

**Evaluation of the
Indianapolis Mayor Sponsored
Charter Schools**

**Ignite Achievement Academy at Elder
W. Diggs School**

3rd Year Charter Review

2019-2020 School Year

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OFFICE OF EDUCATION INNOVATION

Office of the Mayor of Indianapolis

THIRD YEAR CHARTER REVIEW

Ignite Academy at Elder W. Diggs School

November 4-5, 2019

The Indianapolis Mayor's Office Charter Review is designed to assess the development of the school as it is establishing the school culture and curricular practices. The Third Year Charter Review Protocol is based on the *Performance Framework*, which is used to determine a school's success relative to a common set of indicators, as well as school-based goals.

Consistent with the Indianapolis Mayor's Office Performance Framework, the following four core questions and sub-questions are examined to determine a school's success:

Is the educational program a success?

- 1.1. *Is the school's academic performance meeting state expectation, as measured by Indiana's accountability system?*
- 1.2. *Are students making sufficient and adequate gains, as measured by the Indiana Growth model?*
- 1.3. *Does the school demonstrate that students are improving, the longer they are enrolled at the school?*
- 1.4. *Is the school providing an equitable education to students of all races and socioeconomic backgrounds?*
- 1.5. *Is the school's attendance rate strong?*
- 1.6. *Is the school outperforming schools that the students would have been assigned to attend?*
- 1.7. *Is the school meeting its school-specific educational goals?*

Is the organization in sound fiscal health?

- 2.1. *Short term Health: Does the school demonstrate the ability to pay its obligations in the next 12 months?*
- 2.2. *Long term Health: Does the organization demonstrate long term financial health?*
- 2.3. *Does the organization demonstrate it has adequate financial management and systems?*

Is the organization effective and well-run?

- 3.1. *Is the school leader strong in his or her academic and organizational leadership?*
- 3.2. *Does the school satisfactorily comply with all its organizational structure and governance obligations?*
- 3.3. *Is the school's board active, knowledgeable and abiding by appropriate policies, systems and processes in its oversight?*
- 3.4. *Does the school's board work to foster a school environment that is viable and effective?*
- 3.5. *Does the school comply with applicable laws, regulations and provision of the charter agreement relating to the safety and security of the facility?*

Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?

- 4.1. *Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?*
- 4.2. *Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?*
- 4.3. *For secondary students, does the school provide sufficient guidance on and support and preparation for post-secondary options?*
- 4.4. *Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?*

- 4.5. *Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?*
- 4.6. *Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?*
- 4.7. *Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?*
- 4.8. *Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?*
- 4.9. *Is the school properly maintaining special education files for its special needs students?*
- 4.10. *Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to English as Second Language (ESL) students?*

COMPLETION OF THE THIRD YEAR CHARTER REVIEW

As part of its oversight of charter schools, the Office of Education Innovation of the Mayor of Indianapolis has authorized Research & Evaluation Resources, LLC (RER) to conduct site visits of schools in their third year of operation. The purpose is to present the school and the Office of Education Innovation a professional judgment on conditions and practices at the school, which are best provided through an external perspective. This report uses multiple sources of evidence to understand the school's performance. Evidence collection begins with a review of key documents and continues on-site through additional document review, classroom visits and interviews with any number of stakeholders. Findings provided by the site visits can be used to celebrate what the school is doing well and prioritize its areas for improvement in preparation for renewal. It is the task of the site visit team to report on the following pre-identified aspects of the *Performance Framework* and to assist the Office of Education Innovation in its completion of the Accountability Protocol: *Responses to sub-questions 4.1-4.2 and 4.4- 4.10 of Core Question 4.*

The outcome of this review will provide the school with a written report that includes a judgment and supporting evidence on various aspects of the school, based on a of indicators¹ developed for each of the four core questions and sub-questions in the *Performance Framework*. The assessment system utilizes the following judgments:

Does not meet standard

Approaching standard

Meets standard

¹ Rubric indicators are subject to revision by the OEI.

Ignite Achievement Academy at Elder W. Diggs School

The mission of IAA is to provide the community with an accelerated learning institution that propels scholars academically by utilizing a holistic curriculum built upon community engagement, project-based learning and the leading literacy, socio-emotional, and neuroscientific research; thus providing scholars rich opportunities for enrichment, achievement, and increasing degrees of impact in every field of endeavor.

Ignite Achievement Academy at Elder W. Diggs Schools is a K-6 elementary school founded by Shy-Quon Ely II and Brooke Beavers and located on the Indianapolis westside. The target population of the school is minority, low-income at-risk students. The goal of Ignite Achievement Academy is to “propel scholars academically through an accelerated curriculum that focus on neuroscientific instruction and learning, staff and community collaboration and a holistic emphasis that incorporates physical nutrition and mental wellness.”

