



Oakland Unified School District

Charter School Renewal Site Visit Report

Leadership Public Schools

College Park

**8601 MacArthur Boulevard, Bldg. 100
Oakland, CA 94605**

Principal: Andrew Gordon

Dates of review: December 10-11, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Ting L. Sun

Cambridge Education (LLC)

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

School strengths
School challenges

Part 3: Main findings

Overall evaluation
How well the school meets the renewal site visit criteria

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Leadership Public Schools (LPS) College Park is a small charter high school in its third year of operations. The school currently serves 261 9th-11th grade students and is located within the Castlemont Community of Small Schools in East Oakland as one of four schools sharing a single campus. The mission of the LPS College Park is to “get 100% of its students to college.” Student enrollment this year consists of 61% Latino, 35% African American, and 3% Asian and Pacific Islander. Ninety-two (92%) of the students are known to be entitled to a free and reduced lunch.

Approximately 9% of the students have been identified with special needs and 34% have been identified as English Learners (EL), most of whom tested at California English Language Development Test (CELDT) Level 1 and 2, a much higher percentage than the school had anticipated at these levels.

In 2006, LPS College Park had an Academic Performance Index (API) of 620, ranking it 2 statewide. The school’s growth API dropped significantly by 85 points in 2007. State rankings for the 2007 Base API will not be available until March 2008.

Part 2: Overview

School Strengths:

- The school provides a physically safe environment for students, and students feel that the school inspires and motivates them to attain the goal of entering and completing college.
- The school is supported by the Leadership Public Schools' network which provides the school with fiscal, operational and programmatic support.
- Several new management structures and systems have been put in place to initiate instructional improvement – these include a results-focused teacher evaluation system, a scaffolded approach to examining benchmark data, and targeted professional development in classroom management, differentiated instruction and in working with English Learners.
- The LPS charter management organization (CMO) home office has developed more specific and detailed goals for student achievement for each site, including this one.
- The LPS Board of Directors closely monitors the progress of the school.
- There is a sound budget development process wherein the school and the LPS CMO home office work collaboratively to develop and manage its annual budget to best meet the needs of the school.
- The school's Algebra 1 scores are particularly high due to good instructional delivery with support in the Academic Numeracy program.

School Challenges:

- The LPS mission of college preparation and leadership skill development is not fully showing impact on students' behavior or in their engagement with their own learning.
- The school does not consistently follow through on stated school requirements and policies.
- The school's API growth scores dropped significantly last year.
- There is an overall lack of rigor, pace and challenge in classroom instruction.
- There is no clear evidence that assessments and interventions are making an impact on the performance of the school's EL population.
- There is currently no clear or consistent curriculum for the Leadership Advisory class.
- There is a lack of engagement from a significant number of parents.

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation:

This is an underdeveloped school overall.

Is the School An Academic Success?

LPS College Park has not demonstrated academic success in accordance with its mission and goals for preparing students to be ready for college halfway through its third year. Though College Park students performed higher than neighboring schools in the Castlemont community in Algebra, English/Language arts and World History, the school dropped significantly on its API growth score last year, and performance on state tests (STAR and CAHSEE) is low overall, especially for English Language (EL) students. The delivery of the school's college preparatory curriculum is below par due to an overall lack of appropriate rigor, pace and challenge in classroom instruction. Student engagement and self-motivation was observed to be low in many classes.

While students interviewed confirmed that the school is doing a good job in getting them "to think about going to college," the current school culture is not conducive to developing the actual skills necessary for students to enter and be successful in college. Students show minimal adherence to school rules on behavior (i.e. profanity, tardiness, class disruption) and consequences for violations are inconsistently followed through by the administrators and teachers. Though the physical facility is safe and free of violence, students in general are not focused on learning and do not as a whole demonstrate the Leadership Public School Values of commitment, respect and responsibility.

The school recognizes that it has much more to do to meet its academic goals as a third-year school. Several new initiatives have been implemented this year to support the administration, teachers and students and to hold them more accountable for academic achievement. The impact of these initiatives is not yet fully evident, although very recent data on the school's October and December benchmark testing has shown good growth.

Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?

LPS College Park is an effective, viable organization because of its support from the LPS CMO Home Office. The school receives good services from the LPS network which provides fiscal, operational and programmatic support. The LPS CMO has a strong board and knowledgeable leadership team who are determined to realize the LPS mission. Because of this, the school manages its budget well and has been able to leverage additional personnel to work with and support its students.

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

LPS College Park has met the terms of its charter in the areas of governance and fiscal accountability and compliance. It is still developing in terms of meeting its mission of preparing students to succeed in college and developing effective student leaders. The school is currently serving a targeted population of diverse and traditionally underserved students and has, for some of them, started to make them think about attending college once they graduate from high school. Its success in getting students to college can not yet be measured as the school has not had a graduating class nor does it not yet have seniors. Evidence gathered on the school's academic performance thus far, however, indicates that the school may still be far from providing its students academic and leadership skills necessary for college and beyond.

The LPS Six Pillars of School Design: high expectations, significant support, student leadership, talented staff parent and community involvement and focus on student results exist at LPS College Park but are only in the very early stages of development.

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.

