



Charter Schools Office

Report: Mid-Contract

Academy: Conner Creek Academy

Date: December 2 & 3, 2019

The visitation occurred at Conner Creek Academy with five members on the Ferris State University Charter Schools Office (CSO) visitation team. The team had the opportunity to meet with and interview the School Leaders, the School Improvement Team, and two Board Members. The team was able to tour the facility and visit several classrooms to observe teaching and learning. We appreciate the open communication and transparency from the academy team.

Visitation Findings

School Improvement Processes and Student Outcomes	
Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school improvement plan is aligned to the school's comprehensive needs assessment. The administrative leadership team are experienced Conner Creek educators who understand the importance of creating a positive culture. Evidence-based programs are implemented districtwide (Classroom Instruction That Works, Daily Five/Guided Reading, Kagan Structures, etc.) Teachers report improvements in student engagement and overall classroom effort. The leadership team is aware of their MSTEP and NWEA MapGrowth scores. They acknowledge academic weaknesses and have identified priorities for improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop diagnostic protocols and instructional practices based on data aggregation and analysis. Continue to expand knowledge and understanding of how to interpret and use NWEA MapGrowth reports to guide interventions. Continue efforts to develop a written MTSS protocol, including progress monitoring cycles to review the effectiveness of interventions being implemented. Consider evaluating the effectiveness and impact of MC's current data team focus. Does CER (Claim, Evidence, and Reasoning) build links between teaching practices and student achievement? Continue to monitor the effectiveness of online interventions (SuccessMaker/Waterford, etc.). Are they producing the desired results? Do outcomes align with NWEA MapGrowth?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Guided Reading Program appears to have greatly increased literacy engagement. The program is efficiently organized and consistently implemented. The Reading Specialists are visible in lower elementary classrooms, and small group instruction appears to be targeting deficit areas. • There are interventions in place at both locations. The Guided Reading Program, SuccessMaker, Waterford and Academic Intervention Lab both provide ELA and Math support. • The addition of PSAT and SAT Prep classes and lesson alignment should have a positive impact on student outcomes. • MC’s pull-out program now addresses the “bubble kids” vs. lowest performers. • There is a clear link between Professional Development content and School Improvement goals. The information is job-embedded, relevant and revisited often. • MC appears to have an adequate Special Education program that addresses student needs through push-in and pull-out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to analyze initiatives compared to outcomes. Is what you’re doing making a difference? • Continue to monitor classrooms daily (walkthroughs) to ensure high quality instruction is the norm. • Consider offering more content specific professional development opportunities. • Continue looking into the possibility of expanding interventions systems to the 9th graders. • Consider expanding the small group interventions for elementary math support. • Continue to maximize your use of formative assessment to guide instructional best practices.
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Academy Culture Review

Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conner Creek staff communicate a belief in the potential of all students. They have a deep understanding of the benefits of relationship building. • Teachers are committed to developing positive relationships yet believe that accountability is still first and foremost. • Newly implemented PBIS initiatives at MC have shown positive results; the development of behavior incentives (cougar credits) encourage student ownership and responsibility for learning. • There is a strong emphasis on improving student attendance rates. Both buildings have added Attendance Officers, developed protocols, incentives, and student initiatives. • Staff report a collaborative culture and a positive teaching community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop additional partnerships to support whole child growth and development – social, emotional, and cognitive well-being. • Continue efforts to encourage parental involvement and support – PTO, family-based events, etc. • Continue to engage parents in efforts to improve attendance. • Continue to push high expectations, rigor, and the development of intellectually challenging content. • Coordinate efforts to engage students in projects across campuses (reading buddies, mentoring opportunities, etc.). • Continue to identify ways of “getting kids to recognize that they can be more”.

- Staff are sensitive to the needs of children who have experienced trauma. They provide a safe learning environment that addresses the social and emotional needs of their students.
- School leaders aim to create a flexible and supportive environment for staff. Teachers have autonomy and the ability impact schoolwide decision making.
- School Leaders aim to develop a strong collaborative culture based on open communication and reflective practices. Instructional rounds/peer observations are utilized to encourage personal growth and development.
- Positive reinforcement is evident in classrooms. Staff speak respectfully to students, showing genuine interest and empathy.
- Classrooms demonstrate meaningful student-teacher interactions and encourage positive rapport; there is a clear atmosphere of trust.
- Teachers create inviting classroom spaces that embrace student choice and encourage cooperative learning.
- Conner Creek Academy is involved with several community partnerships to provide life skills; dual enrollment, job corps, C² Pipeline, etc.
- Weekly detention at MC now provide training such as conflict resolution and coping skills; resulting in growth and a reduction in behaviors.