Ignite Achievement Academy opened in the fall of 2017 with an enrollment of approximately 501 students across grades K-6. As an IPS Innovation School, Ignite Academy enrollment for the 2018-19 school year stands at approximately 534 students (information provided by the Indiana Department of Education). The student population is 83% African-American, 11% Hispanic, 3% White and 7% multi-racial, meeting the goal outlined in the Ignite Achievement Academy charter application of being a “majority- minority” school. As an Innovation school, the majority of students at Ignite Academy were students at Elder W. Diggs Elementary School who continued their enrollment in the new school.

In addition to providing Ignite students with a standards-based education, Ignite Academy enriches students’ experience through the infusion of African culture throughout the school and the curriculum. Throughout the building there are Afro-centric posters and material for the students to see and engage with all day. As an example, the school colors come directly from the Pan-African flag, which is displayed in the school’s entryway. Students at Ignite take classes on African drumming and dance and are learning about the African-American history through The Historic Journey curriculum, which provides the teaching staff with materials to infuse the Ignite curriculum with content that includes African heritage, slavery in the United States and the civil rights movement.

Ignite Achievement Academy has worked to codify and disseminate standard operating procedures throughout the life of the school. They have developed an Employee Handbook, a Scholar/Family Handbook and a Standard Operating Procedures Manual. The SOP Manual is particularly well done, with guidance for the teaching staff that includes a section on classroom signage/systems, which describes the use of anchor charts, “Spicy and Dead Words” and the use of CUBES (circle,

underline, box, evaluate, solve and check) for mathematical problem solving. The manual also includes guidelines for MTSS and culture/discipline. The SOP Manual is one example of the focus on standardizing and operationalizing the policies and procedures being put in place at Ignite that has led to observable improvements in classroom management, school culture and quality of instruction.

Ignite Achievement Academy is in its third year of operation, and as with most new schools, the school staff and leadership faced many challenges as they took on the difficult work of transforming a failing school into a successful one. Several of these challenges were significant and were described in the 2018-19 OEI site visit report. It is important to note that the staff and leadership of Ignite Achievement Academy have risen to the challenge and have made remarkable progress toward building a strong learning community that provides a high quality, rigorous education. Several of the challenges stemmed from staffing issues and addressing them required some hard decisions. The leadership at Ignite made those hard decisions and the results are evident. The promotion of Ms. Jessica English to Principal and the addition of Nadia Miller as Chief of Staff are two of the decisions that have had a positive impact Ignite Achievement Academy. The Director of Culture, Mr. Rodney Rivers, is also to be commended for his work with the Culture and Restorative team. They have developed a school culture that builds community and supports Ignite scholars as they develop their socio-emotional skills. Finally, Mr. Ely is to be commended for the leadership he has shown during the process of change that has taken place at Ignite.

The Evaluation Process

Research & Evaluation Resources staff engaged in a number of evidence-collecting activities. The focus of this evaluation was to gauge perceptions of key stakeholders at the school in relation to the areas of the performance framework that are part of the evaluation. RER conducted focus group discussions with students, staff, and parents, as well as interviews with the school administration. On November 4-5, 2019, two observers conducted classrooms observations during the 2nd year review of Ignite Achievement Academy.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

IGNITE ACHIEVEMENT ACADEMY AT ELDER W. DIGGS SCHOOL

<i>Core Question 4: Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?</i>	<i>Finding</i>
<i>4.1. Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?</i>	Meets Standard
<i>4.2. Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?</i>	Meets Standard
<i>4.3 For secondary students, does the school provide sufficient guidance on and support and preparation for post-secondary options?</i>	Not Applicable
<i>4.4. Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?</i>	Meets Standard
<i>4.5. Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?</i>	Meets Standard
<i>4.6. Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?</i>	Meets Standard
<i>4.7. Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?</i>	Meets Standard
<i>4.8. Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?</i>	Meets Standard
<i>4.9 Is the school properly maintaining special education files for its special needs students?</i>	Meets Standard
<i>4.10 Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to English as Second Language (ESL) students?</i>	Meets Standard

Standard 4: Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?

4.1. Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum does not align with the state standards; b) the school does not conduct systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school does not regularly review scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) the sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas does not focus on core (prioritized) learning objectives; e) the staff lacks understanding and/or consensus as to how the curriculum documents and related program materials are used to effectively deliver instruction; f) there is a lack of programs and materials available to deliver the curriculum effectively.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum does not align with the state standards; b) the school does not conduct systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school does not regularly review scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) the sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas does not focus on core (prioritized) learning objectives; e) the staff lacks understanding and/or consensus as to how the curriculum documents and related program materials are used to effectively deliver instruction; f) there is a lack of programs and materials available to deliver the curriculum effectively.
Meets standard	The school: a) curriculum aligns with the state standards; b) conducts systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school regularly reviews scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) has a sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas that is prioritized and focuses on the core learning objectives; e) the staff understands and uniformly uses curriculum documents and related program materials to effectively deliver instruction; f) programs and materials are available to deliver the curriculum effectively.

