rigorous, well-rounded curriculum, and to provide all students with extended, enriching, and critical thinking activities that have appropriate depth and pace. We provide a text-rich environment and numerous opportunities for students to delve into subjects more deeply. Many projects are open-ended and give students a chance to adapt their assignments to suit their abilities, interests, and learning modalities. Students often work collaboratively, discussing ideas and concepts, and brainstorming solutions to math, science, and history problems. In addition, we have two yearly parent education nights to assist parents in addressing topics of interest to parents of Gifted and Talented children.

The Open School will continue to use LAUSD’s GATE identification process and policy and will reimburse the District for testing and processing on a fee-for-service basis. If Open School students participate in the Saturday Conservatory of Fine Arts, the Charter School will reimburse on a fee-for-service basis.

### **Special Education**

The District shall continue to serve the needs of special education students enrolled in District Affiliated Charter Schools in the same manner as at any other public school of the District, and shall be responsible for meeting all the requirements of the Modified Consent Decree along with the District Affiliated Charter School.

### **Conversion Affiliated Charter**

#### **1. District Affiliated Charter School’s Special Education Responsibilities**

**a. General Requirements**

The District Affiliated Charter School will adhere to the provisions of the IDEA and California special education laws and regulations to ensure that all students with disabilities are accorded a free appropriate public education (“FAPE”) as is required of all District authorized schools. The District Affiliated Charter School will also ensure that no student otherwise eligible to enroll in the District Affiliated Charter School will be denied enrollment on the basis of their special education status.

The District Affiliated Charter School will comply with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and all Office of Civil Rights mandates for students enrolled in the District Affiliated Charter School.

The District Affiliated Charter School will adhere to the requirements of the *Chanda Smith* Modified Consent Decree and court orders imposed upon the District pertaining to special education and will submit documents and information, participate in reviews, and attend informational sessions and meetings at the District’s request.

The District Affiliated Charter School will use District forms to develop, maintain, and review assessments and Individualized Education Programs (“IEPs”) in the format required by the District and will enter accurate assessment and IEP data into the District’s designated data system (Welligent) in accordance with LAUSD policies and procedures. The District Affiliated Charter School will maintain copies of assessments and IEP materials for District review. The District Affiliated Charter School will submit to the District all required reports, including but not limited to CASEMIS, SESAC and Welligent IEPs, in a timely manner as necessary to comply with state and federal and Modified Consent Decree requirements.

The District Affiliated Charter School shall keep daily attendance for each student which shall be reported and certified according to District policies and procedures.

The District Affiliated Charter School will participate in the state quality assurance process for special education (i.e. verification reviews, coordinated compliance self-reviews, complaints monitoring, procedural safeguards, and the local plan). The District Affiliated Charter School will participate in internal validation review (“DVR”).

The District Affiliated Charter School is responsible for the management of its, personnel, programs and services. The District Affiliated Charter School will ensure that its special education personnel or contracted personnel are appropriately credentialed, licensed or on waiver consistent with California laws and regulations. The District Affiliated Charter School will implement the

programs and services, including providing related services, required by the IEPs of the students enrolled at the District Affiliated Charter School.

**b. Transferring Students**

For students transferring to the District Affiliated Charter School from other school districts, District-operated schools or District authorized charters, the District will provide those related services required by the students' IEPs immediately upon the students' enrollment regardless of the types of service provider (i.e. school-based, NPA or private. District Affiliated Charter School will ensure that IEP team meetings for such students will be held within thirty (30) days of the student's enrollment in accordance with state and federal law if there is a change in the supports and services set forth in the transfer student's IEP.

**c. Assessments**

The referral process shall include Student Success Team (SST) meetings to review prior interventions, accommodations and modifications and to recommend further interventions as appropriate. The referral process shall be supported by the Response to Intervention (RtI) model approach using data to identify student strengths and weaknesses. Upon review of accumulated data, observation and review of records, the District Affiliated Charter School may determine that assessment is necessary to determine possible eligibility for special education programs and related services.

Upon a parent's request for assessment, the District Affiliated Charter School will convene a meeting to review and discuss the request in light of student records, acquired data and student performance to agree with or deny the request for assessment. If the District Affiliated Charter School determines that assessment for special education eligibility is not warranted, prior written notice must be given to the parent/guardian with a clear rationale for such refusal within 15 days of the request. If the District Affiliated Charter School concludes that there are suspected disabilities, the school must develop an assessment plan in Welligent for each student with suspected disabilities within the 15 day timeline. The LAUSD assessment plan describes the types of assessments that may be used to determine the eligibility of students for special education instruction and services. Assessments will be conducted, within legal timelines, after receiving the parents' written consent. The District Affiliated Charter School shall conduct an IEP team meeting that includes required team members within mandated timelines for each student assessed to discuss results, determine eligibility, and (if eligible) specify special education instruction and services. The District Affiliated Charter School will make decisions regarding eligibility, goals, program, placement, and exit from special education through the IEP process according to federal, state and District timelines.

**d. Alternative Placements**

Under limited circumstances when a District Affiliated Charter School student's needs may not be provided at the District Affiliated Charter School, the District Affiliated Charter School will consult with the District to discuss placement and service alternatives. The IEP team convened at the District Affiliated Charter School shall have the authority to make offers of a FAPE and decisions regarding the staffing and methodology used to provide special education and related services at the District Affiliated Charter School pursuant to an IEP.

**e. Least Restrictive Environment**

The District Affiliated Charter School will support movement of students with disabilities into less restrictive environments and increase interactions of students with disabilities with non-disabled students. The District Affiliated Charter School general program of instruction for students with disabilities shall be responsive to the required sequence of courses and related curricular activities provided for all students in the District Affiliated Charter School. Assessment and standardized testing procedures shall be implemented, including guidelines for modifications and adaptations, to monitor student progress.

**f. Staffing Requirements**

The District Affiliated Charter School shall participate in available appropriate District trainings to support access by students with disabilities to the general education classroom, general education curriculum, integration of instructional strategies and curriculum adaptations to address the diverse learner, and interaction with non-disabled peers.

The District Affiliated Charter School will maintain responsibility for monitoring progress towards meeting specified IEP goals. The District Affiliated Charter School will assess, develop, and implement Individual Transition Plans to help students with disabilities transition to adult living in accordance with District policies and procedures.

**g. Student Discipline/Inclusion**

The District Affiliated Charter School will ensure that it makes the necessary adjustments to comply with the mandates of state and federal laws, including the IDEA regarding discipline of students with disabilities. Discipline procedures will include positive behavioral interventions and the District's Discipline Foundation Policy. Prior to recommending expulsion and/or prior to the eleventh day of cumulative suspension for a student with disabilities, the District Affiliated Charter School will convene a manifestation determination IEP set forth in the District's Policies and Procedures Manual. The District Affiliated Charter School will collect data pertaining to the number of special education students suspended or expelled.

The Charter is committed to achieving population balance that includes students with disabilities. The Charter will conduct outreach activities to attract and enroll a range of mild to severe special education students that is diverse and comparable with resident schools with similar demographics. The current District-wide average percentage of students with disabilities is 10-13%. The District Affiliated Charter School's outreach efforts should be geared toward aligning with the District-wide average. The District Affiliated Charter School may not refuse to admit a student based on special education eligibility, needs or services identified in the student's IEP. The District will make available to the District Affiliated Charter School MCD reports indicating range of services and number of students served at individual District Affiliated Charter Schools.

## **2. Procedural Safeguards/Due Process Hearings**

The District may invoke dispute resolution provisions set out in the charter petition, initiate due process hearings, and/or utilize other procedures applicable to the District Affiliated Charter School if the District determines that such action is legally necessary to ensure compliance with federal and state special education laws and regulations or the Modified Consent Decree.

In the event that a parent or guardian of a student attending the District Affiliated Charter School initiates due process proceedings, both the District Affiliated Charter School and the District will be named as respondents. Whenever possible, the District and the District Affiliated Charter School shall work together in an attempt to resolve the matter at an early stage (informal settlement or mediation).

## **3. Complaints**

The District will investigate and respond to all special education complaints the District receives pertaining to the District Affiliated Charter Schools including the District's Uniform Complaint Procedures, Office for Civil Rights and California Department of Education Special Education Compliance. The District Affiliated Charter School will cooperate with the District in any such investigations and provide the District with any and all documentation that is needed to respond to complaints.

## **4. Funding of Special Education**

The District Affiliated Charter School will adhere to all District policies and procedures regarding special education and special education funding, as they may be amended from time to time. The District shall retain all state and federal special education funding for District Affiliated Charter School students which is allocated to the SELPA. The District shall be responsible for providing all appropriate special education and related services in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws.

## **5. District Responsibilities Relating to District Affiliated Charter School Special Education Program**

As long as Charter Schools operate as public schools within the District, the District shall provide information to the school regarding District special education decisions, policies, and procedures to the same extent as they are provided to other schools within the District.

To the extent that the District provides training opportunities and/or information regarding special education to other school site staff, such opportunities and/or information shall be made available to District Affiliated Charter School staff as well.

**\*Modified Consent Decree Requirements**

All District Affiliated Charter Schools chartered by the Los Angeles Unified School District (“LAUSD or the District”) Governing Board are bound by and must adhere to the terms, conditions and requirements of the *Chanda Smith* Modified Consent Decree (“MCD”) and other court orders imposed upon District pertaining to special education. The MCD is a consent decree entered in a federal court class action lawsuit initially brought on behalf of students with disabilities in LAUSD. It is an agreement of the parties approved by the federal court and monitored by a court-appointed independent monitor. The MCD includes nineteen statically measureable outcomes and facilities obligations that the District has to achieve to disengage from the MCD and federal court oversight. All District Affiliated Charter Schools are required to use the District’s Special Education Policies and Procedures Manual and Welligent, the District-wide web-based software system used for online IEPs and tracking of related services provided to students during the course of their education.

As part of fulfilling the District’s obligations under the Modified Consent Decree, data requests from any schools that are not connected to the District’s current Student Information Systems (“SIS”) are made on a regular basis. The requested data must be submitted in the Office of the Independent Monitor’s required format and are as follows:

- # The Independent Charter School Suspension/Expulsion Report, due monthly throughout the school year.
- # Paper SESAC Report and Welligent Student Listing Verification, due monthly throughout the school year.
- # CBEDS, which is due at the end of October of Each School Year.
- # All Students Enrolled December 1 of Each School Year, due at the end of December every school year.
- # Graduation Status of 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Enrolled on December 1, due at the end of June every school year.

Schools that are currently on SIS can disregard the above data requests.

The MCD requires all District authorized schools, including District Affiliated Charter Schools to implement the District’s Integrated Student Information System (“ISIS”). ISIS is a suite of applications designed to capture all District student data and includes the Welligent IEP Management Systems, EESIS, SIS and LAUSDMAX.

The District shall continue to serve the needs of special education students enrolled in the affiliated Charter Schools in the same manner as at any other public school of the District, and shall be responsible for meeting all the requirements of the Modified Consent decree. The affiliated charter school will follow the guidelines, policies and procedures set forth in the Special Education Policy and Procedural Manual.

### *Special Needs Students*

At the Open School, students begin where they are developmentally competent and are expected to grow as learners according to their own pace. In our multi-age, project-based, differentiated clusters, students often work at different paces and are assessed according to varied learning goals. Our school’s Special Education program, approximately 9% of the student population, must be seen within this context of individualized instruction. Our philosophical belief that each child is a unique individual coordinates well with our Individualized Education Plans for our special education students.

Our teachers are sensitive to the differences in the rates and the ways in which children learn. They find ways to make sure their students receive the necessary attention and time that projects and assignments may require. As part of our regular assessment process, the needs of all students are identified, and appropriate instructional interventions are designed and implemented. Through our existing assessment process, students who might be in need of further interventions or assessments are referred to the Student Success Team, who reviews strengths and concerns and makes recommendations for supports and interventions

Resource Specialist Services are provided to eligible special education students through an inclusive and collaborative model where students receive services within their cluster. The Resource Specialist and general education teachers plan together, modifying the curriculum and making accommodations in the classroom, to help support special education students with their learning.

