



Oakland Unified School District

Charter School Renewal Site Visit Report

Bay Area Technology School (BayTech)

**3001 International Boulevard
Oakland, California 94601**

Principal: Oscar Yildiz

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Lead Reviewer: Ting L. Sun

Cambridge Education (LLC)

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Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Bay Area Technology School (BayTech) is a small charter middle and high school, serving 230 students in grades 6-9, with plans to expand to grade 12. The school's charter outlines an educational program with a heavy emphasis on math, science and technology. BayTech is in its fourth year of operations and is undergoing its first renewal.

The school's current enrollment consists of 71% African American, 15% Latino, 11% White students and 3% Other. Seventy-five (75%) percent of the students are known to be eligible for the free and reduced lunch program. Approximately 5% of the students have been identified with special needs and 9% have been identified as English Learners (EL).

In 2006, the school had a base Academic Performance Index (API) score of 653, ranking it 3 statewide and 5 among similar schools. BayTech's growth API dropped 22 points in 2007, resulting in an API growth score of 631.

Part 2: Overview

Strengths:

- The school offers students and parents a unique program with a strong focus on math, science and technology.
- The school is lead by a knowledgeable and experienced director who has developed very good management structures to support students and staff members.
- The school has recruited a diverse teaching staff with very strong content knowledge in math, science and technology.
- The school has put in place several support structures (i.e. afterschool tutoring, Saturday school, home visits, etc.) to help struggling students as well as challenging classes and opportunities (computer programming, science fair, etc.) for students who are excelling.
- Participation in local and state competitions, fieldtrips and partnerships with local universities support and enhance students' learning experiences outside of the school campus.
- The school is supported by a committed Board of Directors that is invested in its mission and closely monitors the progress of the school.
- BayTech has a sound fiscal management system and a collaborative budget development process wherein the school leadership, business manager and board of directors work together to best meet the needs of the school.

Challenges:

- The school's overall achievement on state standardized tests is low.
- Classroom behavior and instructional norms are inconsistent, so learning is not fully maximized in all classrooms.
- The integration of technology for teaching and learning has not been implemented to full effect in all curricular areas.
- The current school facilities, though sufficient for the current program, will not be able to sustain the high school program envisioned by the leadership and Board of Directors.

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation:

This is a proficient school with underdeveloped features in its academic program.

Is the School An Academic Success?

BayTech is demonstrating moderate academic success in its fourth year of operations. Clear growth can be seen in the overall development of the school's curriculum; yet the impact of that curriculum on student achievement, as measured by State standardized test results, is still mixed. The school received an API base score of 627 at the end of its first year in 2005. BayTech then demonstrated strong growth on its API between its first (2005) and second (2006) year with an API gain of 29 points. The school's base API was 653 in 2006. In 2007, BayTech's growth API dropped 22 points, resulting in an API growth score of 631 which places it around the median for middle schools in the Oakland Unified School District. However, BayTech's API current growth score of 631 is higher than other middle schools in OUSD with similar demographics.

BayTech recognizes that it has more to do to meet its academic goals as a fourth-year charter school; but has been diligently collecting data to demonstrate continuing growth. This year, through the implementation of Northwest Evaluation Association's (NWEA) benchmark assessments, the school is utilizing MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) results which show that students are making good growth from quarter to quarter.

The school and its staff are deliberate in implementing a standards-based curriculum as evidenced by teacher lesson plans, teacher portfolios, the school's textbooks and instructional materials. Strong teacher content knowledge in the areas of math, science and technology classes are particularly evident. The school has yet, however, to develop classroom behavior and instructional norms that are consistent. As a result, learning opportunities are limited in a few classrooms.

Both parents and students interviewed feel that the school has done well in providing students with a unique program that focuses on math, science and technology and appreciate that this option exists within the district. Extra-curricular activities in local and state competitions and college events provide students with enhanced opportunities outside of the school and interactions with youth from other schools.

Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?