No significant concerns were found.

Data gathered through classroom observations, focus group interviews and interviews with the school leadership revealed that the curriculum being enacted at Ignite Achievement Academy is standards-based and fully aligned with the Indiana Academic Standards as well as to the Common Core State Standards. There are three curricula being implemented at IGNITE, with mathematics being taught using Eureka Math and Engage NY and Language Arts being taught with ReadyGen. Both Eureka Math and ReadyGen are aligned to the Common Core State Standards and were subsequently crosswalked to the Indiana Academic Standards. A review of the curriculum maps and lesson plans provided for review showed that this process has been completed (indicator a).

Focus group interviews with the teaching staff and the school leadership revealed that the process of aligning the curriculum to the Indiana Academic Standards was a collaborative process performed by the teaching staff under the guidance of the Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Ms. Kelley Hershey and the Assistant Directors of Curriculum and Instruction, Ms. Calasia Carrion and Ms. Rachel Tracy. (indicator a). The process included using the crosswalk between the Common Core Standards and the Indiana Academic Standards provided by the Indiana Department of Education to guide the planning process. The teaching staff reported that they were fully engaged in the process of curriculum development and that they felt ownership of the curriculum and its

implementation. They also noted that they were given the opportunity to unpack the Indiana Academic Standards so that they could fully understand the goals and objectives of the curriculum and actively engage in the process of designing the curriculum maps and lesson plans. Finally, they noted that they were encouraged to find ancillary resources to improve the quality of instruction of the materials, with one instructor noting that “we can find outside materials as long as they are grade level and appropriate. They (the materials) have to be a good choice that meets the rigor of the standard.”

Ignite Achievement Academy has invested time and resources in standardizing the policies and procedures under which the school is operating, and this focus is evident in the processes used to design and implement the curriculum. The Ignite leadership have noted that the goal is to “focus on the intentional use of the curriculum—the core of the curriculum should be observable in everything we do.” To reach this goal, the curriculum and instruction team have standardized the weekly review of the lesson plans using a carefully designed template/script. These scripts include activities that are designed to identify the “highest leverage standard” as well as defining clear objectives for lessons that will be implemented in the following week. In addition to focusing on the core objectives, the templates include a review of any ILEARN released items or examples that are relevant to the upcoming lessons, thus ensuring that course content is specifically designed to present material in time for testing (indicator c).

In addition to standardizing the process for the weekly review of data, Ignite has developed a “Teacher Data Driven Assessment Analysis Protocol” that is used by the teaching staff to analyze their classroom data (indicator b). This template focusses on scholars achieving mastery of each standard and requires that each instructor determine the *highest performing question* in the assessment, noting which standard was assessed in that question, the percentage of scholars who answered that question correctly, and the “possible causes of high performance.” An analogous analysis is performed on the *lowest performing question*. Additional analyses include the *highest performing scholars* and the *lowest performing scholars* with a focus on the possible causes for the scholar performance. Additionally, the template includes a “deep analysis, name the gap and re-assess” exercise in which the instructor chooses a question to assess why they chose this particular question, what is the standard being addressed in this question, what conceptual understanding and what procedural understanding the question requires, and finally some proposed re-assessments to use to examine the standard or topic of the question.

All of the curriculum maps reviewed included prioritized core learning objectives within a unit, as did all of the lesson plans (indicator d). The curriculum maps and lesson plans have been designed using common templates within each subject area, allowing for easier review across and within grades. All of the curriculum maps use a similar format that includes an overview of the unit, the essential questions addressed in the unit, the standards being assessed clearly written out, as well as aligned content and modules/chapters in the appropriate textbook. The process standards for each content area are also prominently displayed at the top of each curriculum map, with the full standard

written out for easy reference. Overall, the curriculum maps provided for review were of excellent quality, both comprehensive in scope while still being easy to use.