The goals of the Resource Program are to support students’ success with the core curriculum in the regular classroom and to accelerate students’ development of skills and learning strategies. The Resource Specialist and Special Education Assistants serve identified Special Education students in the classroom by re-teaching, providing guided practice, evaluating, and providing individualized help with reading, written language and math activities. They utilize teaching strategies based on multiple intelligences, read with students and help them with key concepts and vocabulary, assist with the use of graphic organizers, and help students organize their time and materials. Additionally staff uses core curriculum materials, special educational materials, assistive technology, and computer programs to support the learning needs of the students.



## *Teacher Professionalism*

Open School is a “one-of-a-kind” magnet within LAUSD. There are many unique programmatic features that are key to our historical and continued success. Our teachers are highly trained in constructivist teaching methodology and are qualified in multi-age teaching. Our teachers create their own curriculum, while ensuring that lessons and key concepts are aligned to the Common Core Standards. Within one-1600 square foot classroom, they teach in collaborative teams, sharing clusters of students from varying grade levels. Their thematic, teacher-created curriculum is developed in collaboration with their teaching partner. This extensive, collaborative process means that it takes a minimum of two years to begin to develop an effective, project-based, constructivist curriculum and several subsequent years to further develop, refine and grow the initial curriculum. Our teachers choose to work at the Open School in collaborative teams because they believe in and are committed to our constructivist curricular model. They recognize and are invested in the high level of training, time and hard work required to construct their own curriculum using our methodologies and philosophies.

At the Open School, we strive to hire the most highly qualified teachers and are committed to maintaining the diversity of our fully credentialed staff. Due to our unique staffing needs, teacher candidates go through a rigorous hiring process. We recruit professionals with concrete, constructivist teaching philosophies. Once hired, we make considerable financial investments in order to train our teachers in constructivist methods and curriculum development. We hire and structure our teaching teams so that they are compatible and collaborative. It is also essential that partnering teachers compliment one another’s teaching style. Our teachers must be able and willing to create a dynamic, student-centered, project-based Common Core curriculum, which develops and appreciates over time. Our teachers must also possess a high comfort level delivering curriculums that are not publisher-created and that are responsive to students’ needs.

A key factor in the Open School’s successful educational program is our high level of teacher expertise. As we have extremely unique and specific hiring needs, it is imperative that we are allowed to choose and hire the teachers that are the best candidates. We also look to recruit candidates with skill sets that meet our particular curricular needs. Though the Open School has limited teacher turnover, when hiring is necessary we are committed to sustaining a hiring process that is steeped in educational best practices for long-term institutional success.

## **Professional Development Trainings**

Our teachers continuously participate in school-funded professional development opportunities. Many of our teachers have been trained at Columbia’s Teachers’ College in Writing Workshop. We have received formal training in Reading Workshop as well, through trainings provided by Growing Educators. Teachers have been trained in Singapore Math Model Drawing. Teachers also seek out and participate in individualized professional development opportunities and attend conferences to heighten and extend their own best practices.

Teacher collaboration is a cornerstone of our learning community. Teachers and administrators work collaboratively to continually guide the evolution of our own learning. At our annual two-day staff retreat, we reflect on the previous year's successes and challenges. Using the information gleaned from our annual Program Evaluation Survey (see Appendix C), as well as topics of concern developed through discussion, we set goals for growth and professional development for the following year. We plan and strategize in order to enhance our goals and support our continuing growth as professionals. We carefully craft our professional development days in order to successfully implement our constructivist methods within the context of our mission statement, goals, and student achievement. It is essential that our staff development design reflects our commitment to these goals. Although specific topics and foci vary from year to year, the following describes our current formats.

Our weekly professional development trainings stem from the outcomes of our annual staff retreat. As a group, we analyze data, reflect on our classroom experiences, examine current research and educational publications, and decide what topics we want to pursue during our professional development time. We use a variety of formats for our sessions: Teacher Dialogues, a Protocol process, technology training, grade level/cluster articulation, and staff presentations.

During Teacher Dialogues, we discuss current educational literature and research that is selected based upon specific topics that have been mutually agreed upon as areas of interest or need. The goal of our work together is to continue to improve our academic program to better meet the needs of all students. We constantly develop strategies to more effectively reach our students in the classroom as well as providing families with recommendations as to how to support these efforts at home.

We also engage in technology training and coaching. Since technology is such an integral part of our school culture, we emphasize technology integration by regularly updating equipment and software and offering professional development time for teachers to strengthen their technology skills. Our technology team, led by our technology consultant, develops and teaches these in-services. Our technology plan focuses on the use of current software to extend and support classroom goals and projects. The technology team coaches cluster teams so they can more effectively develop and design projects that support thematic instruction. It is our goal that these projects become a fluid part of classroom instruction and assessment. We believe that the focused training that is supported by our coaching format provides the needed scaffolding to realize this goal.

We also devote professional development time to grade level/cluster articulation. Since each cluster has a thematic focus, we want to make sure that standards are addressed within each theme, that grade level experiences are equivalent between clusters, and that there is continuity for students as they progress through the school.

Our professional development structure provides teachers with the opportunity to work with other teachers in intensive, long-term explorations of curriculum and instruction. Through these professional development opportunities, our teachers not only become

better teachers in their own classrooms, they also prove to be valuable resources for each other and the larger educational community.

## **Professional Interdependence**

There are many institutionalized elements of professional support at our school that foster individual and team growth. These informal structures are essential to our school's professional community and may be utilized by each teacher or teaching team in a manner that supports their needs for professional growth and/or assistance.

Each teaching team is responsible for designing the curriculum for their students. This design is responsive to thematic focus, age appropriateness, curricular standards, teacher expertise, current events, parent and volunteer expertise, field trip opportunities, student interests, and teachable moments. The curriculum is woven together to engage and challenge staff, students, and families. This artistry necessitates detailed organization, which is supported by weekly cluster planning time. Each team is allocated an hour and a half of planning time per week, built into the school day. Although it is clear that this amount of time is insufficient to fully design and implement each cluster's curriculum, the fact that it is part of the school day sends a strong message to our community that team planning is essential.

Open School teachers also utilize their planning time to observe one another teaching and implementing best practices. This collegial spirit develops comfort within our faculty and provides immediate, sustainable professional growth and development.

Conference participation and attendance is also a major component of teacher interdependence. We strive to maintain a \$500 per teacher allotment each year to support professional growth opportunities. Many teachers are also conference presenters, district and in-service trainers, mentors and BTSA (Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment) providers. We are extremely proud to have on our staff four teachers who have achieved National Board Certification.

The dedication of the teachers at the Open School is extraordinary, not only in terms of the hours devoted to the classroom, but also in their commitment to developing as professional educators. We are proud that our exemplary level of training, professionalism, dedication, and commitment results in constructivist practices that foster high student achievement, and promotes the kind of professional pride needed to achieve our goals and support our mission statement.

## **Teacher Coaching and Support Model**

As an extension of our professional development all teachers will participate in either the Project-based or Observation-based Coaching Cycle which center on the Developmental Continuum of Teacher Abilities (DCTA - see Appendix H)\* and the goals and objectives set forth in this document.

The observation-based coaching cycle will rely on a pre-coaching meeting, classroom observations, and a post-observation reflection. The observation-based coaching cycle is reserved for teachers new to the Open School, teachers who have changed a grade level, and for tenured teachers who have not successfully participated in the project-based coaching cycle. The observation-based coaching cycle will be one to two observations for permanent teachers, and 2 to 4 observations for probationary teachers.

The project-based coaching cycle provides a structure for individualized professional growth through a process of self-assessment, goal setting, and feedback from such sources as peer review, peer coaching, and portfolio development. The project-based coaching cycle does not judge teacher performance, but provides an opportunity for experienced teachers to work on a specific set of skills.

The principal determines the teachers who may participate in the project-based coaching cycle based on their classroom-based evaluations and classroom observations.

## **The Observation-Based Coaching Cycle**

### 1. Hold a meeting with the teacher.

- Review the Developmental Continuum of Teacher Abilities (DCTA).
- The teacher uses the DCTA to privately assess their performance and identify areas for growth (see Appendix H).
- Based on the self-assessment, the teacher and principal select a DCTA element for the principal to focus on during the observation.
- Arrange dates and times for observations and pre- and post-conferences.

### 2. Hold the Pre-Conference

The teacher brings to the pre-conference:

- Self-assessment on the DCTA
- Observation Planning Form (see Appendix I)
- Professional Growth Plan (see Appendix I)
- The teacher and the principal discuss the lesson and the DCTA element selected to be the focus of the classroom observation.
- The teacher and principal discuss possible behaviors and/or artifacts to be used as evidence for the DCTA element to be observed.

### 3. Conduct the Classroom Observation

- The principal uses the DCTA element as a focus while observing.
- The principal may use an observation tool to record evidence.
- Following the observation, the teacher completes the Observation Reflection Sheet (see I).

#### 4. Hold the Post-Conference

- The teacher comes with a completed Observation Reflection Sheet.
- The principal and the teacher discuss the principal's observations and the teacher's reflections, with a focus on evidence of the DCTA element.
- The principal asks questions to promote teacher reflection, while offering commendations and recommendations.
- The teacher and administrator identify objectives for growth in the DCTA element area to be recorded in the Observation Report (see Appendix I).
- The principal uses his/her notes, the teacher's reflections, and the post-conference conversation as a basis for writing the Observation Report.
- It is the principal's prerogative to include in the Observation Report anything observed during the classroom visit that s/he deems appropriate.

#### 5. After the Observation Cycles are completed

- The principal completes the Summary Report (see Appendix I).
- The teacher reads and signs off on the Summary Report.
- The teacher has a right to submit a written response to be included in the Summary Report.

### **The Project-Based Coaching Cycle**

Tenured teachers who participate in the project-based coaching cycle will complete the California Standards for the Teaching Profession Self Evaluation Form and review their Professional Growth File. The Professional Growth File is a compilation of all evidence of growth related to the DCTA elements such as: in-service classes, courses taken, conferences, committee work, partner coaching, curriculum development, and pupil progress.

Every two years selected tenured teachers will review their Professional Growth File and select their own form of coaching. Project-based coaching options are as follows:

#### 1. Partner Coaching

- Select a partner/coach approved by the principal
- Submit a self-evaluation for review
- Establish goals and objectives
- Document evidence in Professional Growth File
- Observations by Partner/Coach indicating progress of goals and implementation of objectives
- Post-conference file submitted to principal

## 2. Administrative Coaching

- Submit a self-evaluation for review
- Establish goals and objectives in collaboration with school leader
- Document evidence in Professional Growth File
- Observations documented indicating progress of goals and implementation of objectives
- Post-conference file submitted to principal

## 3. Videotaped Self-Evaluation

- Submit a self-evaluation for review
- Determine lessons (minimum of 2) to be videotaped based on self-evaluation
- Complete Observation Reflection Form after viewing videotape
- Document evidence in Professional Growth File

## 4. Action Research Project (Individual and Small Group)

- Submit a self-evaluation for review
- Select a research project based on self-evaluation and approved by the principal
- Establish goals and objectives
- Document evidence in Professional Growth File
- Submit Action Research Project to the principal

## Dissemination of Practice

Our school attracts many educators interested in learning more about constructivism and the many components that make our school successful, such as the integration of technology, thematic teaching, open-structured and child-centered education, team teaching, multiage groupings, and collaborative governance.

In an effort to make a more meaningful contribution to the educational professional community at large and to extend our leadership, in 1996 we created the **Open Charter School Institute: Constructivism in Action** (see Appendix F). This two-day conference takes place on our campus during the regular school day, offering visiting educators the opportunity to experience and observe learning and teaching processes in an authentic context. It provides an opportunity for participants to learn how to integrate constructivist practices into their classrooms and at their schools through a process of focused classroom observation, teacher-led workshops, and panel discussions involving teachers, students, parents, and staff.