BayTech is an effective, viable organization. The school has a sound financial system managed effectively in-house by a knowledgeable business manager who works closely with the school leadership and Board of Directors. The school is operated by Willow Education and has a committed Board of Directors which has engaged teacher, parent and community representatives in the school's decision-making processes. All members of the board are well-informed and actively support, and provide resources to, the school. The school is direct-funded and manages its own budgets and accounting. BayTech has had clean audit reports for the prior two years that were reviewed. The classrooms have good resources. Learning materials and significant resources have been put into student support programs over the past two years. These include NWEA assessments, smaller class sizes, tutoring and remediation support.

Has the School Remained Faithful to the Terms of Its Charter?

Overall, BayTech has remained faithful to the terms of its charter. The school is currently serving a targeted population of diverse and traditionally underserved students, and is implementing an educational program with a solid focus on math, science and technology. Several student support

structures such as small school/class sizes, after-school tutoring, Saturday school, home visits, and participation in fieldtrips and academic competitions are being implemented to good effect as the learning environment at the school is becoming more rigorous and disciplined. The school is also making progress in the use of technology as an instructional and learning tool through the adoption of the assisted education model (in affiliation with the ACCORD Institute in August 2007), but has more work to do to fully realize the full integration of technology in all curricular areas envisioned in its charter.

Criterion 1: Improving Student Achievement

A charter school promotes student learning through a clear vision and high expectations. It achieves clear, measurable program goals and student learning objectives, including meeting its stated performance standards, state and federal performance standards, and closing achievement gaps of students.

This area of the school's work is underdeveloped with proficient features.

Bay Area Technology School's (BayTech) educational program aims to prepare students for the future workforce by providing them with a solid foundation in math, science and technology. It seeks to help students acquire a set of intellectual habits and attitudes from which to develop critical thinking skills. The school's charter defines this as "scientific habits of thinking." One of the school's goals is to serve socio-economically disadvantaged students.

In its fourth year of operations, BayTech is demonstrating moderate academic success in accomplishing this mission. Clear growth can be seen in the overall development of the school's curriculum; yet the impact of that curriculum on student achievement as measured by State standardized test results is still mixed. The school received an API base score of 627 at the end of its first year in 2005. BayTech then demonstrated strong growth on its API between its first (2005) and second (2006) year with an API gain of 29 points. The school's base API was 653 in 2006. In 2007, BayTech's growth API dropped 22 points, resulting in an API growth score of 631, and the school did not meet the "percent proficient" criteria in English/Language Arts last year under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). There is evidence, however, that BayTech is demonstrating higher achievement when compared to other middle schools with similar demographics in Oakland. For example, the school's Performance Report to OUSD shows that BayTech students overall have more students in the "basic," "proficient" and "advanced" categories of the STAR than other middle schools in the area.

This year, the school is implementing the Northwest Evaluation Association's (NWEA) computer adaptive tests to measure student achievement and growth. The results of the assessments are serving as the school's benchmarks for establishing targets and assessing overall student progress on state standards. Thus far, data collected on these results over the past two quarters show overall growth in proficiency or progress towards proficiency in math and in English/language arts.

Until now, the school's means of demonstrating measurable progress towards achieving other aspects of its mission, for example the development of critical thinking and scientific and technological literacy, have been broad and lacking in clear definition. However, implementation of the new computer tests now allows for benchmarking, target-setting and measurement of student outcomes in these important areas. Thus far, data collected on these results over the past two quarters show overall growth in proficiency or progress towards proficiency in math and in English/language arts.

The school and its staff are deliberate in implementing a standards-based curriculum as evidenced by teacher lesson plans, teacher portfolios, the school's textbooks and instructional materials. Strong teacher content knowledge in the areas of math, science and technology classes is particularly evident. The school has made a concerted effort to hire teachers with experience both in teaching as well as in the science or technology fields – the result of which is that many of the teachers at BayTech are from countries outside of the United States. To balance this, BayTech has also hired many teachers who are from the area and/or who have taught in California schools. The teachers report that the diversity of the teaching staff has been positive in stimulating collaboration and ideas.