The lesson plans were of similar high quality, with the majority of the lesson plans being well designed and comprehensive. The lesson plan template included the standards and objectives to be covered in that week, with both written out for easy reference during instruction. The next section of the lesson plan is “know/show: what will your scholars “know’ and how will they “show” it?” This section includes the breakdown of the Indiana Academic Standard being covered in the lesson and the appropriate assessments for each part of the standard. The lesson plan also includes a list of activities and materials to be used in the lesson. The final section of the lesson plan template is a day by day breakdown of the standards which include objectives to be covered in the form of “scholars will be able to (SWBATS)”, DoNows, mini-lessons and whole group instruction organized around “I do,” “We do,” and “You do.” Each of these daily lesson plans are detailed and include suggestions for informal assessments, small group instruction (which is further differentiated into remediation, enrichment, guided instruction, hands on activities and time on the computer), closure and assessments in the form of exit tickets. Finally, there is also a section for suggested accommodations and modifications for ELL and SPED scholars. This template provides an excellent framework for designing weekly and daily lesson plans, and the majority of the classroom teachers used the template to design high quality lesson plans. There was, however, some variability in the completeness of the documents, with some lesson plans not including all possible sections. The teaching staff clearly understands and uniformly uses the curriculum documents and related program materials to effectively deliver instruction (indicator e). The classroom observations revealed good to excellent instruction in the majority of the classroom observed, and the active participation of the teaching staff in the design of the curriculum maps ensures that they fully understand the Indiana Academic Standards and how they are being implemented in the Ignite Achievement Academy curriculum. The classroom observations also revealed that the classrooms are equipped with the materials needed to implement the curriculum (indicator f). When asked if there were additional resources that would improve their instruction, the teaching staff did note that additional ancillary materials and manipulatives for the younger grades would be welcome and would enrich their instruction.

In addition to the English/Language Arts and Mathematics curricula being used at Ignite Achievement Academy, the teaching staff also have The Historic Journey curriculum to use as a resource. The Historic Journey is a set of lessons and teaching guides that focus on the African and the African American experience in America and in the world at large. In the 2018-19 school year The Historic Journey curriculum was being integrated into the ELA and math curriculums, which was found to be challenging to both the teachers and the scholars. Consequently, the focus in the current academic year has been to develop strong curriculum maps and lesson plans in core subjects, and then integrate The Historic Journey, as well as other Afrocentric texts, into the writing modules of the ELA curriculum.

Areas of Strength: Ignite Achievement Academy has provided the teaching staff with high quality curriculums and the resources needed to implement the curriculum.

Ignite Achievement Academy has made impressive progress in standardizing and operationalizing the procedures used in the classrooms, with the templates for curriculum maps and lesson plans being particularly well designed.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.2. Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum is not implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is not focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery lacks the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities lack variety and/or limited use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) staff do not receive feedback on instructional practices.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum is not implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is not focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery lacks the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities lack variety and/or limited use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) staff do not receive feedback on instructional practices.
Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) the curriculum is implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery possesses the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities possess variety and/or use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) supplies sufficient feedback to staff on instructional practices.

No significant concerns were found.

Classroom observations revealed that the curriculum at Ignite Achievement Academy is implemented in 3 out of 7 of classrooms according to its design (indicator a), with 1 classroom not following the lesson on the lesson plan provided and 3 of the classrooms observed not providing a lesson plan. The lesson plans provided were all of very high quality, with the state standards often provided in the form of learning targets, exemplar responses, direct teaching, guided practice and independent practice all included. The amount of detail varied among the lesson plans, but all of them provided enough detail regarding the state standards being covered or the learning objectives for that day to be useful guiding documents. Many of the lesson plans were extremely detailed and very well done. It was also noted that all of the lesson plans contained core learning objectives which aligned to the state standard being covered for that day.

Classroom observations also revealed that, as delivered, classroom instruction is focused on core learning objectives in 7 out of 7 classrooms observed (indicator b). As noted above, the majority of the lesson plans provided by the teacher who were observed did contain core-learning objectives, and the classroom observations revealed that all of the instructors did deliver a lesson focused on learning objectives. The classroom observations revealed 5 out of 7 instructors observed gave lessons that posed a challenge to students and possessed the appropriate rigor (indicator c). Differentiated instruction was noted in 3 out of 7 classrooms observed (indicator d).

Overall, classroom instruction at Ignite Achievement Academy was good to very good. When asked, the teaching staff noted that the feedback they received from the Curriculum and Instruction staff was of high quality and useful. They also reported that information from classroom observations

was relayed to them soon after the observations occurred, and that they received sufficient feedback on instructional practices (indicator e). In particular, they noted that the feedback regarding data driven instruction and the use of data for differentiation was valuable.

The classroom environments at Ignite Achievement Academy are exemplary for their use of culturally specific materials throughout the classrooms and lesson content, with a focus on African and African-American art and culture that is inclusive and powerful. Most importantly, the inclusion of culturally specific materials is integral to the philosophy and community being built by Ignite Achievement Academy and is not simply another educational best practice to be “checked off.”