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Mission Accomplishment

Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conner Creek staff consistently discuss and reference the mission, vision and core values (ICE – Inspire, Create, Empower) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to revisit the alignment and relevance of your vision, mission and core values.

Governance and Leadership

Observations

- Board members report a positive working relationship with the new leadership team and ESP. Open-communication (leadership) and financial transparency (ESP) are an important aspect of their relationship.
- The Board recognizes the importance of standardized assessment outcomes. They are familiar with the academic data and the need to improve student performance.
- Board members encourage the implementation of new programs and initiatives to increase positive assessment outcomes. They follow up frequently, asking questions and checking in with staff to monitor the progress and overall impact.
- There is careful consideration of current financial standings and fiscal responsibility. They are aware of a decrease in their fund balance and remain vigilant with careful monitoring and relevant conversations.
- The Board has a current and relevant Strategic Plan. They regularly discuss actions and progress related to Strategic Planning.
- The Board recognizes the value and impact of a clear mission and vision. They believe in the adoption of a mission and vision which guides decision-making aligned to the Board's responsibilities.
- The Board continues to consider future opportunities and improvements that support the achievement of their mission and vision.

Opportunities for Growth

- None at this time

Resources and Support Systems

Observations

- Efforts and plans are in place to retain and recruit/hire qualified staff.
- Board members and school leadership recognize the value of a dedicated staff.

Opportunities for Growth

- Continue to consider multiple ways to encourage and support current staff including school leaders.

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Facilities Review

Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff ensure that students and adults feel safe and ready to engage in teaching and learning; the facility is clean and good working order. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None at this time.

Website/Social Media Review

Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The website provides necessary and adequate information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None at this time.

CSO Review of Overall Performance for Conner Creek Academy East

Contract Performance Report Review

Observations (2017-19 data)	Opportunities for Growth (2017-19 data)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enrollment steady- in the 900's for last four years 66% of students reside in Detroit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAP Achievement (goal is 50th percentile) was at 34th for Reading and 24th for Math MSTEP/PSAT 8 Proficiency Percentages were below Composite District SAT average score dropped from 877(2018) to 820 (2019)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MAP Growth mixed for 18-19 (7 grades above and 7 grades below the 50th percentile goal) • Grades 7 and 8 have very low MAP and MSTEP scores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018 Index scores were 33 for the K-6 Building and 29 for 7-12 Building • 2019 Index scores were 35 for the K-6 Building and 32 for 7-12 Building
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School Support Team (SST) and Field Representative (FR) Updates

Observations (2019-current data)	Opportunities for Growth (2019-current data)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RED SST Designated School for the Academic Pillar, Green for Operations and Compliance • Facilities appear safe and conducive to learning • Staffing remains an issue • New leadership • No compliance concerns • Fund Balance is low • Small growth in K-6 MSTEP ELA proficiency for 2019. Build on that! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All tested areas on all assessments need to improve • PSAT 8 (first year) had proficiency percentages of 22% in math and 7% in EBRW- both are lower than DPSCD • SST Action Plan submitted by CCAE has ten excellent goals for the District

Overall Opportunities for Growth

- Need to start a positive trend in growth and Composite District comparison data.
- MAP, MSTEP, and College Board Growth data needs to improve at all grade levels. Achievement improvements will eventually follow.
- Work on creating and keeping an effective staff.
- Grades 7 and 8 need to improve test data in all areas and on all assessments

Current CSO Expectations in Consideration for Recommendation of Reauthorization. These are subject to change.

For Conner Creek Academy East:

- Meet or exceed FSU CSO's academic measures and goals
- Continue to follow all charter contractual expectations
- The CSO may have other academic and non-academic expectations as more information becomes available. All other contractual and policy standards must be met and maintained.
- Keep your MDE Accountability Index Score above the bottom 5% in the State

James K. Scholten

Signed _____

CSO Visitation Chair

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