The overall quality of instruction, primary instructional methodology, and classroom behavior at the school, however, are inconsistent and vary significantly from classroom to classroom. In more effective classes, teachers have established clear routines and behavioral expectations, allowing them to utilize hands-on learning activities to help build students' understanding of concepts. In other classes, behavior is managed; but with instruction that is primarily textbook or worksheet-based with little active student engagement. A small number of classes that were observed lacked appropriate rigor or pacing in its lessons resulting in off-task behavior.

The school has been working to establish a stronger academic culture and consistency of expectations. Schoolwide expectations for coming to school prepared and knowing how to behave, for example, are clearly articulated to students and parents in handbooks and in notices home. Teachers have also been given training on classroom management. Student support structures are in place, including afterschool tutoring, Saturday school and home visits. BayTech is establishing schoolwide routines such as morning Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) and end-of-the-day check-ins for students who have missed assignments and has implemented a school uniform policy. Pull-out programs for students with special needs and for English Learners (EL) are in place with specialist teachers to work with students identified in these areas. There is some good evidence that these initiatives are focusing students' attention towards academics, especially when the policies are carried out consistently. For example, most students are serious about attending the school and feel the teachers care about them. Student behavior during passing time in hallways is boisterous, but not unruly, and the school is having more success in getting students to come to school (and on time) as shown by its 95% attendance rate.

Another aspect of BayTech's educational program currently in development is use of technology assisted education model which integrates technology applications with the learning of core subject content and concepts. The school has two very modern and up-to-date computer labs and has begun to implement the technology-integrated curriculum outlined by the ACCORD Institute. Teachers interviewed discussed how they are working with the computer teacher on content-specific lessons for the computer lab. All students at BayTech also take a computer courses at BayTech begin with basic keyboarding and move to the use software applications. Beyond this, however, the use of technology for teaching and learning was limited to the use of powerpoints in math and science lessons and almost none in other subject areas. Overall the use of technology as a teaching and learning tool, as observed, has yet to be fully embedded in the school's instructional methods and curriculum as described in the school's charter.

A noted feature of BayTech's educational program is its offerings which support its struggling students as well as challenge for students who strive to achieve higher level math or science courses. For example, while the school provides daily afterschool tutoring to students who need additional help, it also offers an afterschool class to students who may wish to learn more about computer programming. A mandatory two-hour Saturday school is in place for students who are behind in grades; but teachers have also made themselves available on Saturdays to work with students on projects for the science fair or to practice for competitions. Partnership with local colleges for afterschool tutoring assistance and language classes and participation in local and state competitions such as Math Counts, SimCity Future City Designs and science fairs allow students extended opportunities to interact with the community and with students from other schools. Parents and students noted these activities, the safe, small school environment and the more personal attention from the teachers as some of the best features of the school.

Criterion 2: Strong Leadership

The leaders of a charter school are stewards of the charter's mission and vision and carry out their duties in a professional, responsible and ethical manner. Charter school leaders use their influence and authority for the primary purpose of achieving student success.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

BayTech is led by an experienced and knowledgeable school administrator who has been with the school since its inception and so understands and communicates the mission of the school well. He is supported by the Dean of Academics and the Dean of Students, two positions that were created two years ago to infuse more discipline and rigor into the school environment and to support teachers and students. Altogether, the administrative team is making a positive impact on the school culture through the steady creation and implementation of schoolwide policies.

Parents, students and teachers confirm that professional development activities, clearer schoolwide expectations and more structured student support programs - afterschool tutoring, Saturday school and home visits for example - are starting to make an impact on the development of a more cohesive

school culture at BayTech this year. As a result, students are becoming more focused on their work and the teaching staff is working well together. Policies are in place and followed, but need to be adhered to more closely and consistently by everyone to maximize impact on the learning environment.