Areas of Strength: The lesson plans provided by Ignite Achievement Academy were of very high quality and contained a variety of educational best practices.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.4. Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are not accurate or useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are not received by classroom teachers in a timely or useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments lack sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is limited frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are not used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are not accurate or useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are not received by classroom teachers in a timely or useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments lack sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is limited frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are not used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.
Meets standard	The school: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are accurate and useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are received by classroom teachers in a timely and useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments have sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is sufficient frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.

No significant concerns were found.

Ignite Achievement Academy administers standardized and classroom assessments that are accurate and useful measures of established learning standards/objectives (indicator a) and are administered with sufficient frequency to inform instructional decisions effectively (indicator d). Specifically, at the school-wide level, Ignite Achievement Academy administers the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress, AIRWAYS, ISTEP, and IREAD-3, as well as formal and informal classroom assessments (do-nows, quick checks, etc.) and interim assessments designed by the instructional staff that provide the teachers with a sufficient variety of assessments to guide instruction for a wide range of scholar learning abilities (indicator c) and are administered on a regular basis. Teachers noted in the focus group that the data is disseminated quickly and presented in a way that is useful for differentiating instruction and determining student weaknesses (indicator b). Ignite Achievement Academy uses an electronic “data wall” to ensure that the teaching staff has access to assessment information in a format that is easy to access and up to date. The Curriculum and Instruction team has also developed a data protocol process that is being used to help guide strategic data dives based on AIRWAYS data.

Ignite Achievement Academy also performs weekly “Power-up meetings” which are led by the Director and Assistant Directors of Curriculum and Instruction. During these meeting the most recent formative assessment results are examined using the data driven assessment protocol described in Standard 4.1 and allow teachers the opportunity to “take a deeper dive” into the data from formative assessment and from weekly progress monitoring. In addition to using data at the level of the student/classroom, the leadership at Ignite have made major modifications to their ELA curriculum in order to address student deficits in the writing portion of the ELA assessment in

ISTEP and then ILEARN. As described by Ms. Hershey, in response to scholar assessment data showing student deficits in writing, ReadyGen, the English Language Arts curriculum being used at Ignite, is being modified to allow teachers to spend more concentrated time on writing. This is accomplished by including in their schedule an intentional writing module that spans 15-18 consecutive days. These writing workshops are focused and rigorous and allow the teaching staff to infuse the writing curriculum with texts of their own choosing. In this way, assessment results are being used to guide instruction and make adjustments to the curriculum (indicator e).

Areas of Strength: Ignite Achievement Academy uses a wide-variety of standardized and classroom-based assessments and disseminate the data quickly and in a useful manner to the teaching staff.

The professional development on data driven instruction has improved the use of data in the classroom.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.5. Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) hiring processes are not organized to support the success of new staff members; b) inefficient or insufficient deployment of faculty and staff limits instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are not certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) does not relate to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD is not determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is not explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) hiring processes are not organized to support the success of new staff members; b) inefficient or insufficient deployment of faculty and staff limits instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are not certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) does not relate to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD is not determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is not explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.
Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) hiring processes are organized and used to support the success of new staff members; b) the school deploys sufficient number of faculty and staff to maximize instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) is related to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD opportunities are determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.

No significant concerns were found.

Ignite Achievement Academy has developed consistent hiring practices to ensure that all new hires are fully qualified and have been approved by several members of the management team. All teachers at Ignite Achievement Academy are certified or credentialed in their teaching area or have the appropriate licensure to teach (indicator c).

New staff members are supported during their first year at Ignite Achievement Academy through additional professional development opportunities on a weekly basis, as well as more intentional observations on a more frequent basis (indicator a). New teaching staff are also supported by the grade level lead teacher who serves as a mentor to the new teaching staff. At the time of the site visit it was reported that approximately 60% of the teaching staff was new to Ignite, with several new to the profession of teaching. Ignite leadership is providing additional supports for the new staff and should consider organizing these supports into a more formal program for new teachers, possibly as a “New Teacher Academy” that provides professional development that is differentiated for new teachers.

The deployment of resources at Ignite Achievement Academy is designed to maximize instructional time and capacity (indicator b). The leadership at Ignite have made several very effective changes in their leadership structure that have led to clearer roles and responsibilities. The addition of the Director of Curriculum and Instruction position has already brought about substantial improvements in the quality of the curriculum and the use of assessment data.