The Institute has been funded through grants from community foundations for many years. We have had a large number of participants, many of whom attend more than once. Schools often send teams of teachers to the Institute with the hope that they will begin to plan thematic units collaboratively. Our Open School Institutes have been well received and attended by a vast array of educators.

As a result of the teachers developing their workshops and focused observations, they have created curricular materials that are of publishable quality. These materials serve the purpose of disseminating replicable and specific examples of quality teaching practices, projects, and authentic assessments. These materials not only share our accomplishments with others, but also enable us to further reflect on and articulate successful classroom practices, as well as clarify and refine the teachers' own work in the classroom.

While we created the Institute to share and disseminate our constructivist practices, it has also become a form of professional growth for our own teachers and staff. Founded primarily as a dissemination tool, the Institute has also been a catalyst for meaningful discussion for us as a learning community as we seek to improve and refine our educational practices. The Institute has also allowed us the opportunity to chart our growth over time and to memorialize our accomplishments.



## Element 2: Measurable Student Outcomes

*“The measurable pupil outcomes identified for use by the charter school. ‘Pupil outcomes,’ for purposes of this part, means the extent to which all pupils of the school demonstrate that they have attained the skills, knowledge, and attitudes specified as goals in the school’s educational program.”*

*Ed. Code § 47605 (b)(5)(B)*

### *Guiding Principles of the Educational Program*

As stated in Element 1, it is our belief at the Open School that we are able to maintain consistently high levels of achievement for all our students because our educational drive stems from a single unified vision of learning. All of our stakeholders are committed to the implementation of that vision.

### *Mission Statement*

Open School is a unique, diverse, collaborative, dynamic and joyous community of learners. Every learner will leave Open empowered and able to direct their own learning with enthusiasm and excitement and conduct themselves with integrity, initiative, and kindness.

### *Measurable Student Outcomes*

Our curriculum is built around our guiding principles stated in Element 1, with the following goals for all students. Students will possess the ability to:

- Read, infer, and interpret a variety of print material including literature, poetry, newspapers, reference sources, the internet, texts, and graphs;
- Communicate clearly facts, ideas, emotions, and opinions, effectively using oral, written and visual language;
- Discern mathematical relationships through in-depth mathematical discussions, reason logically, and use mathematical techniques and skills effectively in practical life applications;
- Understand and apply the major strands of scientific thought, methods, facts, hypotheses and theories;
- Apply knowledge to understand the connections between fact and opinion, ideas and behavior, people’s values and ideals, and the ethical consequences of those beliefs;

- Use the arts to solve problems, make connections across disciplines, and gain an understanding of self and an appreciation of others;
- Understand their relationship with nature, the interconnectedness of natural cycles, the conservation of natural resources, and the preservation of the environment;
- Understand the value, importance and fragility of democratic institutions and the role students must play as responsible citizens;
- Use technology effectively to access, compose and communicate data, ideas, graphics, sounds and music.

### *Student Achievement Results*

The purpose of assessment is to support and guide the learning process. Assessment also clarifies those areas where understanding is developing and enables teachers to focus their efforts where they will produce the greatest benefit. It allows teachers to diagnose students’ abilities at a given time in order to differentiate instruction based on individual needs. Our academic instruction and the assessment of our students is guided by their learning and academic progress. For this reason, we refrain from adhering to definitive assessment timelines. We assess our students with formal assessments, when teacher observation and portfolios show adequate student progress. We use formal assessments to outline academic student growth and to inform future instruction.

Currently at the Open School, we use a variety of instruments to monitor student progress. Though we strongly believe that traditional standardized tests are only one small measure of a student’s progress and do not adequately measure complex thinking and problem solving skills, historically, our students have scored above the state, district and national levels on such tests. Accordingly, in addition to standardized measures such as statewide tests, which we administer to all students, we utilize portfolios, various rubrics and scoring guides to measure performance-based tasks, and student-led parent/teacher conferences. The following table describes assessments used to measure the above desired student outcomes.

#### *Common Assessment and Benchmarks*

<b>Subject Area</b>	<b>Outcomes (Meeting the Standards)</b>	<b>Assessments</b>	<b>Benchmarks</b>
Reading	- Students read, infer, and interpret a variety of print material, through the application of literature, poetry,	- State-mandated assessments  - Columbia’s Teacher College Reading	- The number of students that achieve a score of proficient or above through the CST

	newspapers, reference sources, the internet, texts and graphs	<p>Workshop Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DIBELS</li> <li>- Zamarano Fine Arts Academy Reading Assessment</li> <li>- Teacher-created assessments</li> <li>- Culminating Projects</li> <li>- Fluency assessments</li> <li>- Teacher observation</li> <li>- Anecdotal Records</li> <li>- Publisher-designed assessments (when appropriate)</li> </ul>	will increase annually
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students can communicate clearly to transmit facts, ideas, emotions, and opinions effectively using oral, written and visual language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State-mandated assessments</li> <li>- Performance Assessments</li> <li>- Internally and externally created rubrics</li> <li>- Writing portfolios</li> <li>- Culminating Projects</li> <li>- Anecdotal Records</li> <li>- Conferring with Students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The number of students that achieve a score of proficient or above on the 4<sup>th</sup> grade writing assessment will increase annually</li> </ul>
English Language Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students demonstrate understanding and appropriate use of the English language in academic and social settings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CELDT</li> <li>- Publisher-designed assessments</li> <li>- ELD Portfolios</li> <li>- Culminating Projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The number of students that re-designate as Fluent English Proficient will be at least 10% annually</li> </ul>

		- Teacher observation	
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students discern mathematical relationships through in-depth mathematical discussions, reason logically, and use mathematical techniques and skills effectively in practical life applications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State-mandated assessments</li> <li>- Student Portfolios</li> <li>- Zamorano Fine Arts Academy Math Assessment</li> <li>- Teacher-created assessments</li> <li>- Mathematical discussions</li> <li>- Culminating Projects</li> <li>- District assessments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The number of students that achieve a score of proficient or above through the CST will increase annually</li> </ul>
Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students apply knowledge they acquire to understand the connection between fact and opinion, ideas and behavior, between the values and ideals that people hold, and the ethical consequences of those beliefs</li> <li>- Students understand the value, importance, and fragility of democratic institutions and the role students must play as responsible citizens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher-created assessments</li> <li>- Culminating projects</li> <li>- Classroom observations</li> <li>- Oral presentations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 75% of students will demonstrate proficiency via semester mark reporting</li> </ul>
Science & Ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students understand and apply the major strands of scientific thought, methods, facts, hypotheses and theories</li> <li>- Students understand their relationship with nature, the interconnectedness of natural cycles, the conservation of natural</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State-mandated assessments</li> <li>- Teacher-created assessments</li> <li>- Culminating projects</li> <li>- Classroom observations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 75% of students will demonstrate proficiency via semester mark reporting</li> <li>- 85% of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students will score proficient or above on the CST</li> </ul>

	resources, and the preservation of the environment	- Oral presentations	
Visual & Performing Arts	- Students use the arts to solve problems, make connections across disciplines, and to gain an understanding of self and an appreciation of others	- Performance assessments - Teacher observation - Culminating performances	- 75% of students will demonstrate proficiency via semester mark reporting
Physical & Health Education	- Students understand the importance of maintaining healthy lifestyles and the way in which choices impact physical and emotional health	- State-mandated assessments - Performance assessments - Teacher observation	- The number of students that receive a passing California Fitness Gram score will increase annually
Technology	- Students use technology effectively to access, compose and communicate data, ideas, graphics, sounds and music	- Teacher-created assessments - Teacher observation - Culminating projects	- 80% of students will demonstrate proficiency in use of equipment and software as evidenced in presentations, portfolios, etc.

Comparative data reported by the State, documenting progress toward the above benchmarks is provided in Appendix A.

In the recently released 2012 Academic Performance Index Growth Report, we scored 918, well above the statewide target of 800. When compared with every other elementary school in the state, we received a statewide ranking of 10 out of a possible 10. This highlights the academic levels that we are able to achieve through the very diverse population that we serve. We believe this confirms our success.

***School Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) table***

	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
Percent Proficient Target-ELA	56.8	67.6	78.4
Open School ELA- School Wide Percent Proficient or Above	78	82	83
Percent Proficient Target-Math	58	68.5	79

Open School Math – School Wide Percent Proficient or Above	80	84	83
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### **Element 3: Means to Assess Pupil Progress**

*“The method by which pupil progress in meeting those pupil outcomes is measured.”*  
Ed. Code § 47605 (b)(5)(C)

#### ***Guiding Principles of the Educational Program***

##### ***Guiding Principles of the Educational Program***

To evaluate the educational experiences for students at Open School, we utilize a variety of tools. Our approach to assessment has several guiding principles:

- Assessment is continuous and informs every aspect of instruction;
- Both formal and informal assessments are important for a teacher to truly understand his/her students;
- Assessment is integrated with learning;
- Every interaction with a student gives a teacher an opportunity to learn more about what that student knows and understands;
- Assessment involves what students know, do, and how they use what they know to learn;
- Assessment is developmentally appropriate;
- Assessment involves collaboration among teachers, students and parents.

In order to enhance the limited information provided by traditional standardized tests, the Open School has designed a student assessment system that is valid, reliable, and congruent with our constructivist practices. We believe an effective assessment program must be firmly rooted in the teaching process and be relatively simple, thereby enhancing, rather than negatively impacting, the natural teaching/learning interaction. To this end, our assessment methods are multidimensional and, like the learning process itself, complex.

Currently the Open School utilizes a multidimensional approach to monitor student progress that includes both performance-based tasks and standardized measures. We assess the attainment of student goals, benchmarks, and performance outcomes through rubrics, continuous progress records, classroom-based benchmark assessments,

portfolios, performance tasks, standardized achievement tests, and, when developmentally appropriate and consistent with our curriculum, District-mandated assessments.

We firmly believe that a crucial part of the educational process is supporting students in developing their capacity for self-assessment. Students use rubrics, peer conferencing, and portfolios to evaluate their own progress. In student-led parent/teacher conferences, our students report on their own progress using rigorous standards to evaluate their own learning and set goals for future growth.

Our site-designed electronic report card (see Appendix E) allows us to generate a variety of reports charting individual and group progress over time to more effectively meet student needs and inform our practices. We have also created electronic versions of the Columbia Teacher's College Reading Workshop assessments that include reports that are linked to the report card database and which can also generate individual student and whole class group reports.

In addition to the assessment methods described above, the Open School annually evaluates its overall educational program through a Program Evaluation Survey that is sent to all families. The degree of satisfaction with the school's program is extremely high among all stakeholders. Survey results over the last five year period indicate that parents believe the curriculum is developmentally appropriate, continuity and articulation between clusters is strong, the program has positively impacted children's work habits and social development, teachers have extremely positive relationships with the students, and families and staff collaborate and communicate effectively.

These results are analyzed and discussed at the staff's annual Evaluation and Planning Retreat where collaborative decisions are made about our programs. Programmatic changes are proposed, discussed, and then planned to improve the quality of instruction for all students. Results and any proposed changes in the program are then reported to the Governing Council for further input before implementation.

In addition to our common classroom assessments and benchmarks, we have school wide assessment and developing platforms to assess student data. In Reading we use the Columbia Teacher's College Reading Workshop Assessment. Our students are assessed with this Common Core standards aligned, valid, reliable assessment, at least three times per school year. We have a data platform for which student data is scored, produced and shared. The data informs instruction and provides a strong basis for which we differentiate instruction in language arts for our students.

In Mathematics, we are investigating and piloting several Common Core Standards aligned programs. As a school, throughout our next charter term, we will align our mathematics program so that it is Common Core standards aligned, valid, reliable, and covers the mathematical content. We will create a platform on which these assessments can be scored, printed, produced and shared, just as we have done in language arts. We will utilize precise and efficient computer adaptive assessments to track the timely progress of our students. As we align our math assessments with A Smarter Balance, we



seek to utilize mathematical programs that are technology based. As we continue our research, some of the mathematical programs that we will pilot are, but are not limited to:

ST Math

Scholastic Mathematics Inventory

Through this multidimensional approach, we are able to create an authentic and comprehensive picture of student progress and are able to modify and adapt instruction to meet individual needs.

