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Winston charter school: A case study involving the intersection of external and internal accountability mandates

by

Rebecca Susan Pitkin

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education (Educational Leadership)

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2006

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has met the dissertation requirements of Iowa State University

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Major Professor

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For the Major Program

DEDICATION

To Mike,
One night while writing this dissertation I drove home through an Iowa blizzard.
I phoned you and you said, "Keep going; there is light at the end of the tunnel."
and there was. That phrase became my mantra during this process
so thank you for your words of wisdom and all your help.

To Benjamin and Zoë
who fell asleep many nights to the sound of typing in the office
and stuck "I love yous" all over my computer screen.

To Mom and Dad,
You were with me every step of the way.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Purpose

Charter schools are the most rapidly growing force within the school choice movement. Based on a quasi-market ideology that couples strong parental choice with school autonomy and innovation (Kolderie, 1990; Whitty & Edwards, 1998), charter schools have strong political support from both political conservatives and liberals (Hassel, 1999; Rees & Johnson, 2000).

School Choice

During the 1980s, conservative politicians and interest groups led the movement to revitalize education through school choice programs. The momentum for school choice had its roots in the political pressures for "privatization" in this country and abroad (Buckley, 2004; Elmore & Fuller, 1996). The message was that to have genuine reform that would improve the system there needed to be a variety of different schooling opportunities available for students, accountability to the public, and an entirely new direction in public education, one founded on free market principles. By allowing parents to choose which public schools would educate their children, "market pressure" would stimulate school districts to improve their educational system (Nathan, 1999). Competition for students would reform the system more quickly than other means by giving control to parents and students, who, as customers, could exit the schools if schools did not meet their needs (Finn, Manno, & Beirlien, 1996).

Charter Schools as a Form of Choice

As the newest version of choice, charter schools are a source of great interest and controversy. They have received much public attention, and advocates have touted them as the "hope and opportunity for education in America" (Nathan, 1996, p. 18). Supporters

stresses that charter schools are innovative, have more freedom, have increased accountability, and result in student outcome gains and greater parent satisfaction.

Charter schools are a part of the educational landscape in 41 states. The first charter school legislation was passed in Minnesota in 1991. In 1995, there were approximately 240 charter schools operating across the country, and in 1999 there were 1,484 (USDOE, 2005). As of January 2004, there were almost 3,000 charter schools operating in the United States. Almost 750,000 students take part in this form of public education (United States Charter Schools, 2005; Schneider & Buckley, 2005), and the number of students in charter schools is increasing each year.

The Charter Concept

Charter schools represent one of a number of reforms that fall into the category of school restructuring (Miron & Nelson, 2002). Reform critics claim that other intended reforms such as increased teacher salaries, tougher graduation requirements, scheduling changes, and revamped curriculum have not produced the positive results needed to combat failing school performance (Henig, 1994). The charter concept is as follows: An agency of the state gives a group wishing to establish a school a charter and with the charter comes the right to a fixed number of dollars per pupil, free of most governmental and teacher-contract regulations (Peterson & Hassel, 1998).

A prominent goal in all charter law is the improvement of student achievement. This goal is at the heart of the autonomy–accountability "bargain" (Miron & Nelson, 2002, p. 30), and the concept implies that the granting of autonomy is conditional. Schools receive and maintain autonomy as long as they are fulfilling accountability guidelines and are producing positive results.

Linn (2004) suggests that educators define accountability as the shared responsibility among students, teachers, school administrators, and policy makers. Despite this broader definition of accountability, the reality is that most accountability systems now in place focus both on educators and on students (p. 74). Charter schools are accountable for students and teachers and also additional measures such as meeting growth goals and providing annual reports to the authorizer and parents.

At the heart of the charter concept lays the autonomy–accountability bargain mentioned earlier. Schools receive enhanced autonomy over operations in exchange for agreeing to be held more accountable for results than are other schools. Although charter school authorizers are responsible for enforcing accountability provisions required under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), they also have additional accountability (Witte, 2005). This accountability can come from both the market and oversight from the sponsor. Charter school internal accountability is established by a charter or agreement, which outlines the expectations for the school and charges the school with the responsibility for meeting those expectations (Education Commission of the States, 2004). Charter schools are also accountable for how well they manage fiscal and operational responsibilities entrusted to them (Public Broadcasting Service, 2004; Bowman, 2000). If a charter school does not live up to the terms of its charter, it is closed. Charter schools are subject to the terms of an individual state's charter legislation and differences in state laws bring wide diversity in the organization, operation, pedagogy, and philosophies of charter schools (Buckley, 2001; Driscoll, 2003 Murphy, 2002; RPP International, 2001). Despite the differences in state laws, all charter schools have greater accountability than traditional public schools because of their accountability to their charter.

Accountability has become the focus of the larger educational policy environment in all schools. As Elmore has stated, "Accountability for student performance is one of the two or three—if not the most—prominent issues on policy at the state and local levels right now" (Quality Counts, 1999, p. 8). Even before the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, states were beginning to hold all schools accountable for results, creating and aligning new assessments with curriculum standards and imposing consequences if schools did not attain certain outcomes (L. Anderson et al., 2003). Traditional accountability focused almost exclusively on "the legal expenditure of public funds and other inputs" (p. 2), whereas the new type of accountability, and one that pertains to this study, focuses on school and student outcomes. This "new" accountability requires that all public schools meet certain performance standards. Charter schools then are accountable not only to their charters but also to external state systems.

Because of the individualized nature of charter school contracts, in theory, charter schools should have individualized goals and objectives rather than the standardized objectives of the state accountability systems (L. Anderson et al., 2003). The reality of accountability relationships between charter schools and other agencies, such as charter school authorizers, governing boards, and state agencies, contradicts this theory. Like other public schools, charter schools are subject to externally imposed accountability demands from states and school districts.

Charter School Theory implies that if schools are to be held more accountable, they should also be given more freedom to innovate, yet this is not the case. Charter schools are often subject to double accountability, those stated in the charter document (Hutton, 2003) and those from the state and federal government. Increased accountability can hamper

innovation because state accountability systems focus on state adopted achievement standards and assessments. This may mean that certain curriculum content, instructional techniques and assessment instruments are suggested by the state. In order to prepare students to achieve acceptable performance on tests and to avoid sanctions leveled at schools for failing, charter schools may eliminate innovative curricula not on the state test.

A recent call from states to close the achievement gap has prompted some groups to draft charters that address the needs of certain populations of students such as special education students (Weil, 2000), at risk students (Holland & Mazzoli, 2001), and those from specific ethnic groups (J. B. King, 2004; Yancey, 2004). Research on special education students, at risk students, and those from specific ethnic groups indicates that these students perform best when the setting is small and structured (Fuller, 2003; Irmsher, 1997; Rees & Johnson, 2000), and there is a relationship between the instructor and the students, a high level of accountability, and mentoring of students (Cohen, 2001, Jones & Jones, 2004). Research on curriculum and instruction in regular public and charter schools links several innovations to improved academic results for students, especially those in urban settings: differentiated instruction, culturally responsive curricula, continuous use of student performance data, and academic and social interventions that directly address the tensions between the cultural experience of institutional oppression and discrimination (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Elmore, 1995; M.S. King, 2004; Shepard, 2000).

Charter schools apply their innovative capabilities by developing curricula that exhibit the characteristics listed above. Many are designed to serve specific populations such as urban and low-income students, Native American students, African American students, and other ethnic groups. The charter school selected for this study also serves a particular

population: diverse students from an urban area. It thus employs a culturally responsive and differentiated curriculum, multi-age grouping, and needs-based instruction within the parameters of state department of education accountability requirements in an attempt to balance innovation and accountability. The school makes continuous use of student data gathered from school and state assessments to guide curriculum design and instruction. In addition, the school language offerings reflect the composition and needs of the student population and therefore have several language strands or levels to accommodate various language abilities (Charter School Application, 2002).

Charter schools are accountable in three broad areas: the market, "internal constituencies, and external constituencies" (Vanourek, 2005, p. 16). Charter schools are accountable to students and parents and no charter school can remain in operation without attracting and retaining students. Market based accountability can be measured by data on enrollment, parent and students satisfaction and student retention.

Internal accountability comes from charter sponsors and charter schools are responsible for keeping the promises made in their applications, for handling public monies with integrity, and for compliance with regulations that have not been waived by the state. Only a few states have devised solid charter accountability systems (Finn, Manno & Vanourek, 2000).

Charter schools are accountable to external groups such as the charter authorizer, the state, the federal government, and others such as donors and the local community. Externally imposed mandates take the form of outcome data and are set by the state and NCLB (Fuhrman, 1999). Each charter law spells out the part of the state education and administrative code that applies to charter schools and these are measured by state

compliance audits, review of progress toward charter goals, formal and informal site visits, and reviews of school annual reports. External mandates for the charter school in this study include measures of performance on state tests, graduation rates, the "directive in the wake of NCLB to bring all students to 'proficiency' in 12 years" (Fuhrman, 2003, p. 3), and the monitoring of funds by private donors.

At the site of this study, internal mandates are those set by the school in its charter mission. These include year-end standardized assessments in reading and mathematics, which are taken in addition to the state tests, and are in close alignment with the state tests (Charter School Mission, 2002). A survey conducted each year by a university provides data regarding student service learning involvement and engagement as mandated by the mission of integrating academics and service to the community. Finally, school enrollment data indicates if the school has recruited and maintained the school mission of educating a diverse student body.

The state in which this charter school exists has three accountability questions that guide all aspects of the state's charter school accountability policy, encompassing both internal and external mandates, and assessing the alignment of school practices with state requirements as well as faithfulness to the school's own charter (Vergari, 2002). The three guiding questions are: (a) is the academic program a success? (b) is the school a viable organization? and (c) is the school faithful to the terms of its charter? The state utilizes a mix of paper and on-site reviews to monitor the school's performance. Site visits from the state conducted in years two and three involve a prescribed protocol, and in the fourth year the school presents its case for renewal in a lengthy application. An additional visit from the state is conducted, data are collected, and then it is determined by the state whether the charter will

be renewed (see Appendix A for flowchart of charter school renewal process). The State Department of Education determines renewal or non-renewal of a charter school (State Public Charter School Renewal Inspection Protocol, 2002) using a combination of comparable and comprehensive data. The data describes the school's progress over time in relation to its own goals and baseline measures, as well as student achievement data from external measures such as Stanford 9, California Achievement Test (CAT), or the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS).

Formal, external accountability systems influence a school's internal conception of accountability (Abelmann, Elmore, Even, Kenyon & Marshall, 1999). This influence and interaction can result in a tension or incongruence between the school's mission and the external system created by the state or district. Schools vary in their response to accountability (Fuhrman, 1999), and charter schools, like all schools, attempt to mediate this tension through specific or innovative practices and curricula. However, given the current higher accountability demands of a charter school and its intended emphasis on innovation, the tension for charter schools is increased as they attempt to fulfill the requirements of the state as well as maintain faithfulness to their mission.

Charter School Research Deficit

Because charter schools are a relatively recent type of educational reform, studies about charter schools have focused on issues of access and equity, organizational structure, and governance (Buckley, 2001; Buckley & Wohlstetter, 2004; Weiher, Tedin, & Houston, 2001). Other research focuses on student achievement in charter schools (J. P. Greene & Forster, 2004; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2002; Hoxby & Rockoff, 2004; Miron & Nelson, 2001), and there are multiple writings regarding the policy issues surrounding charter schools

(Griffin & Wohlstetter, 2001; Lubienski, 2003; Peterson, 2002; Peterson & Hassel, 1998; Weil, 2000). Despite the fact that accountability exists as a major tenet of Charter School Theory, there are minimal studies in either school choice research or charter school research that address the tensions between the internal and external demands on charter schools. If a charter school were to implement an innovative curriculum that integrates for example, "rigorous class work with service projects" (Charter School Mission, 2002, p.3) how would that curriculum meet both internal and external accountability demands?

In addition, the service-learning component of this particular charter is intriguing. The rationale for service learning as a part of a school's curriculum has its roots in a democratic governmental system and the belief that through voluntary participation citizens pursue activities that potentially serve the public good (Watson, 2004). Service learning is intended to be a strategy that "enhances student's learning of academic content by engaging them in authentic activities in which they apply the content of their courses to address needs identified in the local and broader community" (Hoppe, 2004, p. 147, p. 1).

Several states with strong charter laws allowing wide autonomy have written documents stating the importance of the service learning component in their state (The Colorado League of Charter Schools, 2004; Minnesota Charter School Research Center, 2004; United States Charter Schools, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Despite the prevalence of this type of curriculum innovation, few studies exist that examine the way charter schools in particular utilize extensive and innovative service learning as a part of the curriculum to balance the tension between internal and external accountability demands.

Significance of the Study

Most charter schools view their curricula as innovative, distinct, and intended for a particular population of students. Studies of charter schools in several states chronicle their innovative practices and results (Buchanan & Fox, 2003; Charter Schools Research Project, 2001; Colorado Department of Education, 2005; J. B. King, 2004; McLaughlin, Henderson, & Ullah, 1996), yet there is a lack of information on charter schools utilizing a curriculum of rigorous state standards integrated with service learning to reach urban students.

Few studies have surveyed large numbers of schools on how accountability mandates shape the school curriculum (Loveless, 2005). Although accountability systems may be one of the most important levers for achieving charter school quality (Hill & Lake, 2005), there is little research on how oversight from the state and charter authorizer might contribute to higher quality schools that have chosen a particular curriculum.

Because charter schools may chose specific curricula to balance multiple accountability mandates, research is needed regarding the way charter schools in particular chose to develop curricula that is innovative yet responsive to both internal and external accountability demands.

The relationship between accountability mandates and achievement merits exploration in an effort to identify instructional strategies that may result in increased student achievement and satisfy accountability demands. Education research lacks a body of knowledge linking specific teaching strategies and a standards-based curriculum to strong student performance and learning, which can inform regular public and charter public schools.

Increased accountability and high-stakes testing are characteristics of our current educational landscape. Further research is needed that examines the role of how accountability shapes charter school curriculum and influences the intersection between innovation and demands from both the state and charter authorizer. Related to the need for research regarding curriculum choice is the importance of examination of instructional strategies, implemented within the parameters of the curriculum, which might lead to increased student achievement.

The importance of this study will be its contribution to the body of knowledge surrounding charter schools to inform policy makers, educators, and other researchers. As our nation engages in school reform and renewal in an age of increased accountability, it is important to understand the way schools with distinct missions, visions, curricula, and instructional strategies and charter schools, in particular, balance them within the guidelines of internal and external accountability requirements. The role of this case study is to "expand and enrich the repertoire of social constructions available to practitioners" (Donmoyer, 1990, p. 175) and others who have an interest in charter schools and education in general.

Research Purpose

It is the intent of this qualitative descriptive case study to understand the phenomenon of how teachers and a principal in a particular charter school designed for a diverse student population are balancing the intersections of their external mandates (see Appendix B for definitions and specific goals) from the state department of education and internal mandates from the school's intended curriculum. Constructionism as an epistemology was deemed most appropriate and relevant for this case study approach because both the respondents and the researcher were constructing meaning against the backdrop of a charter school. This

study also sought to understand the rationale for the adoption of a curriculum that combined rigorous class work and service projects and how that curriculum served to negotiate both internal and external mandates.

My study focuses on the practices of teachers and the principal in a charter school whose mission it was to reach diverse students by utilizing four specific instructional methods that are a part of the schools internal accountability demands: student-focused instruction, guided instruction, instruction for understanding, and conceptualized instruction. These four strategies were chosen by the charter developers in an attempt to support achievement as students become informed, articulate and proactive in all areas of their schooling (see Appendix K for instructional strategies). The context of the case study was the Winston Academy Charter School, which is located in an urban city. Because of the school's mission, student population, chosen curriculum and instructional strategies, this bounded system (L. Smith, 1979) was an ideal venue for this examination of the specific phenomenon of how a charter school implementing specific curricula reconciled possible incongruence between the school's internal educational vision and mission with external performance requirements.

Research Questions

Research questions for this study include the following:

1. How do teachers and the head of school in a charter school balance the external accountability mandates from the state and the internal charter demands with the school's adopted vision and mission?

2. In what ways do the head of school and teachers integrate the school mission and curriculum with the instructional strategies of student-focused instruction, guided instruction, instruction for understanding, and conceptualized instruction?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding the study was charter school performance accountability theory (Buckley, 2004; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Hill, Lake, & Celio 2002). This theory provided an initial framework for data collection, observations, and attention of the fieldworker.

Charter School Performance Accountability Theory

Frustrated teachers, parents, and other stakeholders believe that government is not in a position to provide solutions to improve public education because traditional government structures and mandates are, they believe, a large part of the problem (Chubb & Moe, 1990). Authors such as Osborne and Gaebler (1992), N. Smith (2003), and Moe (2001) argue that choice makes systems in general more responsive, more accountable, and more willing to acknowledge the diverse needs and interests of clients. They suggest that a solution is to reinvent the system by which we provide and run public education. This new system would be a reinvented system of choice, flexibility, and accountability that includes the creation of charter schools.

Theoretically, charter school legislation implies an agreement between parents, authorizing agencies, and charter school developers. In exchange for a higher level of freedom from bureaucratic constraints, charter school developers agree to be held to a higher level of accountability than is expected of conventional public schools (Buckley & Wohlstetter, 2004). Accountability for charter schools has two facets. The first facet involves

accountability to government, both to the authorizers that grant charter contracts and to other governmental entities that set legal and testing requirements involving charter schools. Authorizers all address the same basic issues: evaluating and approving applications, overseeing the school during the contract period, and determining whether to not renew the charter, usually 3-5 years in length (Buckley, 2004; Millot & Lake, 1996; Vergari, 2000).

The second facet includes market accountability and involves accountability for satisfying the consumers of charter schools. The assumption is that consumers will demand high quality education and that charter schools will respond to this demand (Buckley & Wohlstetter, 2004). Finn, Manno, and Vanourek (2000) affirm the view that "the chief aim of accountability is to find and sustain good schools while weeding out or repairing bad ones" (p. 27).

Curricular freedom granted to charter school developers is often constrained by a school's need to comply with the content standards and performance measures required by the state. The goal of increased student achievement through bureaucratic freedom and local control is clouded by the complexities of multi-directional accountability (Hill, Lake, & Celio, 2002). Multi-directional accountability results from charter school law that puts charter schools in a situation to reconcile pressures from multiple sources such as authorizing agencies, families, teachers, and donors, who expect alignment with school mission, safety and caring, job security, and financial propriety. In addition, the government expects evidence of student performance, and adherence to established regulations. Oversight and accountability from these sources form the messages of mixed accountability that charter schools experience.

The charter concept then, according to proponents of choice, improves schools through the mechanisms of competition, a sorting process (schools that cater to educational preferences), and through a mix of deregulation and a new form of accountability (Miron & Nelson, 2002; Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2000; Weil, 2000). However, NCLB requires annual testing, specifies a method for judging school effectiveness, sets a timeline for progress, and establishes specific consequences in the case of failure (Wenning, Herdman, Smith, McMahon, & Washington, 2003). Given that the school is the focus of accountability, as in NCLB, this "creates a dilemma for school principals in that the unit they lead, and thus are accountable for, is judged on actions over which they have little control—student performance on externally created and administered student tests" (Witte, 2005, p.10). Thus, charter schools are in a unique position as they balance accountability mandates within the parameters of their school mission.

The situatedness of Winston Academy Charter School in a city containing a diverse student population prompted the school to exercise the autonomy granted by charter school law to adopt a unique curriculum while balancing both internal and external accountability mandates, thus embracing the innovative component of Charter School Theory. It is the accountability strand of Charter School Theory that will be in the forefront of this case study examining a specific school that has chosen "rigorous coursework integrated with service learning" as its guiding mission to educate its diverse student population, increase student achievement, and fulfill both internal and external accountability demands.

Delimitations

This study was confined to one charter school, a single case, located in an urban city. The interviews were with the teachers, school personnel and head of school. A potential

weakness was the lack of "representativeness" (Hamel, 1993, p. 23) given that the study focused on one particular case and a single observation point. The strength of this single case was its in-depth examination of the phenomenon of the tension between internal and external mandates within a particular urban charter school for diverse students and what practices and activities the school engaged in to fulfill accountability mandates.

Limitations

There were several limitations associated with this study. The purposeful sampling procedure decreased the generalizability of findings. The "case" for the study was bounded by time (3 months data collection) and place (a single school), and the findings may not be applicable to all charter schools, nor may they be applicable to schools in other states as there is great variance among state laws. In addition, the data collection strategies that were used in this study—interviews, observations and document collection and analysis—each have their own limitations (Creswell, 2003). Despite these limitations, the case study method was the most effective position from which to capture the ways teachers and the principal balance external mandates with the school's innovative curriculum within the context of the Winston Academy Charter School. The findings will add information to the knowledge base concerning what works in schools generally and in urban schools for diverse students. This study will also benefit and inform policy makers, charter school supporters and leaders, and those within education who are interested in innovative practices such as intensive service learning integrated with a rigorous and college preparatory curriculum.

As our nation engages in school reform and renewal, it is important to understand the way state-mandated terms of accountability requirements affect educators' efforts to implement alternative and expanded visions of education. This study attempts to expand the

knowledge base in this area as well as at the policy level to inform understanding of the impact externally mandated accountability requirements have on the implementation of reforms intended to facilitate educational innovation.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter highlights the development of school choice and, specifically, charter schools. In addition it explores Charter School Theory, focusing on its innovative component and the application of this element to urban charter schools, like the one in this case study. This chapter also reviews issues related to effective schools and urban schools and specific curricular applications relating to Winston Academy Charter School.

The research cited in this chapter focusing on charter school research spans 1989–2005, revealing the recent nature of charter school development. Issues relating to racial and ethnic demography and schooling reference studies from the 1960s to the present, and research on the characteristics of innovative schools cite work from the 1970s. Information on urban school practices and innovations was gathered from recent studies spanning 2000–2004. A variety of sources have been used throughout this literature review including books, periodicals, charter school mission statements, ERIC reports, reports from private organizations, government reports, working papers, and conference presentations.

School Choice and Effective Schools

In recent decades the school choice movement has gained momentum, and during the past 20 years, segments of the American public have expressed growing dissatisfaction with public education. Choice has emerged as a tool for transforming schools that are widely perceived as failing (Schneider et al., 2000). Many scholars have argued that the current organization of schools is a product of the past and hopelessly out of date. For example, Paul Hill, a critic of American schools, argued that by the 1920s, schooling in the United States had taken the shape that is evident today, "the factory model" (Hill, Pierce, & Guthrie, 1997).

Linda Darling-Hammond (1997) described some of the components of this model in the following terms:

> The large age-graded departmentalized schools were designed for the efficient batch processing of masses of children in the new age of compulsory education and large-scale immigration with an emphasis on rote learning and a standardized curriculum with little concern for individual needs and preferences of individual students or their parents. (p. 13)

Critics of this model (Barton, 2001; James, Jurich, & Estes, 2001; Rosenshine, 1996) cited recent and important changes in technology and demography in the United States, yet the model of education established nearly a century ago has changed little, and the gap between what the country needs from its schools and what the schools are delivering is widening (Brandl, 1998; Ratvitch & Viteritti, 1996), thus adding to the momentum of school choice.

As the school choice reform movement has developed, its advocates have begun to articulate the characteristics of a good school. The alternative to the large, age-graded, departmentalized schools that today's reformers seek to create are small, autonomous schools (Bullard &Taylor, 1999; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Ravitch & Viteritti, 1997), unburdened by a large administrative structure (Miron & Nelson, 2002; Nathan, 1989; Ravitch & Viteritti, 1996). In this vision, good schools focus on student learning and the needs of children by personalizing education and creating relationships between teachers and families (Fullan, 1999; Schneider et al., 2000). Effective schools have a strong sense of mission and a well-defined culture (Block, Everson, & Guskey, 1995; Buchanan & Fox, 2004; Evans, 1996; Wohlstetter & Chau, 2003). Finally, effective schools have a common

curriculum, in which all students participate (Alexander, 2002; Buchanan & Fox, 2003; Resnick & Glennan, 2002; Thernstrom, 2001).

The Charter School Component

The charter schools concept was introduced in 1988 when Ray Budde coined the phrase in his book, *Education by Charter: Restructuring School Districts*. An educational consultant from Massachusetts, Budde proposed a charter for education analogous to the 17th century charter for exploration granted to Henry Hudson that detailed his mission, a time frame, and the resources he would receive. Hudson, however, was left to his own devices about how he would achieve these goals (Gebhard, 2002). Applied to education, the concept of a charter in education allows teachers, principals, parents, and community leaders the autonomy to develop a proposal for the development of a school with specified mission and outcomes.

In 2005 there were over 3,500 charter schools operating in the United States (Carpenter, 2005), and each one is a unique educational institution, unlike any other. Research on 1,182 charter schools in 2001–2002 revealed that although charter schools differ greatly, they can be categorized into five categories, identical to those of regular schools: traditional, progressive, vocational, general, and alternative delivery (Carpenter, 2005, p. 3). Traditional charter schools are those that stress high standards in academics and behavior, rigorous classes, a lot of homework and tend to be teacher centered. Progressive schools place a "premium on individual development and learning [that] is approached holistically with project based and hands on activities" (Carpenter, 2005, p. 11). Equipping students for practical, career-related skills is the focus of vocational charter schools, whereas general schools are those previously operated by a district and are essentially indistinguishable from

conventional public schools. The final category, alternative delivery, consists of those schools that provide most of the instruction outside of traditional classrooms, as in the case of virtual charter schools. Each type of school has an instructional or curricular theme focusing on an intended student population with the anticipated outcome of increased student achievement.

Central in the theory of charter school advocates has been the idea that charter schools would lead to improved student achievement (Murphy, 2002) and attain the ideals for effective schools advocated by proponents of school choice because of school's innovation, autonomy, and accountability. The autonomy granted to charter school teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders would ideally allow them to better craft innovative interventions appropriate for students' unique needs and learning styles (Buckley & Wohlstetter, 2004).

Charter schools exchange autonomy for increased accountability. In contrast to public schools that are "accountable to bureaucratic controls from higher levels within the system" (Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000, p. 127), charter school accountability is propelled mainly by public marketplaces in which a school's clients and stakeholders reward its successes, inform it about the changes that need to be made, develop a plan for remediation, or even punish its failure by closure (p. 131). Given that the charter itself is a legal contract (Weil, 2000); a charter school is also accountable to the sponsoring agency which, depending upon state law can be a local school board, community college, state university, or private education management company (EMO).

Intertwined with autonomy and accountability is the third prong of Charter School Theory, innovation. The innovation granted to charter schools provides opportunity for

charter sponsors and operators to develop diverse curricula and varied instructional approaches (Weil, 2000). In response to widely varying needs of clients or parents, charter schools use their freedom to innovate (Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000). Charter schools are well situated to "produce innovations because the autonomy created by waivers from many existing school regulations will afford more capacious opportunity for innovations" (Miron & Nelson, 2002, p. 124). Opportunities for innovations granted by individual state charter laws can lead to a wide range of designs.

Innovation within a school can be defined as "an idea or practice, or object that is perceived as new" (Rogers, 1995, p. 11). Deal, Meyer, and Scott (1975) found that organizational autonomy, decentralized authority, staff professionalism, and features of organizational climate such as openness, trust, and communication were correlates of innovative behavior in schools. These characteristics are also found in innovative charter schools (Buchanan & Fox, 2003; Carpenter, 2005, Vergari, 2000). Examples of innovations allowed by charter school autonomy include a charter school in the Southwest developed by tribal education directors to reflect the values of the tribe and preserve their culture. A constructionist school in New York is modeled after an "exploratorium" where children direct their learning (D. Greene, 1999, p. 2). Other schools offer a blend of academic and experiential learning modeled after Brazilian educator Paolo Freire (Weil, 2000). Although these examples represent atypical curricula exemplifying innovation, studies regarding innovative practices have found that a large number of parents are seeking not innovation but a back-to-basics, more traditional approach to education (Hoxby, 2000; Rogers, 1995; RPP International, 2001; Schorr, 2002).

A review of research on charter school innovative practices in Arizona, California, Colorado, and Michigan, which are all states allowing wide autonomy for charters, indicated that practices such as block scheduling, smaller classes, parent involvement, all-day kindergarten, and student uniforms were currently being used in the public schools in the same location as the charter schools (Lubienski, 2003; Murphy, 2002; Plank & Sykes, 2003; Zernike, 2000). These practices had been self-labeled as innovative by administrators in charter schools. Although charter schools might not be generating new educational practices, there is evidence that regular public schools are adopting innovative practices used in neighboring charter schools to better serve their student population (RPP International, 2001). The existence of charter schools in communities has induced districts to "be even more vigilant about seeking out practices that better meet their students' needs" (Miron & Nelson, 2002, p. 129).

Charter schools desire to be innovative, and many have designed their curricula to be inventive, but NCLB accountability demands have threatened innovations. The NCLB Act requires annual testing, specifies a method for judging school effectiveness, sets a timeline for progress, and establishes consequences in the case of failure. The high stakes nature of NCLB forces charter schools to focus on content that will be on the state assessment, sometimes to the exclusion of the innovations developed by individual charter schools.

In a charter school, the charter authorizer has the responsibility of ensuring effective implementation of NCLB within the charter. Charter authorizers then have the responsibility of monitoring both internal and external accountability mandates. The mandates from NCLB can steer the focus of a charter school away from school creativity and the freedom to meet student needs and more on upholding external accountability mandates.

Urban Schools

Urban school districts enroll a large share of America's children. Although there are 16,850 public school districts in the United States, 100 of those districts serve approximately 23% of the nation's students. These districts, many of which are located in urban areas, also serve 40% of the country's minority students and 30% of the economically disadvantaged students (The Nation's Voice for Urban Education, 2002). In the national drive to raise school achievement, urban school districts pose the greatest challenges (Alexander, 2002; Resnick & Glennan, 2002). As various achievement indicators have begun to creep upward for the nation as a whole, minority and poor students have largely been bypassed (Lee, 2002). Early gains in reducing the achievement gap have not been maintained, and achievement levels are low in urban districts, even when controlling for their level of poverty (Holland & Mazzoli, 2001; Payne, 2005; Sadowski, 2003; Weis & Fine, 2004).

In reviewing the literature regarding the failure of urban schools, several themes relating to teachers, funding, and leadership emerged. Urban schools have a more difficult time attracting and holding well-prepared teachers than do schools in other locations (Brown, 2003; Guin, 2004). High-poverty urban schools suffer from greater teacher and administrator shortages, fewer applications for vacancies, and high absenteeism (Ingersoll, 2001; Prince, 2002). Teacher salaries are seldom as high as in wealthier suburbs, so city schools often lose their best teachers. As a result, "schools in the lowest-income neighborhoods are often staffed by a shifting cast of new and provisionally certified teachers who lack field-specific training" (Hill, Campbell, & Harvey, 2000, p. 11). Because student achievement is directly affected by the quality of students' classroom teachers, urban students are often segregated not only by race and poverty but also by access to quality teachers, resulting in low-

performing schools (Claycomb, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Hanushek et al., 2001; Haycock, 2002).