Professional development opportunities are based on student attainment data (indicator e), with the professional development opportunities both driven by data and also focusing on the use of data in the classroom. Ignite Achievement Academy provides professional development for the leadership team during a week-long Summer Leadership Institute. The topics covered during this include discipline and restorative practices, curriculum and instruction, an overview of special education and sessions on efficiency and collaboration. The teaching staff attend a three week-long Summer Staff Institute. Professional development offered during the staff institute included sessions on the neuroscience of culture, cultural competency, trauma informed teaching, homelessness, CMT training, as well as training in the curriculums being implemented at Ignite. The teaching staff reported that all of the professional development they are being offered has been of very high quality and is relevant to their classroom practices and provide valuable information. They did note, however, that three weeks of continuous professional development is mentally taxing, with one teacher noting that “by the end of the second week I had absorbed a lot of new information and it was beginning to run together.”

Teacher evaluation currently being implemented at Ignite Achievement Academy is a modified RISE evaluation framework (indicator f). The teaching staff reported that the school leadership is in the classroom at least once a week, and that these observations result in useful feedback. The school performs formal evaluations of the teaching staff in October, January and again near the end of the academic year. For new or struggling teachers the observation schedule is 2 observations and 2 coaching sessions per week. Data from the classroom observations is conveyed through TeachBoost and is immediate. This data is then discussed during a post-observation meeting. The teaching staff conveyed that they fully understood the teacher evaluation framework.

Areas of Strength: The teaching staff at Ignite Achievement Academy are all trained and certified in their areas of expertise.

Ignite Achievement Academy is providing high quality professional development for the leadership and for the teaching staff through summer institutes and through continuous opportunities throughout the school year.

Recommendations: Be mindful that three weeks of continuous professional development can be taxing and survey the teaching staff to determine the time frame that they would like to receive the professional development.

4.6. Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>both</u> of the following areas: a) significant disagreements exist among stakeholders about the school's mission; b) there is a lack of widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) significant disagreements exist among stakeholders about the school's mission; b) there is a lack of widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.
Meets standard	The school: a) has a mission that is shared by all stakeholders; b) has stakeholders possessing widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.

No significant concerns were found.

The school mission is well understood by all stakeholders at Ignite Achievement Academy. When asked what the mission of Ignite Achievement Academy is the leadership of Ignite stated very clearly that they are invested in the future success of their scholars and in the future success of their teaching staff, with one leader noting “the mission is to serve young people and help them make a better future, but our mission is also to help develop culturally competent educators.” Another noted that “I’m here to show the scholars something different than what they see in their own neighborhood. I can help them get through the trauma they see.. this is the best place I’ve ever been.” Finally, one staff member noted that “I’ve been here since the beginning and every time I feel like walking away the kids pull me back in.. this is the hardest work on the planet, but they are worth it.” (indicators a & b). The parents were also very aware of the mission of Ignite Achievement Academy, with the parents noting that the school has become an asset to the community, and in particular the passion and mission of the leadership and teaching staff.

Areas of Strength: Ignite Achievement Academy has a compelling mission that is instantiated daily in the life of the school.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.7. Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns <u>in two or more</u> of the following areas: a) Culturally responsive instructional interventions and teaching strategies are not implemented consistently school-wide; b) A multi-tiered framework for providing all students with evidenced-based behavioral instruction and intervention is not in place and/or is not implemented with fidelity; c) Interactions between adults and students are not consistently supportive and/or restorative in nature; d) Students, Staff, and/or Families lack a sense of connectedness and/or engagement with the school.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns related to <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) Culturally responsive instructional interventions and teaching strategies are not implemented consistently school-wide; b) A multi-tiered framework for providing all students with evidence-based behavioral instruction and intervention is not in place and/or is not implemented with fidelity; c) Interactions between adults and students are not consistently supportive and/or restorative in nature d) Students, Staff, and/or Families lack a sense of connectedness and/or engagement with the school.
Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) Culturally responsive instructional interventions and teaching strategies are used throughout the school; b) a multi-tiered framework for teaching behavioral expectations and providing evidence-based interventions is implemented with fidelity; c) Interactions between adults and students are built upon strong, positive relationships; d) Students, Staff, and Families have a strong sense of connectedness and engagement with the school.

No significant concerns were found.

Ignite Achievement Academy has been implementing restorative practices as part of the school culture. The school leadership displayed a great deal of knowledge regarding restorative practices, and interviews with the relevant school leaders revealed that several members of the leadership team are well trained in the philosophy and practices of restorative practices. At Ignite Achievement Academy the of restorative practices are in place to build and sustain community through the use of restorative circles, affirmative statements, peer leaders and restorative family meetings. Consequently, the disciplinary policy has a clearly stated set of behavioral rules that enforce positive behavior and possesses high expectations for student behavior.