As a District affiliated charter school, the Open School will test with the District and adhere to District testing calendars and procedures for all state mandated assessments. The Charter School agrees to comply with and adhere to the State requirements for participation and administration of all state mandated tests. As a District affiliated charter school, the Charter School will test with the District and adhere to District testing calendars and procedures for all state mandated assessments.

### *Current Assessment Plans/Processes in Each Cluster*

#### **Green Cluster (Kindergarten & First Grade)**

**Reading:** We begin and end the year by administering the Zamorano Fine Arts Academy Reading Assessment at both Kindergarten and First grade levels. Following the results of these assessments, we create homogenous reading groups to begin the school year. These groups are fluid and the students change groups depending on their progress and academic growth throughout the year. The skills assessed are capital and lower case letter recognition, initial and final letter sound production, sight word recognition, story comprehension, visual discrimination, rhyming words, and sentence comprehension. Assessments also include anecdotal records and check lists based upon phonemic development, and reading in both phonics and whole language literature groups.

**Writing:** Our main writing program is based upon the Columbia Writing Workshop. We use conferring to assess the student's individual writing and keep notes on each child's progress. During guided reading we keep anecdotal records on each child's reading fluency and comprehension. We develop writing in different genres and use mentor texts as teaching tools. Additionally, the students are required to write responses to the stories.

**Math:** During the school year we teach the following concepts: number identification, counting, sorting, patterns, measurement, computation, graphing, time, money, and problem solving. We teach the various concepts through daily calendar and small group instruction in both heterogeneous and homogenous groupings. We assess each math unit taught using anecdotal records, check lists, teacher observation, and specific written assignments designed to test the student's understanding. We also have leveled math packets that support student progress and allow for individualized pacing. These packets

begin with number recognition and sets and go all the way through third grade algebra. We use a math program based upon Marcy Cook's Math Tiles. The students progress at an individual pace, starting with simple counting. The program progresses through addition and subtraction facts from zero through twenty and continues into algebra.

### **Silver Cluster (First & Second Grade)**

Assessment in Silver Cluster informs how our curriculum will be organized, presented and modified each year. We assess so that the classroom groupings are suited to the needs of the student. We assess so progress reports accurately reflect the growth of each student.

Formal assessments are taken three times each year. They are traditional, objective measures of student performance. Authentic assessments are used more frequently. They often involve writing and are more subjective. However, mechanical elements of completed written work are measured using simple checklists and rubrics.

All students complete a Field Guide, which is our most complete authentic assessment. It is written at the end of the year and therefore reflects a year's worth of absorption of our language arts curriculum, studies, experiences, and field trips, as well as the use of scientific processes.

The Zamorano Math Concepts Assessment for first and second grade is given in small groups near the beginning of the year. We use the results of the survey to plan the projects that accompany each math concept. Timed facts are also administered. The constructivist projects (like pizza making to illustrate fractions) are created and planned so that students whose skills are not in the average range (either far below or far above grade level) can show growth and deepen concept understanding.

In language arts, the students begin the assessment process by taking a small battery of tests (sight word lists, letter/sound identification, phonemic awareness). Their scores determine the approximate grade level of the next assessment, the running record or the Reader's Workshop assessments. These assessments measure decoding, fluency, and comprehension and are crucial to guiding the literature selected for homogenous groupings. This information is used to create reading groups as well as to identify students' needs. Running records are given formally three times a year, but they are given more often when a student demonstrates mastery or challenges, so that the groupings can be changed as needed. We also keep brief, colloquial notes on students' decoding and comprehension progress using a checklist. Spelling tests are administered weekly.

Writing is assessed by taking a monthly baseline writing sample. The students are given a prompt that is pertinent to a curricular area. We do not assist with spelling, punctuation, or grammar. Quiet and privacy are enforced so each child's strengths and weaknesses are accurately reflected. These samples are valuable because each child's growth is evident as the year's samples are read in sequence.

## **Red Cluster (First & Second Grade)**

In Red Cluster we use a number of formal assessments to determine each child's performance in reading, writing, and math throughout the year. To gauge students' reading skills, we assess their knowledge of letter sounds, decoding and encoding ability, sight word recognition, and story comprehension using the Reader's Workshop assessments. We also give a baseline writing assessment. Students are expected to respond to a simple open-ended writing prompt without assistance. Their responses give us important information about their ability to incorporate conventional spelling, punctuation, and descriptive content into their writing. In math, we test their ability to recognize and write numbers, add, and subtract. Automaticity of math facts is also assessed.

We also monitor students' progress on a daily basis. By analyzing writing pieces, oral fluency within reading groups, and written responses to comprehension questions, we are able to determine whether students are making steady progress. Similarly, we can gauge progress in math by looking at participation levels during whole group lessons and at accuracy in computation.

Start-to-Finish: Project-based assessments are utilized to evaluate students' understanding of each thematic unit taught throughout the year. These assessments are based on participation in hands-on activities, analysis of student work, and the completion of a final project.

## **Orange Cluster (Second & Third Grade)**

Assessment in Orange Cluster employs a multi-dimensional approach. We use our assessments to gain a better picture of each student and where he or she is academically. We also establish next steps based on these assessments. Where do we take the students? What do they need and what are they ready to learn next? We also assess the students to show them their areas of growth and to signal areas they need to continue working on.

We give our major assessments three times during the course of the year. We give each student the Reading Workshop assessments. This is a reading fluency test that quickly and accurately shows us where the student is reading, looking at comprehension, fluency, and decoding. We also give the students a spelling test and a phonemic awareness test. The phonemic test focuses on phonics rules that the students will practice individually. Phonetic spelling packets are created to remediate areas of weakness. We also give a math skills inventory. This sequential math skills assessment shows us what the students are able to do computationally. This assessment guides individual student placement. Our assessments are given three times a year and the results are shared with parents.

Another type of assessment we give is pre and post-tests for our math units. The students are given an assessment before they start new units of study in place value and number sense, geometry, and multiplication and division. This assessment helps drive the direction of our unit. It is used to differentiate instruction based on individual student needs. At the end of a unit, the post-test is given. We then compare the two tests to

evaluate their growth. The students also analyze these tests themselves to examine how much they have grown throughout the unit. During problem solving lessons, the class is taught the various strategies to use when approaching various story problems. Once all the strategies have been taught, each student is given an opportunity to choose and apply those strategies to problems in a packet. These problem-solving packets are then assessed for the students' application and use of strategies. We use the results to review or re-teach specific strategies for students.

Anecdotal records are another large component of our assessment plan. We meet individually with each student for weekly math, reading, and writing conferences. We discuss and observe the student's progress, using the appropriate sections of our school progress report as a rough guide for our anecdotal notes. We take notes on specific strengths, weaknesses, and areas of confusion. We note follow-up steps we need to take for each student as well as areas for review or re-teaching. While meeting with small Book Talk groups, we use the Language Arts section from the progress report to note student progress.

We also include student self-assessment. Before each parent conference and again at the end of the year, students complete formal reflections in order to assess themselves as well as identify areas they need to work on. These reflections serve as a guide for the parent conferences.

Our classroom museum is the culmination and authentic assessment for our yearlong curriculum. It is an opportunity for us to assess what the students have learned throughout the year in social studies and science. The students become the teachers when various guests visit our museum. We are able to observe what they have learned, and since they have had the opportunity to teach others, the students demonstrate a strong sense of pride.

### **Indigo Cluster (Second & Third Grade)**

In mathematics, we assess the students using a variety of methods. We begin and end the year with a comprehensive, standardized assessment. We look at computation, problem solving, and all mathematical strands. We also use the Prescriptive Inventory of Whole Numbers in Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication, and Division to determine the computation skill level of each child. We also assess each student's memorization of the basic math facts using a variety of methods, from one-on-one, to the 60 second sweep, and other activities. After teaching each math strand, we assess the children's understanding through tests and projects. We use many of Marilyn Burns' assessments, such as The Four-Triangle Problem, The Doorbell Rang, 1-2-3 Spinner Experiment, and Candy Boxes. We also use The Maharaja's Tasks from Creative Publications. Another form of ongoing assessment is daily observation of children using manipulatives to play games that develop and reinforce understanding of mathematical concepts.

In language arts, we begin the year by giving each child the Words Their Way Spelling Stages Inventory, which assesses their knowledge of the orthographic word features. We use the Reader's Workshop assessments to help determine the appropriate instructional

reading level for each child. Individual conferencing includes goal setting and tracking each child's progress. We also use incremental writing baselines with specific grammar skills as a focus that shifts related to what we have been teaching.

Our cluster's theme revolves around biomes in the earth one year and the solar system the other. In small heterogeneous groups, the children complete graphic organizers about their biome or planet. Children complete research projects that are evaluated for detail and accuracy.

### **Yellow Cluster (Third & Fourth Grade)**

#### Beginning of the Year

We do a variety of initial assessments. After initial assessments we also check with previous teachers and look at the prior year's assessments to see if our results match a student's previous achievement. Standardized test scores provide additional input. Parent and student surveys help clarify family and student goals and concerns and allow us to learn more about each child so that we can tailor our instruction accordingly. Our initial assessments include the following (some of which are also given throughout the school year):

#### Reading:

- Reading Workshop Assessments
- Follow-up sight word assessments for at-risk students or those we have questions about
- Multiple choice grade level comprehension test to identify particular strategies in which students have strengths or weaknesses
- Student surveys about reading habits, feelings, and goals

#### Language Arts:

- Words Their Way Spelling Stages Inventory
- Writing Sample
- Writing Survey

#### Mathematics:

- Addition, subtraction, multiplication placement tests
- Timed Tests for Basic Math Facts 1-12 in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division

#### Throughout the School Year

Every activity and assignment provides insight into student progress and is viewed as an opportunity for gaining insight into each child's current understanding of the curriculum.

Many math units include both pre- and post-tests to guide instruction and evaluate student achievement. In addition we designate some assignments as formative in order to more formally guide instruction, and others as summative when we move on to another unit or topic. Assessments are teacher created and include multiple choice items and short answers to check skill and concept development, as well as performance assessments to see if students can apply what they have learned in problem-solving situations. Students also complete weekly problem-solving assignments that are evaluated, returned, and discussed. Computation skills are individually paced and tested. Literature work focuses on specific literature skills and writing assignments are evaluated both by the student and the teacher.

Students take weekly timed math facts as well as bi-weekly tests of their Words Their Way spelling lists. Reader's Workshop assessments are given as needed to evaluate a student's progress.

Students are further taught to be self-evaluative. They self and peer score various assignments using both student and teacher designed rubrics. They complete a weekly self-evaluation that we review and comment on, and students share this with their parents. Opportunities to assess the effectiveness of group work are a part of many group activities. Each student also completes a self-evaluation to prepare for student-led parent conferences.

Participation in group performances and projects is a key element of our project-centered curriculum. Students are taught to be a part of the classroom team and many classroom discussions are centered on the individual's role in developing a quality learning community. Constant observation and interaction allows us to effectively guide student growth in this area. The academic skills that are imbedded in the projects are assessed through a variety of means: performance on authentic tasks, multiple choice tests, and other written work.

## **Blue Cluster (Fourth & Fifth Grade)**

### Initial Assessments

**Reading Comprehension and Fluency:** We use the Reader's Workshop assessments to identify each student's instructional level for placement in teacher directed small group instruction.

**Writing:** On the first day of school each of the students is asked to respond to a writing prompt. Students are given approximately 45 minutes to plan, write, and edit this piece. This exercise is completed without teacher intervention. We read each one and determine what they know about writing and what they need to develop. We record this on a graphic organizer by strengths and needs.

**Math Diagnostic:** We use the Scott Foresman 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade beginning of the year diagnostic readiness test to determine how much information students retained from the previous year to help us plan instruction and groupings. Each child's score is recorded on the item analysis for diagnosis and intervention. These tests are based on the California State Standards in Mathematics.