Although the previous literature presents a dismal picture of urban schools, there exists a body of literature pointing to conditions and innovations that can make a difference to urban students. A growing number of individual schools can document successes with urban school populations, giving insight into institutional conditions conducive to higher-quality urban schools (Holland & Mazzoli, 2001; Rofes & Stulberg, 2004). Several design principles are present in urban programs with documented success including:

1. Professional development that is linked to the instructional program for students and embedded in the professionals' jobs (Guin, 2004; Resnick & Glennan, 2002).
2. A focus on core academic skills and rigorous standards (Haycock, 2002; Schwartz, 2001).
3. Recognition of diverse cultures (Brown, 2003; Ferguson, 2005; Schwartz, 2001).
4. Development and implementation of accountability standards (Haberman, 2005; The Nation's Voice for Urban Education, 2002; Schwartz, 2001).
5. Community and family involvement (Collignon, Men, & Tan, 2001; Fan, 2001; Halle, Kurtz-Costes, & Mahoney, 1997; Warren, 2005).

A 2005 study of California charter schools serving largely low income students identified four interdependent practices found to be highly associated with a high performing charter school: prioritizing student achievement; implementing a coherent, standards-based curriculum and instructional program; using assessment data to improve student achievement; and insuring availability of instructional resources (Williams et al., 2005) Many charter schools seeking to meet the needs of low income and urban students have

adopted these elements, and this study seeks to explore how one charter school attempts to integrate the components of prioritizing student achievement, implementing a standards-based curriculum and instructional program, and using assessment to improve student achievement within the context of a high stakes testing environment.

Racial and Ethnic Demography

In addition to the challenges of urban districts, the changing racial and ethnic demography in the United States challenges schools to educate an increasingly diverse student population. Since the Coleman report in the 1960s brought attention to the racial inequity in student outcomes, the achievement gap between White and minority students has raised a multitude of concerns (Coleman et al., 1966; Gillette & Chinn, 1997; Jones, 1987). Although the gap narrowed significantly in the 1970s and 1980s (Freeman, 2005; Haycock, 2002), the 1990s brought setbacks in the progress previously made. Results from the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress show improvement in math and reading and that the gaps between African-American and Latino fourth-graders and their White peers are narrowing. Although the achievement gap is narrowing, progress has slowed between 2003 and 2005 (Haycock, 2006).

According to charter school advocates (Hassel, 2005); charter schools provide a new framework and location for further research on issues of racial and ethnic gap patterns. Because charter schools are autonomous yet accountable for results, they theoretically have the freedom to develop missions, curricula, and environments conducive to the success of students who are marginalized in other settings. Winston Academy Charter School offers such an opportunity since it serves a diverse student population with unique learning needs (Charter School Mission, 2002) through the use of a curriculum that combines standards-

based curricula with service learning. This study seeks to find answers to how teachers and the head of school balance state mandates and the school's adopted mission and vision. In addition it attempts to gain an understanding of the ways the school mission is integrated with the adopted teaching strategies.

Charter Schools as a Response for Urban Students

Charter schools have become a popular instrument for reforming public schools because they expand choices and facilitate local innovations, particularly innovations that meet the needs of a specific student population. The increasing enrollment (Hanushek et al., 2002) of African American, Hispanic, Native American, and at-risk students in charter schools is a strong indicator of the popularity of this form of educational choice for disadvantaged and urban populations (Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Peebles, 2000; Wells, 2002). According to enrollment statistics, charter schools in 36 of the 41 states with charter school laws enroll a higher percentage of African American than White students. As a result of charter school locations in urban areas, charter schools enroll a larger percentage of students of color than do the public schools of most states, as well as enrolling a slightly larger percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch than all public schools (Vanourek, 2005). In urban California, Colorado, and Minnesota, charter schools have had their charter contracts renewed because they "produced measurable achievement gains, including that of students from low-income families" (Hadderman, 1998, p. 13). Because traditional public schools have not worked for large numbers of urban or diverse students, innovative approaches, inherent in Charter School Theory, offer the best possibility for success. The site for this study, Winston Academy Charter School is an urban school serving a diverse student population.

Urban Students and Service Learning

The prevalence of service learning as a component of a school's curriculum has been increasing (Batenburg, 1995; Billig, 2000). Research to date shows benefits to school and community alike. Students who have been involved in service-learning programs related to their school coursework may demonstrate an increased sense of personal and social responsibility and may be less likely to engage in "risk" behaviors (Conrad & Hedin, 1987; National Youth Leadership Council, 1999). At the same time urban students involved in service learning show gains in motivation to learn, resulting in higher attendance rates and increased academic performance. Service learning has a positive effect on interpersonal development, helping students to learn to trust and be trusted by others and to act as a part of a team (McCurley, 1991; McPherson, 1989). An important element of effective service learning is structured reflection activities that help students make the connection between their classroom lessons and their role as young community members working with a community agency (Roehlkepartain, 1995; Supple, 1993). In an effort to integrate class work with service projects, Winston Academy Charter School integrates intensive service learning tied to coursework, and a structured reflection component into their curriculum, and students spend two weeks in the spring engaged in off campus activities within the urban community that reinforce and integrate classroom learning.

Successful service learning partnerships with the community surrounding a school is intended to improve the quality of education and also improve the quality of life in the community (Speck & Hoppe, 2004). This relationship can be beneficial in urban areas, so some charter schools created in urban areas have embraced the concept as an innovative strategy.

Although the national movement to adopt standards-based educational reforms has affected the amount of time teachers have to involve students in community service due to demands of meeting new academic benchmarks and testing, the benefits of real-life problem solving experiences with community partnerships can be adventageous to both students and community organizations (Cairn & Scherer, 1994; Geiger, 2000; McCurley, 1991; Sausjord, 1995).

Charter Schools and Community Involvement

Charter schools channel new energy into public education by giving organizations and individuals that would not ordinarily be involved with public education the opportunity to partner with or sponsor schools. In the case of Winston Academy Charter School, community-based organizations such as the YMCA, historical museums, the Heritage Commission, Access Television, and local environmental advocacy groups have provided supplies, speakers, volunteers and information which were integrated into the school's curriculum. As charter schools are not "gated communities" (Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000), the schools interact with the places where they operate, and "some even play roles in purposive civic efforts to transform those communities" (p. 252). For example, a charter school in South Phoenix located in a gang and drug infested neighborhood opened a police substation on campus and hosted community meetings with local police officers (p. 252). Winston Academy Charter School students have participated in local ecosystem clean ups and species counting (Charter School Mission, 2002). This interaction of school and community set the stage for this case study of a school that desired to promote integrated service learning within the local community with a curriculum serving diverse students in an

urban school. This curricular combination sought to balance both internal and external mandates.

The Case Setting

In the past, public schools focused on building democracy and assimilating ethnic minorities into a homogenized, uniquely American culture (Banks, 1993; Buchanan & Fox, 2003; Houston, 1998; Parker, 2003). Today, our increasingly diverse American society has become a "salad bowl" where each group remains distinct and yet contributes to a pluralistic American culture (Ravitch, 1990). The innovation and autonomy provided by the charter school movement has provided a favorable environment for schools to develop missions, curricula, and educational approaches that address and attract specific populations; thus the characteristics of the population serve as an integral part of the school's focus.

Combining the elements of standards-based curriculum, state standards, and service learning into a school that supports and educates diverse learners operationalizes the innovation granted by Charter School Theory in a manner that attempts to balance internal expectations from the charter authorizer and external "Adequate Yearly Progress" requirements of NCLB (Hassel, 2005). Standards-based reform supporters often regard charter schools as rivals and see charter schools as totally decentralized and a standards approach as strongly centralized (Fuller, 2003). Other education policy analysts support both standards and charter schools (Finn, Petrilli, & Vanourek, 1998). In the case of this school, there is an element of centralization in the embracing of state standards to guide instruction and also an element of decentralization as the school may use its autonomy to innovate in any way necessary to promote student learning (Hill, Lake, & Celio, 2002)

Embracing a mission that sought to educate the city's diverse population, the mission of Winston Academy Charter School states that it utilizes an integration of college preparatory classes with service to the community for its 7th- to 12th-grade students with a "goal of graduating informed, articulate, and proactive (see Appendix B for definitions of these terms) individuals of strong character" (Charter School Mission, 2002, p. 18). The school year is divided into trimesters with short vacations in between in an attempt to decrease the time the students spend outside of school and to reduce the tendency for students to become out of practice in skills, information, and routines.

Winston Academy Charter School chose a popular reform model to assist in its curriculum design. The reform model was founded by the Hudson Institute, a nonprofit research organization (see Appendix C for a description of services). The implementation of this curriculum model attempted to provide for the needs of the school population and to provide professional development for the school. The curriculum development was informed by research in sociology, psychology, neuroscience, and economics. The design built on the strengths of a school, using a detailed analysis of the school's characteristics and student achievement data as a starting point (Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, 2004). A customized implementation program provided the school with particular tools and strategies (see Appendix C for a list of tools and strategies) to develop the school's curriculum and train teachers.

The rationale for the choice of this reform model as a guide at Winston Academy Charter School was its research-based standards (R. Anderson, 1984; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Carroll, 1963) that guide students to becoming increasingly skillful over time and do not dictate coverage. Exit standards for each form (level) at Winston Academy

Charter School are based on performance in academic core, connections (service learning), and choice block classes as well as on adherence to school norms of interaction, identified as REACH. Individuals are expected to act in a responsible, empathetic, assertive, cooperative, and honest manner (Charter School Mission, 2002). The school attempts to assess the qualitative growth in students' understanding of REACH norms and expectations by keeping a record of personal statements from students about what they believe is important for academic and personal success. Students also complete self-assessments of their academic and interpersonal strengths and outline and present this information in a memo or opinion statement to their classmates. Each year students redefine and reflect on their beliefs and must demonstrate growth and reflection as well as receiving a rating of 70% on their memo. The school expectation of students increasing in the REACH norms is part of the mission and its assessment meets the requirements of internal accountability demands.

Students do not pass from one level to the next unless they meet exit standards (see Appendix D for performance standards and assessments). This curricular concept aligns with the innovative grouping within the charter school; students work in multi-age groups and progress after mastery of information and skills.

The knowledge presented within the standards also prepares students for the external mandates of state testing requirements. Winston Academy Charter School has chosen a combination of performance standards from the state curriculum frameworks as well as internally developed standards and service learning to attain its innovative school mission. The school mission also states the importance of preparing its diverse students to master the course content successfully and also the required state testing. By utilizing the standards developed by the state in combination with their own (see Appendix E for a chart of

curriculum alignment) and preparing students for the state test, Winston Academy Charter School attempts to negotiate the tension between internal and external mandates.

As noted earlier, charter schools are premised on the idea that one can leverage degrees of autonomy for accountability, particularly if individual schools are provided with greater autonomy in the area of curriculum and educational programs. Charter school performance accountability theory (Buckley, 2001) states that charter schools are accountable in several directions, not just one. They are accountable to their authorizing agencies, but they must also maintain the confidence of parents, teachers, and private donors. They are also accountable to the Board of Trustees and must remain true to their own vision and mission. According to charter school theorists, being accountable in several directions strengthens, not weakens, charter schools as educational institutions (Schneider et al., 2002).

The state in which the site school is located is known for having the most meticulous charter accountability system in the country (Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000). In addition, charters can only be authorized by the state, unlike in other states where charters can be authorized by local school boards, community colleges, and state universities. Each charter school in this state must develop an accountability contract that describes the school's objectives as well as the measures it will use to document progress toward these objectives. Charter school accountability theory applied to this state's requirements presents an incongruent arrangement given that Winston Academy Charter School has chosen service learning as a key part of its curriculum. The teachers and head of school strive to remain faithful to the terms of its charter, yet the students must be successful on the state assessment measures in order for the school to have its charter remain intact. In general, the freedom granted to charter school developers could become constrained by the school's need to

comply with the content standards and performance measures required by the state, thus restricting the autonomy granted by charter school law (L. Anderson et al., 2003).

Winston Academy Charter School's internally generated accountability plan has three overarching performance goals aligned with the state measures (see Appendix F for performance goals, objectives, and assessment tools). These measurable goals relate to the school's academic success, organizational viability, and faithfulness to the terms of its charter. Building on the state's accountability measures, the school has specified broad performance goals and specific objectives, assessment tools and measures, and baseline data descriptors. This detailed plan combines and streamlines the external and internal accountability measures in specific areas, making accountability to the mission clearly identifiable.

Accountability involves both inputs and externally imposed outcomes, signaling a mismatch between the rhetoric and reality of the charter movement. A central dilemma of charter school reform is the seemingly paradoxical decision by state education policymakers to create schools free from district-level curricular restraints while simultaneously introducing uniform statewide curricular standards and assessments (King, 2004). Winston Academy Charter School teachers must choose innovations that fit within the existing state standards in order for the school to meet its external accountability goals, thus the school does not receive freedom from all district-level restraints.

As shown in Table 1, developed from various models of accountability (Cohen-Vogel, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Ebert & Hollenbeck, 2001; The Education Reform Act, 1993; Fuller, 2002; Harris & Herrington, 2006; Loveless, 2005; Massachusetts Charter Schools, 2005-2006; Schwartz, 2001; Vergari, 2002; Witte, 2005), Winston Academy

Charter School has multiple accountability requirements. Although charter schools were originally envisioned as being free to establish and pursue their own goals (Manno, 1999), Table 1 (see page 36 for Table 1) represents the multiple levels of accountability regulations placed on Winston Academy Charter School.

Table 1. *An Accountability Framework for Winston Academy Charter School*

Type of Accountability	Agency Holding the School Accountable	Accountability Requirements	Assessment
Market	Parents, Students	• Satisfaction, however met or defined	• Enrollment data, retention, • Parent surveys • Data
Internal (required by the charter)	Teacher and Staff	• Quality professional development • Adequate compensation	• Offer voice on governing board • Input in shaping policy
	Governing Board	• Staff performance • Student performance on tests • Student discipline and safety • Parent satisfaction • Instructional practices • Enrollment numbers • Financial viability	• School self studies • Surveys • Internally developed assessments • Growth goals • Internally developed assessment • Student portfolios • Documentation of innovative practices and dissemination of best practices
External (imposed by the state)	Authorizer/State	• Charter approval • Charter oversight • Charter renewal • Compliance with regulations • Student achievement • Alignment with standards and benchmarks • Compliance with Charter Law	• Audits • Site visits from external teams
External (mediated through the state)	Federal Government	• Special education compliance • Compliance with regulations • Health and safety laws • Civil rights laws • NCLB Act	• State audits • AYP • Student achievement reporting • Compliance reports

As exhibited, there are multiple accountability demands placed on Winston Academy Charter School, each with its own requirements and means of assessment.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter school choice, charter schools, Charter School Theory, the tension between internal and external mandates, and curricular issues affecting urban schools and students have been summarized. The following chapter will provide the rationale and plan for using the framework of theory of charter school performance accountability (Buckley, 2001; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Hill, Lake, & Celio, 2002) within the context of case study methods.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

This chapter describes the methodological framework and epistemology that guided this inquiry. It also outlines the method for conducting a case study involving a charter school. Descriptions of the site, participants, data collection, and analysis strategies are then presented. Issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations are later addressed. Finally, the researcher role and reflexivity are discussed.

The intent of this study is to gain greater understanding of the intersection of internal and external accountability mandates with school mission, as well as the specific strategies the head of school and principal use to integrate the school's chosen strategies and a qualitative research paradigm was most conducive for "generating knowledge of the particular" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 23). A qualitative paradigm also allows for understanding the issues intrinsic to the case through the use of naturalistic inquiry (Merriam, 1988). The study was conducted in a charter school and examined the practices engaged in by teachers and the principal to balance the incongruence between internal and external mandates and school mission. Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) definition of qualitative research reinforces the intent of this study:

> Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of meaning people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual's lives. (p. 3)

This study sought to gain understanding of the nature of a charter school through naturalistic inquiry, which emphasizes first hand, eyewitness accounts and faithful representations of the way a school operates and how the members of the school engage in the operation of the charter school.

In this study, principal and teacher perspectives and words were gathered through face-to-face interactions and observations to "catch the complexity of a single case" (Stake, 1995, p. xi) and were critical to describing the construction of meaning ascribed to day-to-day practices in a charter school.

Epistemology

Set in the context of a charter school, this study focused on an in-depth exploration of the activities, practices, and beliefs of individuals within the school. To investigate the phenomenon of how the practices of school personnel are affected by external accountability mandates, this study was grounded in a constructionist epistemology that assumed the meaning making of reality by the individual (Crotty, 1998). Multiple constructed realities, or ways of describing practices, were described through the words of the respondents, dependent upon individually constructed perceptions of their school, school vision, and external accountability mandates.

The design of this research was a single descriptive case study. It focused on identifying and understanding practices that teachers and the head of school performed to balance the charter vision and mission with external state mandates within the context of a charter school serving diverse students. Because the purpose of this study was to seek greater understanding of the phenomenon of what teachers do in one charter school, with an outcome of in-depth exploration, case study was the chosen method. Case studies allow investigations

of how and why questions regarding a contemporary phenomenon occurring in a real-life context (Yin, 1994).

The context of this charter school provided the platform for the teachers to operationalize the charter vision and mission, thus making this design appropriate. Within a case study design researchers attempt to "get as close to the subject of interest as they possibly can, partly by their access to subjective factors (thoughts, feelings, and desires)" (Bromely, 1986, p. 23) and this closeness provides information regarding the phenomenon. Case study design is particularly suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context (Yin, 1994), and in this study the internal and external mandates related closely to curriculum development and implementation.

Merriam (1988) described the four essential characteristics of case study design as particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive. The particularistic nature of this study was its focus on a particular program (school), providing a holistic view of the situation. The descriptive nature of this study was the use of "thick description" (Stake, 2000) or as Merriam (1988) described, the "complete and literal description of the incident or entity being investigated" (p. 11). Descriptions of the phenomenon included, as much as possible, events, quotes, samples, and artifacts. The findings of this case study will illuminate the reader's understanding of what teachers do in this context and the ways they operationalize curriculum in a charter school to balance the internal and external mandates. The final characteristic of case study design, its inductive nature, is exhibited in the discovery of new relationships, concepts, and understandings of the phenomenon. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) describe the inductive method as one that "builds theoretical categories and propositions from relationships discovered among the data" (p. 4). This case study describes the

phenomenon of interest, a charter school balancing internal and external mandates, and describes and interprets the issues intrinsic to the case.

Rationale for Site Selection

Questions relating to the way charter schools that implement alternative curricula are reconciling the possible incongruence between their internal educational visions and their external performance requirements began to surface during school visits throughout my Capstone Project (Pitkin, 2005) completed last year as a consulting project for the Iowa Department of Education. Although the focus of the Capstone study was leadership, the issues relating to school mission and accountability were a topic of discussion with the principals and also of personal reflection. Much of my journaling relating to the Capstone project dealt with the concern of internal and external mandates and how schools with unique curricula prepare students for external assessments. Each of the schools had a unique mission and vision, five of the schools served specific populations of students, and all students participated in state mandated assessments. Reflections from the previous study as well as readings on unique charter school curricula (Belgarde, 2004; Good & Braden, 2000; Hill, 2000; Holland & Mazzoli, 2001; King, 2004; Yancey, 2004) shaped my interest in this topic and the criteria for the site selection.

A review of literature on charter schools that sought to balance their mission with external demands (L. Anderson et al., 2003; Buchanan & Fox, 2003; Buckley & Fisler, 2003; The Center for Education Reform, 2004; Cohen-Vogel, 2003; Hill, Lake & Celio, 2002) led me to develop the criteria for this case. The charter school selected for this study fulfilled the following criteria determined by the researcher: (a) a unique mission designed to educate a diverse population of students, (b) a curriculum that integrated academics and service

projects, (c) location in a state that required that all students take the high stakes state assessment, and (d) performance and progress goals which were determined externally.

Goetz and LeCompte (1984) described a unique-case selection as one that is chosen on the basis of innovation, exception, or unusual characteristics, and the selected school meets this criteria in these ways: (a) it serves a more diverse student population than the local district; (b) service learning is an essential and integrated component of the curriculum with three weeks a year devoted solely to service learning projects; and (c) the curriculum is standards-based, integrates state and school benchmarks, and students progress only after individual benchmark mastery (70%).

Access

Prior to beginning this study, the criterion for the case was determined and two schools fitting the criteria were identified. Heads of school at both were contacted, and one responded positively, stating her willingness for the charter school to be part of the study. She reviewed the proposed parameters of the study for the board of trustees and then contacted me in December 2005 regarding their approval of my site visits. The head of school at Winston Academy Charter School became the formal "gatekeeper" (Esterberg, 2002) for this study and her permission and willingness for me to visit the school provided access.

A document detailing the school's proposed charter was carefully read after determining criteria for the case study. The long-term intent was to refine and replace first impressions from the charter with data from interviews, observations, and documents. The entire experience of being engaged in the life of this school contributed to the data collection.

The Human Subjects Board and my committee approved this study in January 2006. Site visits were conducted in February 2006 and twice in March 2006.

Participant Selection

The participants for this single case study were selected using voluntary selection (Patton, 2002) and included 11 teachers, the head of school, guidance counselor, school nurse, special education director, and a paraprofessional/assistant teacher for a total of 16 participants. This selection was based on the assumption that the samples would describe and explain the phenomenon under study and allow the researcher to discover, understand, and gain insight (Hamel, 1993). Although a selection problem in qualitative studies has been called "key informant bias" (Schwandt, 2001, p.15), an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study was achieved by interviewing those in close relation to the topic. The respondents included 13 females and 3 males (see Appendix G for participant information). Half of the respondents were First Form (6th and 7th grade) teachers and the remainder taught Second Form (8th and 9th grade). Due to a staff shortage, the head of school served as a teacher for one class per day and she also taught part of an Algebra class to provide instruction for a smaller number of students. All but one of the teachers participated in interviews. Six of the respondents were in their second year of teaching at Winston Academy Charter School and the remainder, although not first year teachers, were new to the school the year of data collection. Two teachers had taught at the school just three months, replacing teachers who left the school (one for personal reasons and the other was asked to leave). All of the Second Form teachers were new to the school due to the addition of ninth grade.

Data Collection

Data collection took place during three visits to the school, each lasting three to five days. A total of 13 school days and 5 evenings were spent at the site. During the first visit, the head of school and I discussed confidentiality of data, anonymity of site location, and a discussion of the general workings of the visits and data collection. It was my responsibility to remember my role of guest at the school. My intent was to prevent my research endeavors and presence in the school from compromising the workings of the school to accomplish its mission or alter individual behaviors (Hawthorne Effect) although I recognized the potential of my presence as an influence on interviews and observations. All staff members interviewed were assured that the study was confidential and that comments would not be attributed to identifiable individuals.

Interviews

Because this case study was an intensive description and analysis of the phenomenon of the balance of internal and external accountability mandates in a charter school, it was necessary to understand the "meaning people involved in education make of their experience" (Seidman, 1998, p. 5). Therefore, a combination of two types of interviewing was used.

The first source, a semi-structured interview (see Appendix H for interview protocol) was "guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored" (Merriam, 1988, p. 75) and was used during all the interviews with the exception of the second one with the head of school. The protocol questions evolved from my research questions, journal entries from my Capstone project, peer feedback, and readings on distinct charter school missions (Buchanan & Fox, 2003; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Fuller, 2000; Gebhard, 2002; Murrell, 1999).

To begin this type of interview, an open-ended question or a "grand-tour" question (Seidman, 1998, p.69) was asked, as indicated in the interview protocol, asking the respondent to tell about a day in his/her work life (Spradley, 1979). This question would set the tone for the remainder of the questions, providing an opportunity for the respondent to reconstruct his/her experience (Seidman). Although these interviews were guided by a list of questions, neither the exact meaning nor the order was determined ahead of time, allowing for the interviews to be open ended and assume a conversational manner (Yin, 1994).

Unstructured interviews, with no predetermined set of questions, were used during each week's visit of the case study to explore further how teachers and a head of school make meaning of what they do and for interview clarification or further explanation of classroom procedures and strategies. These unstructured interviews were not audio taped and were 10–15 minutes in length. Researcher notes were made after each conversation. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) have suggested that "unstructured interviewing can provide a greater breadth of data than other types" (p. 652). According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), these interviews appear to be guided conversations rather than structured queries, and the actual stream of questions fluid rather than rigid. The qualitative interview process involves interviewees becoming partners in the research process and some instances, key respondents may be asked about the facts of a matter or their insights into certain occurrences. Schwandt (2001) documented a change in recent interview practices, applicable to the methods of this study, by saying,

> It has been increasingly common in qualitative studies to view the interview as a form of discourse between two or more speakers or as a linguistic event in which the

> meanings of questions and responses are contextually grounded and jointly constructed by interviewer and respondent. (p. 79)

The joint construction of meaning during interviews increased as the study progressed and my presence at the school became more expected. Despite the change, my primary role was that of listener, focusing on listening reflectively to "key in" on feelings and perceptions that perhaps were just below the surface. Though conversational in tone, through unstructured interviews I was able to gather data that contributed to and clarified existing information gathered from previous interviews.

During the first week's visit, I talked with each teacher to establish a relationship and explain the research purpose and interviewed as many as time allowed. The principal also sent an email to the staff detailing the purpose and intent of my visit and alerting them to potential interviews, and this helped clarify my position at the school. The first week seven formal interviews were conducted, during the second week nine were conducted, and in the final week one was conducted for a total of 17 formal interviews. With the exception of the head of school, each participant was interviewed one time. Because the head of school was integral in designing the school as well as in the charter mission formation, two formal interviews and several informal ones were beneficial for answering the research questions for this study. In addition to the formal interviews, multiple informal conversations were held with school personnel for clarification purposes, especially during Service Learning week to determine the staff's role in the service component and its application to course content and assessments. Each audio taped structured interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes, depending on the respondents' availability, and was later transcribed.

Observations

Essential to this case study was "direct firsthand eyewitness accounts of everyday social action in an effort to determine what's going on here" (Schwandt, 2001, p.23). Two types of observations were conducted: participant observation and nonparticipant observation. Collected observational evidence was used to provide additional information about the school and to see first hand how teachers interpreted the framework that this school has chosen to guide its teaching and curricular activities. Nonparticipant observation involves "merely watching and recording the events on the spot" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 143), as in a classroom at Winston Academy Charter School, and interactions with participants are minimized. In contrast, participant observation involves a researcher interacting with teachers and students, if only in a minimal way. Merriam (1988) suggests a checklist (see Appendix I for observation check sheet) to guide observations and the identified elements of setting, participants, activities and interactions, frequency and duration, and subtle factors that serve to guide and focus the observations. The checklist in Appendix I was developed through a combination of my own experiences observing student teachers and from sample observation checklists received during my coursework. The checklist also directed observations relating to research question two which asks: In what ways do the head of school and teachers integrate the school mission and curriculum with the instructional strategies of student-focused instruction, guided instruction, instruction for understanding, and conceptualized instruction?

I observed each core class including English, History, Math, Science, and Spanish in both First and Second form five times. Each class was 55 minutes long. Multiple visits

provided an opportunity for me to observe direct instruction, students engaged in cooperative learning and independent work, projects, labs, and presentations.

I observed a number of other events at the school including homeroom, lunchroom interactions, before- and after-school student/teacher interactions in the multipurpose room, student pick-up and drop-off, 55 minute long choice blocks, and before- and after-school extensions as well as disciplinary situations and three community meetings. During each of the three visits I attended a three-hour professional development workshop Wednesday mornings for a total of nine workshop hours. The final visit to the school was during service learning (SL) week during which there was an alternative schedule with students spending the majority of the day with their SL group. The time that week was spent observing the students preparing for, carrying out, assessing, and reflecting on the service project, which had been the focus of their trimester service learning curriculum. Many of these projects involved activities both at the school and in various locations in the community.

In order to provide thick description both formal and informal interviews and observational data as detailed below were collected from those most directly related to the case study topic (Yin, 2003). In addition to formal and informal interviews, data were collected through classroom visits observing instruction and activities, and attendance at a trustee meeting, the charter school lottery, sports events, an Arts Jam, and community service projects. Adding to the data collection were informal conversations with board members, parents, outside service providers, school secretaries, the technology coordinator, parent volunteers, and a researcher visiting the school for a different study. These informal conversations were held before, during and after events, in the hallway, and other places where I could converse with individuals associated with the school. For example, one

afternoon I was organizing my documents in the school library and a parent arrived to help organize books in the library. She voluntarily described her son's experiences at the school and the reasons for her choice of Winston Academy Charter School. Both administrative assistants also provided information regarding the dynamics of the city and their perceptions of the regular public schools as well as other information relating to the school's operation.

Documents

In addition to data gathered from what people said, documents were used as a source of data because documents "provide evidence for the topics and questions . . . because they are material manifestations of the beliefs and behaviors that constitute a culture" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 153). A goal of the first face-to-face meeting with the principal was to gain access to a collection of textbooks, curriculum guides, memos, enrollment records, handbooks, lesson plans, and correspondence from within the school, which were utilized to provide valuable information regarding social and philosophical curricular goals. The head of school provided an array of documents, and on the final visit, a notebook identical to the one given to the Department of Education on a recent site visit was provided for my use.

This case study began during year two of the school's existence, and it was especially important to seek out the paper trail for what it could reveal about the program and, as Patton (2002) suggests, to determine "things that cannot be observed because they may have taken place before the study began and because they reflect aspects of the organization that may be idealized" (p. 152). Although the beneficial nature of documents was recognized, so was some caution. Documents are not always accurate and can be biased, so caution was exercised regarding their authenticity (Creswell, 2003; Schwandt, 2001; Yin, 2004). Noting the limitations of the documents was important for the researcher, but the most important use

of documents in this case study was to "corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (Yin, 1994, p.66). Several school documents had been rewritten and edited and these became a part of the data collection. For example, previously chosen reform curriculum identified by the school in the charter application as the foundation for its school standards and benchmarks had been modified, and the addendums were also gathered as data.

Memos

In addition to collected materials from within the school, my own researcher memos and journaling as well as emails chronicling daily impressions of the school sent to peers each day became a part of the data collection. Other sources of documents were in the form of an archival review, looking at past and present local media pieces describing this school, other research conducted at the school, and correspondence between the charter-granting board and the school.

Data Analysis Strategies

For this study, data collection and analysis were deliberately overlapping (Gebhard, 2002) and intertwined, with analysis during the earlier stages shaping the direction of later stages. Because audio recording preserved the words of the participants and respondents could be consulted for clarification as data analysis was proceeding (Seidman, 1998), each formal interview was audio recorded and transcribed and transcripts were returned to respondents for their review after each visit. Several of the teachers made comments regarding the length of their interview or needed assurance that the data was confidential.