The school's director/principal is reflective and has worked continuously during the past four years to make adjustments leading to improvements in the school program overall. The school has been previously reviewed by three other outside organizations over the past two years and has received several recommendations and suggestions, many of which it has addressed. Last year, under the High Priority Schools Grant program, the school developed a comprehensive school action plan with an outside consultant. It has been implementing the action plan and collecting data to support to enable measurement of growth towards its goals. BayTech is now primarily using Northwest Evaluation Association's (NWEA) computer adaptive tests to measure student achievement and growth throughout a school year and is making use of Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) data to inform individual student and class performance each quarter. These serve as benchmark evaluations on the action plan as well. Teachers report that these assessments are helping the school focus on curricular or skill areas of most need.

Teachers report that the administrative team has been supportive in providing the professional development and resources they need to teach effectively. The administrative team conducts both formal and informal evaluations, and this year, the Dean of Students and Dean of Academics have been assigned specific teachers to coach. Professional development is strongly encouraged, and in some cases, required, for improving teaching effectiveness. There are, nevertheless, observed inconsistencies in the quality of instruction throughout the school, so the effectiveness of these support structures is not yet fully evident in terms of impact upon teaching quality.

The school has done well in providing several sources of communication to parents and students. Information packets on school events are sent home weekly, and student performance information is sent through progress reports, report cards and individual student NWEA MAP reports. Additionally, the school uses MagnoXP, a web-based student information system, so that families can access up-to-date assignment and grade information at any time. A small, but active, parent club at the school has also taken the initiative to mobilize parental involvement and has created an electronic mailing list to provide information to parents who have access to email. For parents who may not be engaged in their child's learning, BayTech teachers and staff make home visits to talk to parents about their child's progress and about events at the school.

It is clear that the school leadership has put several structures in place to develop a sense of school community. Parents interviewed report that they are well-informed about their child's progress at the school and that there is good access to school staff and administration. In addition, the school has clear dispute resolution procedures which are distributed to parents at orientation. The school pursues a myriad of activities involving the community, including partnerships with local universities for tutors, fieldtrips, and academic and sports competitions. Students and parents report that these partnerships with the colleges and activities off campus are building stronger school spirit and pride.

Criterion 3: A Focus on Continuous Improvement

A charter school engages in a process of continuous self-improvement in order to increase the effectiveness of its educational program. The school regularly assesses and evaluates student learning based on stated goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Over the past four years, BayTech has worked towards continuous improvement. Processes and structures have been incrementally developed to monitor student progress more closely and to enable necessary adjustments to ensure improvements in teaching and learning. In addition to annual STAR data the school is, for example, currently using two systems for monitoring and analyzing student achievement: These are Magno XP, a web-based student information system to track grades, attendance, transcripts, and discipline reports and NWEA's Measure of Academic Progress (MAP), which provides detailed results on computer adaptive tests administered every quarter. The school also

uses ACUITY, a diagnostic assessment of students' skills. Based on the ACUITY diagnostic test results, low achieving students are assigned to mandatory language arts and math tutoring classes. These students are required to participate in tutoring classes until they become above basic proficiency level according to the next ACUITY diagnostic test, which is administered monthly. During the tutoring classes, students are instructed through ACUITY's online-based instructions.

The school administrators and teachers report that information collected from these systems is reviewed and discussed at its bi-weekly staff meetings. Additionally, teachers are using the results of these assessments to make adjustments to the curriculum, in order to identify elements of the program that need re-teaching or for targeting tutoring strategies for students. For example, based on analysis of student data from STAR and MAP, the school has recently adopted a school wide SSR program to build stronger literacy and reading skills.

Thus far, moderate results on MAP between first and second quarter can be seen at each grade-level in both English/language arts and in math; but full impact of the school's use of data on overall teaching and learning and on student engagement may be better assessed with additional administration of the NWEA adaptive assessments throughout the remainder of the year (i.e. after the third and fourth quarter assessments).