Ignite Achievement Academy has made substantial strides in using restorative practices as the foundation for an effective and adaptive multi-tiered framework for reading behavioral expectations (indicator b). They have adapted the restorative practices model to include some aspects of progressive discipline, with students being given “checks” for violating school norms or causing a disruption. After 5 checks a student has “checked out” and are admitted to the “Influence Room” where they are given socio-emotional supports and guidance in order to address the cause of their behavior. In most cases, the students are back in the classroom the next day. The goal of the Influence Room is twofold: One, to protect the integrity of the classroom so that the teacher can continue to effectively teach and the scholars can continue to learn, and two, to give the scholar the supports they need to learn the “culture of Ignite” and be part of the learning community (indicator a). Part of the second goal is to work to return the scholar to the classroom as soon as possible, while still ensuring that they are ready to be back in the learning environment. Focus group interviews with the teaching staff suggest that the culture team is very successful in their work to

protect the classroom environment, with the teaching staff reporting that they felt supported when they called for a member of the culture team, and also that that students were not returned to the classroom before they are ready to be there. One member of the teaching staff noted that “the Influence Room is support for us, the teachers. if a student is struggling it gives them a chance to get better before they come back to the classroom.” In addition to the reactive nature of the Influence Room, Ignite Achievement Academy also works to proactively to ensure that all scholars understand the culture of success through the “Culture Camp.” In the Culture Camp students who need additional socio-emotional supports spend their elective periods for three weeks in an “onboarding process for students” where they are introduced to restorative practices and the culture of Ignite.

There is a strong focus on socio-emotional learning at Ignite Achievement Academy, which has led to strong positive relationships between students and staff, and between the staff and school leadership (indicator c). Ignite is implementing an array of current best practices in socio-emotional learning and mental health, including but not limited to the use of the Panorama platform to measure and support socio-emotional learning, trauma informed teaching strategies and training in cultural competency. Ignite Achievement Academy also implements daily meditations for scholars and staff, teaching scholars mindfulness and self-regulation.

Ignite Achievement Academy is also successful in creating a strong sense of connectedness and engagement with the school among students, staff and families (indicator d). The families are well informed regarding the restorative practices and the school culture being built at Ignite and see themselves as partners in their scholar’s education. The school leadership also views parents and family as partners in the success of a scholar and work to keep families informed regarding their scholar’s behavior and also to make the family part of the scholar’s return to the Ignite community.

Areas of Strength: Ignite Achievement Academy has created a culture of success and community that includes students, staff and parents.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.8. Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) there is a lack of active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) school communication is neither timely nor relevant to the parental concerns; c) student academic progress and achievement reports are not clearly reported and/or misunderstood; d) the school's communication methods are not well-designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., not communicating in parents' native languages, communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at inconvenient times for parents).
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) there is a lack of active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) school communication is neither timely nor relevant to the parental concerns; c) student academic progress and achievement reports are not clearly reported and/or misunderstood; d) the school's communication methods are not well-designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., not communicating in parents' native languages, communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at inconvenient times for parents).
Meets standard	The school: a) has active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) utilizes communications that are both timely and relevant to the parental concerns; c) communicates student academic progress and achievement in reports that are understood by parents; d) the school's communication methods are designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., communicating in parents' native languages, not communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at convenient times for parents).

No significant concerns were found.

Ignite Achievement Academy has active and ongoing communication between the school and parents (indicator a), with the teaching staff using a variety of ways to communicate with parents. These communications take the form of school newsletters, classroom newsletters from each teacher, behavior reports sent home daily or weekly, parent-teacher conferences, phone messenger systems, emails, phone calls and face to face discussions. All of these communication methods are used throughout the school year (indicator b). The teachers noted that the content of communication with parents are substantive and valuable for both teachers and parents. For the most part the school's communication methods were designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (indicator d), with an easy to find translation pull down menus on the school website. There are also members of the staff fluent in Spanish for those families whose first language is not English. Focus group meetings with parents revealed that they are happy with the quality and amount of communication provided by Ignite Achievement Academy. They noted that the teaching staff communicates with them using a variety of methods, including email, phone calls and conversations during drop-off and pick-up. The teaching staff provides a weekly newsletter called the "Trailblazer News" that was cited by several members of the family focus group as being a valuable source of information regarding events and activities at Ignite.

Ignite Achievement Academy has also developed strategies to include parents and families in the life of the school, including Parent University, a food pantry, Muffins with Moms and Donuts with Dads, as well as providing resource fairs for the community. The school leadership at Ignite also does home visits based on student attendance and will reach out with supports and resources to the

scholar's family. Finally, Ignite is instituting a 3-hour volunteer rule, so that families will make the extra effort to come to Ignite and become engaged with the life of the school.