Following collection of all the data, an initial step in data analysis was the repeated close reading of the interview transcripts, observational notes, and documents that were to be analyzed. Passages of interest from the transcripts were marked and labeled (Seidman, 1998).

The next strategy, "scanning" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1994, p. 181), involved examining the data for categories of phenomena and for relationships among such categories. Beginning with a meaningful unit of data such as a word, phrase, or narrative, a comparison was made to other units of data, looking for common patterns and regularities across data (Merriam, 1998, 2002). These units of information were both relevant to the study and able to stand alone as information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) The units of information were coded and categorized and all the like passages were put into one transcript to provide longer passages of the emerging theme. The themes that emerged were constantly refined and shaped, leading to "naturalistic generalizations" (Merriam, 1988, p. 176) and a descriptive case study. Throughout the data analysis process, data was displayed in tables and charts as a "think display" (Miles & Huberman, 1984) to emphasize information, align data with research questions, and to help the researcher conceptualize the data. Researcher memos (Esterberg, 2002), focusing on researcher thinking and rationale for analysis and procedures, as well as field notes were written during the entire analysis process and were utilized during the final write up.

Following the analysis of the data from the initial school visit, "a provisional report" (Mattson & Sage, 2003, p. 115) was presented to participants for their feedback, including corrections, amendments, and extensions prior to finalizing the draft. Each respondent, even those who had previously received a copy of her or his interview, was mailed an additional report with an accompanying list of identified themes. Two respondents asked for clarification regarding the themes, and one respondent, who had been interviewed during the first visit, provided additional information regarding a service-learning project. This form of

member checking allowed for review of data for "accuracy and palatability" (Stake, 1995, p. 115), and this feedback was included as a part of the refining and categorizing process.

Trustworthiness

Establishing trustworthiness lies at the heart of qualitative research, forever negotiable, continuous, and open ended (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and was important to establish in this study. The goal of this study was to gain understanding, through multiple realities, of how teachers and an administrator respond to external accountability mandates. The reality was holistic, multi-dimensional, and ever changing, and the researcher's goal was to capture what "seems true" (Merriam, 1988, p. 167). In this study, the use of multiple sources of evidence, engagement over time, persistent observation, member checks with respondents, peer debriefing, ongoing self-reflections, thick description, triangulation of data, and keeping a detailed record of "methods, procedures, and decision points" (Merriam, 2002, p. 25) provided ethical trustworthiness.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) offered a set of criteria for judging the quality or goodness of qualitative inquiry: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

This study sought to present an honest rendering of how informants actually view themselves and their experiences (Merriam, 1988, p. 168). Frequent engagement (three visits) over the course of two months in the research site allowed for "opportunities for continual data analysis and comparisons to refine constructs and to ensure the match between scientific categories and participant realities" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 221), thus enhancing credibility. Throughout the study there existed a fit between the respondent's "views of their life ways" (Schwandt, 2001, p.258) and my representation of data from

interviews and observations. The mission and vision that the founders of Winston Academy Charter School had chosen and said they believed in was operationalized in the daily workings of the school.

Transferability

Through presentation of thick description and sufficient information regarding the case, it was anticipated that the patterns that emerged from the study would be in the form of "naturalistic generalization" (Merriam, 1988, p. 176) or patterns that explain readers' own experiences as well as the events in the world around them. Readers of this study will be able to "transfer" the information from the case study to another situation as plausible, developing a "working hypothesis" (Donmoyer, 1990), and analyzing the "degree of congruence between contexts" (p. 185). The results of this case study will enable readers to experience vicariously the situation described in this charter school, inform them of a unique school model, increase their knowledge about charter schools, and allow them to " look at the world through the researcher's eyes and see things we otherwise might not have seen" (Donmoyer, p. 194).

Winston Academy Charter School has unique characteristics such as its intensive service learning benchmarks and instructional methods, yet it also has characteristics of other charter schools with its accountability mandates and desire to innovate. It is my intent that readers will see enough similarity between their situation and that of Winston Academy Charter School and experience a "transfer of knowledge" (Stake, 2000, p. 443) and gain beneficial insights regarding charter schools.

Dependability

The third criterion of trustworthiness was met by providing readers with a detailed summary of assumptions and theory behind the study, researcher position as described below, the basis for informant selections, and a detailed description of data collection (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

Confirmability

The final criterion of trustworthiness, confirmability, was increased through use of member checks, peer debriefing, and carefully linking assertions, findings, and interpretations. Confirmability techniques also included an audit trail that in this study consisted of extensive field notes, transcripts, and researcher memos (Maxwell, 1996).

An essential component to the trustworthiness of this study was the reflexivity of the researcher and acknowledgement of my role in the inquiry.

Reflexivity and Researcher Role

The process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher is a crucial part of this study. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) purport that researchers must acknowledge who they are and the relationship this has to the study, stating that "no matter how much you try you can not divorce your research from your past experiences, who you are, what you believe and what you value." (p. 35). Given this understanding, it is my obligation to recognize who I am within the context of this study of a charter school. Within this section I describe the connection of this study to my past jobs and experiences as well as to my beliefs about schooling and the way these factors influence my position and role as a researcher in this study.

My teaching responsibilities of the past 20 years in diverse settings and geographical locations with children and adults have given me insight into factors contributing to what I believe to be an effective school. The characteristics I value most are teacher's pedagogical ability and level of caring, school climate and vision, and teacher ability. I believe that teachers highly skilled in both teaching and classroom management, who care deeply about their students, are the greatest contributor to effective schools. It is this combination that impressed me in past classroom observations, and its opposite, schools unresponsive to students, can negatively color my perceptions. Additionally, a school with a shared mission and vision evidences its care for students by developing and carrying out a shared vision and exhibiting this in multiple ways within a school building. Finally, I believe that charter schools are an opportunity for public funding to be used to develop schools with a shared vision, attracting effective teachers who share the school vision and mission. This was evidenced in my previous study of effective charter school principals (Pitkin, 2005).

As a teacher and trainer of teachers conducting research with teachers, I recognized the relationships that I was establishing with the respondents as I participated in the school environment for three weeks. Throughout this study I was partnering with my respondents to produce useful information and data. Because of my own training and teaching it was my natural tendency to become involved in the classroom and acknowledge students who need assistance and attention. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) issued a caution regarding the nature and degree of involvement of researchers with participants and stated that this kind of research is governed by an informal tradition that involves sympathizing and identifying with the people studied to the "extent that the materials produced represent the participants' life in ways that are not just true to life and authentic" (p. 88). I recognized that by becoming a

participant observer in classrooms, I became a part of the study and had to continuously assess my interpretations and level of self-awareness.

The data were filtered through my personal lens, which is situated in a specific sociopolitical and historical moment. According to Creswell (2003), the personal-self becomes inseparable from the researcher-self and my role was embedded throughout the study. Thoughts, feelings, and perceptions were recorded in journal format, continuously reinterpreting and comparing personal understandings across the interview data, literature, and observational data to assess underlying biases.

To minimize my bias and address issues of validity (Maxwell, 1996), peer debriefing throughout the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was employed. As a case study investigator I was especially prone to bias because I understood the issue of charter schools and accountability (Yin, 2003). Peer debriefing involves "exposing oneself to a disinterested peer . . . for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (p.308). To test the degree to which I was open to contrary findings, I reported my preliminary findings to a colleague as well as kept a record of emails describing my end-of-day reflections sent during all three data collection stages. These readers offered me possible explanations for my findings and reduced the likelihood of bias (Merriam, 1988). In this study, peer debriefing occurred by having an administrator at an independent school, and a reviewer of my protocol questions, review the themes and categories. Leah Ross, a doctoral candidate who had provided feedback throughout all the stages of my research, reviewed the themes and categories as well. These individuals were appropriate because they were my peers, had knowledge of my topic, and were involved in

qualitative research, and correspondence with them provided opportunities for me to check biases and clarify interpretations.

Member checks, or respondent validation (Schwandt, 2001), were an important procedure for corroborating or verifying findings. Through member checking, participants can comment on interpretations, "suggest fine-tuning to better capture perspectives" (Merriam, 2002, p. 26), correct errors, and add additional information. In this study, member checks occurred by returning the transcripts and themes to participants to review for accuracy and completeness so that the participants could confirm or disconfirm my interpretations. As mentioned on page 51, a few of the respondents commented on the interview transcripts, but none commented on the findings or interpretations.

Ethical Considerations

As a researcher, I recognized the potential for becoming too involved in the situations under study, the potential for confidentiality problems, and a need to preserve the anonymity of subjects (Merriam, 1988). These major concerns were addressed throughout the study by communicating with respondents and the key informants and by heightened awareness of the researcher to potential ethical issues that can pervade research. Care was taken to insure that each respondent had signed the IRB informed consent form (See appendix S for consent form) and was aware of the details of the study. In addition, conversations were held before each interview to assure participants of the confidential nature of the study and that they would not be identified by name within the findings or otherwise be identified, even if their name was not used. In several interviews the individual could be identified, and in each of these cases the respondent was informed and gave consent for the transcript to be a part of the study.

As a teacher who was interviewing other teachers over a period of several months, there was the possibility of relationships developing between researcher and respondent, and this could have led to possible difficulty in objective interpretation. My presence in the building became routine and no attempts seemed to be made by the staff to hide emotions, frustrations, positives, or negatives or to present anything other than their interpretations of situations as they were experienced. Because the school was new and experiencing the typical growing pains of a start-up school (Nathan, 1996), I was able to observe changes in practices and even personnel as the school worked through various situations and issues, evidencing the hard work of beginning a charter school. Engagement in reflective journaling, obtaining peer feedback, and providing respondents with drafts revealing how they were presented and quoted (Stake, 2000) were all used to prevent inaccurate, unethical, or partial presentation of the realties that existed at the school.

Care was taken to abide by the confidentiality measures established with the head of school. These measures included not identifying the school's name and location in an effort to protect the identity of the case and those involved. For this reason, the specific state assessment test is not named nor is the outside agency that is assessing the service learning components. Throughout the study I reflected on ways of keeping the study confidential and obtained advice and input from stakeholders as well as from the research community (Stake, 2000) in an attempt to lessen the likelihood of inaccurate representation.

Before beginning the study, I conducted practice interviews with two people. The intent was to try out the interview questions for clarity and cohesion and to increase my skills as an interviewer. One person was a graduate of an Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program and had extensive administrative experience and the other was an

administrator at a community college. Both provided specific suggestions regarding the order of my protocol questions as well as suggestions for differentiating the questions to be asked to teachers and the head of school. One individual suggested organizing the questions according to themes and also asking questions of the head of school that would provide means for triangulation with what the teachers reported.

Conclusion

This chapter described the methodological framework and epistemology that guided this study, as well as design methods and procedures. Case study methodology is fitting when the object of study is a phenomenon occurring in a real-life context, as is Winston Academy Charter School. Data from multiple interviews, both formal and informal as well as observations and document analysis provided multiple perceptions of the way a particular charter school negotiated the intersection of internal and external accountability demands. The next chapter discusses the findings, which emerged from the data collection and will provide readers with insight into the life of a charter school.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

Charter school accountability theory (Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Hill, Lake, & Celio, 2002) was adapted as an appropriate theoretical framework for this study of an urban charter school that serves a diverse population. Charter school accountability theory posits that a charter establishes a school's freedom of action as it creates pressure for performance. The combination of autonomy over resources and the performance pressure from families and teachers causes schools to develop internal accountability to their individual mission. External accountability to authorizers that set definite expectations for performance; to parents; to potential teachers; and to other supporters, ultimately motivates internal accountability (Furhman, 2003), and allows a charter school to remain a viable organization, that can meet the accountability requirements from the market as well as internal and external demands. The case school in this study operated in a state formally committed to standards-based reform, and the theoretical lens of accountability theory was used to view the phenomenon of how a charter school that implements specific curricula reconciles the potential incongruence between the school's internal educational vision and mission with its external accountability performance mandates. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do teachers and the head of school in a charter school balance the external accountability mandates from the state and the internal charter demands with the school's adopted vision and mission?
2. In what ways do the head of school and teachers integrate the school mission and curriculum with the instructional strategies of student-focused instruction, guided instruction, instruction for understanding, and conceptualized instruction?

Interviews, observations, and document analysis were used to gather data to answer the research questions. This chapter begins with the details of the school mission, purpose, and development, and follows with a description of the site school. Findings are then presented and discussed. The initial findings discussed relate to research question one and are divided into sections, each of which relates to a part of the school mission: (a) college preparatory classes, (b) service learning, (c) diverse learners, and (d) developing character. Within each section is a discussion of how teachers and the head of school balance different accountability mandates with the components of the mission. Following the section discussing the components of the mission, are additional findings related to how teachers and the head of school balance various mandates with the school's mission. These include: (a) charter school mission as a building block for school activities, (b) norms and procedures, (c) teacher accountability to school mission, (d) leadership, interactions, and school mission and (e) staff development and mission alignment.

Findings for research question two are organized according to school- determined instructional strategies: (a) student focused instruction, (b) guided instruction, (c) instruction for understanding, (d) conceptualized instruction, and (e) technology as a tool, a category not within the school's stated instructional strategies. Within the findings are descriptions of school activities, practices, mores, procedures, and values.

School Context

Charter School Mission

Winston Academy Charter School was started in 2002 by a collection of residents, parents, teachers, business leaders, civic leaders, and educational experts, who sought a new educational option that would provide a rigorous educational program, and contextualized

learning, stress the importance of community, and prepare a diverse student population for success in college. Three educators with different content specialties designed the charter school mission prior to the school's opening. They reviewed research on successful charter schools (Charter School Mission, 2002; Cotton, 1996), educational best practices (Gregory & Smith, 1995), service learning (Fowler & Walberg, 1991), and the student population within the city that would be best served by a culturally responsive curriculum (Howley, 1994).

Winston Academy Charter School's mission or vision is a promise to the public (Charter School Application, 2002). With the mission, the charter developers set the learning goals of graduating informed, articulate, and proactive students of strong character. These learning goals dictated what students needed to know and be able to do in order to graduate.

The school's standards were developed next. The standards that were designed fell into the categories of informed, articulate and proactive. Following this, teachers developed units with clear, specific, and measurable benchmarks that were the concrete steps students took to achieve mastery of standards. According to the charter school application (2002), Winston Academy Charter School promises an environment that will prepare students to succeed in college and in their personal and professional lives. The staff attempted to accomplish this goal by aligning internally developed standards with the external state standards and by providing opportunities for application through service learning.

In February 2003 the volunteer group was awarded a charter from the State Department of Education and spent the next 18 months planning and preparing for the school's initiation. In September 2004, it opened its doors to a group of 88 sixth- and seventh-grade students. In September 2005, the school doubled its capacity to 176 sixth- through ninth-grade students (Charter School Handbook, 2005-2006). Enrollment for

September 2006 is slated for 200 students in grades six through ten. The school's goal is to add a grade level each year until students in grades 6-12 are enrolled and the enrollment number reaches 308 students by the fifth year (2009-2010). The school has chosen not to exceed this number, and the rationale for maintaining this enrollment figure is based on research on student achievement and small schools (Charter School Application, 2002).

The stated mission and purpose of the school was "to provide a research-based education model, integrating college preparatory classes with service to the community, that accounts for the student population's diversity, and will graduate informed, articulate, and proactive [see Appendix B for definitions of terms] individuals of strong character" (Charter School Application, 2002; Charter School Handbook, 2006-2006) Defined as "diverse" are students from various socioeconomic levels, cultures, backgrounds, English proficiency levels, academic achievement levels, and interest areas (Charter School Mission, 2002).

The school chosen for this study was designed to educate students who were not succeeding in a traditional public school setting. The public schools in this district are large (averaging 1,200 students), and the small size of this charter school was designed as "an alternative for students who would likely benefit most from a small school environment but are least likely to be able to afford alternatives to the local public schools" (Charter School Application, 2002). Prior to formation of this school, the State Department of Education had identified through use of the state test given to students in grades 3-10, in 2004 between 15 and 20 percent of eighth-grade students in the district were in the "proficient" category of the state test in English and math and 37 percent of students in English and 39 percent of students in math fell in the "needs improvement" category. The percentages for the 2005

school year found only 19 percent of eighth-grade students proficient in math and 16 percent of eighth-grade students proficient in science (State Assessment, 2005).

The regular public schools in the site city have experimented with various ELL and two-way language programs to improve academic achievement of the diverse student population. The charter school's explicit focus, however, was on raising achievement through mastery of skills and content in core academic subjects using standards-based instruction; the idea is ensure that all students are well prepared for further study after high school. The charter school adopted a reform design with academic performance standards aligned with the state standards. According to the head of school, the selection of this curriculum design model supplemented the state standards:

> The state standards focus on the "informed" and some of the "articulate" part of our curriculum, but we were looking for something to help us with the "proactive" part and focus on conceptualizing the standards. We used the design model as a guide.

The entire school curriculum was intended to respond to external state mandates of preparing students for state tests and to implement the innovative strategy of service learning with a goal of understanding and addressing the needs of diverse students.

According to the school handbook (2005-2006), the school sought to promote learning by creating a culture that reinforced shared norms. All school community members were expected to REACH-act in a **R**esponsible, **E**mpathetic, **A**ssertive, **C**ooperative, and **H**onest manner. These norms were reinforced through academic courses, participation in service work, and the school's Code of Conduct. Students who conducted themselves according to the school norms were publicly recognized at weekly Community Meetings, which enabled the norms to be emphasized and made concrete.

A central component of Winston Academy Charter School's mission was service learning, which provided an opportunity for students to apply their academic learning to fieldwork and internships in service to the community (Charter School Handbook, 2005-2006). The principles that guide the service learning are: (a) the promotion of students' academic success by granting opportunities to apply their learning to the real-life context of their community; (b) the training of students to serve as civic participants and community leaders in the present and in the future; and (c) the addition of resources and capacity to improving the city's historical, cultural, and natural resources (Furco & Billig, 2002).

In an effort to meet the individual needs of all students, Winston Academy Charter School utilized multi-age groupings of students. This grouping of students was based on the premise that aligning ability, knowledge, and developmental needs with instruction facilitated student success and motivation. First Form students were those in sixth and seventh grade, and Second Form students were those in grades eight and nine. As the school adds a grade level each year, Third Form will include students in the tenth and eleventh grades, and Final Form students will be twelfth graders.

The extended school year schedule comprised 195 days, (15 more than a typical school year in that state); the intent of the longer school year was to maintain student performance and decrease learning loss over the summer vacation months. With increased autonomy, many charter schools, including Winston Academy Charter School, have experimented with changes in the school year and weekly schedule, and Malloy and Wohlstetter (2003) found a wider range in length for school calendars of charter schools (163-250) than for those of other public schools (155-187), which suggests that one way to accomplish accountability mandates is through extended staff development and increased

instructional time. Three hours every other Wednesday morning were devoted to professional development and built into this school's weekly schedule.

A combination of teaching strategies, including student-focused instruction, guided instruction, instruction for understanding, and conceptualized instruction (see Appendix J for instructional methods) was used by teachers to promote achievement of the school goals and mission. The results of one research study (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999) were cited in the charter application as the rationale for why these strategies were chosen. A design team of three educators chose these teaching strategies; they specialized in mathematics and science, social studies and Spanish, and special education, respectively. The purpose of the strategies was to support achievement and fulfill the school's learning goals of promoting informed, articulate, and proactive students (see Appendix K for instructional strategies).

Becoming informed, articulate and proactive is a performance goal for students and teachers alike. The Charter School Application (2002) describes an informed teacher as one who possesses significant understanding of the content area, is articulate in lesson and unit development, proactively offers "new and exciting lessons to the school" (p. 26), and seeks out new opportunities for themselves and their students. The school administration seeks teachers that are committed to the school's mission and capable of "modeling the school's norms" (Charter School Application, 2002, p.26). These norms are also developed and discussed at teacher in-services (IDPs).

The head of school expected that teachers would utilize instructional strategies or methods that included student-centered instruction, guided instruction, instruction for understanding, and conceptualized instruction. A part of the teacher's Instructional Development Plan was improvement in the quality of instruction in these four strategies.

According to the Charter School Application (2002), Winston Academy Charter School "insists that all teachers work toward mastery of the four instructional methods" (p. 39). As part of the internal accountability demands relating to the school mission, teachers were expected to set personal goals for instructional improvement at the beginning of the year. The head of school evaluated teachers based on their instruction and the impact their teaching had on student achievement. According to the Charter School Application (2002), the head of school assesses the effect teacher instruction has on student achievement by reviewing student achievement data, teacher portfolios containing research, planning notebooks, videos of their teaching, reflections and student work three times a year, as well as reviewing written evaluations from students once a year. It was anticipated that teacher growth in the school's chosen instructional strategies would lead to students becoming better informed, articulate, and proactive (see Appendix J for instructional strategies).

School Description

This study was conducted at a charter school in an urban city noted for its rich history and the city is home to 55 different nationalities and languages. The charter school is located in a city where, (according to the charter school application), 35 percent of students are children of color, 28 percent speak English as a second language (ESL), and 35 percent are low income. This diversity is what the school sought to reflect in its student population and during its first year of operation, the school enrolled a higher percentage of African-American and Hispanic students than the local district (Charter School Accountability Plan, 2005).

The creation of the school was met with opposition from the regular public school board, which believed that the creation of a charter school in its community would duplicate

programs already in existence. It claimed that the school as designed failed to meet the state's criteria as an innovative addition to the educational landscape in the community. A hearing before the city school board that was attended by the mayor and other city officials was held prior to the charter approval. At that meeting, the school committee, city public middle and high school administrators, and public school parents from the city of the proposed charter school (as well as from surrounding communities) presented arguments in five main areas regarding denial of the license. The rationale for license denial targeted the punitive funding formula, (that it would mean that the regular public school would receive less money) the proposed head of school's lack of experience, and program duplication. According to the head of school, the meeting was emotional and she left it uncertain about the future of Winston Academy Charter School. Following the hearing, the school board identified a need for an educational option within its district that specifically addressed the needs of diverse students. Despite the opposition, the school opened and immediately met a part of its mission goal, attracting a diverse student population.

Its first year of operation, the charter school matriculated a higher percentage of African-American, Hispanic, limited- English- proficiency, low- income, ESL and special-education students, and a lower percentage of white students than the regular public schools in the city (Charter School Accountability Plan, 2005). The school's enrollment was managed by lottery.

The school operated in a rented facility within a large industrial park that spanned several blocks. The park was home to a childcare center, ethnic cultural center, various businesses, and a large parking facility. The site was a study in contrasts as three-story houses converted into apartment buildings and narrow streets surrounded the immediate

location of the school. The sides of some buildings displayed painted murals as part of a city beautification project; several empty areas nearby were cluttered with trash and small businesses sported bilingual signs. Throughout the day, small multi-ethnic groups of adults engaged in conversation would cluster along the streets.

The front exit of the school led to a bridge for vehicles that crossed to another part of the city. The neighboring area of the city was framed with single-family historic brick homes, cobblestone sidewalks, an expansive park, streets lined with restaurants, and small shops selling local souvenirs and specialty coffees—a stark contrast to the school's neighborhood.

The secured front entrance of the school was well marked by a blue awning and was distinguishable from those of other tenants in the large building. Upon entering, visitors were greeted by two administrative assistants and instructed to sign in and wear a visitor tag. The foyer and waiting area held posters of upcoming school events, school news items, and a large poster that stated the school's mission and vision. Lining the narrow halls were student work samples including models, dioramas, posters, games, and puppets. The hallways were subdued between classes, with the exception of students with passes to the library, restroom, or computer lab, and those waiting in the foyer for disciplinary consequences.

The hall branched out in two directions, both of which opened to classrooms. Student lockers lined one side of the hall, and several other rooms housed the offices of the head of school, executive director, school counselor, and nurse. At one end of the hallway was a learning center that provided space for individualized and small group help for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), ELLs (English language learners), or other students needing additional help. The room was divided into three work areas that allowed several teachers to provide instruction simultaneously.

Situated at the rear entrance of the building was a large multipurpose room that was outfitted with lunch tables that converted to benches. The room functioned as a cafeteria, community-meeting room, before-school gathering area, after-school study hall area, and site for evening events. A regular purpose of this room was the Friday morning meetings, during which the entire school congratulated and celebrated students who demonstrated the REACH (Responsible, Empathetic, Assertive, Compassionate and Honest) characteristics, as well as teachers who were nominated for a Teach/Reach award. These honored individuals had their painted handprints placed on a banner.

A computer-learning lab at one end of the hall housed 25 personal computers. The lab was used throughout the day by individual students as well as entire classes. Teachers frequently included computer technology as a component of their classes, and students appeared to be well versed in using technology to assist their learning.

The school had a small library organized by a service-learning group and staffed part-time by parent volunteers. The counselor also used the library for small group sessions. The book collection appeared to be in the beginning stages, but reflected a number of classics, contemporary adolescent literature selections, and reference books on colleges and careers, as well as study guides for the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) tests. Also in the library were diverse text selections such as *Farewell to Manzanar, Bless Me Ultima, Beloved*, and *The Joy Luck Club,* all of which were chosen by teachers in an attempt to reflect the students' cultures.

Across from the library was a small kitchen area where faculty gathered for brief moments throughout the day to eat and chat. Students also used this area to make popcorn for

celebrations, prepare food, or assist teachers with food-related projects. Both students and teachers used the area, and it did not have the "off limits" aura of a typical teacher's lounge.

Hallways of the school were decorated with posters that advertised upcoming fundraising events such as a book fair or candy sales sponsored by various service-learning groups, student artifacts showing art projects and history maps, and health awareness posters challenging students to think about adolescent issues such as anorexia, bulimia, bullying, and their behaviors and self-esteem.

First Form (sixth and seventh grade) and Second Form (eighth and ninth grade) students followed the same bell schedule but attended classes at separate ends of the hall (with the exception of foreign language classes, where students were grouped by ability and not age). The hallways were narrow and became congested during the three minutes that students passed to and from classes, and engaged in conversations and brief exchanges along the way. Teachers could be found monitoring the halls between classes.

There were similar features within each classroom, most of which reflected procedures established by the school community as norms for all teachers to follow. Each classroom had the following items listed on the board each day: (a) a "Do Now" activity, which students completed upon entering the classroom; (b) lesson objectives and curriculum benchmarks for that day's lesson; and (c) the homework assignment and agenda or outline of the class period. Many classrooms had posters that recognized students who had achieved or increased benchmark proficiency. Posted in each classroom was the school vision as well as the school's mission of graduating informed, articulate, and proactive individuals of strong character and a sign that encouraged students to "REACH" for college. In each classroom, the students sat at tables in groups of four. White boards lined the front and side walls, and

the teacher's laptop, used to assist with attendance-taking at the start of each class period, was visible at the front of the room. Student passes for the library, hall, nurse, and bathroom hung near each door. Students seemed to be aware of the school procedures and norms and entered the classrooms with knowledge of their initial task for the class period. Several students volunteered information regarding these expectations and the consistency of them. Once, I entered a classroom before the teacher did and a student, thinking I was a substitute, told me the class already knew what to do because it was on the board. Another day the teacher became ill, and I volunteered to take over the class for a while. As she left, she informed me that the students knew what to do, and that appeared to be true. Students were aware of the expectations, norms, and procedures of the school and were able to verbalize what was expected of them.

College Preparatory Curriculum

The next section examines ways in which teachers and the head of school balance the various accountability mandates with the school's mission. Winston Academy Charter Schools' accountability plan (August 2005) described the type of students that would hopefully be a product of the school and implied that for this to happen, teachers needed to teach rigorous and challenging curricula while keeping the goal of college for all students in mind. One performance goal in the school accountability plan states, "Students will demonstrate that they are prepared to succeed in college." The objective for this goal is that 90 percent of the students will take the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), 100 percent of students will apply to at least one college or university, and 100 percent of students will be accepted into at least one college or university. An example of the school trustees and staff's belief in the importance of college for all students is that they have established a Navigator

Fund to support students as they apply to and attend college. As the school expands, all Upper School students will be required to register for the SAT, and younger students will have a PSAT preparatory class and will begin to learn about colleges through visits and research. The first graduating class of twelfth grade will be in 2009 (Charter School Accountability Plan, 2005)

Stemming from the mission statement was the directive that all students should be educated using a college preparatory curriculum. Just over half of the staff members talked about the responsibility they felt for preparing all students for college. One sixth-and seventh-grade classroom had pennants from multiple colleges lining the walls and took time during class to explain the different types of colleges and their locations. The teacher engaged students, parents, and visitors in helping her collect the pennants and explained that her purpose was to help students begin conversations about college and to expand their knowledge about the variety of higher education opportunities. Some teachers described specific activities the school does to assist in this process, such as college student visits, campus tours, and visits to specific college departments and facilities. One teacher explained, "We did a field trip in the beginning of the year and took students to colleges. It was a beautiful area [with] beautiful schools and we wanted to show the students and give them an introduction … spark their interest." She stated that the goal was to visit a variety of types of colleges and expose students to what was available. Other teachers commented that the rigor, pressure, and high expectations stemming from the college prep nature of the school and the expectation that all students will attend college promoted frustration for some students, especially those who struggled academically.

Community meetings on Friday frequently featured speakers who had unique jobs, (often related to service learning), which they explained to students as part of the presentation. One particular assembly occurred while I was there and a speaker described his experiences as an engineer during the Hurricane Katrina rescue operation. One student asked what the speaker's college major had been, and if it had been useful for what he does now. This unprompted question was from a seventh-grade student who appeared to understand that there had been some special preparation necessary for this profession.

The importance of college as a future for all students was woven into conversations during lessons. For example, one teacher used an interest inventory to begin a discussion of what careers students desired. The discussion moved from career desires to the types of colleges that students could attend to become broadcasters, architects, veterinarian's assistants, or translators. Another teacher compared the access American students have to a college education to the access in some foreign countries in an effort to have students think about the opportunities in this country. Many students in the class had parents who were not raised in the United States. A computer teacher assigned his students to investigate colleges that had majors related to each individual student's interests, and required the students to write letters to the colleges asking for information which would later be used in collaborative groups in an effort to heighten student awareness of higher education.

While the content taught in the classroom reflected the mission's intention of preparing all students for college, so did the school building. Hanging throughout the building were large banners encouraging students to "Reach for College." This repeated theme was accompanied by descriptors of an individual who "reaches" and exhibits qualities that reflect the school norms. Each classroom displayed the mission, and the handprint logo

symbolizing the REACH norms and mission were visible on the handbook and other school documents.

The Service Learning Component of the School Mission

The integration of service learning into the curriculum was a component of the school's mission statement and part of the school's internal accountability plan (see Appendix L for service-learning benchmarks). This integration was another way the school sought to balance the multiple accountability mandates from the state and charter authorizer with the school's mission. The school actively sought community partnerships in the local area and explored ways students could be involved in the environment surrounding the school. In 2005, the school was awarded two grants from local foundations for the purpose of establishing and maintaining service partnerships.