#### Periodic Assessments – Multiple Forms

**Math:** Strand or unit quizzes for math are used to check for students' understanding of the current strand or skill taught. We use this to check for mastery so that we can re-teach concepts via one-on-one tutoring for students who need this support.

**Science:** We use teacher-generated quizzes for science and rubrics to assess individual projects where students apply what they have learned (e.g., creating a sea floor using a spreadsheet incorporating positive and negative numbers).

**Social Studies:** We use teacher-generated quizzes, assignments, or project simulations to assess their understanding of social studies concepts. For example, students take on the perspective of a fictional character and write about their experiences, decisions they make, or discuss topics related to the era.

**Writing:** Students apply what they learn and know about writing in various projects and written assignments such as Mr. Books, science accordion books, poetry, essay writing, writing about the author's message or the lesson learned, research projects, point of view analysis, book reports, responses to prompts, group descriptions or community writing.

### Purple Cluster (Fourth & Fifth Grade)

Beginning of the year:

- Reading Workshop Reading Assessments – fluency, comprehension, sequencing
- Publisher and teacher-made math assessments – computation, word problems, problem solving, fractions, decimals, measurement, graphs, geometry
- Writing samples

Ongoing:

Math:

- Diagnostic assessments with each math strand
- Math facts quizzes
- Cooperative group projects - statistics and graphing integrated with science
- Math reasoning illustrated through written and verbal explanations and problem of the week assignments
- Problem solving assignments
- Logic puzzles



- Bridge Design, Landscape Design

#### Literature:

- Written responses to literary prompts
- Reading Workshop conferences
- Comprehension questions
- Small group reading circles
- Margin notes

#### Writing:

- One on one and small group conferences
- Published pieces
- Anecdotal notes for Writing Workshop
- Original stories (historical fiction, eco-mysteries, expository writing)

#### Science:

- FOSS 1-checks, response questions
- Notebooks – recording data and evidence, creating testable questions, experiment observations
- Cooperative group projects – hands on investigations
- Observations of student work habits
- District periodic assessments
- Science symposium / Invention Convention

#### Social Studies:

- Social studies concept quizzes/tests
- Notebooks based upon readings
- Cooperative group projects
- Observations of student work habits

### **Resource Program Assessments**

#### Standardized Assessments

- Kaufman Tests of Academic Achievement II (KTEA II)
- Woodcock Johnson III (WJ III)

Informal Assessments used yearly and for ongoing diagnostic assessment and progress monitoring

### **Reading**

- Reading Teachers College Guided Reading Assessments (Readers Workshop)
- Individual Reading Inventory (IRI)
- Graded word lists
- Graded paragraphs with literal and inferential comprehension questions
- STAR Decoding Skills Diagnostic Reading Assessments - alphabet/letter recognition, consonant sounds, short vowels, long vowels, blends / digraphs
- Zamarano Reading Assessments – letter, sounds, sight words
- Multisensory Sensory Education Assessment - Orton Gillingham - phonetic elements and blending & high frequency words
- LindaMood Bell - Seeing Stars - phonetic blending and sight words
- Dibels - fluency
- Voyager - phonics, blending, sight words, fluency, comprehension

### **Spelling**

- Kottmeyer Spelling Test – graded word lists
- Prescriptive Spelling Assessment – applying phonetic elements
- Work Samples

### **Math**

- Prescriptive Inventory of Math – computation
- Singapore Math - Story Problems - model drawing
- Math Strands – pretests/post-tests for time, money, shapes (geometry), fractions, etc.
- Hands On Equations – algebra

### **Writing**

- Test of Written Language (TOWL)
- Conventions - spelling, punctuation, capitalization
- Language - vocabulary, sentence structure
- Story Construction - plot, beginning, ending, development
- Work Samples

The Charter School agrees to comply with and adhere to the State requirements for participation and administration of all state mandated tests. As a District affiliated charter school, the Charter School will test with the District and adhere to District testing calendars and procedures for all state mandated assessments.

## Element 4 – Governance

*“The governance structure of the school, including, but not limited to, the process to be followed by the school to ensure parental involvement”*

*Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(D)*

The Open School is governed by (see Appendix N):

- The LAUSD Board of Education
- Educational Services Center-West
- Our Local School Leadership Council (Governing Council)
- Eleven Open School Committees

### ***Purpose***

The Open School is an affiliated charter school locally governed by parents, teachers, and administration in a dynamic and successful collaborative structure that focuses on the needs of the child. Parents are partners in education at the Open School. They are an integral element of our school, fully participating in every facet of the school program - from collaborative governance to classroom instructional support. Since our inception over 35 years ago, our governing structure has consisted of a school-based management process designed to build consensus among faculty, administration, and parents.

The local governance of the Open School is conducted via the Governing Council. The Governing Council was established to promote a cooperative and positive effort among teachers, administrators, and parents to ensure the achievement of program goals, and to develop the best possible educational program for all students at the Open School. The Governing Council acts as the primary decision-making body for the school.

The Governing Council is charged with prioritizing educational needs in order to encourage each student to realize his or her maximum potential. To support this goal, the Governing Council identifies budgetary priorities involving the use of discretionary funds, evaluates the academic effectiveness of the Open School’s overall program, and makes recommendations for improvement. It also establishes committees and/or task forces as necessary to implement the business of the Governing Council and to facilitate its functioning.

### ***Membership***

Our Governing Council is configured to represent both staff and parents. Historically, we’ve had one council for the purpose of local school decision-making. Currently, the

state of California mandates every public school have a School Site Council (SSC). Therefore, under the current law, we should have a SSC and Governing Council.

Compositionally our governing council structure has been aligned with the configuration of SSC, which requires parity. Since our inception over 35 years ago, our governing structure has consisted of a school-based management (SBM) decision-making process designed to build consensus among faculty, administration, and parents. Through the years, under our SBM model we have been afforded the opportunity to make local school leadership decisions as a collaborative community. These decisions which the Governing Council has been responsible for in the past are not the same decisions that can be decided upon by SSC. As outlined in the UTLA/District CBA, Article XXVII, continuing our SBM model will allow us to continue making the following decisions including: staff professional development, student discipline guidelines and code of student conduct, schedule of school activities, events and special schedules, guidelines for the use of equipment, and local budgetary matters, in addition to decisions which fall under the purview of SSC. In making determinations in the matters listed above, the local school leadership council operates within the same set of powers and constraints as previously applied to the principal.

In order to allow our school to continue to function as successfully as it has in the past, the school will seek to obtain a waiver from Educational Service Center-West on a yearly basis for the purpose of maintaining parity. If a year-to-year waiver is not granted, Open Magnet Charter School will have both a SSC and Local School Leadership Council.

The number of members and composition of the Local School Leadership Council will be as follows: There will be 8 members on the Local School Leadership Council. 50% of the committee will be made up of 3 teachers and 1 UTLA Chapter Chair; the other 50% of the committee will be comprised of 1 Principal, 1 classified staff, and 2 parents.

Upon being granted a year-to-year waiver from the Educational Services Center- West, the Governing Council will be made up of 12 parents and 12 staff members. The parent representatives on the Council are comprised of 11 elected parents plus the president of The Friends of The Open School (Booster Club). The 12 staff members are comprised of 8 general education teachers, 1 resource teacher, the principal, the magnet coordinator, and 1 classified staff representative.

The Open School is subject to the governance of the LAUSD Board of Education, which has a fiduciary responsibility over the Open School. Governance at the school site level shall be in accordance with the provisions of this petition and will be consistent with all applicable state, federal laws and regulations and the provisions of collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). Any governance model in conflict with the above shall be null and void unless the appropriate parties have agreed to a waiver or exemption. Absent agreed upon waivers between the District and UTLA, Article XVII of the LAUSD-UTLA CBA must be adhered to, particularly in regards to Local School Leadership Council composition and responsibilities.

In the event that the Open School changes from affiliated charter status to independent charter status, Open School and / or its non-profit corporation will be a separate legal entity and will be solely responsible for the debts and obligations of the Open School. If Open School changes its status to an independent charter school, Open School shall submit a petition for material revision with articles of incorporation and bylaws for District's approval.

The Open School will comply with the Brown Act and other laws governing public meetings.

Members of the Open School's governing council, any administrators, managers or employees, and any other committees of the Open School shall comply with federal and state laws, nonprofit integrity standards, and LAUSD's Charter School policies and regulations regarding ethics and conflicts of interest.

The District reserves the right to appoint a single representative to the Charter School governing council.

Governing Council elections are held each April for the following year, with parents electing parents and faculty selecting faculty representatives. Officers are then elected by all of the Governing Council members during the May meeting. Membership and its definitions, succession, voting rights, termination of membership, resignation, and vacancies are covered in detail in our By-Laws, Article III, Membership (see Appendix G). The procedure followed for conducting elections and soliciting candidates is also delineated in our By-Laws, Article IV, Elections, Sections 1-5.

Governing Council meetings are held the second or third Thursday of each school month, depending on the school calendar, and are open to everyone in the entire school community, though only elected Governing Council members can vote on matters put to Council vote. The Governing Council's Executive Committee, consisting of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Principal, and Teacher Representative, sets the agenda based on input from the community. Parents are notified of the agenda one week in advance of the meeting date. Our weekly "Thursday's Backpack" (schoolwide electronic newsletter) contains Governing Council agendas, meeting notices and Governing Council actions. The secretary of the Governing Council takes minutes at every meeting and once the full Governing Council has approved the minutes, they are made available in the school office to members of the school community.

Korean and Spanish interpreters are provided upon request. Free childcare is available for all meetings.

### ***Committee Descriptions***

Standing committees, composed of parents/guardians and faculty/staff members, carry out the majority of the Governing Council's work, overseeing areas such as budget, site maintenance, by-laws and charter review, staff selection, and communication, among others. (See complete list of standing committees with descriptions below.) From time to

time, as is deemed necessary by the Governing Council, task forces or subcommittees may be convened to address specific issues. The President of the Governing Council appoints the parent co-chairpersons of these task forces or subcommittees to fulfill the same responsibilities as standing committee chairpersons as described below.

All standing committees, with the exception of Staff Selection and Budget Committee (see Staff Selection and Budget descriptions below) adhere to the following membership, meeting procedures, as well as chairperson selection procedures. Standing committee participation is available to parents/guardians of currently enrolled students and all faculty and staff. Each standing committee is co-chaired by one parent/guardian and one faculty/staff member. The Governing Council's Executive Board may grant exceptions to the co-chair composition on an as-needed basis. Committee members select the parent/guardian chairperson, or the President of the Governing Council may appoint them. Parent/guardian chairpersons need not be elected members of the Governing Council. Faculty/staff volunteer to serve as committee co-chairpersons at the beginning of each school year.

Standing committees have no fewer than two members and there is no limit for a maximum number of members. Committee membership varies by committee but each committee has an average of five to seven members annually. Committee chairpersons are responsible for convening and chairing all meetings and for reporting the outcome or progress of the meetings to the Governing Council. Committee meetings are scheduled in advance and posted to the school wide community on the school website and via email announcements. All parents/guardians and staff/faculty are invited and encouraged to attend all committee meetings.

The Governing Council has established committees that will continue address the ongoing needs of the school. The following committees adhere to the membership, chairperson selection and meeting procedures stated in the previous paragraph.

### **After School Committee**

The After School Committee is available to parents/guardians of currently enrolled students and all faculty and staff. It is co-chaired by one parent/guardian and one faculty/staff member. Committee members select the parent/guardian chairperson, or the President of the Governing Council may appoint them. Parent/guardian chairpersons need not be elected members of the Governing Council. Faculty/staff volunteer to serve as committee co-chairpersons at the beginning of each school year. This committee has no fewer than two members and there is no limit for a maximum number of members.

The After School Committee oversees all afterschool programs at the Open School. The committee surveys the needs and interests of students and their families to offer various afterschool options, including District programs such as Beyond the Bell, and fee-based supervision such as STAR. In addition, families can elect to enroll in fee-based enrichment classes led by trained specialists. With such classes as yoga, Lego Robotics, photography, Spanish, and chess, there is a multitude of extended learning opportunities to choose from throughout the school year. We offer income-based scholarships for all

after school programs to make them financially accessible to all of our students. The After School Committee will continue to bring educational and interesting choices for our students beyond the school day.