In addition to developing more structured methods to assess student progress, the school has also been previously reviewed by three outside organizations, the Charter School Development Center (CSDC), the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and EdTec. A set of recommendations followed each review, and with EdTec, a comprehensive school improvement plan. The school is following up on the recommendations of these reports to infuse more rigor, discipline and support into the program for students who are not at grade-level or not making appropriate progress. This is evidenced through changes in BayTech's policies, by adjustments the school has made in personnel, in its staff development activities and by reallocation of school resources for student remediation strategies. Though the school still has some ways to go to optimize student learning through the impact of these strategies, it is making good progress in focusing students on academics and in increasing student performance over the past two quarters, as measured by MAP.

Most stakeholders interviewed, including parents, teachers, administrators and board members did, however, note that the school's overall progress was impacted last year by the significant amount of time and attention required for its renewal process with the Oakland Unified School District. As a result, the school does not feel it has made as much progress as it had hoped in locating facilities that would better accommodate its expanding high school program.

Criterion 4: Criterion 4: Responsible Governance

A charter school board and administration establish and implement policies that are transparent and focused on student achievement. Charter school board members and administrators have a cogent understanding of and comply with the laws that govern charter schools.

This area of the school's work is proficient with excellent features.

BayTech is managed by Willow Education, a public non-profit charter management organization. The Willow Education Board of Directors currently consists of five very committed and dedicated individuals with experience and background in the math, science and technological fields. Willow Education has engaged teacher, parent and community representatives in the decision-making of the school through the formation of the BayTech School Board. All members of the School Board remain in close communication with, and actively support and promote, the school. Meeting agendas and interviews demonstrate that the board is well-informed of the school's academic performance and appropriately oversees the school budget. Both Willow Education and the BayTech School Board meetings are held in compliance with the Brown Act and operate under a fully adopted set of bylaws, which include conflicts of interest policies.

There is a uniform complaints procedure, which is provided to parents during orientations, to ensure adequate resolution of any parent or community concerns. Input from parents can also be directed through the parent club and/or the parent representative on the BayTech School Board.

To keep abreast of charter school issues, BayTech maintains memberships of both the California Charter Schools Association (CCSA) and the Charter Schools Development Center (CSDC), consults with EdTec and participates in OUSD charter school meetings. The school maintains a School Accountability Report Card (SARC), as required by law, and has submitted all required reports to the district. These have been submitted in accordance with established timelines.

Criterion 5: Fiscal Accountability

A charter school fulfils its fiduciary responsibility for public funds and maintains publicly accessible fiscal records. The school conducts an annual financial audit which is made public.

This area of the school's work is excellent.

The school has a solid financial system managed very effectively in-house by a knowledgeable business manager who works closely with the school leadership and Board of Directors. The school has a well-organized and comprehensive fiscal accountability structure which includes strong checks and balances and fiscal policies to closely monitor its accounts.

BayTech is a direct-funded charter school and ensures that all fiscal reporting requirements are met. The school adheres to the audit requirements in law for charter schools, and audits are performed in accordance with generally accepted standards. Audit reports reviewed for the past two fiscal years show no exceptions or deficiencies. The classrooms have good resources and learning materials, and it is evident that the school has put a significant amount of resources into its technology labs to support the program outlined in its charter. Significant resources have also been put into student support systems during the past two years. These include NWEA assessments, smaller class sizes, tutoring and remediation support.

BayTech currently operates with a healthy reserve.