Winston Academy Charter School students were expected to spend approximately 100 hours per year applying academic work in context through service-learning groups. The performance goal for this aspect of the school's charter was assessed using four tools: (a) surveys and a focus group from an independent evaluator, (b) standards-based assessment reports, (c) REACH awards, and (d) service-learning presentations and curriculum documentation. The primary purposes of service learning were to introduce students to the concepts and skills involved in service learning, to become familiar with issues in their community, and to learn how they can help address these issues (Charter School Handbook 2005-2006). Groups of students engaged in one of three types of service learning: direct, indirect, or advocacy (see Appendix M for types of service). The term "service learning" was frequently heard in the building, and throughout the interviews, multiple individuals

contributed their interpretation of the goals, intentions, and practical applications of service learning.

In one classroom, students painted a large tarp with a mural that advocated the importance of respect. The teacher who was leading the youth council service group explained that the issue of respect was one the students felt needed to be promoted among their peers, and they had designed the banner collaboratively and were now painting it. The mural would hang in the school's hallway following a presentation explaining its purpose and intent. A store in the community had donated the tarp and paint, and the students planned to give back to the community by writing and acting out a play relating to respect that they would perform in other schools. In this example, students had identified an issue within the school community that they wanted to address, designed a response to the issue, and were then taking it to the larger community of other schools to promote awareness. The students were applying skills of debate, writing, and speaking through this youth council activity, and these were benchmarks from their English class.

One morning every other week was devoted to service learning, and students met with their service-learning groups in classrooms or in the community, (depending on the task for the day). During this time, students and teachers engaged in activities that promoted group unity and understanding, and began the five-step process of identify, research, plan, act and reflect. This process (see Appendix N for the 5-step process) was developed by the school founders and university researchers who were conducting a quantitative research project on service learning at the school. This five step format was a part of the school's mission that each group was expected by the head of school to use. Also consistent across the school were the weekly plans for service learning that used the same planning template as the

academic subjects. The plan included the key concepts, vocabulary, and daily objectives, and kept teachers accountable to the head of school by requiring that they turn in their lesson plans for service learning.

The culmination of this process was a week each trimester devoted to the final two parts of the process: act and reflect. During this week, regular classes were suspended; students met with their service-learning groups for the entire time and carried out the activity that had been planned throughout the trimester. Many of these projects involved leaving campus and becoming involved in various organizations, such as a homeless shelter or a center for adults with disabilities, making a presentation to elementary students, producing a film about the way community members view respect, and spray-painting drain covers with warnings (see Appendix O for other examples of service projects).

Students in the First Form changed service-learning groups each trimester. The service-learning concept was new to First Form students, so learning the process was important, according to the head of school. Second Form students remained in the same service-learning group for an entire year and their efforts followed a student-selected theme. This year's theme was that of respect, and various groups explored respect in multiple ways, examining its impact in the environment, family relationships, peer relationships, and the school setting. Ideally, service-learning groups were chosen based on interest or content area, but this was not always the case due to scheduling challenges. According to the head of school, the final outcome of service learning will be for seniors to present a thesis project or portfolio related to service learning as a graduation requirement.

In contrast to the clearly developed and consistently reported-on school norms and procedures, service learning was manifested in multiple forms and embraced by teachers

with varying degrees of understanding. According to the head of school, "the biggest challenges have been in planning and in execution," and many teachers also expressed this sentiment.

During most of the interviews, there was a discussion of service learning, usually in the context of a conversation on teacher accountability. Some teachers mentioned that it was the service-learning piece that attracted them to work in this setting and stated that they made the transition to Winston Academy Charter School because they had "been doing service learning for a long time … it was local [and] it was a new venture" adding, "The payoff is high for service learning." Others shared similar sentiments such as, " I've always thought service was great and it [became] a part of my life," "You can give of yourself so I really liked that piece and I think it applies here," and finally, "The service learning is what caught my eye."

Contrasting with those who chose Winston Academy Charter School based on the service component of the mission were those who expressed an initial lack of understanding regarding service learning, although they had read the mission statement prior to employment. A teacher who had been at the school since it opened stated, "I read the mission and it sounded like something I wanted to be a part of [but] I didn't really know what [service learning] meant … I never really knew about service learning until I got here." This teacher also stated, "The projects are all worth it in the end," and showed great enthusiasm by her animated voice, gesticulation, humor, and energetic manner when leading her class through the steps of their project.

Other teachers leading service-learning projects labeled themselves as "a person with zero service-learning background" and, although "committed to the idea [of service

learning]," expressed insecurity regarding their abilities. The comfort level of the teacher with service learning seemed to align with whether the project fell into his or her content area. The closer the project aligned with the content a teacher taught, the higher level of his or her comfort appeared to be. For example, one paraprofessional who assisted in science classes as students covered a unit on ecology suggested a service project for recycling and preserving forests. She belonged to an organization that focused on recycling and this translated into a project she co-led with the science teacher on recycling that encompassed both school and community. Observations of service-learning projects and conversations with teachers yielded three categories of understanding relating to this component of the school mission: (a) the high level of student engagement throughout the projects, (b) service learning as a work in progress, and (c) community and student benefits of service learning.

Student Engagement and Service Learning

Observations of service learning projects at Winston Academy Charter School revealed that they were was engaging and motivating for students, especially for those who had shared in the creation of the project, were given responsibility, and felt ownership. During service learning, students volunteered all at the same time, at times disagreed with their peers, usually because they wanted a more "important" task), and walked eagerly to a service-learning sites. Through the division of labor that occurred as each teacher facilitated a service-learning meeting, group members were accountable for tasks that contributed to the project as a whole. There was a great variance of student tasks, and students were involved in jobs such as writing grants, phoning businesses and community leaders, developing presentations, writing letters asking for support, shopping for supplies, designing a banner to reflect the group theme, and running a book fair. Although a teacher supervised all of these

tasks, the students were given responsibility and for the most part, completed the tasks in a productive manner, ultimately receiving kudos from their teachers regarding their positive work. During my second week at the school, students began to bring me samples of their work and copies of letters they had written, and their presentations, as a way to share their accomplishments.

By my third visit to the school, students were engaged in the week-long intensive service-learning component of the curriculum. This experience provided first-hand observations of the high level of student engagement and responsibility. Students conducted interviews in the community, built wooden crafts to sharpen their skills for park bench repair, operated the student store and book fair, and planned a day of respect by surveying their peers. Throughout this week, teachers invited me to visit their classes to see the finished projects or to come with them as they went out into the community to carry out the projects. They gladly shared the finished projects, gave credit to the students for their hard work, and showed pride in the work the students had accomplished. Teachers made comments about students like, "[they rose] to the occasion and [accomplished] tasks they had never done before," "[they found] their niche in a project for the homeless," "[they exhibited] empathy for others," "really [took] charge," and "[were] able to use their talents in the area of service."

The process for service learning, which stems from the internally developed benchmarks, was evidenced in an Arts Jam held one evening as a culmination of a service-learning project. Throughout the trimester, the First Form students had participated in the identification, research, and planning stages of the evening event. The service-learning week was devoted to the final stages of planning, as well as the "act" stage. Students had

developed fliers in advance, which were displayed around the city. All decisions regarding the evening were generated by group members and voted on by the entire group who sat in a circle on the floor. The teacher facilitated the discussion and centered it on student input.

The purpose of the event was to raise funds to benefit the arts program, and it was a success by both financial and attendance measures, as the room was full and all the seats were taken. The students transformed the multi-purpose room into a recognizable art gallery complete with couches, cozy enclaves, dimmed lighting, a stage area, and cheerful tables for four. Visitors looked at art as students took orders for drinks and snacks. Various parents and student amateur artists performed on stage, and a local poet read for an enthusiastic audience. The day following the event, the service-learning group completed the final step, reflection, and discussed the evening. The discussion generated positive and negative aspects of planning and procedures that they would use to guide future Arts Jams. The positives of the evening focused on attendance, money raised, and participation from many students. The negatives and suggestions generated for the following year related to event details such as room set-up, clean up, amount of food, and the way the food was distributed to the visitors.

A project carried out by Second Form students that focused on the theme of respect actively involved all of the group members in a different way. This group focused on the multiple forms of respect and disrespect, and presented their outcomes using multiple technology applications. The students wrote and filmed a play and interviewed people in the community about times they had felt disrespected. They also filmed areas of the city that contained litter or evidence of disrespect of property.

Although the final movie will be completed at the end of the last trimester, the students had learned to record and edit movies and had produced a product chronicling a

current issue of their choice to show to their peers, and eventually the community. The excitement of venturing into the city to collect interview data seemed to be motivating and engaging to students. Students across all grade levels appeared actively involved in their service-learning projects, and this was especially evident during the five consecutive days of service learning as they applied the first steps of service learning to the culmination project.

Winston Academy Charter School has an internal accountability performance goal related to service learning that states that students will demonstrate increasingly proactive participation in service learning activities as measured by an external evaluator and internal standards-based grading. This goal relates to the overall school mission of integrating service learning with course content, and the importance of this part of the mission was evident throughout the school. Although teachers described the experience of service learning with varying levels of understanding, innovative and intensive service learning was a key component of the internal accountability system at Winston Academy Charter School.

Service Learning and Curriculum Alignment

Most participants, while recognizing the value of service learning and its place as a part of the internal accountability of the school, reiterated that its purpose was a "work in progress" with more planning time needed. The intent of service learning stated in the school handbook was for it to be integrated with the curriculum and this was not consistently the case. According to the head of school,

> We do have service-learning benchmarks but that isn't quite right yet. Ideally, the way we see it is in the First Form they are learning about how to do this and then in the Second Form, it [will] be more tied to their classes. Then, when they graduate it [will] be a thesis or a portfolio that they have to pass.

The need to continue conversation on this topic was shared by one teacher who believed that "to do it properly we need more time . . . to plan . . . it has been everybody's frustration". Another teacher confirmed this sentiment by saying, "We've got a bit of time on Wednesday but that is not enough to plan for all-day activities," and "It [quality service learning] comes down to the time you've got to plan it."

Although the high level of student engagement reflected in service learning motivated teachers to be engaged in this type of learning, teachers expressed some elements of dissatisfaction given service learning's intended curriculum alignment, (especially with the academic standards and benchmarks), and they could not always see the relationship between content in the classroom and service learning. One teacher shared,

> The way we are doing it, it's not aligning with curriculum. If it [was] we would be weaving it into our classrooms which would be really difficult ... what we are doing [for service learning] we learned about last year and it's not woven in.

Another teacher experienced in service learning relayed a similar perspective regarding the visible challenge of integrating service learning with the content by stating, "My experience with service learning is to have it really connected to the curriculum. I feel like it's not connected very well at all ... so it's half-hearted."

The mission states that college preparatory classes will be integrated with service to the community and some teachers stated that the two were not integrated. The internally developed service-learning benchmarks (see Appendix L for service-learning benchmarks) do not list curricular integration as a measure of student success. It appears from the detail and success of some service projects that although they are not directly integrated with

course content, the benchmarks for student learning are still attained, and it may be the comfort level and work load of the teacher that affects the level of curricular integration.

The internal accountability mandate of involving students in service learning is attained by building time into the school day for students to participate in service projects. This involvement also satisfies the component of the mission relating to service learning as well as the external mandates, as many of the projects involve skills that are included on students' standards and benchmarks that are assessed externally by the state test. For example, during service-learning activities students write letters, make presentations, read newspapers to gain information, and keep records of expenses. All of these skills are listed as school benchmarks as well as standards for the state test.

Community and Student Benefits of Service Learning

The school mission stated that the intent of service learning was to serve the local community, and that the school was accountable internally to fulfill this part of the mission's mandate.

The areas of service for each group were determined in a variety of ways. As previously stated, some aligned with the benchmarks, and others stemmed from special interests of the students or teacher leader. All of the projects were intended to impact the community, and this appeared to be the case. For example, a group of First Form students adopted a shelter for the homeless as their project. Inspired by the passion of an individual student, the class completed the initial steps of the process by first identifying the topic and the specific questions they wanted to answer. Because homeless individuals were seen every day in this city, students had wondered how the homeless survive, especially in the winter,

and what they could do about it. To research the topic, the class invited a speaker and then determined what their stereotypes were and how these related to the truth about the issue.

The group then volunteered at a shelter, assisting in projects such as placing donated shoes into pairs and organizing the cans and shelves in the kitchen. The culmination activity was to transform their classroom into a "homeless awareness" presentation that included skits, poetry, financial information regarding homelessness, and a chance for students to donate money. Other classes and parents were invited to visit the final presentation. According to the head of school and the teacher who is leading this project, it will continue into the next trimester for some of the students, and the students plan to "take the presentation on the road to other schools, community groups and other organizations to encourage others to become active participants to help find a lasting solution for homelessness."

Observation revealed that these engaged students were concerned and empathetic about this issue and that they enthusiastically role-played the part of homeless people as they passionately performed the play they had written. Several students in particular, (who during previous observations of academic classes had not been active participants in class activities), played key roles in their service-learning group and invited me to visit their classrooms, come to their out-of-school projects, and handed me their presentations to read. Although not specifically integrated with a content area, woven throughout this project were activities relating to problem solving, writing, speaking, researching, and technology; all of these skills are listed as various content area benchmarks.

Another group of First Form students developed a project that involved visiting a daycare facility for older adults. The students had visited the facility throughout the trimester

and, as a final activity, designed various games and activities that they took to the facility and played with the adults. The students had created the activities and directions, and tested them on their peers before they could go on the final activity. This project benefited both the adults and the students and provided students with a respectful perspective on aging and some of its related issues and challenges. A final activity for this project was for students to use magazines to create a collage that exhibited stereotypes of the elderly. Students worked collaboratively on the collages and, from their conversations, it was evident they had an empathetic perspective on the lives of the older generation.

A First Form group sponsored a blood drive for the school faculty and the public; as a part of the process, they investigated the purposes of blood, the types, its importance, and stories of those who had received transfusions. Their final presentation involved transforming their classroom into multiple stations that viewers could progress through to learn about donating blood, blood types, and the need for blood donors. The presentation culminated with a creative puppet show in which red and white blood cells vied for dominance. These activities related to their science knowledge.

The benefits of service learning were greatest for students in the areas of increased responsibility and leadership. Because each student was given a task and held accountable by the teacher for its completion, interdependence among group members was fostered. Teachers also facilitated recognition of student accomplishments and gave them opportunities to affirm each other's leadership using strategies such as a web of compliments, a gratitude tree, and personal notes of recognition. Service learning also gave students the opportunity to present information in multiple forms that fit their own learning style. Students researched topics in groups and presented them to the rest of the group. Multiple

presentation modes were used including Power Point presentations, skits, poetry writing, raps, posters, and artwork. The final benefit to students was that those who had not previously acted as leaders or been vocal in discussions shone in the context of service learning. The lessened academic rigor and the knowledge that student's aptitude in service learning would not be assessed on a standardized test, allowed students who did not participate in regular classroom activities to take the lead; this increased their self-confidence and allowed them to use their talents.

The accountability transfers from the internal mission of increasing student leadership roles in service learning to teachers and finally to students was evidenced in the level of responsibility given to students throughout their projects. Although the goals of service learning included developing student awareness of the process, benefits, and steps involved, an additional outcome appeared to be the skills students developed. Students were given tasks different from their past experiences such as grant writing, calling the mayor, phoning public officials, working with wood, and comparing prices of products. The result of these tasks seemed to be life skills and non-classroom learning situations that provided a different type of learning that could not be measured by a paper and pencil test, as well as the confidence in a new skill.

Service learning was a critical part of the mission at Winston Academy Charter School and an internal accountability mandate as mentioned in chapter two. The school leaders were also held accountable by the state for the degree of alignment between what the school did and what it said it did. Negotiating the place and purpose of service learning in Winston Academy Charter School was an ongoing conversation and will continue to be as efforts persist to improve the delivery and curriculum alignment.

Teachers and the principal in Winston Academy Charter School balanced the service-learning aspect of internal and external accountability mandates by fostering a school climate and value system where the two can exist in harmony, each enriching and broadening the other. Although the seamless alignment of this part of the mission is a "work in progress," the clearly defined school mission that includes service learning, sets the stage for continued conversation on the articulation of service learning. The goals of the service-learning benchmarks such as active listening, drawing conclusions, designing action plans, and evaluation of solutions, are skills that are intended be transferred to core academic subjects and lead to increased student achievement on the external state assessment. In this way Winston Academy Charter School aligns the external mandates from the state with the internal accountability of the charter.

Diverse Students

Accountability for student outcomes is a main tenet of charter schools. It is also a problematic one due to the diverse populations that a school can inherit or acquire based on the lottery system. Good and Braden (2000) found that few charter schools had concrete plans for demonstrating a goal of accountability for all student populations. This was not the case for Winston Academy Charter School, and a concerted effort was made to demonstrate the goal of meeting the needs of all students.

The mission of Winston Academy Charter School states that it will account for student diversity and prepare all students for external assessment, thus balancing the internal and external mandates with school mission. Given that part of the external accountability mandates from the State Department of Education relate to how closely the school aligns with its chosen mission, the theme of accounting for student diversity surfaced throughout

the interviews and observations. Diversity within the school covered a broad spectrum: it was ethnic, economic, and academic. One teacher summarized the student diversity in this way:

> We have all kinds of diversity. We have students who are at the top of their class and probably could be advanced rapidly and work independent study internships. We have students who can barely read ...who don't know the English language very well but hide it really well or don't ...students that are very fluent, students who are very, very poor and work with their family business after school. We have a lot on free and reduced lunch, kids who have a passion for learning and kids who don't see the value in school at all, kids from stable families and those that are on the brink of divorce and kids that have had hellacious lives. Take any diversity and we have it here.

Providing an opportunity for each student to reach his/her potential was a value embedded in the charter school mission and practiced by the staff. Changes took place in student grouping, levels, and instruction throughout the year to facilitate the best learning environment for all students. "Giving kids what they need" was a phrase frequently heard in the building. Teachers used the phrase as they reflected on their current practices and to validate whatever changes were made.

Cultural and Ethnic Diversity

The school population was more ethnically diverse than that of the regular public schools. For example, students had roots in Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Russia, and Serbia as well as in other countries. According to the February 2005 board meeting minutes, door-to-door student recruitment had taken place in the local Latino community to inform families of the school and attract ethnically diverse students. Admission by lottery was

required under the state law, and this prevented selection bias and allowed the school to attract children who had struggled in the public school setting.

Students were expected to speak English at school but the recognition of cultural diversity was evident in classroom presentations, family trees and coats of arms displayed in the hallway, and in the Arts Jam performances. Teachers encouraged students to share their cultural diversity and explained how this is done as follows:

> A lot of our kids are proud of their culture. We obviously encourage them because we want to hear about their backgrounds. We try to incorporate it as much as we can. In biology when they studied ecosystems the teacher specifically tried to look at Cuba and Haiti and Jamaica We try to respect difference in culture.

Students brought cultural foods to school and were heard discussing their upcoming Quinceacnera parties, a coming-of-age party for Hispanic girls that is held on their fifteenth birthday. Girls were seen in hallway holding hands, which is also a cultural expression of affection, and although school policy required conversations in English and teachers reminded students of this policy, hallway conversations in other languages were frequently heard. The week of the Arts Jam, the dance group "Seis Chiquitas Lindas" practiced in the community room and was observed by another student who commented, "How do they do that?" The library, although small and lacking a full-time librarian, provided a selection of multicultural authors for students to choose from. Students seated at lunch tables exhibited a blend of various nationalities and shared conversations and laughs. The lunchroom assistant spoke in Spanish when it appeared her requests to some students in English were not being followed.

Many of the teachers had extensive experiences in foreign countries, either as citizens or for their schooling and as a result were bilingual. According to the teachers, these experiences helped them to promote a culture that reinforced multiculturalism, and their background knowledge provided understanding of cultural traditions and festivals.

I observed this at work during lunch as some girls discussed their coming-of-age parties and the foods and customs and dances. A teacher who had lived in South America actively participated in the conversation and asked about specific events as she had seen them in another country.

It was also evident in a Spanish class for native Spanish-speaking students. The head of school, as well as one of the administrative assistants at the front desk, were also bilingual and communicated in either English or Spanish when talking to parents.

Letters informing parents of events were sent home in English, Spanish, and Russian, which were the three principal languages spoken in the homes of Winston Academy Charter School students. During this study, the Department of Education visiting team spent time at the school, and invitations for parent participation in a focus group were sent home in three languages, an example of the school's recognition of its diverse student population.

Academic Diversity

Another example of diverse needs of students was evident in the academic realm. One teacher noted, "We are getting a lot of kids who are not succeeding in other schools." This phenomenon caused the school to attract students on both ends of the academic spectrum- gifted, and those needing special education services- whose parents felt they had not been effectively served in the regular public schools. On this same topic, an administrator said, "The public school is referring parents of special education students to this school."

Approximately 18 percent of Winston Academy Charter School students are on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The head of school restated the school mission of accounting for student diversity and preparing all students for college when referring to the needs of diverse learners by saying, "We have a diverse population, and very different experiences and skill levels coming into school, so we understand that we need high expectations so kids can meet them and be prepared for college." In addition, all students with the exception of low- functioning special education students must take the state assessment test. These students take an alternative assessment, which will be explained later, and English-language-learners also take a different version of the test.

Preparing students to meet high expectations when they do not arrive at school with the needed skill sets was a challenge cited by all the respondents. Despite this challenge, the school had specific plans in place to bridge the gap for students with deficits. Many of the classes were co-taught with a special education teacher in the room with the regular teachers. Students also went to the learning center throughout the day for extra help and some students had "double math" classes or "double English."

Special Education Students and English Language Learners

External accountability measures from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the state pressure on schools to produce students who are proficient, as this is the critical measure that enables schools to meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and avoid penalties (Ploeg & Thum, 2004). For charter schools, meeting AYP translated to remaining a viable organization (Fuhrman, 2003; Kim & Sunderman, 2005). Given the Act's incentives, the focus of schools is on nonproficient students, and it is not surprising that it can be increasingly challenging for schools to meet the needs of gifted or high achieving students.

A section of the law for the state in which Winston Academy Charter School operates reads, "A charter school shall be a public school and shall hold teachers and school administrators accountable for students' educational outcomes" (p. 3). The fact that all students must take the statewide comprehensive test has increased the urgency of the school to find ways to diagnose and remediate existing skill deficits. An executive summary released in the spring of 2005 from the state superintendent's association recommended that charter schools address the needs of students who benefit from special education and ELL services. Special education students' needs are being addressed in this school, as are those of ELL learners, because both of these populations need additional services to increase their achievement. Reflecting on the accountability data from the state, the governor recently stated that:

> The time has come to launch a renewed concerted effort to address the needs of our minority students. We must not allow our black and Hispanic students, or our students with special needs or limited English skills to lag behind. We must commit ourselves to giving them the help they need.

The school's mission of accounting for student diversity aligned with the governor's vision for special education and ELL learners, and also attempted to meet the needs of high-achieving students.

Winston Academy Charter School's mission states that the school will meet the needs of diverse learners, and special education students fall into this category. Preparing these students for college and using a rigorous college preparatory curriculum can present challenges. The school met this challenge by providing extra assistance for these students and maintaining high expectations for them. The goals of the mission applied to all students.

The needs of special education students were met by following their IEPs. The special education coordinator spoke of the high standards for all students in this way: "In the beginning, I was just like everyone else and thought I needed to protect them [special education students] and they do [need some protection], but they [special education students] need to be held to high standards because they can go to college."

She explained that her previous experience in the regular public school had left her frustrated, because students were not being served adequately. The mission and vision of this school matched her philosophy regarding special education students. She described her decision to work at Winston Academy Charter School in this way:

> I want to take a leadership role and to provide a continuum of special education services and to improvise at providing inclusion support and work with the teachers. I don't really want to create substantially separate classrooms for kids with … problems because as soon as we do, every single kids in grades 6 through12 will be sent here, because the services are appalling [in the district], and that is not what charter schools are suppose to do. We are supposed to give a choice.

She had been a part of the mission development prior to the school opening and believed that special education students should be taught in the regular classroom, provided with support, and given an equal chance to go to college. One way she provided this support was through resources she shared with other teachers that suggested practical ways they could differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners. She also worked closely with individual students, reteaching, reinforcing, and keeping them on track.

Both First and Second Form teachers recognized the diversity within their classes and described some of the techniques that were used. "We work really well with the special

education department," said one teacher, and described some specific teaching tools such as visuals, hands-on projects, project variations, different homework assignments, and interest-based choices. Several teaching designs are used within the school to assist learners: the co-teaching model, the pullout model, and a re-teaching model which focuses on specific skill deficits. Some students had different benchmarks. For example, a student remained in the same room as the rest of his class and worked on separate benchmarks from the rest of the class with the assistance of the special education teacher. Even though the benchmarks were different, the goal was to move the student to grade level by the time of the state assessment. Having a special education teacher in the regular classroom appeared to benefit all students, as students at all levels frequently huddled around the special education teacher as she provided explanations and assistance for all students. One teacher explained the model in this way:

> Having an extra teacher in the room benefits all students, not just the ones on an IEP. It also helps to have two teachers figuring out the best way to teach a concept. If something is not working, I ask my co-teacher. We also try to plan together to be sure we have all the various learning styles and levels.

Frequently, co-teachers were observed using visual or concrete examples to assist student understanding and this benefited all students as they worked toward content mastery and ultimately increased achievement. Since many students arrived at the school testing below grade level, extensive assistance for students was needed to prepare them for both internal and external assessments.

Students without IEPs were also given needed help when they were struggling. A paraprofessional worked with teachers to modify assignments, develop alternative

assignments and to be "general support" for the students. Another special education teacher described her job as follows: "I work not just with kids with IEPs. They are my main focus but I work with students who have questions." This was evidenced through observations as the co-teaching model provided extra support for many students. Some of these students did not take the regular state assessment but instead were assessed using a portfolio of their work. Only low-functioning students who are unable to read the test are exempted from the regular state test, but they must produce a portfolio of work samples. Two students at Winston Academy Charter School fell into this category.

Despite this, the school's goal was to have them progress on the school's internally chosen benchmarks, and as stated in the school's performance goals, to show one year's growth after being in the school for two years and meet grade-level proficiency while preparing for some form of higher education. Several teachers described parents' surprise and elation when they were informed that their child would be in the regular classroom and learn challenging content. I observed teachers working with small groups, explaining concepts in multiple ways to assist in student understanding, and several held the student's benchmark report in their hands, specifically directing their teaching to the unmet benchmark. One teacher said, "It is amazing to see what the special education students can learn. They have never been given the chance or high expectations, and I think this is the right and fair way to teach." Her belief in the mission of the school, and that all students can learn, motivated her to work hard at helping students gain benchmark mastery.

As students progressed along the benchmarks, their progress was charted. However, several stories were shared of situations that led staff to believe students were not progressing at the rate they should be. One situation resulted in a class being split, which enabled students

to be given more focused help. In addition to splitting the class, the students were provided with an additional math class during the day in the math learning center, which was designed for "students who are having difficulty in math."

At the end of each trimester the school has a reading week. For students who need extra help, the week is spent reviewing and completing sample problems similar to the state test. A teacher who had spent all of reading week working on fractions with a student described her week:

> We were working on particular benchmarks for a whole day; we practice it during the class, we practice it at night for homework, and then we come in the next morning and practice it again. Some students need to over-learn and practice a skill a lot to pass the benchmark.

This method of frequent reteaching was a strategy used to meet the needs of diverse learners and prepare them for the school and state assessments. Several teachers noted that these students had not succeeded in the past, and failure became the expectation, rather than the expectation to participate in a rigorous curriculum set by the charter school's mission.

Four days a week, students have a literacy block in the middle of the school day. This time allows them to read on their own level some media of their choice, and time is also allocated for students who need extra help in this area to have small group or one-on-one assistance. This built-in time provides a way for students to self-guide their reading, as well as to have enrichment or remedial literacy instruction. The state test has sections in both language arts and reading and literacy block instruction reinforces skills in both of these areas.

A special education teacher who worked with students who were not on IEPs but who had low math scores described the intense review of concepts students receive and stated that kids have at least "two opportunities per day" to work on their math. When questioned about the motivation behind the drive to build skills, the immediate response was, "the mission, that is our mission." This response was quickly followed by, "It also comes from inside me as well. I want to see the students be able to reach their potential and their potential at this school is to prepare them for college."

ELL students have additional English classes while other students take a foreign language. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires that limited English proficient (LEP) students be mainstreamed into all-English content and tested in English after three years in schools. The Act was intended to "ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education and reach proficiency . . ." (United States Department of Education, 2002, n.p.). The administrators at the school realized their accountability for assisting the LEP student meeting requirements and provided substantial assistance for these students and others at Winston Academy Charter School.

The external accountability mandates from the state remained in the forefront of teachers' minds. Many referenced the state test in discussions of "giving students what they need" and realized this translated into additional instructional time to prepare students for the state test.

The internal mandate from the mission to provide students with a rigorous curriculum integrated with the external state testing demands encouraged teachers to recognize diversity and provide special education students with additional instruction and high expectations and assist them in increasing their achievement.

Gifted Students

Also attending Winston Academy Charter School were students whose academic needs were not being met in their previous school due to the lack of rigor and challenge, according to their parents. One teacher noted that meeting the needs of advanced students is a common challenge for all schools and for Winston Academy Charter School as well. She explained, "Parents are frustrated because nobody's meeting their needs. They are fairly independent ...they read it [information on a topic] on their own because their parents have bought them books. I do not see it as uncommon [here]."

A small percentage of students had been identified as gifted, and although these students did not have an IEP, the teachers attempted to enrich the curriculum for these students. Overall, the sense of urgency that existed for below benchmark students did not exist for those who had mastered them or who were far above the class in ability and aptitude, perhaps because the external accountability mandates created a sense of urgency for students to be proficient, not to exceed benchmarks. Two teachers commented on students who were high achievers. The first stated,

> We do a really good job here at meeting the needs of the average, of the low, and of the special education students. The hardest piece is the kids that are really high and most likely have seen the most material. We have been working on this and had lots of discussion on what we can do to push these kids farther.

The teacher shared some of the enrichment strategies she used such as explorations, differentiated projects, and homework. The second teacher who addressed this issue described a particular student. "He will be done before everybody else and does not disrupt

class but it is kind of unfair to him to be just sitting there and wasting his time so I give him an extra reading."

Curriculum differentiation for high-level students was also discussed at the teacher in-service meetings. Teachers in small groups discussed possible advanced placement courses for students as well as alternate texts and independent studies on student-chosen topics. During service learning week, high achieving students were given independent tasks such as drafting letters to community members, phoning the mayor's office, and other general leadership tasks. Students also had an opportunity to participate in Destination Imagination competitions and choice block courses that concentrated on a specific skill at a higher level, but as evidenced by information from teacher interviews, more time was spent on "remedial kids," and "catching them up."