### **By-Laws, Charter, and Program Evaluation Committee**

The By-Laws, Charter, and Program Evaluation Committee is available to parents/guardians of currently enrolled students and all faculty and staff. It is co-chaired by one parent/guardian and one faculty/staff member. Committee members select the parent/guardian chairperson, or the President of the Governing Council may appoint them. Parent/guardian chairpersons need not be elected members of the Governing Council. Faculty/staff volunteer to serve as committee co-chairpersons at the beginning of each school year. This committee has no fewer than two members and there is no limit for a maximum number of members.

The Charter and By-Laws are the documents that govern the Open School. The By-Laws, Charter, and Program Evaluation Committee is charged with the responsibility of analyzing the current Charter and By-Laws. The committee determines whether any amendments are necessary or advisable and brings the By-Laws and Charter into conformity with one other in the event of any discrepancies. Accordingly, the policy and process issues discussed in this committee are fundamental to the operation and governance of the school. The committee makes recommendations to the Governing Council for its consideration. Amendments to the charter and the By-Laws are made through the Governing Council and are submitted to the District for review and approval. In addition, this committee also oversees the Governing Council elections in April.

The Program Evaluation work begins each March as this committee reevaluates and, if necessary, redesigns the previous year's Program Evaluation Survey. Any additions or changes made are based on the previous year's responses, curricular or program changes at the school, and feedback from parents and teachers. Questions may be revised for clarity or new questions may be added and others deleted to procure the information sought. Once the evaluation questionnaires are finalized, they are translated and sent home with directions on how to fill out the forms or posted on a site such as Survey Monkey. Both students and parents complete evaluations. The committee then reviews the responses, with school wide results reported to the Governing Council and cluster reports given to each cluster. This information is then used to guide our annual staff retreat and plan for the upcoming year.

### **Communication Committee**

The Communication Committee is available to parents/guardians of currently enrolled students and all faculty and staff. It is co-chaired by one parent/guardian and one faculty/staff member. Committee members select the parent/guardian chairperson, or the President of the Governing Council may appoint them. Parent/guardian chairpersons need not be elected members of the Governing Council. Faculty/staff volunteer to serve as committee co-chairpersons at the beginning of each school year. This committee has no fewer than two members and there is no limit for a maximum number of members.



This committee is responsible for ensuring that we have effective home-school communication systems, updating and upgrading them as necessary. In recent years they have redesigned our website, created an Open School Directory, and have greatly reduced our paper use by migrating most of our communication online. They continue to work on making sure that our website is up-to-date in its information and is a useful, relevant, and easy to use tool for all community members.

### **Community Building and Education Committee**

The Community Building and Education Committee is available to parents/guardians of currently enrolled students and all faculty and staff. It is co-chaired by one parent/guardian and one faculty/staff member. Committee members select the parent/guardian chairperson, or the President of the Governing Council may appoint them. Parent/guardian chairpersons need not be elected members of the Governing Council. Faculty/staff volunteer to serve as committee co-chairpersons at the beginning of each school year. This committee has no fewer than two members and there is no limit for a maximum number of members.

This committee is responsible for planning and organizing events that celebrate, enhance, and educate our community. They have held many informative parent education nights, including a viewing of the movie “Race to Nowhere,” a math night, and a Life After Open event to help educate our parents on middle school options. They also plan and facilitate our annual Open School Day celebration, during which the entire school celebrates the diverse families that make up our community. In addition, they plan and organize educational events for our students during our two yearly conference weeks so that the teachers can meet with every student and their parents for a student-led conference. Themes for these weeks have included a College/Career week and a Respect week.

### **English Learner Advisory Council**

The English Language Advisory Council adheres to the State and District guidelines of ELAC.

The English Learner Advisory Committee discusses issues of importance to English Language Learners and their parents. Examples of such issues include: communication in Spanish and Korean, monitoring the progress of EL students and their path toward redesignation, parent involvement, student attendance and the use of funds to support the needs of English Language Learners. Meetings are held monthly and translation is provided. The chairperson of this committee also attends District English Learner Advisory Council meetings and reports to the Governing Council.

### **Hospitality and Volunteer Coordination Committee**

The Hospitality and Volunteer Coordination Committee is available to parents/guardians of currently enrolled students and all faculty and staff. It is co-chaired by one parent/guardian and one faculty/staff member. Committee members select the parent/guardian chairperson, or the President of the Governing Council may appoint

them. Parent/guardian chairpersons need not be elected members of the Governing Council. Faculty/staff volunteer to serve as committee co-chairpersons at the beginning of each school year. This committee has no fewer than two members and there is no limit for a maximum number of members.

This committee is responsible for hosting events on our campus such as magnet tours and coffee hours and assisting with welcoming new families at events such as our Back to School Picnic. They also help recruit, inform, and organize parent volunteers for all school events.

### **Library Committee**

The Library Committee is available to parents/guardians of currently enrolled students and all faculty and staff. It is co-chaired by one parent/guardian and one faculty/staff member. Committee members select the parent/guardian chairperson, or the President of the Governing Council may appoint them. Parent/guardian chairpersons need not be elected members of the Governing Council. Faculty/staff volunteer to serve as committee co-chairpersons at the beginning of each school year. This committee has no fewer than two members and there is no limit for a maximum number of members.

The Library Committee implements schoolwide literacy activities and oversees the operation of our school library. Recently these events have included: themed annual read-a-thons in which the entire school, students and staff, competed against each other to read the most minutes; book fairs during student-led parent/teacher conference week; vacation challenges during which students tracked their reading; a book swap program, and author visits.

### **School Safety Committee**

The School Safety Committee is available to parents/guardians of currently enrolled students and all faculty and staff. It is co-chaired by one parent/guardian and one faculty/staff member. Committee members select the parent/guardian chairperson, or the President of the Governing Council may appoint them. Parent/guardian chairpersons need not be elected members of the Governing Council. Faculty/staff volunteer to serve as committee co-chairpersons at the beginning of each school year. This committee has no fewer than two members and there is no limit for a maximum number of members.

The School Safety Committee has a broad and vital function: to outline the school's safety plan and procedures in the event of any natural disaster or unsafe situation that may occur while students are present on our school campus. This committee oversees emergency/earthquake preparedness, identifies safety hazards, plans procedures in the event of a lock-down situation, and reports its recommendations and progress to the Governing Council.

### **Site Committee**

The Site Committee is available to parents/guardians of currently enrolled students and all faculty and staff. It is co-chaired by one parent/guardian and one faculty/staff member.

Committee members select the parent/guardian chairperson, or the President of the Governing Council may appoint them. Parent/guardian chairpersons need not be elected members of the Governing Council. Faculty/staff volunteer to serve as committee co-chairpersons at the beginning of each school year. This committee has no fewer than two members and there is no limit for a maximum number of members.

The Site Committee is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of the physical site of the school. This committee works collaboratively with the District to plan and implement improvements needed to both maintain the quality and integrity of the school program and meet District guidelines. This committee also researches and seeks outside funding opportunities for such improvements.

### **Volunteer Coordination Committee**

The Volunteer Coordination Committee is available to parents/guardians of currently enrolled students and all faculty and staff. It is co-chaired by one parent/guardian and one faculty/staff member. Committee members select the parent/guardian chairperson, or the President of the Governing Council may appoint them. Parent/guardian chairpersons need not be elected members of the Governing Council. Faculty/staff volunteer to serve as committee co-chairpersons at the beginning of each school year. This committee has no fewer than two members and there is no limit for a maximum number of members.

The Volunteer Coordination Committee helps recruit volunteers for The Friends of Open School and for school events through targeted communications and volunteer events. The committee is dedicated to helping match volunteers with jobs that suit specific interests, talents and schedules. One of the first events the committee organizes is the Open School Family Mentor Program that introduces new students and their families to the Open community by pairing incoming families with returning families. The program strives to ensure that incoming families transition to their new school environment as smoothly as possible. The committee also helps plan events such as the Back-to-School Picnic to welcome all students and Volunteer Night, an evening to hear about the various volunteer opportunities at the Open School.

The last two committees, Budget Committee and Staff Selection Committee, adhere to different criteria for parent members. These criteria are explained in within their respective sections.

### **Budget Committee**

The Budget Committee is responsible for overseeing the financial administration of the school. The Committee parent co-chair is also the Treasurer of the Governing Council. There is one faculty/staff member co-chair who volunteers at the beginning of the school year. Committee membership is open to parents/guardians of currently enrolled students and all faculty and staff. This committee has no fewer than two members and there is no limit for a maximum number of members. The budget committee has one teacher co-chair, as well. The number of committee members is not specified. This annual Open

School budget (which includes District funds, grants, donations and fundraising revenues) optimizes the use of these resources in order to best meet the school-wide goals and priorities that support our quality learning community. Block grant funding supports responsive distribution of allocated monies and allows this committee the flexibility needed to use the funds effectively. The voting members of the Governing Council approve the annual Open School budget in May for the following school year.

### **Staff Selection Committee**

This is available to parents/guardians of currently enrolled students who have been at the school at least two years and all faculty and staff. It is co-chaired by one parent/guardian and one faculty/staff member. Committee members select the parent/guardian chairperson, or the President of the Governing Council may appoint them. Parent/guardian chairpersons need not be elected members of the Governing Council. Faculty/staff volunteer to serve as committee co-chairpersons at the beginning of each school year. This committee has no fewer than two members and there is no limit for a maximum number of members.

A key factor in our successful educational program is our high level of teacher expertise, historically drawn from a diverse and broad teacher pool. We choose qualified applicants who possess skill sets that meet our particular curricular needs. In order to find these qualified candidates, we need flexibility to recruit, interview, and choose in accordance to the Personnel Commission and LAUSD HR Policies. The Open School has had limited teacher turnover. However, when selection is necessary, we are committed to sustaining an autonomous-process that is steeped in educational best practices for long-term institutional success. We require selection procedures to sustain the continuity of our teaching teams and to maintain the quality of our unique, school-funded teacher training and professional development.

At the Open School the employee selection processes are rigorous and deeply rooted in consensus and community buy-in. We remain committed to the phases of our selection process in an effort to always hire the most effective candidates. The Staff Selection Committee is responsible for the discrete nature and validity of the process. The Staff Selection Committee is comprised of teachers from each cluster, as well as the resource specialist, parents, classified personnel representative, and administrators.

At Open School we follow all LAUSD guideline for selecting teachers. In addition, we have a four-phase selection process once a candidate meets LAUSD standards and guidelines. Phase one begins by advertising the position and soliciting applications. The entire selection committee screens the resumes for basic criteria. Criteria such as relevant experience, familiarity with constructivist practices, team teaching ability, appropriate credentials, and academic expertise. Qualified candidates who are selected matriculates into phase two of the selection process and are scheduled for an initial interview with a sub-committee, which includes administrators, and a subset of parents and teachers. Candidates whom this group finds qualified move into phase three. Phase three consists of the candidates touring our school and doing a demonstration lesson, preferably in their own classroom, and observed by the sub-committee. Candidates then have a second

interview with the entire selection committee. The selection committee uses a pre-determined rating scale to rates the candidates individually. Based on the rating scales and discussions, the committee creates a list of candidates they find eligible for employment at the Open School. Top candidates from the eligibility list move into phase four. In phase four the candidates meet individually with their potential teaching partner and possibly an administrator. In order to promote a powerful collaborative working environment, the team teacher has the final decision in the selection of his/her partner.

Principal selection is the purview of the LAUSD Superintendent.