Areas of Strength: Ignite Achievement Academy staff are friendly and responsive to parents, providing them with information about their students through a variety of different modes of communication.

Recommendations: Provide translations into Spanish of all school documents relating to matriculation, school policy, schedules and events.

4.9. Do the school's special education files demonstrate that it is in legal compliance and is moving towards best practice?	
Does not meet standard	The school's special education files present concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) services outlined within Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) do not adequately match the exceptional needs of the student; b) each need identified within the IEP does not have a corresponding goal and plan for assessment; c) all goals are not rigorous or based on state or national learning standards; d) evidence does not demonstrate that goals have evolved each year as the student developed; e) specifically designed curriculum is not outlined.
Approaching standard	The school's special education files present concerns in <u>one</u> or more of the following areas: a) services outlined within Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) do not adequately match the exceptional needs of the student; b) each need identified within the IEP does not have a corresponding goal and plan for assessment; c) all goals are not rigorous or based on state or national learning standards; d) evidence does not demonstrate that goals have evolved each year as the student developed; e) specifically designed curriculum is not outlined.
Meets standard	All of the following are evident in the school's special education files: a) services outlined within Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) adequately match the exceptional needs of the student; b) each need identified within the IEP has a corresponding goal and plan for assessment; c) each goal is rigorous and is based on state and national learning standards; d) explicit evidence exists to demonstrate that goals have evolved each year as the student develops; e) specifically designed curriculum is outlined.

Ignite Achievement Academy: December, 2019

Special Education Audit

Allison A Howland, Ph.D.

This report compiles a review of all practices and procedures specific to special education services at Ignite Achievement Academy as of November 2019. The results of this evaluation are based on the following pieces of data collected onsite: review of internal processes and procedural documentation, focus groups with general education and special education staff, as well as interviews with the special education director (Foshee) and members of the school leadership team (English, Miller). Lastly, a review of the school website and a review of 25% of the permanent files for student currently enrolled with IEPs were conducted. These permanent files are housed and managed within the Indiana Individualized Education Program (IIEP) secure online system.

Standard 4.9: Do the school's special education files demonstrate that it is in legal compliance and is moving towards best practice?

Meets Standard: In the majority of special education files reviewed, the following indicators are adequately addressed:

- (a) services outlined within Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) adequately match the exceptional needs of the student*
- (b) each need identified within the IEP has a corresponding goal and plan for assessment*
- (c) each goal is rigorous and is based on state and national learning standards*

(d) explicit evidence exists to demonstrate that goals have evolved each year as the student develops

(e) specifically designed curriculum is outlined.

The auditing process revealed sufficient evidence to support the provision of compliant special education services for students with special needs currently enrolled at Ignite Achievement Academy. Students with IEPs are receiving appropriate services and IEP files are legally compliant. Notably the school has ***demonstrated significant effort to fully implement the recommendations*** suggested in the 2018 Special Education Audit report:

- a) Special education files are appropriately secure to insure confidentiality.
- b) Documentation of parent engagement in the education process for student with special needs is present in files.
- c) Protocols are in place to document how requirements for direct services provision specified in the IEP are met on a regular basis (e.g. minutes or hours/week).

4.10. Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with limited English proficiency?	
Does not meet standard	The school is <u>not</u> fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ESL students, and requires substantial improvement in order to achieve conditions such as the following: a) appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; b) relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.
Approaching standard	The school is not yet completely fulfilling all of its legal obligations regarding ESL students, and requires <i>some</i> (but not considerable) improvement to fully achieve conditions such as the following: a) appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; b) relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.
Meets standard	The school is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ESL students, as indicated by conditions such as the following: a) appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; b) relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.

No significant concerns were found.

The ESL coordinator for Ignite Achievement Academy, Ms. Britney Tewell, is knowledgeable in current legislation regarding the education of ESL students and is familiar with Indiana’s English Language Proficiency Standards and has participated in professional development opportunities relating to effective best practices in the field of ESL through the Indiana Department of Education in ESL education, as well as several webinars on the topic.

Ms. Tewell is also very familiar with the Indiana Department of Education Office of English Language Learning & Migrant Education Guidelines to Satisfy Legal Requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and employs effective ESL practices to ensure Ignite Achievement Academy is in compliance with these standards. Ignite Achievement Academy students are provided with both push-in and pull-out services and supports and services are provided to help with their socio-emotional adjustments as well (indicator a).

Ms. Tewell also ensures that relationships with students, parents and external providers are well-managed and comply with the law (indicator b). As noted above, Ignite Academy provides services that comply with Indiana state law, as well as with the standards and best practices required by the Indiana Department of Education.