Winston Academy Charter School spent considerable time planning its internal accountability system and the strategies it implemented to meet the needs of diverse learners before the school opened its doors. The school founders planned specific ways they would attempt to meet the needs of all their students through multi-age groupings, tutoring, ELL classes, curriculum differentiation, enrichment opportunities for advanced students, and a literacy block each day.

Developing Students of Strong Character

Although many teachers spoke with consistency regarding the specific nature of the standards, benchmarks, and other areas within the academic arena, these same teachers identified a need for specific attention to be directed toward the character training component of the school mission. Graduating individuals of strong character was a part of the school mission, however, it was not an element with clear implementation and strategies.

Examination of the school's accountability plans pertaining to students revealed performance goals that describe academic achievement, college preparation, service learning, and the expectation to uphold school norms. The school norms of responsible, empathetic, assertive, cooperative, and honest students reflected a student with "strong character" (Charter School Mission, 2005), but conversations with teachers indicated a lack of an intentional plan to accomplish this element of the school mission.

The accountability for increased student outcomes that charter schools experience can steer the focus of a school toward academics, and; this was acknowledged by the head of school. She described the social and character element of their school's situation as follows:

> The academic piece is tangible, whereas the social aspects are harder and more difficult to grab a hold of. We need to work on this. They are coming second, and that [character education] is also a top priority for us.

The Charter Application (2002) states that student's character development is an important aspect of the school. In addition, the REACH norms are evident throughout the building, and students can explain what they represent, but there is not a program in place specifically designed to develop character and provide guidance for students about how they should relate to one another, show respect, and recognize the value in diversity.

Teachers revealed concerns with the way students treated each other; they found it "disheartening" to see students acting disrespectfully toward each other and, although they recognized it as typical of the age of the students, believed there should be a program in place to "get kids to respect each other or be more empathetic . . . [because] they have no idea what they are doing." Another teacher reflected on the challenge of getting kids to go beyond fear, safety, and survival issues that they face in their home environments to get to the point of

being ready to address the character development part of the mission. A Second Form teacher believed that character education should encompass community-building activities, so students understand how to "be a human being to another human being."
Although I observed this teacher engaging students in community building activities such as peer compliments, problem solving, and moral dilemma activities, she believed a school-wide focus on character was necessary to foster increased morale and kindness at the school.

The character development goal of the mission was an issue of discussion in an interview with the counselor and the nurse as well as with several teachers, and the code of conduct committee recognized the need to solidify this area of internal accountability and to "focus on the development of character." Several mentioned the need for a point person in the form of a dean of discipline who could handle issues in a consistent manner. Although a person in this position would dole out consequences in line with the code of conduct, the issue of character was described as more complex than an individual in a position of authority and seemed to align with the issue of school culture. One teacher shared thoughts on this issue: "Kids are a critical part of this community, and we need the culture piece [and] that is more difficult to figure out." Another teacher found the inconsistency of no clear system of "showing kids how to behave" to be troubling and "on my mind a lot."

Addressing the issue of social behavior was a concern for the school staff. Several teachers alluded to a belief that teaching social skills is just as important as teaching academic skills, and without social skills, the academics are going to be impeded.

A teacher who had been a part of the school prior to its opening mentioned the head of school's strong ideas about the character component of the mission. The belief in the importance of character development resonated through the respondents' comments;

however, the reality of accountability for academic achievement and the consequences for failure to produce (Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000) loom large, and according to the head of school, determining "what is urgent versus what is important" is a constant challenge. Charter schools are mission-driven and built around a unifying vision but their freedom to be different is at times inhibited by external demands. There seemed to be agreement among the staff that character development needed to be at the forefront of future discussions at staff in-services, but other issues, such as curriculum implementation, students not meeting standards, and the details of service learning, took time to work out, and time was always in short supply.

Charter School Mission as a Building Block for School Activities

A charter school has its mission underlying all school activities (Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000). At Winston Academy Charter School, the mission set the day-to-day activities of the school and the value and precedence that were placed upon certain teaching methods, curriculum, and allocation of time and resources. When a charter school mission is clear and specific, the school is better able to translate its mission into practice (Wohlstetter & Griffin, 1998), and this leads to outcomes in student achievement and school procedures that can be measured against the school's internal and external accountability parameters. Balancing the mission with internal and external mandates involves a well-developed mission, as in this school, and a deliberate alignment of the mission mandates with what the school is expected to be accountable for, both internally and externally

Accountability to the charter school mission is one form of measurement of success in most states, including the state in which Winston Academy Charter School is located. The individual school mission at Winston Academy Charter School played a primary role in

focusing and directing the school activities and functioned as a building block for the day-to-day operations of the school. A criticism of charter-granting agencies is that they struggle with how charter school missions fit into existing state and district standards and testing regimes (Hill et al, 2000). This leads to a central dilemma of charter school reform and the seemingly paradoxical decision by state education policy makers to create schools that are less constrained by district level curricular restraints while simultaneously introducing uniform statewide curriculum standards and assessments (King, 2004).

Accountability theory posits that the increased accountability required of charter schools will allow for autonomy and schools will choose innovative curricula and instructional strategies that will increase student achievement. The reality the relationship between accountability, autonomy, and innovation is often more complicated because many of the defining purposes and visions of charter schools, such as safety, character, and discipline, are nonacademic in nature and do not lend themselves to traditional forms of accountability such as a single standardized test (Wells, Vasudeva, Holme, & Cooper, 2002). The school in this study deliberately streamlined its curriculum around the existing state standards as a way to accomplish part of its mission and prepare students to meet external accountability demands from the state. The internal accountability demands, which also fulfill a part of the mission, call for a variety of specific instructional strategies as a way to ensure that all students receive high-quality instruction and reach a certain level of competence in core subject areas that are measured by the state assessment.

Winston Academy Charter School chose to align its curriculum with state standards and benchmarks and, using these as a foundation, it developed its own individual benchmarks. The words of the mission were not simply rhetoric stored in a binder in the front

office to be read by state officials and board members; this mission was a part of the ethos of the school; was easily discerned; was visible throughout the facility on walls, banners, and student planners; and was understood by students, staff, and parents. The application of the school mission led to an explicit mindset that guided school activities and functions. It was spoken about, visible throughout school activities, used as a barometer for school effectiveness, functioned as a lens for reflection, and was reinforced by the leadership.

The mission of Winston Academy Charter School was "to provide a research-based education mode, integrating college preparatory classes with service to the community that accounts for student diversity, and will graduate informed, articulate, and proactive individuals of strong character" (Charter School Mission, 2002). The school sought to fulfill the mission of preparing students for college by aligning its curricular content with the state standards and benchmarks and by requiring that teachers use varieties of specific instructional strategies in their lesson plans. In addition to required strategies, specific norms and expectations for classroom operation had been determined by the head of school and were a part of the internal accountability for teachers.

Norms and Procedures

An area of internal accountability that all respondents identified related to a set of procedures and norms required by the head of school that all teachers were expected to use. The anticipated result of implementing consistent norms and strategies was that the focus of teachers would be on instruction and learning, and student achievement would increase, which would lead to fulfillment of accountability mandates. Implemented in the school's second year, teachers in every classroom were observed using a common set of techniques that was intended to provide similarities among all classes. The daily content, listed as

"students will be able to" (SWBAT) was displayed on the whiteboard in the same place each day. Students were trained to understand that upon entering a classroom, they will find an assignment called a "do now" for their immediate completion, the benchmark and content to be covered that day, the agenda for the class time, and the homework assignment.

Most teachers identified these norms for classroom procedures immediately when asked what they were accountable for as teachers. The administration held teachers accountable to these procedures to increase time on task to facilitate accomplishing the benchmarks, increase student achievement, and maintain a positive learning environment. One teacher commented that "it is good to have [the procedures] be something that somebody is holding me accountable for" and another referred to these expectations as "pretty high, but they are the clear ones that you can pin down" and finally, one referred to them as useful so "kids know where to find stuff consistently from class to class." Every teacher seemed to recognize these procedures as part of the school norms that were developed to assist in the learning process. Despite identification of these procedures by all teachers and evidence of them in all classrooms, the value teachers placed on them differed among teachers. It appeared that the First Form teachers were more structured in the use of the procedures and reviewed them with students, prior to beginning class. They also expected their students to enter the room and begin work immediately, minimizing any conversations between students. Although procedural information was on the boards of all Second Form teachers, their interpretation of the importance of the norms seemed to differ from First Form. The classes began with more student conversation and socializing and students did not appear to begin work as quickly as the First Form students and fewer teachers made reference to the information on the board. One Second Form teacher noted the "feeling" they

got from First Form teachers that they "were not strict enough and not using the procedures like they should". Two Second Form teachers noted that classroom norms were interpreted differently and one saw this as an area of concern:

> We need to be more consistent across grade levels. Students talk to each other and we need to have a conversation about this. If we think these [procedures] affect learning, then we need to do them the same, or have two separate sets [of procedures] for different grade levels.

Comments from teachers in both forms seemed to indicate that although required, the norms and procedures were interpreted differently and this was perceived by the head of school as a drawback.

During observations in several classes, teachers commented to the students that the "do now" looked much like a standardized test question. While explaining the difference between assonance and consonance, for example, one teacher asked the class, "Do you think the [state test] will try to trick you? We will have a practice test next week." The teacher wanted her class to understand the importance of her information and that it was on the state test in a similar format. This statement exhibited the primary role the state test, an external accountability demand, plays in directing the content for instruction. Another teacher, in an effort to prepare her First Form students for the state test stated, "one of your benchmarks for this is … there are many ways to do this, so let me model for you." She was showing them the various ways the questions could be worded on the state test and that the benchmarks the students were mastering were on the test, if in a different format.

Less clearly delineated than the procedure for starting a class and the criteria of what to have on the board was the style of individual teacher classroom management expected by

the head of school. Although this was not explicitly stated by the handbook or in the school's instructional methods, some teachers perceived that there was an expected style of teaching and classroom order, and teachers who did not align directly with what they perceived as the expectation (although it was not stated) felt that disapproval was directed toward them (although not in an overt manner). When probed about these perceptions, several teachers made reference to quick drop-ins from the head of school and the negative facial expressions they had perceived from the head of school. The teachers felt that the head of school had a somewhat critical opinion of their teaching strategies and although the teachers did not provide concrete examples, several teachers mentioned this perception. The statement, "I don't think we match," was used by one teacher to describe how one teacher felt regarding his/her style and what he/she perceived as that of the school mission.

Other teachers mentioned the various interpretations of "student-focused," the words used to describe a strategy the school embraced. Another mentioned that his/her style (more informal) did not necessarily mesh with the school expectations, although the teacher could not list what the expectations were, other than the expected procedures. This teacher also made reference to a feeling he/she got from the head of school that his/her work was at times less than adequate. Several others mentioned the phrase, "urgency of learning," as one frequently heard in school discussions and aligned this phrase with a particular type of teaching- that of students quietly working at their seats. Although the teachers readily and consistently identified the school expectations stated above, few could describe what *was* go expected in a classroom, except to say that there was an expectation of the way the class should operate. Several teachers did describe what was necessary in a classroom for them to

accomplish the task of covering content: quiet and focused students with a high level of structure.

Although the norms and procedures for beginning a class were explicit, the remainder of the class procedures were not, and this led to a perception among some teachers that they were not aligning with the desires of the head of school. What emerged from these implicit expectations was that teachers understood that a standards-based curriculum may promote a particular type of teaching and classroom environment that did not mesh with the image of the standards-based teacher they envisioned. Teachers at Winston Academy Charter School felt accountable to "perform effectively," but the way this was implemented in every-day schooling had not been solidified.

Teacher Accountability to School Mission

The central idea of charter school accountability theory, that if schools have greater autonomy and control over the educational programs, then greater demands can be placed on educational performance (Buckley & Wohlstetter, 2004), was reflected in the responses of the teachers to questions regarding their accountability to internal demands from the school and external demands from the state. The internal accountability of the school called for students to become increasingly informed and articulate through measurable academic achievement (also an external mandate), and to be prepared to succeed in college. These internal mandates were accomplished, in part, by tasks the teachers performed or efforts they made toward student preparation. All of the teachers made reference to the fact that the internally developed school standards were chosen because students needed to be prepared for the state test. Several stated that "our daily lesson plans list the benchmark we are covering for the day, and we know they are going to be on the state test." Four teachers made

reference to the fact that the school's viability was dependent upon how well the students do on the assessments, both internal and external. Teachers were aware of the consequences for themselves, such as loss of job and the school's potential closure, if students did not perform well. Student achievement was a part of the internal teacher evaluation process completed by the head of school. The process was part of the yearly teacher evaluations and determined a teacher's contract renewal. The school's state AYP report that listed the percentage of students who passed or failed the state test was printed in the newspaper each year. Three respondents pointed to the fact that parents and others were waiting to see how the charter school fared.

When teachers were asked why they chose a charter school environment in which to teach, the majority indicated that it was because of the educational philosophy, the like-minded colleagues, and because they liked the idea of a new school and a new venture. A teacher who had taught in other charter schools commented on the rigorous expectations for teachers:

> I had no idea that this [job] would be so much work. We are expected to record a lot of student information. We have to keep a notebook up to date, and in it are standards, benchmarks, unit plans, and all types of assessments and work samples.

Other teachers described the extended time they spent on weekends or evenings getting caught up on planning and completing the required curriculum binder (discussed below).

The responses of the teachers at Winston Academy Charter School indicated their desire to take on new challenges within the boundaries of increased levels of accountability that were placed upon them, both internally from the school and externally from the state. Although the expectations from the school aligned with most teachers' beliefs and values,

over half expressed frustration with the amount of time they spent at school after the students had left for the day on meeting internal accountability demands. This combined with the already extended school-day and year leaves little time for non-school and personal activities and caused some to question whether they would remain at the school the following year.

The state standards and benchmarks provided the structure for course content and were integrated with the school's internally developed learning goals and benchmarks. This in turn dictated what teachers were accountable to teach, and the head of school assessed their coverage of this information. Each teacher had a curriculum binder (see Appendix P for curriculum binder table of contents) that listed the state standards and benchmarks, as well as additional benchmarks the school had designed, and this content was intended to direct daily teaching lessons as well as to prepare the students for the state assessment. Also included in the curriculum binder were yearly overviews, semester outlines, unit plans, and lesson plans (see Appendix Q for templates of lesson and unit plans). Weeks of planning and discussion by the staff over the previous summer led to the development of the binder's content and the additional information that each content area teacher felt should be added to the existing state benchmarks. For example, a history teacher described the content he added to the acceptable state benchmarks indicating that, without this information, students would not have a complete background. He shared,

> This year I am teaching ancient civilizations . . . but I've also decided to put in a unit on India and China, which I am not required to teach, but I'm not going to teach my kids about ancient civilizations without mentioning Asia and Latin America.

This teacher viewed the accountability of the state's history benchmarks and the requirements of the school's curriculum binder as "comforting" because they directed his

teaching, yet he still had autonomy to insert additional content he deemed necessary to accurately portray history. Based on the content of what he taught, he stated that his students would do well on the state test.

The head of school examines the binders on her walk-throughs and at other times during the year to determine if the teachers are keeping documents filed and that their current lesson plans are being followed. Commenting on the head of school's walk throughs and presence in their classrooms, one teacher explained:

> At the beginning of the year, she was in our rooms a lot more, and she was visible for more than just discipline issues. Then we had some problems with teachers, and after Christmas, we were short two teachers and she [head of school] had to fill in the gaps and teach. Also the deputy head of school is on leave, and we are short an administrator. She [head of school] kind of does everything and can't be in our rooms like she used to be. Some things just don't get done [binder checks, room visits].

The importance of this internal accountability from the school of teacher record keeping and planning was not reduced, but it was monitored less frequently as the year progressed. Despite the infrequency of the binder check, teachers continued with their original curricular plans, perhaps due to the potential consequence of poor teacher evaluations or potentially low student test scores.

Several times teachers offered their binders to me so I could see the format and the planning involved in them. It appeared to be an effective record of teachers' activities and students' goals although it appeared to be a time consuming task to remain current with plans and records.

The head of school required that each teacher would develop the upcoming week's lessons and the corresponding benchmarks the week prior to implementation and post them electronically for her to view. During interviews, both teachers and the head of school discussed this procedure. This requirement was part of the teacher's contract that stated what he or she would do as an employee of the school. One teacher explained the process:

> In my curriculum binder, I have my plans for the year so I know what I am going to teach next. What I don't always have time to do until the weekend is get the details of the upcoming week on paper and sent to [head of school].

The binders are effective tools for organizing plans, especially if teachers use them the next year, but it seems that they are not kept as current as was intended.

The head of school commented that the thoroughness of this requirement is much greater than other schools where a teacher "fills in a little box, and the principal signs off on it." She believes this system increases accountability and provides a window into the classroom for her.

This internal accountability of detailed record-keeping in the binders, developed by the head of school and other school founders, was intended to keep teachers on track toward completing their yearly plan and was used to inform the head of school of student progress and alignment of instruction with benchmarks. According to the head of school, the process functioned in this way,

> I can see by a click of my mouse . . . I can see what we are working on this week and are we where we are supposed to be [according to the yearly plans]. Using our management information system, I can click on the benchmark summary and if it says

> that someone [a student] is at 30 percent [of concept mastery] and we are 50 percent of the way through the year . . . this worries me.

A detailed management information system enabled this high level of teacher accountability and tracked individual student progress along the continuum of the standards and benchmarks. All student data, including nationally normed standardized assessments, state tests, and internal assessments were accessible via the school's information management system.

Teachers were required to record information gathered weekly from classroom standards-based assessments that measured students' progress toward standards. Teachers and the head of school used the information to adjust curriculum and instruction. Discussions regarding curricular adjustments, modifications, or additions were held during professional development time and at summer teacher workshops. The executive director, head of school, and the Board of Trustees reviewed the data on student achievement and other key school outcomes quarterly to ensure that the school was fulfilling the part of its mission that related to preparing students for college and developing individuals who were informed, articulate, and proactive through standards-based instruction.

Curricular differentiation was recorded in the binders and in the lesson plans, so the head of school could assess how multiple student needs were being met. The need to differentiate and meet multiple needs of so many students added to the tension some teachers experienced. One teacher explained this system as follows:

> What we teach is tuned directly to the state standards, so if you keep that in mind and you want to put that in broader perspective, since the [state test] is tied to the state

> standards and benchmarks and our benchmarks are tied to the state standards then you could say everything we teach is geared to preparing students for the state assessment.

Other teachers commented that it was not the state test that guided their teaching, but instead the Winston Academy Charter School benchmarks that were tied to the standards. One teacher explained this as:

> The subject I teach is not on the state test, so it [the state test] is not on my mind at all. In a couple of years, it will be. Now I focus on our [school] benchmarks that in the broader perspective are tied to the state benchmarks.

Another teacher described the benchmarks in this way:

> It is the blessing and the curse of [subject area]. The blessing is that you don't have to worry about the state test and the curse is no one cares about you because of that. [Subject area] is the ugly-stepchild of classes because it is not being tested.

The responsibility teachers felt to cover the content was increased when their subject area came under the scrutiny of not only internal accountability, but also external demands from the state.

During community meetings that were held each Friday, students were recognized for academic improvement in their core courses and for progress in increasing their scores on the practice version of the state assessment. Students took the practice test three times during the year in anticipation of the official test, which was given in the spring, and students who increased their scores by the largest percentage, were the most improved, or obtained the highest scores, were recognized publicly. This community practice reinforced the importance of the state assessment and meeting the benchmarks, recognized students who were

improving, and confirmed the high level of internal expectations that stemmed from the school's mission and external accountability from the state for both teachers and students.

While teachers were accountable to the head of school to teach their regular course load, they were also expected to provide after-school tutoring. This duty was a part of their contract. Students were informed upon matriculation of the need to remain at school for tutoring if they fell below a 70 percent on a benchmark in any core subject. Intended as a stopgap to prevent failure, one content area teacher held an after-school session devoted to tutoring each day of the week. One teacher shared a perspective on the positives of tutoring:

> I like to couch it [as] we want all students to succeed, and tutoring is a chance to bring [their] grades up… you get the kids engaged again and they keep learning the material until you get it in their brain[s].

This teacher also emphasized that the goal of teaching is to impart knowledge, and she believes she has an implicit obligation to help students achieve mastery. Another teacher shared a similar perspective: "We do several things in tutoring to help them succeed. One is a smaller group that allows for modifications of assignments. I can also isolate skills to work on and really drill them."

Teachers believed that the extra time they spent tutoring students gave students an additional chance to succeed and enabled the teachers to provide additional instruction in areas where students struggled. However, it added even more responsibilities.

Leadership, Interactions, and the School Mission

The head of school played a large part in helping create the balance between internal and external accountability mandates and the school's mission. Abelmann et al. (1999) cited leadership as crucial to responding to the demands for accountability and noted that the

schools best prepared to respond are those with strong principals willing to develop and nurture a common vision and mission. The head of school functioned as a curriculum leader who assisted teachers with the implementation of the school mission.

Sarason (1998) spoke to the need for vision clarity if charter schools are to meet their internal and external accountability mandates. At Winston Academy Charter School, the two are interwoven and although the state looks at nontest indicators for accountability, it is the student test scores that determine school sustainability (Linn, 2004). Recognizing this tension, one teacher shared his/her idea about the head of school's role in negotiating the mandates: "She does a great job at providing instructional support and leadership and feedback," and "I think she keeps us on track with the mission." The head of school attempted to keep the teachers focused on teaching the content and tried to assist them in this area to move toward the outcome of increased student achievement. Her desired role (that she described for herself) was to help teachers balance the accountability mandates from both the state and the charter.

The vision, zeal, and doggedness of charter school founders are, according to Finn, Bierlien, and Manno (1996), critically important to the successful launch of charter schools. These charter school founders, "often incredible dedicated, committed, and tenacious individuals," (p. 8) play a critical leadership role in the governance of their school and the design and implementation of the school mission. The head of school at Winston Academy Charter School played a key role in translating the school mission from written format to living directive. Instrumental in the initial vision of the school, through her initiative the school went from a dream to a reality, and the fact that she had developed the mission gave her in depth knowledge and passion, and she stated that this guided her purpose throughout

the day. The head of school expressed her accountability to the school groups in the following manner, "I feel accountable to the teachers and to the families and the students and that is my world here. I am also accountable to our board of trustees and the state." In separate conversations, she expressed her additional accountability to the mission of the school.

Preserving the mission and its implementation was a large part of her job. The mission, well defined prior to the school opening, guided the content of the staff development days, the conversations she had with staff, and the statements she made. She performed a variety of tasks within the school, such as teacher evaluations, staff development, meetings with the Department of Education, public relations with the community and district, and monitoring of student progress. Her duties were increased during the period of fieldwork when the depute head of school took a leave of absence. A teacher who had been at the school since its origin described the head of school's role as "supporting the staff, a resource person, scheduling ... she does it all."

The head of school was described by teachers as easily approachable, willing to listen, and responsive to their needs. One teacher who had been at the school since the beginning shared that it was "the engaging presence [of the head of school] that attracted her to work," and that "[the fact that they] share a lot of desire for school reform" was what kept her at Winston Academy Charter School. Other teachers commented that the head of school "empowers teachers" and "expects that teachers [will be] assertive and will raise issues." Several teachers commented that the head of school challenges them positively, that they can go to her with any issue, and that she is a part of a team, she will listen.

Some teachers explained that they viewed the head of school as very concerned with the mission of the school, yet at times it seemed she was not as concerned about other issues like staff morale and teacher workload, issues that were significant to them. They acknowledged that her focus was on the "health and sustainability of the school." Several teachers spoke about the clear accountability measures that the administrator reinforced, and viewed them as a positive because "here, expectations are clearer, and I don't have to figure out what to do on my own." Relating to the idea of aligning missions were statements about the head of school and teachers' relationships:

> Being all on board here to try to help kids succeed and the [head of school] will sit down with me and try to attack a problem as best she can. She is a support for the staff and also a resource for curriculum ideas.

Although many teachers recognized the head of school as a factor in keeping the mission alive and visible, others felt she was too preoccupied with the big picture and ignored other tasks they felt were necessary, such as helping enforcing the dress code and engaging more with students. When questioned about her main role at the school, she described her position as one typical of a curriculum director. Her desired role had been compromised as another administrator, who had been in charge of discipline, was gone and the head of school had to assume many of the necessary disciplinary actions. Her office was frequently used as a holding place for students who had been removed from their classrooms and were awaiting a consequence for their inappropriate behavior.

Some teachers felt the head of school did not provide as many positive reinforcements as they would like, especially in recognizing a job well done. One teacher shared, "It [positive reinforcements] means a lot, and when you don't hear it from other

adults in the building, it is tough." Another offered advice to anyone starting a charter school; he/she recommended, "You better really feed your teachers praise that's real, and you need to be able to take a pulse on how they're feeling, because if you don't know how they are feeling, it is going to get ugly fast." Reinforcing the idea that some teachers felt they need more recognition regarding their positive efforts in working toward the school mission, another shared, "Teachers need nurturing."

In self-analysis, the head of school supposed that teachers would identify interpersonal relationships as her weakness, and she recognized this as an area for improvement. She reflected:

> At the end of the day, I would say that teachers would say that I am worse at the every day constructive criticism and praise. I appreciate them a tremendous amount... so I think I am worse at that then the big picture stuff. I think I really should have praised [name of teacher] more and what a fabulous lesson to push [students] toward higher-level thinking, but I think that stuff is sort of hard for me.

She also reflected on the multiple tasks of running a school and believes the experience is "really humbling. and you never feel like you are on top of your game. That is for sure."

The head of school, as well as several teachers, stated that the time the school spends problem solving is immense, partly due to the newness of the school and partly because many problems are unique. Despite this, a concerted effort was made to handle issues internally, and teachers, administrators, parents, and the counselor could often be seen in meetings, working through problems or complex situations. As noted by one teacher, "The payoff for working things out ourselves is huge, and each time we learn more about ourselves and have more ownership in our school community."

A common gathering place for short breaks and conversations was a small kitchen off the main hallway. As teachers gathered there over the lunch break, the head of school often stopped by to visit with teachers and strategize, discuss student issues, and gather collective input for a decision. Statements such as, "Why don't I put out an e-mail and see what everyone wants," or "She [individual student] does not seem to get it [discipline issue]; what should we do?" were expressed by teachers. At a staff meeting, the head of school used a decision-making strategy (heads down, hand up) to determine staff opinion on shortening winter break versus getting out later at the end of the school year. She also solicited input regarding an earlier start to the school day, although she relayed information from the board of trustees that reiterated that this decision was "a philosophical piece of the school mission to keep the late start for adolescents and reduce the after-school risk time." Although the head of school attempted to align each decision with the school mission, she valued input and reflection from the staff who, according to her, "had insight that I might not have" and "understand that I am mission focused," and the head of school strove to keep the teachers informed of changes that might affect them or their students. One teacher noted the amount of time spent talking and stated, "Sometimes we end up talking around issues too long, but I like the fact that we have time and there is a place to really sit down and reflect and we can make it [school mission] work." At a trustee meeting, the head of school presented the consensus of the teachers on an issue, and she also surveyed them anonymously to determine views on various issues like future classroom locations, the potential for two learning centers, and formats of in-services.

The head of school kept the staff abreast of the board of trustee discussions-especially those that impacted their teaching the most. One example was a discussion

regarding facilities. As the school expanded and added grade levels, the importance of keeping the school commitment to smaller class sizes became a factor in decision-making. The fact that the school had grown so rapidly that year had produced a lack of clarity in some mission-related issues, and the head of school felt it was critical to reduce the rapid growth the upcoming school year and "maintain stability." The school had made a commitment to expand facilities, which translated into increased financial output without the expected financial input from increased student numbers. As the head of school explained, "Less 20 students times $10,000 equals a deficit, but we do not want to expand a lot of students or staff." Her plea to continue to shape school policy, even at the risk of tight finances, seemed well received by the teachers.

As an instructional leader guiding mission alignment, she hired teachers who were "not only smart and dedicated, but also philosophically aligned with the school's mission and methods." Regarding hiring teachers who aligned with the vision, she explained her perspective:

> Being able to hire folks who are really on board with the mission, someone who has taught diverse populations, someone who is creative and excited about doing service and then being able to explicitly convey what that is and what that means and then make sure those conversations happen so that all the staff, not just [when] the administration is looking …is this our mission, and if so, what should we be doing? There is more disparity than I would like.

This statement was in the context of a conversation about roadblocks to carrying out the mission, and she expressed awareness that the mission "may look different throughout the school." Implicit in this statement is the recognition that initial understanding of the mission

is not enough, and there must be constant review for all teachers- not just the newly hired. The internal accountability demands from the school require that student achievement increase and although school norms, procedures, and instructional strategies are in place, it seems that they are interpreted differently among teachers, so the mission might "look different." There seemed to be a discrepancy within the school between the mission on paper and the missions in action.

In addition to hiring teachers subscribing to the mission, a prospective teacher's previous experience with a standards-based curriculum was important. This was evidenced in this statement: "In the ideal world, I am looking for someone who has worked in a standards-based school and is dedicated to standards-based teaching."

A teacher with this experience would have an understanding of the importance of aligning his or her teaching and classroom assessments with the standards in an effort to prepare students for the state test.

The head of school discussed a mutual accountability between her and the staff. She recognized that they chose to work at the school, have longer hours than regular public school teachers, and to not be compensated for extra duties because they were attracted by the school's newness and its mission and vision. Recognizing their hard work, she explained, "The first people I feel accountable to are the teachers. If we are not doing well at holding ourselves accountable to staff . . . then it is really hard for us to achieve our goals with the state." She understands that she must "keep promises to teachers and provide a collegial environment where classroom practice is not always changed by mandates on high" (Hill, Lake, & Celio, 2002, p. 38). She realized that if teachers do not perceive that they have a voice, and if the mission to which they were initially attracted is minimized, they may leave

as a consequence. She explained the frustration of getting caught up in administrative issues and meetings that take her away from working on mission alignment. In addition, the cumulative consequence of students not achieving desired external accountability measures is ultimately school closure. She used the phrase, "We are all in this together," to explain the relationship she feels with the staff. The head of school played an integral role in helping the school balance internal and external accountability mandates with the school's adopted mission by assisting and supporting the teachers in their tasks. She also developed the content of staff development workshops around the mission components.

Staff Development and Mission Alignment

In addition to developing the mission within the school and hiring staff, the head of school also functioned as the curriculum director at the school and led staff development workshops (IDPs) held every other Wednesday for 3 hours. The purpose of IDPs, according to the head of school, was to "direct our progress on accomplishing what the school was founded to do and be." The content of these sessions helped focus the staff on the school mission and how accountability mandates could be met by teacher awareness and improvement in various areas with an outcome of increased student achievement. During each of the sessions I observed, the teachers spent time on components of the mission-specifically in the college preparatory classes, with content related to the state standards, diverse learners, and ways to promote informed, articulate and proactive students. During these times, the staff collectively re-centered on the general topic of how closely their instructional practices aligned with the mission. Time was then spent on specific implementations and strategies. There were also professional development days built into the school calendar that were used for the development of instructional developments plans and

various teacher trainings. The head of school was accountable to the board of trustees to report the content of these workshops and how they related to the school mission. Last year at a board meeting, the head of school provided a year-long professional development calendar that cited examples of ways she would assist the staff in meeting the accountability elements of the mission (Annual Meeting Minutes, 2005). Review of the school's board of trustee minutes revealed that the head of school acted as a liaison between the board and the teachers, providing information regarding the content of staff development meetings to the board and relaying board meeting information to the teachers during the IDP meetings. This internal accountability from the board provided opportunity for continual checking of school functions against the parameters of the mission and promoted positive relationships and open communication between the board and the teachers.