Our principal selection process mirrors our teacher selection in many regards. In phase one we advertise and recruit viable candidates. Once we receive an ample amount of qualified applicants, the entire selection committee, with involvement of the Education Service Center Director, reviews all of the applications using a predetermined rating scale. Qualified candidates are selected to matriculate into phase two of the selection process and interview with the entire committee. In an effort to prepare for the interview, all candidates are encouraged to familiarize themselves with our school charter. Phase two also includes a writing component. The selection committee rates the candidates on their interview and written response, using a pre-determined rating scale. Once a candidate has successfully completed phase two, they tour of the campus and observe classrooms. We take this time to answer any questions they might have. Phase three may consist of all or some of the following components: a sub-committee visitation to the candidate's current school site (upon permission), a second committee-wide interview, and/or a meet and greet of the applicant with members of the Open School's stakeholder groups. These additional components may be necessary to make a final decision between top candidates from our eligibility list. After our process, final principal selection is the purview of the Superintendent.

### ***Friends of the Open School***

As a public school with a relatively small student enrollment that generates limited public funds, the Open School depends heavily on additional funds raised by our school community. Friends of the Open School ("Friends") is a separate § 501(c)(3) organization that was established in 1983 to generate the additional funding necessary to provide the rich humanistic and experiential program we believe is essential to the education of all children. Friends is comprised of parent volunteers and governed by an elected Board of Directors. It is charged with planning, organizing, and implementing fund raising activities and events, as well as seeking corporate sponsorships and other outside funding opportunities. Friends meet monthly and present a monthly report to the Governing Council. Funds raised by Friends support school needs as determined by the Governing Council, such as technology, the visual and performing arts, our learning garden, and other important student programs.

## ***Charter Renewal***

The Open School shall submit its renewal petition to the District's Charter School Office every five years.

Provisions related to Charter revocation are contained in Element 16.

## ***Our Relationship With LAUSD***

In filing this petition for renewal of charter school status, the Open School wishes to retain its magnet school classification by continuing to work with the Office of Student Integration to follow its court ordered selection process and other guidelines with the District. As an affiliated charter school, the Open School will be responsible for all matters concerning school site budgeting, authority to reduce class sizes below District norms, where possible; instruction, curriculum and assessments; professional development; class scheduling and the 'banking' of time for professional development; enrollment processes; and school site specific policies per Bulletin number 5439.0, Affiliated Charter Schools. The Open School will participate in all state-mandated assessments, and withholds the right to administer those District-designed assessments that enhance our comprehensive assessment plan.

### **LAUSD Charter Policy**

The Open School will comply with the District policy related to Charter Schools, including the Affiliated Charter Schools bulletin (BUL-543.9.0), as it may be changed from time to time.

### **Responding to Inquiries**

The Open School will promptly respond to all inquiries, including, but not limited to, inquiries regarding financial records. The Open School acknowledges that it is subject to audit by LAUSD including, without limitation, audit by the District Office of the Inspector General.

If an allegation of waste, fraud or abuse related to the Open School's operations is received by the District, the Open School shall be expected to cooperate with any investigation undertaken by the District and/or the Office of the Inspector General, Investigations Unit.

### **Notifications**

Notification is to be made to the Educational Service Center and Charter Schools Division of any notices of workplace hazards, investigations by outside regulatory agencies, lawsuits, or other formal complaints, within one week of receipt of such notices by the Open School.

## **Grievance Procedure for Parents and Students**

As a District affiliated charter, the Open School shall comply with the District's grievance policy and procedure for parents and students.

## **Element 5 – Employee Qualifications**

*“The qualifications to be met by individuals to be employed by the school.”*  
*Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(E)*

Open School believes that all persons are entitled to equal employment opportunity. Open School shall not discriminate against qualified applicants or employees on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, age, marital status, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition, or any other characteristic protected by California or federal law. Equal employment opportunity shall be extended to all aspects of the employer-employee relationship, including recruitment, hiring, upgrading, training, promotion, transfer, discipline, layoff, recall, and dismissal from employment to the same extent as all LAUSD schools.

### **Personnel**

Open School shall follow all applicable state and federal laws and regulations and collective bargaining agreements. Any conflict with the above shall be null and void unless the appropriate parties have agreed to a waiver or exemption. Absent agreed upon waivers between the District and UTLA, Article XXVII of the LAUSD – UTLA CBA must be adhered to particularly in regard to Local School Leadership Council composition and responsibilities.

### **Staff Selection**

Principal selection is the final approval of the Superintendent. Open School is subject to District decisions regarding reduction in force, mandated furloughs, layoffs, and any other District decisions regarding salaries, classifications, and assignments.

### **Certificated Personnel**

Selection of certificated staff will be aligned with current Education Code, District Policy, and collective bargaining agreements. Open School will have the autonomy to



interview and select teachers and school-funded support staff from District approved lists of eligible candidates. Available lists will be determined by Human Resources and may be limited to Priority Placement Lists (displaced teachers) and Rehire Lists depending on the current hiring situation in each subject area. While every effort will be made to avoid assigning any certificated employee to any Charter School campus, the District retains the right to make such assignments in cases where no other alternative is available (i.e. Reasonable Accommodation). As a District Affiliated Charter School, Certificated Human Resources will process all employment and assignments and monitor credentials on an annual basis.

### **Classified Personnel**

Selection of the classified staff will be in compliance with the current merit system provisions of the Education Code, the Personnel Commission Rules and applicable collective bargaining agreements. Unless valid reemployment lists exist, Open School will have autonomy, when selecting employees for regular assignment, to select from the top three eligible candidates on current valid eligibility lists promulgated by the Personnel Commission. When valid reemployment lists exist, every effort will be made to avoid assigning classified staff to Open School, however, the Personnel Commission retains the right to make such assignments in cases where no alternative is available (e.g. reductions-in-force or reasonable accommodations required in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.)

Unless the District has assigned all employees in a classification to a specific basis, Open School will have autonomy in assigning positions to specific working basis.

### **Professional Development**

In addition to any District-mandated professional development, Open School shall have full autonomy in the selection of professional development programs for their employees to meet their site-specific needs. Any professional development required by the District for newly-adopted curriculum selected by Open School will, in turn, be funded by the District consistent with its practice for other District schools.

## **Element 6 – Health and Safety**

*“The procedures that the school will follow to ensure the health and safety of pupils and staff. These procedures shall include the requirement that each employee of the school furnish the school with a criminal record summary as described in § 44237.”*

*Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(F)*

As an affiliated charter school, the Open School will adhere to the District’s Health, Safety and Emergency Plans. The Open School will ensure that staff has been trained in health, safety, and emergency procedures and will maintain a calendar and conduct emergency response drills for students and staff in line with District’s procedures.

The Open School, its employees and officers will comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) at all times.

As an affiliated charter school, in order to guarantee the health and safety of pupils and staff, the Open School will ensure that all employees follow the procedures of LAUSD Human Resources Department concerning criminal background checks, examination of faculty and staff for tuberculosis, immunization of pupils as a condition of attendance, screening of pupils' vision and hearing and screening for pupils for scoliosis.

The Open School will comply with all regulations as required by the federal, state, county, and city laws, such as fire and safety codes. The Open School shall comply with District policy related to reporting suspected child abuse or neglect as mandated by District guidelines, federal and state law, and local agencies. In addition, the Open School shall comply with LAUSD policy on Employee-to-Student Sexual Abuse and Related Investigation and Notification (BUL 5736.0) in reporting sexual misconduct allegations by certificated employees within 72 hours to parents and guardians of students in the school. The Open School shall also comply with any other policy as established by the District with regards to reporting of child abuse and notification to parents and guardians related to classified employees.

#### Insurance

Coverage shall be provided to the Open School by the District under any of the District's self-insured programs or commercial insurance policies. The District shall secure and maintain insurance to protect the Open School from claims which may arise from its operations, as provided to all other schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

It shall be the District's responsibility to monitor the Open School vendors, contractors, partners, or sponsors for compliance with District insurance requirements for third parties. The Open School shall adhere to current District Procurement Manual policies and procedures prior to accepting any services from vendors, partners, or sponsors.

## Element 7 – Means to Achieve Racial & Ethnic Balance

*“The means by which the school will achieve a racial and ethnic balance among its pupils that is reflective of the general population residing within the territorial jurisdiction of the school district to which the charter petition is submitted.”*

*Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(G)*

#### **\*Court-ordered Integration**

Open School shall comply with all requirements of the Crawford v. Board of Education, City of Los Angeles court order and the LAUSD Integration Policy adopted and maintained pursuant to the Crawford court order, by Student Integration Services (collectively the “Court-ordered Integration Program”). The Court-ordered Integration Program applies to all schools within or chartered through LAUSD. The School will

provide a written plan in the charter petition and upon further request by the District outlining how it would achieve and maintain the LAUSD’s ethnic goal of 70:30 or 60:40 ratio. (*Ratio represents the percentage of Predominantly Hispanic Black Asian Other (PHBAO) compared to Other White (OW)*). The written plan should list specific dates, locations and recruitment activities to achieve the District’s Racial and Ethnic Balance goal.

The District receives neither average daily attendance allocations nor Court-ordered Integration Program cost reimbursements for charter school students. Instead, the District now receives the Targeted Instruction Improvement Grant (TIIG) for its Court-ordered Integration Program. The District retains sole discretion over the allocation of TIIG funding, where available, and cannot guarantee the availability of this Funding.

**\*Federal Compliance**

As part of Los Angeles Unified School District, which is a recipient of federal funds, Open School has agreed to meet all of the programmatic, fiscal and other regulatory requirements of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

## **Element 8 – Admission Requirements**

*“Admission Requirements, if applicable.”*

*Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(H)*

### **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**

The Open School will adhere to the provisions of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children and youths.

### **Affiliated Charters without SAS Programs**

This section does not apply to the Open School.

### **Affiliated Charters with SAS Programs**

This section does not apply to the Open School.

### **Affiliated Charters with Magnet Program**

This section applies to Open School. The school is a magnet and accepts students through the “Choice” Program.

Prior to the Open School’s conversion into an affiliated charter school, the Open School had a LAUSD magnet program, which had an attendance boundary for students from all

over LAUSD. The Open School shall continue to provide admission preference to pupils from LAUSD as determined by the magnet program and consistent with Crawford v. Board of Education court order.

## Element 9 – Financial Audits

*“The manner in which annual, independent, financial audits shall be conducted, which shall employ generally accepted accounting principles, and the manner in which audit exceptions and deficiencies shall be resolved to the satisfaction of the chartering authority.”*

*Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(I)*

Affiliated charter school will follow Board District Policy relative to the annual audit.

## Element 10 – Student Expulsions

*“The procedures by which pupils can be suspended or expelled.”*

*Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(J)*

As an affiliated charter school of the Los Angeles Unified School District, the Open School will follow all discipline procedures established by the District and will comply with Education Code 48900, et. seq. In LAUSD, the Student Discipline and Expulsion Support Unit provides technical assistance to schools considering recommendations for expulsion, ensures that students recommended for expulsion are afforded a fair and impartial hearing and all due process rights, and provides for post-expulsion placement/rehabilitation plans and services as required by law.

The Open School shall provide due process for all students, including adequate notice to parents/guardians and students regarding the grounds for suspension and expulsion and their due process rights regarding suspension and expulsion, including rights to appeal, in accordance with District policies and procedures.

The Open School shall utilize alternatives to suspension and expulsion with students who are truant, tardy, or otherwise absent from compulsory school activities. The Open School shall also comply with the District’s Discipline Foundation policy.

### Outcome Data

The Open School shall maintain all data involving placement, tracking, and monitoring of student suspensions, expulsions, and reinstatements, in the District’s student information system and make such outcome data readily available to the District upon request in accordance with District policies and procedures.

## **Readmission**

The Open School shall follow District policies and procedures with regard to requests for readmission and the process for the required review of all expelled pupils for readmission.

## **Special Education Students**

In the case of a student who has an IEP, or a student who has a 504 Plan, the Open School will ensure that it follows the correct disciplinary procedures to comply with the mandates of state and federal laws, including IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Plan of 1973 and the Modified Consent Decree. An IEP team, including a District representative, will meet to conduct a manifestation determination and to discuss alternative placement utilizing the District's Policies and Procedures Manual. Prior to recommending expulsion for a student with a 504 Plan, the charter administrator will convene a Link Determination meeting to ask the following two questions: A) Was the misconduct caused by, or directly and substantially related to the student's disability? B) Was the misconduct a direct result of the Charter's failure to implement 504?