School name: Bay Area Technology School

School Quality Review	5	4	3	2	1
Overall evaluation score		X			

Criterion 1: Improving Student Achievement: A charter school promotes student learning through a clear vision and high expectations. It achieves clear, measurable program goals and student learning objectives, including meeting its stated performance standards, state and federal performance standards, and closing achievement gaps of students.		5	4	3	2	1
Criterion 1 overall score:				X		
1.1	Achieves clear, measurable program goals and student learning objectives, including meeting its stated performance standards, and state and federal standards			X		
1.2	Achieves comparably improved student learning outcomes relative to students in traditional public schools that students would have otherwise attended			X		
1.3	Demonstrates high expectations for student achievement			X		
1.4	Provides a challenging and coherent curriculum for each individual student			X		
1.5	Implements and directs learning experiences (consistent with the school's purpose and charter) that actively engage students		X			
1.6	Allocates appropriate resources in the way of instructional materials, staffing and facilities to promote high levels of student achievement			X		
1.7	Promotes academic risk taking by supporting students in a safe, healthy and nurturing environment characterized by trust, caring and professionalism			X		
1.8	Productively engages parental and community involvement as a part of the school's student support system		X			
1.9	Shares its vision among the school community and demonstrates its mission in daily action and practice		X			
1.10	Involves staff, students, parents and other stakeholders in its accountability for student learning and in the school's program evaluation process		X			

Criterion 2: Strong Leadership: The leaders of a charter school are stewards of the charter's mission and vision and carry out their duties in a professional, responsible and ethical manner. Charter school leaders use their influence and authority for the primary purpose of achieving student success.		5	4	3	2	1
Criterion 2 overall score:			X			
2.1	Effectively communicates and engages stakeholders in the vision mission of the school		X			
2.2	Consistently puts into practice the educational program outlined in its charter.		X			
2.3	Generates and sustains a school culture conducive to staff professional growth			X		
2.4	Actively monitors and evaluates the success of the school's program		X			
2.5	Provides regular, public reports on the school's progress towards achieving its goals to the school community and to the school's authorizer		X			
2.6	Treats all individuals with fairness, dignity and respect		X			
2.7	Has a cogent understanding of the laws that govern charter schools and monitors the trends, issues and potential changes in the environment in which charter schools operate		X			
2.8	Makes management decisions and uses his/her influence and authority for the primary purpose of achieving student success		X			
2.9	Abstains from any decision involving a potential or actual conflict of interests		X			
2.10	Respects diversity and implements practices that are inclusive of all types of learners consistent with the school charter		X			
2.11	Engages community involvement in the school		X			

Criterion 3: A Focus on Continuous Improvement: A charter school engages in a process of continuous self-improvement in order to increase the effectiveness of its educational program. The school regularly assesses and evaluates student learning based on stated goals.		5	4	3	2	1
Criterion 3 overall score:			X			
3.1	Uses information sources, data collection and data analysis strategies for self-examination and improvement.	X				
3.2	Establishes benchmarks and a variety of accountability tools for monitoring student progress and uses the results of these assessments to improve curriculum and instruction		X			
3.3	Establishes both long and short term goals and plans for accomplishing the school's mission as stated in its charter.		X			
3.4	Uses student assessment results to improve curriculum and instruction.		X			
3.5	Uses the results of evaluation and assessment as the basis for the allocation of resources for programmatic improvement.		X			

Criterion 4: Responsible Governance: A charter school board and administration establish and implement policies that are transparent and focused on student achievement. Charter school board members and administrators have a cogent understanding of and comply with the laws that govern charter schools.		5	4	3	2	1
Criterion 4 overall score:			X			
4.1	Ensure that policies are implemented in a fair and consistent manner.		X			
4.2	Monitor the trends, issues and potential changes in the environment in which charter schools operate.	X				
4.3	Seek input from impacted stakeholders.	X				
4.4	Enact policies that respect diversity and implements practices that are inclusive of all types of learners consistent with the school charter.		X			
4.5	Actively engage the school's authorizer in monitoring the school's educational program and its fiscal status.		X			

Criterion 5: Fiscal Accountability: A charter school fulfils its fiduciary responsibility for public funds and maintains publicly accessible fiscal records. The school conducts an annual financial audit which is made public.		5	4	3	2	1
Criterion 5 overall score:		X				
5.1	Creates and monitors immediate and long-range financial plans to effectively implement the school's educational program and ensure financial stability.	X				
5.2	Conducts an annual financial audit which is made public.	X				
5.3	Establishes clear fiscal policies to ensure that public funds are used appropriately and wisely.	X				
5.4	Ensures financial resources are directly related to the school's purpose: student achievement of learning goals.	X				