One Wednesday meeting began with the head of school stating, "It is important to stick to the mission and revisit why we are doing this." The session was then spent on instructional differentiation, a strategy to meet the needs of diverse learners, which was a part of the mission statement. The concept of differentiation was reviewed, and then teachers worked collaboratively to identify students who had unique learning needs, factors that made it difficult to modify curriculum and instruction, and practical ways to address students with diverse learning profiles. Teachers then examined specific benchmarks and ways these could be modified for students. The session produced practical solutions relating to the mission of helping students achieve their benchmarks.

Another staff development workshop focused on the greatest challenges content area teachers faced in accomplishing their benchmarks. The cross-grade-level discussion was intended to inform teachers of overlaps or omissions within a content area and to brainstorm

ways to fill in the perceived gaps. Together the teachers discussed their greatest challenges listing low-achieving students, students without the needed skill sets, high-level students, and the need for a uniform writing sourcebook as well as practice books that related to the state test, as areas which needed work.

The collaboratively proposed ideas were given to the head of school to assist in decision-making for the next school year. Also at this meeting, teachers were given a student data analysis sheet as a tool for examining the aggregate data from each of their classes (by benchmark report) to determine which merited whole-class instruction and review, and which ones warranted more time for small group or individual help. This activity brought the importance of accountability to external mandates into focus and directed the conversation to the critical issue of what the school is all about.

The head of school modeled the internal school expectations of specific procedures during the IDPs. On the board was listed, "Teachers will be able to" (TWBAT), which is similar to the SWBAT, one of the school norms and procedures teachers were expected to use. There were also outcomes for the day and an agenda listing the plan. This format reinforced expectations and indicated, "This is how we do things here."

Aside from the recurring suggestions from teachers relating to the need for additional time, the IDPs were viewed positively as a refocusing time, and many teachers, when discussing time limitations of their days, mentioned they were thankful for the time built into the regular school day, instead of the typical after-school in-service model. Several teachers explained that they liked the morning time before the students came to school because the usual day's stresses had not begun, and they could focus on the meeting.

To ensure alignment of school and state standards, staff also took part in summer workshops prior to the opening of school. More days of workshops were required prior to the beginning of the school year than for regular public school teachers, and much of the time was spent on developing benchmarks that aligned with the state standards as well as using their freedom to innovate in curriculum and instruction. The summer prior to the school opening was spent drafting standards. For this process, the school used the state curriculum standards because, as the head of school explained,

> If you don't [align], you don't get a charter. This is a public school, and these are the standards we are assessed on, and this is the data that assesses what kids know… and we need this to meet external and internal accountability mandates. That was never a question.

She went on to explain that although the state standards were the external accountability demands, the internal accountability measures called for more than just skill standards.

> We wanted big picture skills, so that was one reason we looked at some curriculum reform designs that we used to draft our standards. We asked what we really believe kids need to be able to do to be informed, articulate, and proactive. We want real-world and conceptualized skills.

She also explained that other parts of the mission mandates such as service learning, had benchmarks students needed to attain even though the state did not require them.

As the school standards were crafted, the curriculum reform design was eliminated, and the school wrote standards on its belief system and integrated the dual accountability mandates. The process of developing lesson objectives flowed from the school's overall learning goals of developing informed, articulate, and proactive students (see Appendix R for

learning goal flowchart). Newly crafted standards and benchmarks replaced the previous ones in each teacher's binder.

The development of school standards was a collaborative activity, and the "teachers worked on it together." The process was detailed and time consuming, and the head of school stated:

> I read all the benchmarks. We make sure all the state frameworks are covered and [that] they work in a way that facilitates our students' learning and are not too broad. Then we develop a map of the year. We do it for each trimester and teachers know what they should teach. Kids need to know 70 percent of these benchmarks to pass.

Developing the standards collaboratively and then revisiting them each summer provided job clarity for teachers and increased understanding of the mission and accountability at the school, as well as the external testing mandates from the state. By dedicating time and resources to professional learning and reflection, Winston Academy Charter School continuously refined its alignment with both internal and external accountability mandates. The internal accountability mandates established by the board that are discussed during summer meetings include the internal performance goals. For example, teachers looked at student yearly growth based on value-added analysis of students' achievement using standardized assessments, examined the number of students meeting grade-level proficiency after two years at the school, reviewed student surveys on service learning, and evaluated the connection between service learning and academic subjects. The staff also reviewed state test results, an external accountability mandate. Progress toward these goals indicates increasing alignment with the school mission.

Balancing the Mandates

Winston Academy Charter School teachers and the head of school attempted to balance the different accountability mandates from the state and charter authorizer with the school mission in several ways. Its college preparatory curriculum combined state standards with those chosen by the school, and students were required to achieve benchmark mastery indicate their competence with internal standards, and show that they were prepared for the external demands of the state test. The service-learning component met internal mandates and provided an additional avenue for students to apply the skills and knowledge necessary for the state test. Meeting the needs of diverse learners and preparing them for the state test was a goal of the school, and this was implemented through curriculum differentiation, enrichment, and remediation in individual and small groups. Classroom norms and procedures had been established by the administration to guide teachers in establishing a classroom environment conducive to preparing students for the external demands of the state test.

At Winston Academy Charter School the mission provided the foundation for all school activities. Because the components and expectations of the mission had intentionally been aligned with external accountability mandates from the state, the activities and functions of the school met their internal mandates, and those of the state. The balance between demands was maintained by connecting components of the two sets of accountability mandates.

Integrating School Mission through Instruction

This section discusses findings related to research question two, which states: In what ways do the head of school and teachers integrate the school mission and curriculum with the

instructional strategies of student-focused instruction, guided instruction, instruction for understanding, and conceptualized instruction?

Each instructional strategy from the school mission is described, as well as an additional strategy of technology as a tool, and following are the ways the teachers and the head of school integrate the mission with classroom interactions and activities. Answers to the research question were formulated using data from interviews, observations, and documents.

Mission Implementations through Instruction

Rarely does a charter school throw out all of the district-chosen materials and strategies in exchange for a unique and innovative one; instead, charter schools pick and choose, replace and modify, and supplement and enrich (Lubienski, 2004). This was the case with Winston Academy Charter School, which developed its instructional program by choosing texts and curriculum programs that aligned with its standards and school learning goals and met the needs of a diverse population. An example of the school how the school developed a modified curriculum was in literature. The course materials included an anthology used by the school district but also multiple shorter texts on varied reading levels, as well as short stories and poetry selections from various cultures. Together, these reflected different reading levels as well as the cultures of the diverse student population. The school faced the challenge of fulfilling its educational mission or promise to the public of using rigorous coursework integrated with service learning to prepare diverse students for college and to graduate informed, articulate and proactive students. To accomplish this mission or goal, the charter designers developed four instructional strategies (see Appendix K for description of instructional methods) unique to the school that were based on best practice

research that would apply to instruction in all subjects. The instructional strategies of student-focused instruction, guided instruction, instruction for understanding, and conceptualized understanding were intended by the school designers and current head of school to be used consistently throughout the school as a way to accomplish the promises of the mission.

Student-Focused Instruction

Although the charter school application (2002) described students as being the center of the classroom, evidence from observation and interviews showed that the teacher was at the center, and that he or she initiated classroom activities and interactions based on the instruction that he or she had given to the class. The intended strategy of student-focused instruction as described in the Charter School Application (2002) was not the primary practice of teachers.

Teachers were asked about their main role at the school and how this influenced their work in the classroom. Just over half of them described roles such as mentor, counselor, and listener. Several also mentioned their role as a model of one who had overcome obstacles and challenges and became successful. They explained how they used this role to help students and build relationships. Despite the variety of roles described, both First and Second Form teachers identified their primary role as one of giving students instruction in content students needed to know, and identified that this instruction occurred with the teacher at the center of the classroom. This contrasted with the intended strategy of student-focused instruction that was intended to place students at the center of the classroom. The teacher-centered strategy utilized teacher explanation and modeling combined with student practice and feedback to teach the concept and skills. One teacher shared,

> My role is to give them knowledge. They can show me they understand in many ways, but the bottom line is, it is my job to give them information that they need to know. We cannot do other activities until they have a knowledge base of content so this is where we start, with me providing information and facts.

Student note-taking was evidenced in many classrooms, and the students appeared to understand the importance of the information for their upcoming class assessments. As a lesson was being taught, common reminders such as, "You need to know this," "You will see this again," and "Be sure you get this down," were heard.

Observations revealed the teacher at the front of the classroom the majority of the time and it was the teachers' voices instructing in content that were heard as I walked through the hall; students were quiet, and teachers were instructing, demonstrating, or reviewing. A teacher explained his/her perspective of student-focused instruction as:

> I provide the information that students need to know for the assessment from the school and state. I try to cover as much as I can and help them understand it. A lot of students do not have prior knowledge in what I am teaching, so it is difficult, and I need to go over and over the material.

This comment reveals that student-focused instruction is interpreted by some teachers as teacher-focused instruction. Another teacher explained instructional strategy of student-focused instruction in this way:

> I would love to base my lessons on students' background knowledge of [stories and books] and experiences [traveling], but most of them [students] don't have any [that apply to the content]. I provide the background knowledge, and we go from there. Students are not bringing a lot of experiences to the classroom. Some of them have

> not gone to museums, libraries, or traveled outside of this area. The students that have are a definite contrast, and I try to use their experiences in my instruction.

Student-focused instruction was acknowledged by this teacher, but the reality of their instruction was teacher-focused.

The instruction was student-focused in the sense that the students were expected to learn the information and were assessed on it regularly, but not in the constructivist sense of students developing their own knowledge and understanding instead of having it delivered by others. In a constructivist classroom, teachers encourage and accept student autonomy, allow student responses to drive lessons, intentionally engage students in experiences that would contradict their initial hypothesis and then encourage discussion, and use inquiry-based instruction (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). In each classroom there was direct instruction of content with the expectation that students would learn the material.

The weeks at the school yielded consistent evidence that pointed to the role of the teacher as instructional leader and the center of the classroom. Frequently, teachers greeted their students at the door and then took their places at the front of the classroom, and following a beginning of class activity, reviewed the previous lesson, clarified misunderstandings, stated the content for the day, and began to instruct from the board with the expectation that the class was orderly and following along. The intended end result of the school mission was to increase achievement and student outcomes, and meeting this accountability mandate was accomplished in part by the teacher directing the learning.

Guided Instruction

Another expectation of Winston Academy Charter School was that teachers would lead students to a greater understanding of the explicit instruction they had received by using

the second instructional strategy, guided instruction. The head of school explained, "Kids do not all learn in the same ways, so providing them with hands-on opportunities and seeing the relevance in their work is a logical place to be."

She explained that students understand content at a deeper level if they can apply it and see how it works. She cited an example of this in a science class where FOSS kits are used as a supplement to the science texts. The teacher uses these kits to provide students with hands-on reinforcements of class instruction with activities, labs, and simulations, and real-life applications. The head of school gave an example of a teacher who had guided students in a service project based on the content they had learned in science class and the end result was a recycling project in the community.

The main role of teachers as instructional leaders was consistent in their actions and words as described in the previous section. Secondary to this main role was that of the teacher guiding students to explore learning. Following an explicit instruction, teachers provided guided time, frequently in small groups, for students to "work on strategies for remembering, understanding, and problem solving" (Charter School Application, p.5) and make meaning out of the content. For example, while students were studying the Crusades in history class, they had time after instruction to work in small groups to develop information to present at a symposium in which they discussed various roles and views the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian people had on the Crusades throughout history. The teacher guided the students through a different approach to the same materials that they had covered through the instructional time. Another example was observed in an English class following a lesson on metaphors, similes, hyperbole, and personifications. Students were seated in groups of

four, given song lyrics and asked to identify the literary devices within the lyrics, and guided through the process of skill development on the concept.

Within the parameters and context of the mission mandate was the freedom for teachers to express their own style of teaching and individuality in leading and guiding students to apply the information received through the explicit instruction role that was common to all teachers. This freedom did not diminish the school's expectations, but it did allow teacher talents to be used for the benefits of students. The director stated that she sought teachers who were creative and had unique interests, and teachers were seen using creativity and personal interests to innovate in attempts to meet the needs of their students. A science teacher, who was also a cyclist, brought in her bike to help a group of lower-level students understand the concept of how the wheels operated, and then related it to a pulley system. She used the bike for another group to calculate distance while explaining how many miles she rides to work and how long it takes. One teacher who said she loved drama brought in multiple props for students to use while reading the play *Romeo and Juliet*. She bridged the gap between the student's knowledge of Elizabethan times and their own lives by engaging students in lively interpretations of the original text, thus making a challenging play comprehensible. Teachers who used personal strengths to guide instruction exhibited enthusiasm for guided instruction, and this had the potential to translate to increased student understanding as the information was presented in unique ways.

Instruction for Understanding

All teachers utilized the third strategy of instruction for understanding to complement and build on the previous two instructional strategies as a way to guide their students through the curriculum to positive student achievement. The strategy of instruction for understanding

is focused on "open-ended activities that go beyond skills and information and allow students to explore content" (Charter School Application, 2002, p. 5).

Common to all the teachers was the component of guiding students to greater understanding through projects or activities to reinforce and enrich their instruction, yet there was great diversity in implementation. In the words of a Second Form teacher, "There is freedom to dream and engage students in activities and projects that inspire them."

The teachers in the school used the state standards as a basis for their instruction and combined them with their own specialties and areas of expertise with the goal of increasing student understanding and overall achievement. The way each teacher interpreted and applied the school-chosen strategy of instruction for understanding flowed from his or her individual notion of how students learned best within developmentally appropriate parameters of guidance and freedom. When teachers were asked how they thought students learned best, the answers varied. Some cited cooperative learning, and some listed lecture and note taking. Others mentioned frequent testing, a combination of technology and instruction, or inquiry-based instruction.

Examples within classrooms of the application of content with the goal of increased understanding were visible throughout the building. A science teacher explained this process as, "We do a lot of visuals and hands on. It is easy in science and it works for both high-and low-level kids." This class reviewed for a class assessment based on the benchmarks covering moon phases by conducting a variety of activities simultaneously in the classroom. Several small multi-level ability groups read paragraphs from the science text and then discussed them, with each person taking a turn to explain key concepts with the help of others when necessary. Another group, with each person designated as a moon phase, used a

flashlight to demonstrate the amounts of light the phases emitted. The phrase the teacher repeated while ensuring each student had a turn was, "Demonstrate . . . how are you going to demonstrate?" which showed the teacher's belief that providing students with time to explore, act out and explain a concept can lead to a higher level of understanding. Another group used flashcards of phases to quiz each other. The students rotated through the groups as the teacher facilitated, clarified, and assessed student understanding. Through such active learning, students in this science class worked toward mastery of the benchmarks and increased achievement.

After teaching a lesson on surrealism in art class, a teacher showed the students famous photos of art from the genre and allowed the students to generate meaning and interpretations based on the information she had presented to them. Students became engaged in what they were discovering and constructing based on their own interpretations. The teacher guided the students to share their reflections and aligned their responses with information she had shared previously. Functioning as a facilitator, the teacher used their gifts and expertise to lead students to a higher level of understanding. The teacher then provided art material, and gave the students time to practice some of the artistic techniques of surrealism.

A foreign language teacher stated that she is an advocate of student-selected activities and would provide blocks of time for "intensive engagement" (Charter School Application, 2002, p. 5). She described her practice of guiding students to apply their knowledge. She explains,

> On a weekly basis, I cover the benchmarks and give a weekly assessment. Then at the end of the chapter, they have a choice of two projects and they vote on them. One

> project was to create and write about [in Spanish] their own uniforms, and I give them the benchmarks before we start and they have to complete the steps.

She instructed students on the benchmarks, which covered new Spanish vocabulary for the week, and believed that student choice increases motivation and student engagement. The idea of student choice was evident in the strategies she used to apply content and the level of group and cooperative learning that the students engaged in as a way to reinforce the content. This teacher's strategies of scaffolding techniques to lead students to deeper understanding of content matched her beliefs about how students learn; other Winston Academy Charter School teachers' strategies did as well.

A Second Form (eighth and ninth and grade) teacher, who described herself as an advocate of choice theory and a little "outside the box" in terms of the way she approached her classroom decisions, believed student voice and a democratic classroom were an integral part of engaging students in their own learning. The teacher's preferred teaching mode was project-based learning, and she allowed her students to propose projects based on their own interests. The teacher told students,

> Propose to me anything you want and we will temper it to what you are interested in. You can make a map, a plate, a sculpture, or a board game or write a paper. [The teacher asks], what skills are you going to work on? They create amazing things. We have transformed this whole room into a society and shelter based on a book.

There was explicit instruction on the standards and benchmarks relating to this activity in the Second Form classroom prior to the project's creation and traditional assessments to ensure student mastery of the concepts. This teacher used her expertise,

talents, and preferred mode of teaching, as well as the developmental characteristics of her students and extended engagement time, to increase students' depth of understanding.

A history teacher who had studied abroad used his passion for history to guide students through the Middle East. Student depth of understanding was gained during an assignment that required students to create scrolls that commemorated the accomplishments of several Hebrew leaders.

All of these are examples of ways teachers integrate the school's mission of preparing students for college with the strategy of instruction for understanding. The use of open-ended activities, problem-solving strategies, and extended time for learning were combined with teachers' professional talents and strengths to integrate school mission with the school's chosen strategies of curriculum delivery- all within the parameters of the accountability mandates and performance promises.

Conceptualized Instruction

The fourth instruction strategy relating to research question two is conceptualized instruction. The intent of this strategy was to provide a context for learning outside the classroom to aid students in transferring their understanding. Conceptualized instruction was exhibited during the service-learning projects and is discussed on pages 79-88. In addition, teacher took students on field trips to science museums and an aquarium, for walks on nature trails, and on sightseeing tours to visit historical monuments. The sights and facilities in the local area that could be integrated with class content provided a context outside the classroom for enrichment and the transfer of understanding.

Technology as an Instructional Tool

The final instructional strategy, technology as an instructional tool, was used by teachers to integrate the school's mission and curriculum. The presence of technology and the dependence of teachers on its use as a tool were evident throughout the school. Teachers often enriched the textbook information by showing students an interactive display on the computer or videos on the computer of places or events. The students' textbooks suggested links for students to access to help them develop deeper understanding of the concept being taught, and teachers often used these links during classes.

As mentioned earlier, the standards and benchmarks for each student were recorded in a school-wide system, which allowed students and teachers to track progress. Attendance was taken using this same system, as were discipline infractions.

Each teacher had a laptop that was purchased by the school that he or she carried wherever he or she went, and as the building was equipped with a wireless network, each could access records from any point. One teacher explained, "I have everything I need on this computer. It tells me where kids are [in their standards] and what I need to be working on. We are all networked, and I would be lost without it."

Although the laptop was intended for teacher use, students were often observed using the teachers' computers to check their benchmark progress and school memos, and to access information that related to their assignments. There was a high level of comfort on the part of both teachers and students with using technology as a part of the school program and as a tool to integrate specific strategies into the school day to accomplish the school's vision and mission. Students were able to access information independently and rarely asked for assistance with information location, Power Point presentations or other applications.

Along with the role of teacher as an instructional leader delivering content and as a guide who enriches student learning using projects, activities, and other extensions of learning often matched to their own interests, was the idea of teachers partnering with technology. Through classroom observations, it was evident that teachers used technology as a crucial piece of their curricula and frequently used a computer activity to accomplish the instructional methods determined by the school.

Students learned "from" technology and "with" technology (Reeves, 1998). Learning "from" the computer resulted in students who used the computer as a tutor or for computer-based instruction. Students worked "with" technology to access and interpret information and to present what they knew to others in the form of Power Point presentations, posters, or dioramas. Providing multiple opportunities for technology as a tool integrated throughout the curriculum allowed teachers to vary content depending on the composition of the class (Charter School Application, 2002). A teacher explained how the students viewed technology:

> It is motivating for kids of all levels. Because it is easy to access and does not always require a high reading level, some kids are comfortable with it and they feel like they are doing research they could not do with a book. Advanced kids can pursue topics our textbook does not cover… ones that interest them.

The computer lab, which was located at one end of the hallway, was rarely unoccupied; teachers had to sign up for its use, and it was often overcrowded. Students asked to go to the computer lab and once there were engaged in assigned tasks. There was not an assumption at the school that students would be able to access technology in their homes, so the lab was available before and after school for students who needed extra time. The

technology component allowed teachers to differentiate instructions by preparing multiple tasks with different outcomes based on achievement, motivating students by using their interests, allowing a choice of several sites to explore, and teaching research skills by framing structured investigations for students to complete.

According to the Charter School Application (2002) and the school's internal accountability guidelines, the instructional methods chosen by Winston Academy Charter School were intended to assist students in a continual progress toward the school's learning goals and ultimately college preparation, a key focus of the school's mission. The instructional methods supported students with diverse interests, cognitive abilities, and levels of mastery. Evidence of the way technology use assisted and was a tool for these methods could be seen daily. Rarely did an entire class work on the same project in the computer lab; instead, assignments were given that accounted for the differences mentioned above. For example, as enrichment for a science class studying solar and lunar eclipses, students went on a web quest. The benchmarks for the activity were listed on the rubric, and students worked cooperatively in pairs to find the information. It was evident that multiple levels of achievement were in the room, but collaboration with peers allowed for variety in outcomes. The assignment also required students to draw some of their findings, which was evidence of the recognition of various learning styles.

Teachers explained their role in technology activities as a guide and the technology as an assistant. They determined the activity and corresponding benchmark in advance, and while in the computer lab, they circulated throughout the room, provided assistance, prompted deeper thinking, encouraged, asked questions, and kept students on task.

The role of technology seemed to be a teaching tool and not a time-filler. Students were engaged in authentic learning and were accountable for a quality product, one that was aligned with a benchmark. The use of technology was an intentional supplement and an instructional partner for classroom instruction, and there was evidence of this in all classrooms. For example, during a science lab, students used a computer program that helped them build molecules, which were built using blocks using blocks; they wrote the formulas on paper. This exhibited the use of technology as a tool to assist in understanding the science content.

Students were at ease with the technology, knew where to save their work, and frequently used it for multiple activities. Teachers integrated technology into much of the school's curricular activities, which exhibited technology's ability to assist teachers in integrating the school's mission within the school's chosen instructional strategies.

Winston Academy teachers utilized four specific instructional strategies: student focused instruction, guided instruction, instruction for understanding and conceptualized instruction, to assist them in their teaching. These internally developed strategies focused teachers' efforts on preparing students for academic achievement, which is an internal and external demand, and providing service learning opportunities, all part of the school's mission.

Conclusion

The findings of this study present the results of the research questions that guided this inquiry. The first question involved an examination of the ways teachers and the head of school in a charter school balance the external accountability mandates from the state and the internal charter demands with the school's adopted vision and mission. At Winston Academy

Charter School, the mission or promise to the public was articulated in multiple ways throughout the school. The mission was posted in various places throughout the building for staff, students and visitors to see, but its impact was far greater then simply the written text. The mission of providing a rigorous college preparatory curriculum integrated with service learning was the essence of the school and was an internal accountability mandate. The curriculum, which was chosen by the school founders and staff, was aligned with the state standards and benchmarks, and supplemented by internally chosen benchmarks. By creating a curriculum such as this, the teachers and the head of school were attempting to prepare all students for a high level of academic achievement and preparation for college, as well as for success on the state mandated test, an external accountability mandate. Woven throughout the curriculum- although not to the extent that the head of school and some teachers desired- was the service-learning component of the curriculum, and students participated in service learning each week, as well as for an intensive week each trimester. Teachers were expected to implement school norms and procedures into their classes in an effort to create a classroom climate conducive to student achievement. Despite the clarity of the norms and procedures, there existed uncertainty among some teachers regarding the type of classroom environment expected by the head of school, who viewed her role as preserving and promoting the school mission. Internal and external accountability measures were balanced with a mission that embraced the components of both mandates, and this was the foundation for all school activities including staff development, curriculum, and teacher expectations.

In an effort to meet the needs of diverse learners, a part of the mission, Winston Charter School used multiage groupings, differentiated instruction, recognition of student cultures, and required tutoring for students who were not achieving the necessary level of

mastery. The final part of the mission was to develop students of strong character, and the need to develop this aspect of the curriculum further was voiced by the teachers and the head of school.

The second research question this study explored was the ways the head of school and teachers integrated the school mission with specific instructional strategies chosen by the founders of the school to promote increased achievement. Student-focused instruction, although intended to be a strategy that placed students at the center of the classroom, was in reality implemented as teacher-focused instruction, as the teachers directed the majority of the standards-based instruction. Following teacher-directed learning protocol, teachers provided a portion of class time for individual and group work that focused on skills practice; the teachers acted as guides. Student exploration of learning was accomplished through instruction for understanding (another strategy), and was manifested in the classroom through student exploration, problem solving, and open-ended activities. The final strategy, conceptualized instruction, was evidenced in service-learning activities and projects that required application of knowledge. Together, these instructional strategies were integrated with the mission in ways that fulfilled the mandates of rigorous curriculum and service learning and thus promoted increased student achievement and met both internal and external accountability mandates.

Winston Academy Charter School attempted to balance its accountability demands by embracing components of the external demands and incorporating them into its mission. It aligned much of what it did with what was required of it by the state. Its norms and expectations for teachers and students also focused the school's functions on accomplishing dual accountability. Accomplishing these multiple expectations required the vigilance of a

leader who was committed to sustaining the school mission and teachers who devoted long days to fulfilling their expected duties.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS LIMITATIONS, ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this study, the practices of teachers and the head of school in a charter school were examined to determine the ways they balanced the internal school mission with the external accountability mandates from the state. Charter school performance accountability theory (Buckley, 2001; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Hill, Lake, & Celio, 2002) was selected as the framework from which to view the case of Winston Academy Charter School. Through interviews, observations, and document analysis, I obtained information regarding the practices that teachers and the head of school engaged in to balance both internal and external accountability demands. The themes that emerged that related to the way a charter school negotiated these mandates with its teacher practices and school mission were discussed in Chapter 4.

Presented in this chapter is a discussion of findings, theoretical implications, contributions to the field, and recommendations. Also discussed are ethical considerations, limitations, and directions for further research. The recommendations from this study are most directly applicable to Winston Charter School, and to other charter schools, especially those in states with high accountability mandates that require all students to participate in statewide assessments. In addition, these recommendations are directly applicable to charter school administrators and boards that have chosen as a mission design a model that stresses high standards in academics and behavior and use a predetermined body of knowledge (such as state standards) as the framework for curricula. Schools using a standards-based curriculum to meet the needs of a diverse student population (especially in urban areas) will

also benefit from the recommendations. The final area of direct application is to charter school faculty members who have chosen intensive service learning as a part of the school's mission, and strive to integrate this component into the daily life and functions of the school. Others within the education community may find the results of this study useful in light of the implications it has for individual school accountability mandates stemming from NCLB, as well as for regular public schools that serve student populations who test below the proficiency mark for state tests.

Summary of Findings

This study sought to determine how teachers and the head of school in a charter school balanced the differing accountability mandates with the school's adopted vision and mission. It also examined the way specific instructional strategies were used to accomplish the mission. A summary of findings is provided:

- The college-preparatory element of the school mission promoted rigor and attention to content mastery for students and balanced both internal and external accountability demands.
- Service learning was an innovative component of the school's mission and an internal accountability demand.
- Curriculum differentiation for diverse students attempted to increase student achievement and answered both internal and external accountability mandates.
- Graduating individuals of strong character was a part of the school's mission, but not an element with clear development.

- Norms and procedures for teachers were a part of the internal accountability demands, and their use was intended to increase student achievement to meet external mandates.
- Teachers were responsible for teaching the state standards and benchmarks and for keeping detailed records regarding curriculum and student progress.
- The role of the school leader was to translate the school mission into teacher and school practices.
- Staff development promoted mission attainment.
- The school mission was a building block for school activities.
- The instructional strategy of student-focused learning was implemented as teacher-directed instruction.
- Teachers guided students to greater understanding by using approaches and content matched with teacher interests and strengths.
- Technology assisted teachers with delivery and instruction.

The findings from the study, which were gained from an exploration of the research questions that guided this study, provide the context for the key issues revealed as a result of this inquiry into the life of Winston Charter School, a school existing in a state with high accountability mandates. Three main ideas emerged, essential to the understanding of the application of both Charter School Theory (Finn, Manno & Vanourek, 2000) and accountability theory (Hill, Lake & Celio, 2002) to the workings of Winston Academy Charter School: (a) the rationale behind the formation of this charter school was manifested in its organizational innovations, which provided the context for fulfillment of both internal and external accountability demands; (b) location in a high-stakes testing state influenced the

school to align its internal goals and demands with the state mandates; and (c) an unintended consequence of increased accountability is that teachers experienced a tension between belief in the school mission and the long hours required to meet the expectations, resulting in a lack of time for other areas of their lives and possible burnout.

Discussion of Findings

Organizational Innovations

Winston Academy Charter School was developed as an alternative to the district schools and was formed to meet the needs of students who were not being served effectively in the regular public school setting. To accomplish its goals and mission, the school chose elements of organizational innovation that would fulfill its purpose. The school adopted only those innovations that directly aligned with its purpose and would satisfy requirements of both internal and external mandates. The innovations embraced by the school were not those that "plowed virgin soil" (Finn, Manno & Vanourek, 2000, p. 91), but rather were those that were new in the particular context of this school, and facilitated mission attainment.

For example, the school made changes to the typical school calendar. The increased length of the school day provided blocks of time where teachers could use a variety of strategies to increase student understanding. A longer school year than most regular public schools evidenced the belief that increased time on task promotes increased student achievement. The extra time not only provided increased student instruction, but also enabled teachers to provide more tutoring and areas of enrichment to broaden student skills and engage them more deeply in learning. Staff development meetings were held one morning a week (another variation of the flexibility promoted by a longer day) and staff development

was linked to the instructional program for students, a characteristic of successful urban school programs (Guin, 2004; Resnick & Glennam, 2002).

Another area where Winston Academy Charter School embraced organizational innovations was in the area of school and class size. As an alternative to the public school, the charter school was intentionally developed by the school founders as a small school with small classes of no more than 20 students, aligning with the research on the positive benefits of small, autonomous schools able to personalize student learning (Bullard & Taylor, 1999; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Ratvitch & Viteritti, 1997). Much of the flexibility and autonomy embraced by Winston Academy Charter School was in the area of school organizational structure, and the innovations chosen by the school administrators were tools to increase the focus on carrying out its mission and intent.