## **Gun Free Schools Act**

The Open School shall comply with the federal Gun Free Schools Act.

## **Element 11 – Employee Benefits**

*“The manner by which staff members of the charter schools will be covered by the State Teachers’ Retirement System, the Public Employees’ Retirement System, or federal social security.”*

*Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(K)*

Employees of the Open School will continue to receive compensation and benefits for their services according to the provisions of the collective bargaining agreements of their respective bargaining units with LAUSD inclusive of, but not limited to, salaries, unemployment benefits, and retirement benefits including organizations such as STRS/PERS, health insurance, life insurance, and all other assigned compensation and benefits.

As LAUSD employees, administrators, faculty and staff will receive all appropriate benefits in compliance with state and federal laws regarding employee benefits.

## Element 12 –Attendance Alternatives

*“The public school attendance alternatives for pupils residing within the school district who choose not to attend charter schools.”*

*Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(L)*

Pupils who choose not to attend the Open School may choose to attend other public schools in their district of residence or pursue an interdistrict-transfer in accordance with existing enrollment and transfer policies of the District.

## Element 13 – Rights of District Employees

*“A description of the rights of any employee of the school district upon leaving the employment of the school district to work in a charter school, and of any rights of return to the school district after employment at a charter school.”*

*Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(M)*

As an affiliated charter school, all administrators, faculty and staff of the Open School are LAUSD employees. All employees will be hired by the District and maintain the same relationships in all bargaining units.

## Element 14 – Mandatory Dispute Resolution

*“The procedures to be followed by the charter school and the entity granting the charter to resolve disputes relating to provisions of the charter.”*

*Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(N)*

The staff of the Open School and LAUSD Board of Education agrees to resolve any claim, controversy or dispute arising out of or relating to the Charter agreement between the District and the Open School, except any controversy or claim that is in any way related to revocation of this Charter, (“Dispute”) pursuant to the terms of this Element 14.

Any Dispute between the District and the Open School shall be resolved by a collaborative team from the Educational Service Center and the Charter Schools Division in accordance with the procedures set forth below:

1. Any Dispute shall be made in writing (“Written Notification”). The Written Notification must identify the nature of the Dispute and any supporting facts. The Written Notification shall be tendered to the other party by personal delivery, by facsimile, or by certified mail. The Written Notification shall be deemed received (a) if





## Element 15 – Exclusive Public School Employer

*“A declaration whether or not the charter school shall be deemed the exclusive public school employer of the employees of the charter school for the purposes of the Educational Employment Relations Act (Chapter 10.7 (commencing with Section 3540) of division 4 of Title 1 of the Government Code).”*

*Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(O)*

The Los Angeles Unified School District is the exclusive public school employer of the employees of the Open School for the purposes of the Educational Employee Relations Act (EERA).

## Element 16 –Charter School Closure

*“A description of the procedures to be used if the charter school closes. The procedures shall ensure a final audit of the school to determine the disposition of all assets and liabilities of the charter school, including plans for disposing of any net assets and for the maintenance and transfer of pupil records.”*

*Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(P)*

The Open School reverts back to a District traditional school in the event of a closure.

### ***Charter Revocation***

The District may revoke the charter if the Open School commits a breach of any provision set forth in a policy related to Charter Schools adopted by the District Board of Education and/or any provisions set forth in the Charter School Act of 1992. The District may revoke the charter of the Open School if the District finds, through a showing of substantial evidence, that the Charter School did any of the following:

- Open School committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in the charter.
- Open School failed to meet or pursue any of the pupil outcomes identified in the charter.
- Open School failed to meet generally accepted accounting principles, or engaged in fiscal mismanagement.
- Open School violated any provisions of law.

Prior to revocation, and in accordance with California Education Code Section 47607(d) and State regulations, the LAUSD Board of Education will notify the Open School in writing of the specific violation, and give the Open School a reasonable opportunity to cure the violation, unless the LAUSD Board of Education determines, in writing, that the violation constitutes a severe and imminent threat to the health or safety of the pupils. Revocation proceedings are not subject to the dispute resolution clause set forth in this charter.

### *Closure Procedures*

The decision by the LAUSD Board of Education to revoke or not renew the affiliated charter school constitutes a Closure Action. The Closure Action shall be deemed to have been automatically made when either the Charter is revoked, non-renewed by the LAUSD Board of Education, or the Charter lapses. In the event of such a Closure Action or as soon the Open School's site-based governance informs the District of its intent to voluntarily revert to non-charter status, the following steps are to be implemented:

1. If the affiliated Charter School's site-based governance votes to revert to non-charter status the LAUSD Board of Education will hold a public meeting officially terminating the charter. The Board of Education will direct the Superintendent or his designee to determine implementation of the closure procedures.
2. The Charter Schools Division will notify the California Department of Education that the Open School has terminated its charter, and the effective date.
3. Upon closure, all of the assets of the Charter School are transferred to LAUSD. A copy of the stamped order of business showing the action taken by the LAUSD Board of Education will be included in the notification to the CDE.
4. The LAUSD Board of Education or its designee will determine the distribution of any remaining balance in the Categorical Block Grant Account of the Charter School upon closing.
5. LAUSD reserves the right to conduct a close out audit by the LAUSD auditor.
6. Written notification to parents/guardians/caregivers of the enrolled students of the Open School will be issued by Open School within 72 hours after the determination of a Closure Action and the effective date of the termination of the charter.

This Element 16 shall survive the revocation, expiration, termination, cancellation of this charter or any other act or event that would end the Open School's right to operate as a Charter School or cause the Open School to cease operation.

### *Facilities*

K-12 school sites remain subject to use by the District and possible space allocation under Proposition 39 and implementing regulations.

## *Requirements for Schools Obtaining Independent Status*

In the event that the Open School changes its status to independent charter school, during the term of this Charter, the Open School shall submit a petition for material revision for District's approval. The Open School shall meet all requirements of an independent charter that occupies LAUSD facilities; the Open School shall enter into facilities use agreement with the District and adhere to District guidelines including:

- Proposed Charter School Location
- Names of District school sites near proposed location
- Proposed Charter School to be located within the boundaries of LAUSD.

**District-Owned Facilities:** If the Charter School is using LAUSD facilities as of the date of the submittal of this charter petition or takes occupancy of LAUSD facilities prior to the approval of this charter petition, the Charter School shall execute an agreement provided by LAUSD for the use of the LAUSD facilities as a condition of the approval of the charter petition. If at any time after the approval of this charter petition the Charter School will occupy and use any LAUSD facilities, the Charter School shall execute an agreement provided by LAUSD for the use of the LAUSD facilities prior to occupancy and commencing use.

The Charter School agrees that occupancy and use of LAUSD facilities shall be in compliance with applicable laws and LAUSD policies for the operation and maintenance of LAUSD facilities and furnishings and equipment. All LAUSD facilities (i.e., schools) will remain subject to those laws applicable to public schools which LAUSD observes. In the event of an emergency, all LAUSD facilities (i.e., schools) are available for use by the American Red Cross and public agencies as emergency locations which may disrupt or prevent the Charter School from conducting its educational programs. If the Charter School will share the use of LAUSD facilities with another LAUSD use group, the Charter School agrees it will participate in and observe all LAUSD safety policies (e.g. emergency chain of information, participate in safety drills).

As a condition to the approval of the charter petition, the Open School will enter into a Public School Choice Facilities Use Agreement with the LAUSD prior to occupying or using the LAUSD facilities.

The use agreements provided by LAUSD for LAUSD facilities shall contain terms and conditions addressing issues such as, but not limited to, the following:

- Use. Charter School will be restricted to using the LAUSD facilities for the operation of a public school providing educational instruction to public school students consistent with the terms of the charter petition and incidental related uses. LAUSD shall have the right to inspect LAUSD facilities upon reasonable notice to the Charter School.

- Furnishings and Equipment. LAUSD shall retain ownership of any furnishings and equipment, including technology, (“F&E”) that it provides to the Charter School for use. The Charter School, at its sole cost and expense, shall provide maintenance and other services for the good and safe operation of the F&E.

- Leasing; Licensing. Use of the LAUSD facilities by any person or entity other than the Charter School shall be administered by LAUSD. The parties may agree to an alternative arrangement in the use agreement.

- Minimum Payments or Charges to be Paid to LAUSD Arising From the Facilities:

Pro Rata Share. LAUSD shall collect and the Charter School shall pay a Pro Rata share for facilities costs as provided in the Charter School Act of 1992 and its regulations. The parties may agree to an alternative arrangement regarding facilities costs in the use agreement; and

Taxes; Assessments. Generally, the Charter School shall pay any assessment or fee imposed upon or levied on the LAUSD facilities that it is occupying or the Charter School’s legal or equitable interest created by the use agreement.

Maintenance & Operations Services. In the event LAUSD agrees to allow the Charter School to perform any of the operation and maintenance services, LAUSD shall have the right to inspect the LAUSD facilities and the costs incurred in such inspection shall be paid by the Charter School.

(i) Co-Location. If the Charter School is co-locating or sharing the LAUSD facilities with another user, LAUSD shall provide the operations and maintenance services for the LAUSD facilities and the Charter School shall pay the Pro Rata Share. The parties may agree to an alternative arrangement regarding performance of the operations and maintenance services and payment for such in the use agreement.

(ii) Sole Occupant. If the Charter School is a sole occupant of LAUSD facilities, LAUSD shall allow the Charter School, at its sole cost and expense, to provide some operations and maintenance services for the LAUSD facilities in accordance with applicable laws and LAUSD’s policies on operations and maintenance services for facilities and F&E. NOTWITHSTANDING THE FOREGOING, LAUSD shall provide all services for regulatory inspections, which as the owner of the real property is required to submit, and deferred maintenance and the Charter School shall pay LAUSD for the cost and expense of providing those services. The parties may agree to an alternative arrangement regarding performance of the operations and maintenance services and payment for such services in the use agreement.

- Real Property Insurance. Prior to occupancy, the Charter School shall satisfy those requirements to participate in LAUSD’s property insurance or, if the Charter School is the sole occupant of LAUSD facilities, obtain and maintain separate property insurance for the LAUSD facilities. The Charter School shall not have the option of obtaining and maintaining separate property insurance for the LAUSD facility IF the Charter School is co-locating or sharing the LAUSD facility with another user.

**Facility status:** The charter petitioner must demonstrate control of a facility such as a commitment from the landlord, to ensure that the property is actually available to the charter developer, and that the facility is usable with or without conditions (such as a conditional code permit.) The Charter School facility shall comply with all applicable building codes, standards and regulations adopted by the city and/or county agencies responsible for building and safety standards for the city in which the Charter School is to be located, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Applicable codes and ADA requirements shall also apply to the construction, reconstruction, alteration of or addition to the proposed Charter School facility. The Charter School cannot exempt itself from applicable building and zoning codes, ordinances, and ADA requirements.

**Occupancy of the Site:** The charter petitioner or developer shall provide the District with a final Certificate of Occupancy issued by the applicable permitting agency, allowing the petitioner to use and occupy the site. The Charter School may not open without providing a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy for the designated use of the facility. If the Charter School moves or expands to another facility during the term of this charter, the Charter School shall provide a Certificate of Occupancy to the District for each facility before the school is scheduled to open or operate in the facility or facilities. Notwithstanding any language to the contrary in this charter, the interpretation, application, and enforcement of this provision are not subject to the Dispute Resolution Process outlined in Element 14.

Health & Safety:

The school will comply with the Healthy Schools Act, California Education Code Section 17608, which details pest management requirements for schools. Developers may find additional information at [www.laschools.org/employee/mo/ipm](http://www.laschools.org/employee/mo/ipm)

**Asbestos Management:** The Charter School will comply with the asbestos requirement as cited in the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), 40CFR part 763. AHERA requires that any building leased or acquired that is to be used as a school or administrative building shall maintain an asbestos management plan.