Innovation was embraced by the faculty at Winston Academy Charter School when it worked within the context of the existing external mandates. Although charter schools have autonomy to innovate as a result of their charter status, those innovations that fall within the parameters of the external accountability mandates will likely be sustainable; therefore, leaders of charter schools such as Winston Academy Charter School must carefully deliberate the ways in which they innovate.

High Stakes Testing

All schools are accountable for increased student achievement, yet states interpret the assessment of this mandate in different ways. The high-stakes testing nature of this school's setting dictated the school's internally chosen goals, and preparing students for the state test was a great motivator. A charter school has five years to prove to the state that they are a viable organization, and increased student achievement on the state test is a key factor in the

probability that a school will sustain its charter. Winston Academy Charter School embraced the external accountability that came from the state and then increased the accountability by adding to it the outcomes that the founders of the school believed to be important, such as service learning. The founders recognized that all of their students would face standards-based testing; therefore, the founders used the standards as the foundation for their instruction, and developed norms and instructional strategies that would attain what the state desired as well as meeting internally developed standards.

Standards-based testing is becoming a norm in many states. Charter schools that embrace the state standards have an advantage over regular public schools; they can embrace the standards as a part of their curriculum, and then add to them by designing internal accountability mandates that go beyond the state standards while still preparing their students for the state test.

Unintended Consequences

The final area of discussion relates to the unintended consequences of increased tension that teachers experienced as a result of the conflict between commitment to the school mission, and the long hours required to meet the school's expectations. This resulted in a loss of time with family and a feeling of burnout, which caused teachers to consider whether or not they would return to the school the following year. Adding to the tension in this school was the fact that it was a new school; as a result, there was no history of the way things had been done, and there were no mentors from new teachers. Accomplishing the multiple demands from internal and external constituents required diligence and long hours for teachers. In the case of Winston Academy Charter School, there was great diversity among students, which added to the amount of time necessary to bring students to acceptable

academic levels. The teachers at this school faced the challenge of preparing students for the state test, conducting longer-than-average school day, meeting internally developed requirements such as development of a binder detailing extensive plans and record keeping, and tutoring students after school. The external and internal accountability experienced by charter schools places increased responsibility on teachers who, although they believe in the mission of a school, may not be able to maintain continuous long hours at the expense of their personal lives. Higher teacher turnover can be anticipated in charter schools as they negotiate internal and external accountability mandates within the context of high-stakes testing.

Contributions of Study

This study contributed generally to the body of knowledge relating to charter schools as a form of school reform. Specifically it revealed the challenge to charter schools of maintaining their individually chosen and often innovative curricula within the parameters of increasing accountability mandates (Buckley & Wohlstetter, 2004; Hill, 2002). It also added to the literature regarding service learning that was integrated with the curriculum as a beneficial innovation for urban students, and the positive effects service learning has on interpersonal development, as it helps students to learn to trust and be trusted by others, and to act as a part of a team (McCurley, 1991; McPherson, 1989). This study contributed to the research relating to standards-based instruction and curriculum alignment and potential instructional strategies that could be used to increase student achievement, as well as the challenges inherent in the strategies. Finally, the literature on charter school leaders and teachers, and their roles within their schools, has been supplemented.

Theoretical Implications

External Accountability

High-stakes accountability from the state drove the functions of this charter school. The pervasive nature of this accountability framed school activities and complicated the notion of autonomy. According to Charter School Theory, the adoption of charter school law provides more autonomy and flexibility for charter schools than traditional public schools because of their independence from the school district and waivers from state laws and regulations (Buckley & Fisler, 2003). In reality, the school had autonomy only in how it negotiated the best path to meeting the mandates based on the needs of its students. For charter schools in high-stakes testing states, the rules of the accountability game are already determined. Those that "win" the game must adopt those rules with minimal variations. The challenge for charter schools is to develop and implement "winning strategies" across the school.

Internal Accountability

The internal accountability of a charter school is what makes it a unique organization. In this case, it was the set of beliefs that led to the school's mission and created a shared vision and set of expectations for school functions. Although few charter schools have a high degree of internal accountability from the start (Hill, Lake, & Celio, 2002), Winston Academy Charter School had its internal accountability clearly formulated prior to its opening, and this led to a school that "hung together" and its mission and actions meshed. Charter School Theory (Buckley, 2002; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Hill, Lake & Celio, 2002) applied to internal accountability, implies that although enhanced autonomy allows charter school teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders to craft educational

interventions appropriate for students' unique needs and learning styles and develop internal accountability those interventions must be compatible with external accountability. Compatibility of these two elements allows charter schools to control internal decisions such as staffing, budget, use of time, and pursuit of vision, all directed toward increasing student achievement (Wohlstetter & Griffin, 2003). If charter schools do not have clearly articulated internal accountability systems with performance standards, assessment strategies and consequences based on performance, then the purpose of the school will be determined solely by external mandates, collective vision will be lacking, and it may resemble a regular public school, having lost its distinctive charter nature. Developing internal accountability is perhaps the greatest challenge charter schools face as the external mandates are already in place and alignment with them is a given for all schools.

Service Learning

The case school used its innovative potential implied by Charter School Theory (Buckley, 2002; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Hill, Lake & Celio, 2002) to develop its service-learning component. This innovation attempted to accomplish three goals often cited in charter school advocacy (Lubienski, 2003): (a) providing an option for parents who embraced this innovation, (b) increasing student achievement, and (c) meeting the needs of some students whose preferences are not met in the standard curriculum. Service learning also presented an incongruent situation within the school. As with any school-wide innovation, for teachers who embraced its implementation it became a motivator, but for those who embraced it only in part, it became an extra task. Service learning was a means to other faculty-developed goals such as increased student achievement, increased student leadership potential, and service to the community. As exemplified by the service-learning

component of this school, innovations have the potential to strengthen the practices of schooling if viewed within the context of accountability and increased student achievement (Williams et al, 2005). For example, with service learning students are gaining skills in areas they will need to know for the state assessment such as writing, math, and language arts skills.

Service learning in this school was envisioned as a way to connect students' classroom learning to their community, and confirmed Speck & Hoppe's (2004) research on this innovation in urban areas that embraced this concept as an innovation to improve student achievement. The school interacted with the community and the potential for "some [to] even play roles in purposive civic efforts to transform those communities" (Finn, Manno & Vanourek, 2000, p. 252) was evident.

Leadership

Educational leadership takes on a new dimension within the charter school setting. Not only are these leaders carrying out the general tasks entrusted to them by the government and the school board, but also they are also involved in a new type of school reform. Charter school leaders operate differently because they are leading organizations with a defined purpose, and a purpose that can be lost if the school is not successful. At Winston Academy Charter School, the head of school exhibited an intentional attitude in all she did, seemingly conscious of the multiple looming accountability mandates just outside her vision. She had a fierce loyalty to the school and knew that within the school it was no more "business as usual"; there was a job to be done to accomplish the mission and everyone was needed to get the job done. She was, on top of all her other responsibilities, trying to create or "found" a school that was intended to provide a different educational experience from the regular

public school. Charter school principals who chose to work in these settings are committed to balancing double accountability found in charter schools, despite the challenging decisions that may result from this responsibility of leading in this setting.

Standards-based Instruction

Standards-based instruction does not appear to conflict with or inhibit the autonomy and innovation granted to charter schools. Instead it functions as a barometer to measure a school's readiness for meeting expectations from external accountability and focuses instruction on core academic skills and rigorous standards, principles found to be effective in urban schools (Haycock, 2002). The foundation of standards-based instruction provides security for teachers that the content they teach is preparing students for the state test, and within the security gained from aligning with external demands is the freedom to innovate and develop a unique focus. For example, an English teacher could present the information from the standards to her class and then integrate a novel of choice as application to the information on the standards.

Conclusions from Implications

This charter school expanded opportunities for students who were not succeeding in the regular school environment. As Finn, Manno & Vanourek (2000) discuss, "all organizations must rethink themselves to see if they have outgrown their old ways" (p. 53). The school in the study rethought the current system and developed an organization based on high expectations that all students would be prepared for college and that the achievement of students from low-income, limited-English-speaking, or otherwise diverse backgrounds would increase. This was its promise to the public.

Charter schools that embrace external accountability and internal standards will become a strong force and will function effectively within the NCLB context. Choice makes systems more responsive, more accountable, and more willing to acknowledge the diverse needs and interests of clients [students] (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Osborne & Gabler, 1992). Charter schools are well positioned as organizations to experiment reasonably and try to unmask the variables and practices that lead to low-performing schools. Charter schools present an alternative for schooling that uses standards as a foundation. Charter schools that do not choose to use their autonomy and innovations in a way that embraces standards as a foundation will likely be unsuccessful if they have not focused learning on the standards assessed on the state test. Student achievement on the state test is a criterion for charter schools to remain in operation. I envision that charter schools of the future will begin with standards as a framework for their innovations, and the end results will be multiple applications of innovations and charter missions, as we see now. However, the innovations will be secondary to the need to produce high-achieving students. Schools that do not meet achievement demands will close and those that increase student achievement will expand and will inform the practices of the general public schools.

Practical Recommendations for Charter Schools in High Accountability Contexts

As a result of the information gathered from this study, recommendations are listed that may be beneficial for charter schools operating in high-stakes testing states that seek to balance the internal and external accountability mandates. The initial recommendations are directed toward Winston Academy Charter School and specifically address the expectations for teachers in the school, the role that service learning plays in the school mission, the need

for clarification of the head of school's role in mission direction, and the need for the development of school culture.

The Model of Winston Academy Charter School

Leaders in the school in this study did many things well that could serve as a model for other schools. The leaders of the school had a carefully developed mission that was evidenced and articulated throughout the building. The mission drove the activities in the school, and curricular and instructional decisions were made with the mission as a foundation. The flexible groupings allowed for student learning to be differentiated, and for teachers to focus on the needs of diverse learners. The service-learning component had impacted the local community, (even though it was only in its developmental stages), and multiple projects had already been completed. Also, the head and founder of the school had a passion to develop the school according to plan and to facilitate mission alignment in all she did. She sought out ways to improve both the school and her leadership abilities, and saw the new organization as full of potential and hope.

Teacher Expectations

Teachers at Winston Academy Charter School seemed to have been given clear guidelines from the internal accountability mandates regarding the curriculum they were to teach and the mode of direct instruction necessary to relay the rigorous content. Despite this seeming clarity, the expectation of what this teaching would look like on a day-to-day basis and how this related to the school mission was not clear. Despite the explicit procedures, teachers expressed their uncertainty regarding the format that their classes were to take. They sensed that there was an expectation, (of students quietly working in their seats during instruction), that followed what they referred to as a "traditional" approach to teaching.

Given that the head of school had mandated four specific strategies to guide instructional input and several of those promoted group and collaborative learning, then there is a place for a -less-than-silent classroom. The head of school might consider determining the expected classroom environment and make that clear to teachers; these expectations could also become an internal accountability mandate. Charter schools often attract innovative teachers who are drawn to the autonomy of practice and the professional decision-making opportunities that are often granted to teachers in such an environment (Wohlstetter & Chau, 2003), and when this is not the case, teachers may experience confusion.

Winston Academy Charter School teachers spend many hours each day at school. Since teacher turnover is already high in urban schools (Brown, 2003; Guin, 2004), and Winston Academy Charter School and other charter schools want to retain teachers in high-stress contexts like a new school for diverse learners, they might consider developing detailed job descriptions for prospective teachers. These descriptions would assist teachers in understanding their responsibilities and the type of teaching that is expected, and provide suggestions for ways this could be implemented. Since many of the teachers are new to the school, suggestions for the kind of classroom environment that meets the approval of the head of school, as well as the protocol for how the classroom should look in terms of organizational features would be beneficial to eliminate perceptions of inconsistencies.

The expectations for classroom management should be consistent across grade levels, and there should not be separate standards for different grade levels. This inconsistency creates a sense of unfairness among students. It also causes teachers who might not be as structured in their classroom management to feel as if some teachers are more favored because they are maintaining the school expectations for classroom management, whatever

those may be. Once the parameters of expectation are determined, they can be used as a part of the classroom observation protocol as well as for daily walk-throughs that the head of school completes. This consistency would create a sense of confidence among teachers that they were indeed in line with expectations, and it would alleviate the sense among teachers of not knowing the expectations and perceiving disapproval. Consistency within classrooms could also minimize the discipline issue of students behaving differently in different classroom environments. Conversation and solutions regarding student behavior would result in concrete solutions that are applicable to all classrooms, not just those where there is a problem. Students might develop further understanding of the format of classes at Winston Academy Charter School and how these relate to the mission.

Teachers might also be informed of the expectations for duties beyond those of classroom instruction. Expectations of attendance at trainings and meetings, after-school tutoring sessions, and time spent preparing detailed lesson plans should be included in the job description, so teachers are aware of the time commitments of the job. In addition, teachers might be informed of the technology they are expected to use with the school-wide system of entering grades and student benchmarks. Some teachers choose to work in charter schools because they have specific preferences about instructional style (Hill, Lake, & Celio, 2002) and would not choose to work in a school that required methods that made them uncomfortable. Most teachers make more general demands and desire to work in a "collegial, caring, environment where classroom practice is not challenged from on high" (p. 38). Good teachers are assets, and their job expectations need to be clear and their work rewarding; therefore, expectations for preferred teaching styles need to be developed with teachers.

Service Learning

Research to date shows benefits of service learning to school and community alike. Urban students involved in service learning show gains in motivation to learn that result in higher attendance rates and increased academic performance. Service learning has a positive effect on interpersonal development, and helps students learn to trust, be trusted by others, and act as a part of a team (McCurley, 1991; McPherson, 1989). Effective service learning helps students make connections between their classroom lessons and their roles as young community members working with a community agency (Roehlkepartain, 1995; Supple, 1993), and students at Winston Academy Charter School were making connections through the service projects that aligned with their courses.

A central component of Winston Academy Charter School's mission is service learning. The mission states that the educational design is grounded in a research-based model that integrates rigorous academic work with service work. Service learning in this setting is a chance for students to apply their academic learning to fieldwork and internships in service to the community. Because teachers expressed the need for service learning to be more fully integrated with the curriculum, it would be beneficial for the administration and teachers to determine what level of academic integration is desirable and necessary. Some teachers mentioned that the service project was integrated with content from the previous year. The mission states that service learning is to be integrated with rigorous content, but it does not specify with which content it should be integrated. Integrated into all service projects is the five-step process of reflect, identify, research, plan, and act; therefore, an English teacher guiding students through a homeless awareness project would not be using specific English standards to accomplish the tasks, but during the project, students would be

writing, editing, and using research, and public speaking skills- all skills used in English as well as in other content areas. Likewise, a science teacher assisting students with woodworking skills in anticipation of a project to repair city park benches is guiding students to increased understanding of tools, types of wood, the cost of varnish, brush care, and the process of sanding and polishing. Students are gaining woodworking skills not learned in typical science classes as well as the interpersonal skills of working in a group toward a common project, and the outcome of the project will enhance the community.

The notion of "integrated" merits further discussion and explanation, given that teachers were engaged in rigorous and worthwhile projects, that were at times outside their content area, which led to their perceptions that service learning "was not exactly what it was supposed to be." On the other hand, some teachers may choose projects in which they are not personally engaged because they are "integrated with the content." It is reasonable to think that many teachers could facilitate outstanding service-learning groups based on their own interests and enthusiasm, which would filter to the students, and could assist students in acquiring the content necessary for the project-even if it is not directly aligned with the content they teach.

It appears that some teachers lack confidence about how to lead service learning. It would be a challenge to find two teachers teaching the same content who could align the projects to their content but a more reasonable model might be for two teachers with the same interests to co-lead the group, and center it on a relevant topic of interest to the group.

The common service-learning benchmarks, an internal accountability mandate, describe the outcomes students should gain as a result of their participation in service learning. All of the benchmarks could apply to any content area. The benchmarks assess the

students on their abilities to present information clearly, provide accurate information, listen actively, complete the five step process, explain the benefits of service learning, design an action plan, reflect, and perform other higher-order thinking skills-all skills applicable to multiple content areas.

Service learning implemented in an urban community will likely produce some unique opportunities for students to participate in organizations and activities that do not relate directly to coursework and that will broaden and increase student awareness and value of their community. This will most likely be true as the community becomes increasingly aware of the school's endeavors and impact in this area.

The centrality of service learning as a critical part of the school culture was firmly established the first two years of the school's existence. School personnel should consider the place service learning has in relation to the curricula and measures that determine if the service-learning benchmarks have been met. On-going discussion of the parameters of rigorous standards integration with service learning is needed to clarify this important part of the school mission.

Leadership

A characteristic of charter school principals is that they wear multiple hats and are often consumed by the day-to-day managerial tasks of running a school (Wohlstetter & Griffin, 1998). Effective charter school leaders must "take the initiative in clearly communicating what the school mission intends to accomplish and what it will not. Charter school leaders must operate differently, constructing specific expectations and creating internal division of responsibility that allows the school to meet them" (Hill & Lake, 2002, p.

90). Division of responsibility needs to occur at Winston Academy Charter School so the head of school can effectively function in her role as curriculum leader.

The head of school was the leader in Winston Academy Charter School's design and inception. It was her vision that began the process of application for a charter, and it was her foresight that initially sustained the vision and brought others along. She saw herself as an instructional leader and a guide for the school mission and vision. In its second year, the school grew, and she was unable to devote the necessary time to mission implementation and sustainability. Some of the factors influencing this were temporarily beyond her control. For example, the deputy head of school took a medical leave and several teachers, one by choice for personal issues and the other for reasons unknown to me, were asked by the board of trustees to leave the school, which resulted in the head of school assuming a teaching role.

Aside from these events, it is critical for school sustainability and accountability that her job description and duties be determined by the board of trustees, and that those duties that do not align with the position be delegated to another administrator. Much of her day was spent on issues such as discipline, covering classes, and scheduling, which could have been relegated to another. Students receiving in-school suspension were frequently seated in her office, which prevented her from using her office for other purposes. As an instructional leader, she needed time to visit classrooms, plan IDPs, and provide support for teachers in the task of aligning teaching with the standards and benchmarks. The tension of mediating multiple issues outside the realm of her position left her unable to fulfill responsibilities to the organization she had designed, which left the important task of developing the mission and checking alignment undone or not done to the best of her abilities.

The head of school had high standards for students and staff and demanded that those standards be met. She desired to communicate clear messages of what was expected of everyone in terms of quality of work and respect, but other duties prevented her from spending adequate time on this and the messages became less clear. Time was also needed to build teamwork and a staff that held mutual respect and trust. Several teachers spoke of this need, but recognized the lack of time and overwhelming nature of the head of school's responsibilities. A division of responsibility is needed within the school so the head of school has the freedom to use her skills to create unity and progress as an instructional leader working toward the mission of the school.

School Culture

The final recommendation for Winston Academy Charter School relates to the creation of a school culture. Winston Academy Charter School had attained clarity in its mission and vision and had aligned the school goals with state accountability expectations that results in a natural alignment of internal and external accountability mandates. The vision in the school mattered and was related to the common agenda shared by the teachers. Because this was a new school, the focus had been on the part of the mission related to the rigorous standards and less time had been spent on creating a school culture or the "correct way to perceive, think, and feel" (Schein, 1992, p. 12) and the "deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization that operate unconsciously" (Schein, 1992, p. 6). Students from multiple towns, schools, cultures, and ethnic groups and were all in one building and together as a community, but it was a community that was in the beginning stages of formalizing its customs, rituals, and ceremonies. The school mission was the foundation for this culture because it stated that all

students could go to college and that diversity is positive, recognized, and embraced. A formal statement of desired school culture is necessary. Community meetings and ceremonies each Friday were an example of the beginning of culture formation within the school, as was the ritual handshake each person who entered the building received from the head of school. Students need to know what makes their school unique, beyond more work and longer days. The focus on culture creation will promote ownership, pride, and increased understanding of the mission and its outcomes. The autonomy granted by charter school law provides opportunities for school leaders to be more than institutions of selecting and sorting (Schlechty, 1992) pp. 7, 17-28), but individuals enabled to consciously determine traditions, norms, and mores that characterize their schools. Learning can be fostered by "strong traditions, frequent rituals, and poignant ceremonies to reinvigorate cultural cohesion and focus" (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p.32). Rituals and ceremonies can promote school cultures that make the routines of school have meaning. In a rigorous, standards-based curriculum focused on a diverse student population, formulating a unique culture will benefit the staff and give the students a school identity to pass on to incoming students and to take with them as they exit.

The recommendations identified thus far relate to Winston Academy Charter School and are based on observations of the learning community, as well as on conversations and interviews with stakeholders. Some of these recommendations are also applicable to the broader school community, especially in light of the increased accountability climate in schools. All teachers need to prepare students to meet accountability expectations, and the implications of this study indicate that all school stakeholders including parents, teachers, and school leaders should be informed of ways to increase student achievement; parents need

to be informed through newsletters in their native language, teachers need to provide an orderly classroom with norms and procedures to maximize learning time, and administrators need to direct the content of teacher in-services toward increasing student learning.

Charter schools and regular public schools need to meet to share resources and best practices strategies. One rationale for the development of charter schools is that they become a sort of a lab school to test ideas and inform the public schools (Finn, Manno & Vanourek, 2000). Despite the rhetoric, this has not been the case and more work is needed.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is that its context was one school in one high-stakes testing state with high-accountability parameters for charter schools. This limitation is overcome by the fact that in our current age of increased accountability, the model of this school leaders adoption of the state standards as the foundation for their curriculum integrated with its internally developed innovations could be a model for other charter schools in similar situations.

This study illuminates understanding of the particular in depth, and its aim is to understand Winston Academy Charter School. Although this could be seen as a limitation, readers bring knowledge to the study, and will make connections as they read with information that is personally useful. Case studies present insights into the "human condition" (Stake, 1995, p. 65), and readers can apply the information to their own situation. The findings of this case study cover theoretical issues involved in charter schools such as the role of increased external accountability and its intersection with external demands. These issues represent the building of a theory relating to charter schools and are a way to

look at other studies of a similar nature (Merriam, 1988). Thus, despite the limitations of the study, they are overcome by its merit as a tool to examine other schools.

Researcher Role and Ethical Considerations

Following the formal, taped interview, several participants began to tell me some personal information that related to their school experiences and asked that this not be used as a part of the study. It did not pertain directly to the research questions but to instead observations they had made regarding organizational structure, and the researcher memos will be saved for further research.

As a former teacher who has experienced many of the day-to-day frustrations as well as successes that accompany the teaching profession, I developed a relationship with some of the teachers, especially those whose teaching and classroom management style aligned with my own. They understood my advocacy for school choice and specifically for charter schools. In addition, they were aware of my position in a teacher training institution as well as my personal journey through classroom teaching, to graduate school, and finally to conducting dissertation research. Because I had "been there," I was approached several times by three teachers with questions about what a particular teacher should do in a given situation, how an issue should be handled, or how I thought they could reach a particular student. Many of these interactions were laden with emotion on the part of the teacher. Given that I was not a passive observer of this school setting, but had become engaged with individuals and was drawn into their world (Van Maanen, 1988), I responded to their questions, but, following each interaction, attempted to journal reflexively to document the interaction as well as to separate the purpose of my study from the relationships I had developed. Because I was drawn into the world of this school and I wanted it to be

successful, my consistent reflection was necessary to check my authentic understanding of the school. In order to present my findings in a manner that did not give a more positive or negative slant to each teacher's situation, I frequently reread my initial reactions to these events because I realized that the more I reflected on it, the reality of each specific moment and conversation became clouded.

As a part of the member-checking process, all of the respondents received their transcribed interviews as well as information about the themes within the data. Of those who did receive the information, two asked for clarification regarding the themes, and none of them provided feedback that conflicted with my themes.

Inherent in research is an ethical responsibility to act in a moral manner and to present the case as it is. Care was taken throughout this study to act in a way that respected confidences, that communicated the aims of the study to the participants, that identified my biases and attempted to minimize them as I analyzed data, and that acknowledged that the "burden of producing a study that has been conducted in an ethical manner lies with the individual researcher" (Merriam, 1988, p. 184).

Directions for Future Research

Despite the variety in charter schools, minimal research has been conducted regarding the integration of standards and service learning in an urban school for diverse students. The new wave of accountability as a result of NCLB has shifted the focus to the school as the individual unit of accountability. The result is that charter schools have to negotiate internal and external accountability and ensure that the two types are compatible or overlap. The school in this study was two years old. A study of the school after it has reached it maximum capacity for students would be beneficial to determine if it has maintained its original

mission, and if students are consistently meeting the internal accountability standards. In addition, the "new school" issues that contributed to the dynamics of the school would provide relevant information about the way decisions were made and the head of school's leadership style. Each situation that occurred in the school was a first and took large amounts of time to solve or evaluate, which took time away from other issues that needed attention, and made the "new school" issue a part of the school culture.

The predominance of teachers within the school who did not endorse the mission was an unexpected finding. Charter school accountability theory (Hill, Lake, & Celio, 2002) discusses school accountability to teachers as well as teacher accountability to the school mission as a distinguishing trait of charter schools. Further exploration of charter schools with distinct missions, and the alignment of teacher and school philosophy, would provide insight into this issue.

An examination of the internship possibilities of service learning would prove beneficial to provide insight into how students can meet benchmarks and be involved in prolonged service. A main purpose of service learning is to prepare students to be leaders. Conducting a study using students as respondents would provide descriptions of student perceptions of service learning and their development of leadership skills. Certainly a longitudinal study tracing graduate higher education and employment experiences would be beneficial to learn about the long-term results of part of this reform.

The head of school at Winston Academy Charter School viewed herself as an instructional leader. The autonomy granted by charter school law provided a stage for the development of innovative curriculums directed by an innovative instructional leader. A study that examines the leadership practices of an individual in a charter school who views

herself as primarily an instructional leader would provide information regarding the way school boards negotiate the multiple other duties performed by administrators in charter schools.

A quantitative study comparing the scores of students in this school to students in traditional public schools would provide insight on the feasibility and worth of this type of reform and indicate whether the longer day, intensive tutoring, and small class sizes were factors in students' successes. Other beneficial quantitative studies that would reveal pertinent information related to charter school success include those investigating the achievement of students before they came to charter schools compared with the students' annual yearly growth while attending charter schools.

The board of trustees or governing boards in charter schools serve a critical role in internal accountability (Finn, Manno & Vanourek, 2000) yet many of them do not receive any formal training in using best practices, developing clear bylaws, and conducting self-evaluations. Quantitative studies looking at the previous issues regarding boards of trustees and their relationships to school success would benefit charter schools, as would quantitative studies that examine trustee turnover rate and school leadership.

Given that charter schools are a relatively new phenomenon within the school reform movement, multiple studies merit completion, each of which would relate to a particular piece of the school landscape.

Conclusion

This descriptive case study presented the story of a charter school in an urban area that served a diverse student population. Using the theoretical framework of Charter School Theory, the study presented findings related to the way teachers and the head of school

balance multiple accountability mandates within the context of their unique school mission and their chosen curriculum and instructional strategies. The autonomy of charter schools is used to develop innovations that meet internal accountability demands and are constrained by external accountability mandates. Charter schools in high-stakes testing states negotiate the intersection of internal and external mandates by utilizing state standards as a foundation for their individual curriculum requirements.

The dynamics of charter schools and the combination of innovation, autonomy and accountability chosen can present a dilemma for teachers, who may be committed to the mission of the school, and yet find themselves unable to meet personal and family obligations; as a result they may leave the school.

The findings, recommendations, and implications of this study add to the existing research about charter schools and have implications for the greater educational community during this current age of increased educational accountability.

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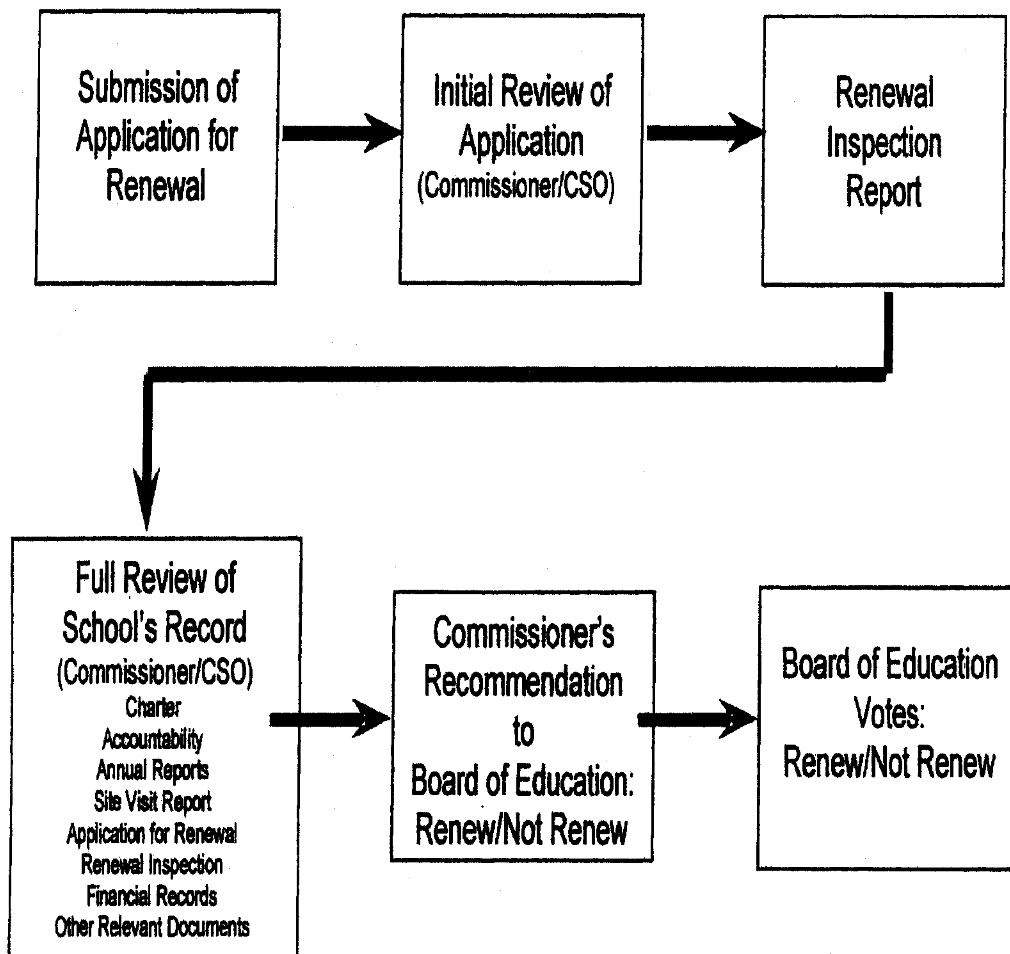
APPENDIX A. RENEWAL OF A PUBLIC SCHOOL CHARTER SCHOOL IN ONE STATE



APPENDIX B. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Diverse Student Population - Diversity of socioeconomic levels, cultures, backgrounds, English proficiency, academic achievement levels, and interests

External Mandates - Students will take the state test and in order to maintain the charter, student scores must be higher then the sending districts scores. Students, after two years in the school, will meet 70% of benchmarks at each grade level. Average scores for each cohort of students will improve 2 NCE's (normal curve equivalents) every year in each grade level that the standardized test is administered (Charter School Application, 2002). Charters have the same reporting requirements as other public schools and students must meet the same performance standards, testing, and portfolio requirements as other public school students (Vergari, 2000).

Internal Mandates-Students will meet the school's promotion standards that cover meeting a 70% of benchmarks for each benchmark in each academic core class. Students must also meet standards of participation and attendance. The school has set a standard that 95% of students will be admitted to college or employed upon graduation. Internal mandates also state that students will improve 2 normal curve equivalents every year in each grade that the standardized test is administered. Internal mandates also cover a charter school's responsibility to the governing board, students and parents.

School's Intended Curriculum - The school uses as its curriculum a popular reform model as well as the state standards and benchmarks to develop its curriculum.

Informed - All students will master fundamental academic skills and information

Articulate - All students will be able to conceptualize and communicate their understandings

Proactive - All students will be capable of forming their own ideas and taking the initiative to follow through in them.

APPENDIX C. CURRICULUM DESIGN: DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE, TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

The customized implementation program utilized by the school the first year provides the following guidelines for training as well as tools and strategies (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2005):

Individuals from the reform organization establish a long-tem relationship of at least three years with a charter school, providing an average of 25 days of on-site training annually. The design team has developed 30 training modules, organized into groups that address key areas of school and classroom change. The modules included: diagnostic analysis, principal coaching, using data instructionally, classroom organization and management, instructional coaching, and classroom behavior/management. Each school may select a different combination of nine modules, depending on the customized plan it develops with the curriculum model. This design involves all stakeholders in the reform process including teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, parents, and community.

Curriculum Tools and Strategies

The customized implementation program provides a school with the following tools and strategies (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2005):

1. A standards-driven curriculum, instruction, and assessment using state and district standards
2. Using best instructional practices in all content areas
3. Differentiated instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students in all classrooms

4. Establishment of a school leadership team
5. Use of technology to improve communication between teachers and parents and to enhance instruction
6. A standards-driven curriculum, instruction, and assessment using state and district standards
7. Differentiated instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students in all classrooms
8. Develop parent and community partnership

APPENDIX D. WINSTON ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS

Taken from Charter School Application (2002)

Winston Academy will use multiple assessment tools to gather information about students in order to evaluate individual student progress as well as the success of the school as a whole. The school aligned the performance standards from a curriculum reform model with the state curriculum frameworks and the school learning goals. There are 5-10 performance standards for each subject area and they each include an equal number of benchmarks for each of the standards at each grade level. In addition to standards and benchmarks for each form (level), there is a service project application. All data collected will be recorded in the school's information management system. The following standards are necessary for exit from a particular level:

Academic Core

1. Demonstrate progress toward school Learning Goals by meeting 70 percent of benchmarks for each benchmark in each academic core class (Humanities, Math, Science, Language) as assessed by internal classroom assessments.
2. Demonstrate progress toward school Learning Goals by meeting 80% of the standards specified on internally designed rubric for Service Project presentations.

Connections

1. Meet standards for participation, personal statements, self-assessments, and memos and have 100% attendance unless excused

Choice Block

1. Meet participation requirements and have 100 % attendance unless excused

Responsibility to School

1. Students must have 100 % attendance unless excused and must meet norms outlined in REACH.

APPENDIX E. CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT OF STATE AND SCHOOL STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS

Subject	Standa	Benchmark	Type	Category	Benchmark Description	State ID
Math	MP2	M.PR.P.001	Proactive	Number Sense and Operations	Students can use ratios and proportions in the solution to problems	8N3/8M4
Math	MA1	M.PR.A.001	Articulate	Number Sense and Operations	Students can represent numbers in scientific notation, and use them to solve problems	8N4
Math	MP2	M.PR.P.002	Proactive	Number Sense and Operations	Students can apply the rules of powers and roots to the solution of problems.	8N7
Math	MI2	M.PR.I.001	Informed	Number Sense and Operations	Students can use the correct order of operations and extend the order of operations to include positive integer exponents and square roots	8N7
Math	MP2	M.PR.P.003	Proactive	Number Sense and Operations	Students can use the inverse relationships between addition and subtraction, multiplication and division, squares and their roots, in order to solve and simplify problems	8N9
Math	MP2	M.PR.P.004	Proactive	Geometry and Measurement	Students can recall the Pythagorean theorem and apply it to the solution of problems	8G4
Math	MI3	M.PR.I.002	Informed	Geometry and Measurement	Students can use formulas to convert one system of measurement to another	8M2
Math	MI3	M.PR.I.003	Informed	Geometry and Measurement	Students can use formulas to calculate area, surface area, volume, perimeter/circumference	8M3
Math	MA4	M.PR.A.002	Articulate	Geometry and Measurement	Students can use models, graphs, and formulas to solve simple problems involving rates	8M5
Math	MA4	M.PR.A.003	Articulate	Pre-Algebra	Students can represent and analyze patterns using tables, graphs, and symbolic expressions	8P1
Math	MI3	M.PR.I.004	Informed	Pre-Algebra	Students can evaluate algegraic expression for given variable values e.g. 3a^2-b for a=3, b=7	8P2
Math	MI2	M.PR.I.005	Informed	Pre-Algebra	Students can evaluate (-x)(-y)=xy	8P3
Math	MI3	M.PR.I.006	Informed	Pre-Algebra	Students can use this identity (-x)(-y)=xy to simplify algebraic expressions	8P3
Math	MI3	M.PR.I.007	Informed	Pre-Algebra	Students can calculate the slope of a line using points and a graph	8P5
Math	MA4	M.PR.A.004	Articulate	Pre-Algebra	Students can apply the concept of slope to the solution of graphing problems	8P5
Math	MI3	M.PR.I.008	Informed	Pre-Algebra	Students can identify the roles of variables within the equation y=mx+b	8P6
Math	MI3	M.PR.I.014	Informed	Pre-Algebra	Students can express y as a function of x with parameters m and b	8P6
Math	MA1	M.PR.A.006	Articulate	Pre-Algebra	Students can set up linear equations and inequalities with one variable using algebraic methods	8P7
Math	MI1	M.PR.I.009	Informed	Pre-Algebra	Students can solve linear equations and inequalities with one variable using algebraic methods	8P7
Math	MA1	M.PR.A.007	Articulate	Pre-Algebra	Students can set up linear equations and inequalities with two variables using algebraic methods	8P7
Math	MI1	M.PR.I.010	Informed	Pre-Algebra	Students can solve linear equations and inequalities with two variables using algebraic methods	8P7
Math	MA4	M.PR.A.008	Articulate	Pre-Algebra	Students can explain using pictures, how a change in one variable impacts other variables in a functional relationship	8P8
Math	MA4	M.PR.A.009	Articulate	Pre-Algebra	Students can explain using graphs, how a change in one variable impacts other variables in a functional relationship	8P8
Math	MA4	M.PR.A.010	Articulate	Pre-Algebra	Students can explain using charts, how a change in one variable impacts other variables in a functional relationship	8P8
Math	MA1	M.PR.A.011	Articulate	Pre-Algebra	Students can explain using equations, how a change in one variable impacts other variables in a functional relationship	8P8
Math	MP2	M.PR.P.005	Proactive	Pre-Algebra	Students can use linear equations to model and analyze problems involving proportional relationships	8P9
Math	MA4	M.PR.A.012	Articulate	Pre-Algebra	Students can use tables and graphs to represent and compare linear growth patterns	8P10
Math	MA1	M.PR.A.013	Articulate	Number Sense and Operations	Students can order, estimate, and convert between integers, fractions, mixed numbers, decimals, and percents	8N1
Math	MP2	M.PR.P.006	Proactive	Number Sense and Operations	Students can select and use the correct operation to solve problems with rational numbers	8N12
Math	MI3	M.PR.I.011	Informed	Number Sense and Operations	Students can estimate and compute with decimals	8N10
Math	MI3	M.PR.I.012	Informed	Number Sense and Operations	Students can estimate and compute with fractions, including their simplification	8N10
Math	MP2	M.PR.P.007	Proactive	Number Sense and Operations	Students can apply number theory concepts to the solution of problems	8N5
Math	MP2	M.PR.P.008	Proactive	Number Sense and Operations	Students can apply the associative, communatative and distributive properties to problem solving with rational numbers	8N8
Math	MA3	M.PR.A.014	Articulate	Data and Statistics	Students can find and interpret appropriate measures of central tendency	8D3
Math	MA2	M.PR.I.013	Informed	Geometry and Measurement	Students can convert within the same measurement system	8M1
Math	MI3	M.PR.I.014	Informed	Geometry and Measurement	Students can identify the relationship between the number of sides and the sums of the interior and exterior angle measures of polygons	8G1
Math	MI3	M.PR.I.015	Informed	Geometry and Measurement	Students can classify figures in terms of congruence and similarity	8G2
Math	MA3	M.PR.A.015	Articulate	Geometry and Measurement	Students can explain the relationship between angles formed by intersecting lines	8G3
Math	MA3	M.PR.A.016	Articulate	Geometry and Measurement	Students can predict the results of transformations on unmarked or coordinate planes and drew the transformed figure	8G6
Math	MA3	M.PR.A.017	Articulate	Geometry and Measurement	Students can identify and name three-dimensional figures and draw their two-dimensional counterparts	8G7/8G8

APPENDIX F. PERFORMANCE GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT TOOLS

IS THE SCHOOL AN ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

PERFORMANCE GOAL 1	STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY ARE INCREASINGLY INFORMED AND ARTICULATE THROUGH MEASURABLE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.

PERFORMANCE GOAL 2	STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY ARE PREPARED TO SUCCEED IN COLLEGE.

PERFORMANCE GOAL 3	STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY ARE INCREASINGLY PROACTIVE.

IS THE SCHOOL A VIABLE ORGANIZATION?

PERFORMANCE GOAL 1	THE SCHOOL WILL BE A FINANCIALLY SOLVENT AND STABLE ORGANIZATION

PERFORMANCE GOAL 2	TRUSTEES WILL GOVERN SOUNDLY.

PERFORMANCE GOAL 3	THE SCHOOL WILL HIRE, SUPPORT AND RETAIN EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF.

PERFORMANCE GOAL 4	SCHOOL WILL RECRUIT AND RETAIN A DIVERSE STUDENT BODY.

IS THE SCHOOL FAITHFUL TO THE TERMS OF ITS CHARTER?

PERFORMANCE GOAL 1	STUDENTS WILL UPHOLD THE SCHOOL'S NORMS AND MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT IN THEIR COMMUNITY.

PERFORMANCE GOAL 2	SCHOOL WILL DOCUMENT AND SHARE INFORMATION ON ITS SCHOOL MODEL, INCLUDING INNOVATIVE PRACTICES.

APPENDIX G. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

PARTICIPANT	*JOB TITLE*	*LEVEL TAUGHT*
A	Math teacher	First Form
B	Math teacher	Second Form
C	Spanish teacher	First Form
D	Spanish teacher	Second Form
E	English teacher	First Form
F	English teacher	Second Form
G	History teacher	Second Form
H	Humanities teacher	First Form
I	Special Education Director	
J	School Nurse	
K	Math Teacher	First Form
L	Assistant Teacher/Assistant Teacher	First Form and Second Form
M	School Counselor	
N	Head of School	Second Form
O	Science Teacher	First Form
Q	Science Teacher	Second Form

APPENDIX H. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

RQ #1:

1. Describe your typical school day.
2. Tell me about the mission of the school.
3. How was the school mission formulated?
4. What input did you have or do you currently have regarding the school mission?
5. In what ways does your teaching relate to the mission?
6. What specific strategies do you use in your classroom?
7. What is your role as a teacher?
8. How do the standardized testing requirements and NCLB affect your teaching?
9. What types of assessment do you use in your classroom?
10. In what ways do you prepare your students for standardized testing?
11. What are the most pressing external mandates?
12. How closely aligned is your teaching with the state standards?
13. What challenges have you faced in the classroom?
14. How do the standardized testing requirements affect your teaching?

RQ #2:

1. What teaching strategies are you expected to use?
2. Tell me about a typical class period in your room.
3. In what ways is your teaching student focused?
4. What is your preferred method of instruction?
5. Who decides what you are to teach?

Additional questions related to the particular curriculum:

5. In what ways do you assist students in achieving exit standards for each form?
6. What procedures are in place for students who do not demonstrate proficiency?
7. In what ways is your classroom and teaching culturally responsive?
8. In what ways are parents involved in your classroom and in the school?
9. What types of diversity do you have in your classroom?
10. In what ways does the student diversity influence your teaching?
11. What kind of staff training is provided to prepare you for the population you teach?
12. What types of service learning do your students take part in?
13. How does the service learning experience inform your teaching?
14. In what way do students engage in reflection based on the service learning?
15. What are the benefits of a service-learning component of the curriculum?

APPENDIX I. OBSERVATION FORM

Site/Location:__________ Person Observed___________

Observation Date:_______ Length of Observation_______

Documents Collected________________________________ (Attached)

1. *The Setting*: Physical environment, context, behaviors (RQ 1, 2)

2. *The Participants:* Describe the scene, who is there, how are people interacting? (RQ 1, 2)

3. *Activities and Interactions*: What is going on? Is there a sequence of events? Are there reoccurring activities? (RQ 1, 2)

4. *Frequency and Duration*: When did it begin and how long did it last? (RQ 1, 2)

5. *Subtle Factors*: Less obvious but perhaps as important events such as informal and unplanned activities, nonverbal communication. What does not happen?

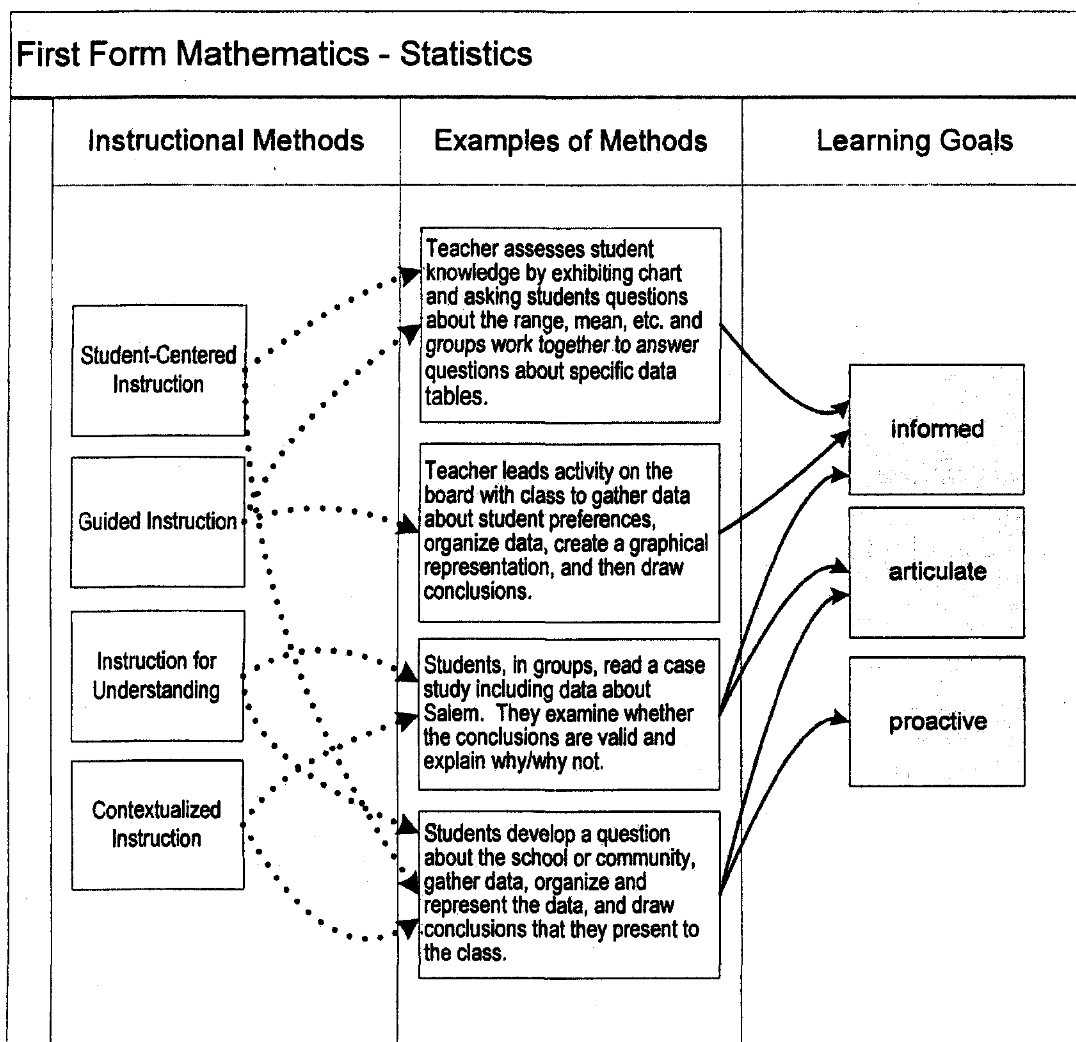
6. What evidence is there of the 4 types of teaching strategies (Student-focused instruction, Guided instruction, Instruction for understanding, Conceptualized instruction)

Notes on immediate reactions after observations. Does what I saw align with previous information? Does what I saw lead to new questions and if so what are they? Were any of my research questions answered through this observation?

Reflective Summary of Observation

Explanation of Documents Collected

APPENDIX J. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS, EXAMPLE OF METHODS, LEARNING GOALS



APPENDIX K. INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES OF CASE SCHOOL

(Charter School Application, 2002)

Student-focused instruction - Students at Winston Academy will be the center of the classroom. Teachers will focus on students in two ways: they will recognize the individuality of each student and they will allow students to share in directing their learning. Teachers will identify student backgrounds, interests, cognitive abilities, and levels of mastery. They will respond to students by incorporating interest and backgrounds into the classroom and by differentiating instruction to accommodate individual preferences and strengths. Teachers may vary content, activities, or outcomes for students depending n the composition of the class. Academy teachers will encourage and provide ample time for students to make choices, to lead classes and to express themselves.

Guided instruction - Winston Academy teachers will ensure that students master fundamental skills and information by explicitly guiding students during a portion of their instructional time. Teachers will assist individuals or groups by organizing and presenting information clearly, connecting topics to prior learning, introducing multiple approaches or perspectives on the same topic, and modeling supportive structure for skill-development and problem solving such as mnemonic devices, diagrams and routines teachers may demonstrate procedures for mathematics problems in the board for the whole class, work with a small group on strategies for remembering and understanding fractions rules or prompt a specific students to develop a mnemonic device to assist memorization.

Instruction for understanding - Instructions in the classroom will be focused in learning for understanding. In order to grasp concepts, students must go beyond mastery of simple skills and information. They need time to explore learning. Teachers will construct rich, open-ended activities to allow students to explore content matter and develop problem-solving strategies. They will provide student with blocks of time for intensive engagement. During this time, teachers will check for understanding, assess student progress, and prompt student when appropriate. Academy teachers will seek to provide continuous and appropriate challenges for all students. Class work will be structured to provide opportunities for students to initiate investigations, facilitate discussion, make decisions about learning, and to reflect on their work,

Conceptualized instruction - Teachers will provide context for learning inside and outside the classroom to aid students in transferring their understanding. Opportunities for applying learning will range from using manipulative to facilitate understanding of number relationships, to role-playing, to performing laboratory experiments, to using interdisciplinary themes across classes. Service projects are an ideal medium for students to apply their skills and knowledge from academic classes. Their community provides a relevant context and the specific projects provide clear benefits to others.

Instructional Methods are taken from the Charter School Application (2002).

APPENDIX L. SERVICE LEARNING BENCHMARKS

Service Learning Benchmarks - Common

Code	Benchmark
SL.A008	Students will deliver clear oral presentations (e.g., eye contact, pacing, voice level, posture).
SL.A009	Students will provide accurate information and answer questions on their topic in oral and/or written form following established rubrics.
SL.A010	Students will listen actively and will follow agreed-upon rules for class and small group work.
SL.I002	Students will be able to identify the Five Steps in the Five Step Process.
SL.I001	Students will be able to define service-learning and community service.
SL.A001	Students will be able to explain the Five Step process and articulate the importance of each step in their project.
SL.A002	Students will be able to explain the benefits of service work.
SL.A003	Students will be able to compare and contrast types of service (community service and service learning as well as indirect, direct and advocacy) and to differentiate between the implications of each type.
SL.I003	Students will be able to identify an issue in the community to address through a service project.
SL.I004	Students will be able to organize relevant and appropriate information about an identified issue. (DISC1, RES02, RES03)
SL.A005	Students will be able to draw conclusions from the data that they collect about their issue. (RES07)
SL.A007	Students will be able to design an action plan to address their issue.
SL.P001	Students will be able to evaluate the effectiveness and feasibility of possible solutions.
SL.P002	Students will actively participate in carrying out the service project plan.
SL.P003	Students will be able to reflect on their project, discussing the benefits, the challenges, and the successes of their work.

APPENDIX M. TYPES OF SERVICE

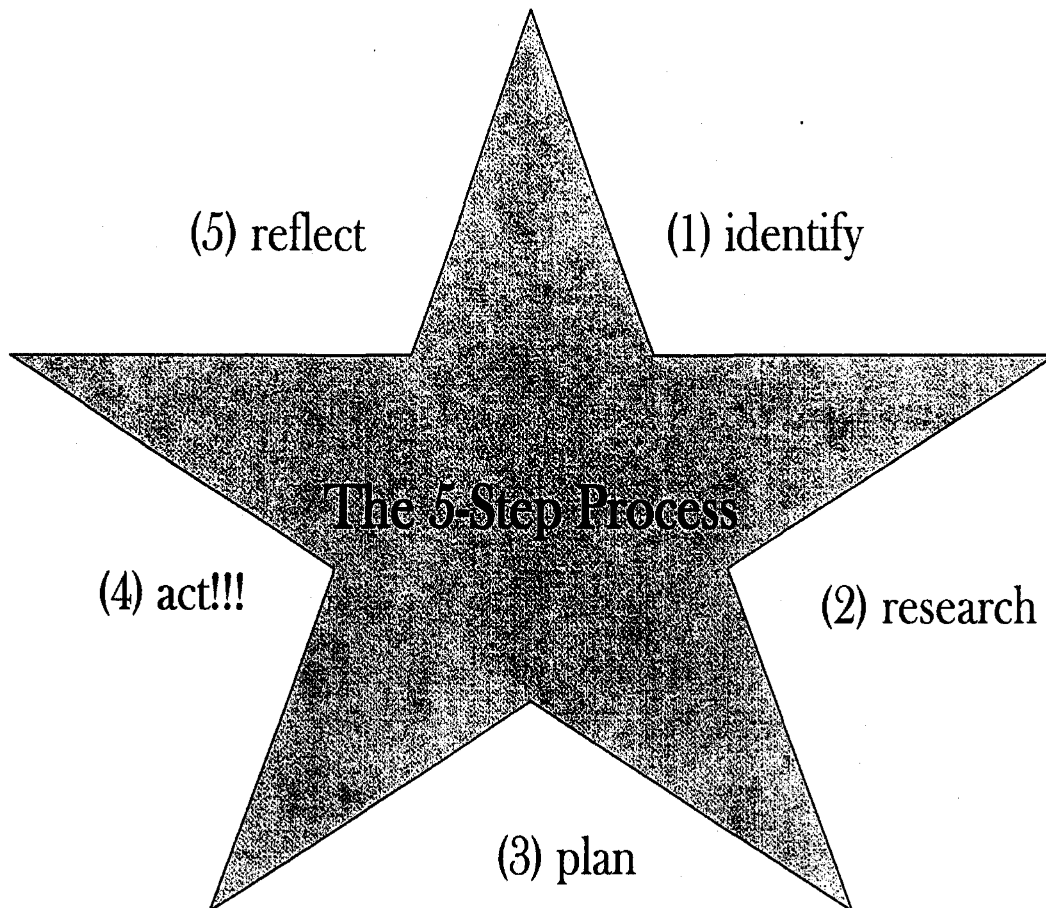
Direct Service: Students engage in face-to-face interaction with the people begin served. Examples are tutoring, mentoring, reading to the blind, and providing companionship to the elderly.

Indirect Service: Students address a community need, but are physically distant form the people or organizations they impact. Examples are creating manuals to help a group, raising money for a family in need, or providing toys for sick children.

Advocacy: Students trying to increase public awareness of a problem or issue affecting individuals, the community, the nation, or the world as a whole. Examples in include speaking, performing, or lobbying for equal rights; getting school funding for the arts; and persuading young people to vote.

Information taken from the DOE site visit manual, 2006.

APPENDIX N. SERVICE LEARNING 5-STEP PROCESS



APPENDIX O. EXAMPLES OF SERVICE LEARNING PROJECTS AT WINSTON ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

Direct Service:

Blood Drive

Visiting a home for handicapped adults

Visiting a shelter for the homeless

Fine Arts Jam

Book Fair

School Store

Indirect Service:

Penny Drive for Lymphoma

Advocacy:

Homelessness issue

Day of Respect/respect workshop

Documentary on respect

Landscaping, recycling, Earth Day

Raising awareness of trash in storm drains

Sticker shock campaign, underage drinking

APPENDIX P. CURRICULUM BINDER TABLE OF CONTENTS

CURRICULUM BINDER TABLE OF CONTENTS

Required Components:		
☐ Subject and grade-level specific state standards	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
☐ Course Standards List	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
☐ Course Benchmark List	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
☐ Year-long Curriculum Map	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
☐ Course Syllabus	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
☐ Unit Plans	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
☐ Weekly Plans	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
☐ Daily Lesson Plans (one per trimester)	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
☐ Baseline Assessments	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
☐ Formative Assessments	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
☐ Cumulative Assessments	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______
	Dated: _______	Initialed: ______

APPENDIX Q. LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE

❑ **Study Guides and Answer Keys**	**Dated: ______**	**Initialed: ______**
	Dated: ______	**Initialed: ______**
	Dated: ______	**Initialed: ______**
❑ **Rubrics**	**Dated: ______**	**Initialed: ______**
	Dated: ______	**Initialed: ______**
	Dated: ______	**Initialed: ______**
❑ **Model Work Products**	**Dated: ______**	**Initialed: ______**
	Dated: ______	**Initialed: ______**
	Dated: ______	**Initialed: ______**
❑ **Classroom Handouts**	**Dated: ______**	**Initialed: ______**
	Dated: ______	**Initialed: ______**
	Dated: ______	**Initialed: ______**
❑ **Student Work Samples**	**Dated: ______**	**Initialed: ______**
Please include:	**Dated: ______**	**Initialed: ______**
❑ **Mastery-level student work sample**	**Dated: ______**	**Initialed: ______**
❑ **Proficient-level student work sample**		
❑ **Below proficient level student work sample**		

UNIT PLAN TEMPLATE

Teacher Name:	Course :	Unit Title:
Trimester: □ 1 □ 2 □ 3	Unit Number:	Duration of Unit (# of days):
Benchmarks Addressed:		
List here the benchmarks that will be addressed in this unit. Be sure to include benchmark ID, benchmark description and state standard alignment (drawn from the database).		
Guiding Questions:		
List here the questions that will elicit understanding of key, big-picture topics in this unit. Guiding questions are intended to probe beyond skills and rote content and to help students make meaning.		
Service Project/Community Connections:		
List here how students might use the knowledge and skills learned in this unit in their lives and for their service projects.		

APPENDIX R. WINSTON ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL:

FROM LEARNING GOALS TO LESSON OBJECTIVES

Learning Goals:
Winston Academy Charter school's standards indicate what students will know and be able to do in each of the Academic Core Subjects when they graduate in order to achieve the school's Learning Goals. Standards are broad objectives.

Standards:
Winston Academy Charter School's indicate what students will know and be able to do in each of the Academic Core subjects when they graduate in order to achieve the school's Learning Goals. Standards are broad objectives.

Benchmarks:
Winston Academy Charter School's benchmarks delineate content and skill objectives for each Form in each Academic Core Subject. Benchmarks are clear, measurable objectives that provide steps toward mastery of standards.

Lesson Objectives:
Winston Academy Charter School's lesson objectives are specific and measurable objectives for particular lessons.

APPENDIX S. CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

Informed Consent to Interview Participants

To: Interview Participants

From: Rebecca Pitkin

Subject: Participation in face to face interview

Purpose: The purpose of this interview is to gather information about the way this school balances internal and external accountability mandate. An additional purpose is to determine the strategies that teachers use to align with the school mission.

Recording: The interview will be audio-taped so that the information collected during the interview will be accurate and complete. The tape will be transcribed for analysis.

Time Required: The interview will be 30-60 minutes in length. You may be asked additional questions for clarification.

Preserving Confidentiality: Your participation is the interview is voluntary. Every effort will be made to protect your anonymity. Your name will not appear in any written documents other than those used by the researcher.

I have read the memo describing this research project and understand the nature of the project and my participation.

I voluntarily agree to participate in the interview that is a part of the dissertations study on The Intersection of Standards and Service being conducted by Rebecca Pitkin of Iowa State University.

I understand that I may be contacted for a follow-up interview if necessary. Following the completion of the interviews, I will receive a paper copy of the transcript that I will be asked to review for accuracy and t which I may provide corrections or additional information. I will also receive a copy of the themes that emerged from the transcripts that I will also be asked to review for accuracy and to which I may provide additions, clarifications or additional information.

I understand that the evaluator will preserve my confidentiality. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw from the participation at any time or choose to not answer one of the questions.

I understand that the results of this study will be shared with the researchers' dissertations committee, will be bound and a copy will be placed in the Iowa State University Parks Library. I also understand the results of this study will be shared at conferences or published but in no way will the confidential nature of the study change or will my identity be revealed.

____

Name (Print) Date

____

Signature

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am blessed to have had a hallway of friends who completed this process along with me.

Dr. Joanne Marshall, my major professor, consistently encouraged me with a steady stream of green ink, and helped me transform my ideas into a coherent study. I am extremely grateful for her support and guidance through multiple draft exchanges on her back porch.

I am also thankful for my other committee members: Dr. Carol Fuhler, Dr. Florence Hamrick, Dr. Frank Hernandez, and Dr. Barbara Licklider for their encouragement throughout the process and their commitment of time.

This study would not have been happened if it were not for Winston Academy Charter School. I am grateful to the head of school for her willingness to let me visit the school, and for the teachers and other staff members who gave their time for this study and made me feel welcome in their school.