LPS College Park has the expressed mission of "getting 100% of its students to college" which is well-articulated among the school community though not yet embedded in the culture. Clear, measurable student performance goals to achieve this mission are just now being delineated into more defined targets on benchmarks. For example, the LPS home office has established specific school performance goals in terms of proficiency on English/language arts (ELA) and math (MA) benchmark assessments for College Park, and the school principal has established an overall goal of 650 points on the school's 2008 API score. A 2006-2007 College Park School Improvement Plan further articulates measurable goals for specific areas of student achievement and for school program improvement; however, there is little evidence to show that the school has fully tracked its current progress on these specific goals.

To date, the school's overall academic performance is low. The school dropped by 85 points on its 2007 API growth score to 535 from its 2006 base API of 620 and did not meet its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the areas of ELA proficiency and the additional indicator of API. There is data, however, that shows that College Park students performed significantly higher than neighboring schools in the Castlemont community on both the 2006 and 2007 STAR, particularly in the areas of Algebra, ELA and World History. The school points to this data to demonstrate the "value-add" of College Park to the east Oakland community. Results from the LPS College Park benchmarks assessment data this year is demonstrating overall student growth in all subject areas from the October 2007 to December 2007 test administrations, but will need to be monitored to assess a continuous growth trend throughout the remainder of the year.

A standards-aligned curriculum is in place and graduation requirements meet minimal entry requirements for the University of California (UC) and CSU. However, LPS College Park has just only just begun in its third year of operations to implement several changes to infuse consistency, rigor and high expectations in the school's educational program. Citing challenges such as the move onto a new campus, an extremely inexperienced teaching staff, and an unexpected influx of low level EL students, the school admits that it was unprepared last year to address the issues that resulted from these challenges. This year, however, with the support of the LPS home office several initiatives have been created to address these issues and are in various stages of implementation. Several new management structures and systems have been put in place to initiate instructional improvement. These include a staff evaluation system with a focus on benchmark growth, a scaffolded approach to examining benchmark data, and targeted professional development in classroom management, differentiated instruction and in working with English Learners. A college counselor has been hired to work with students on college preparation and plans and funding are in place to hire an Academic Intervention Counselor to work with EL students for pull-out and afterschool support to target the low performance of these and other struggling students. A new Dean of Students has also been hired this year to address student behavioral issues.

There is some evidence that some initiatives are taking root. However the school has much further to go. Classroom instruction is uneven and mostly all teacher-driven, limiting student opportunities for students to actively participate in the learning process. Questioning and learning activities in most all classes were rote and mechanical, requiring one-word answers or the copying of vocabulary. Despite the LPS required pacing guides and the instructional delivery model, transitions between learning activities and/or lessons are very long, leaving significant proportions of students non-engaged in direct learning. Classroom management issues exist in many classrooms from lack of student engagement to verbal confrontation between students.

The current school culture is not supportive of the college preparatory curriculum LPS College Park envisions for its students. Hallways are loud and profanity is regularly heard during passing time and in the classrooms. Adherence to the dress code is limited. A number of students do not bring necessary learning materials to school and are regularly seen using cell phones and ipods during class, especially during long transition times. Graffiti and gang symbols are seen in the halls, classrooms and bathrooms. The principal says that this has been brought to the attention of the district as it is a district site. In some classrooms, however, more graffiti mark the walls and cabinets than student work. There is a marked and distinct disconnect between the articulated LPS values outlined in the student/parent handbook and what currently exists in the school.

The school recognizes that student leadership development is limited. Although students attend a Leadership Advisory class, the curriculum for this course lacks focus and is inconsistent. Some work has already begun at the CMO level to develop a more consistent and coherent curriculum for leadership development and college preparation for the Advisory class. However, the school and the CMO made a strategic decision to focus first on basic academic preparation and building closer relationships with students through family meetings and celebrating success.

The administrators, counselor and teachers state that parental support at the school is a challenge because of the community that it serves and is making some additional efforts to engage and involve more parents in the activities of the school. The 30 hours parent participation requirements are not being followed, but the school is planning family/community activities with a small group of dedicated parents in an effort to draw in more parents to the school. The small group of parents who spoke with the site visit team feels the school makes good efforts to inform all parents of their child's progress through progress reports and phone calls from the teachers.

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 underdeveloped.

All members of the school leadership, the principal, dean of students and the school counselor communicate the mission of the school well. Students interviewed report that the school inspires and motivates them to attain the goal of entering and completing college. However, the school leadership has been minimally effective in implementing and in putting into practice stated policies and procedures to support an effective learning environment so that students can attain that goal. Negative behaviors and lack of student engagement was addressed at times by administrators and teachers with some individual students one-one-one, but regular and consistent adherence to schoolwide policies is not evident. Classroom rules, for example, are not followed in many classes and consequences for not following through on these rules are not evident. Graffiti and gang-related symbols, as another, have remained on walls and cabinets since the beginning of the school year.

The school principal has reflected on the challenges of the previous two school years and is working with the LPS CMO home office to implement professional development activities that will support a more rigorous academic curriculum. Ten of the fourteen staff are new to the school this year, but the current staff are reflective of greater teaching experience overall than the staff last year. The principal is now visiting classrooms more regularly and is developing professional goals with each teacher. The impact of these changes is not yet completely evident. For example, although classroom boards are required to have lesson objectives and lists of class activities as outlined through the LPS instructional delivery model, adherence to this varies and is inconsistent from teacher to teacher.

The principal is now systematically collecting and analyzing data on students based on performance in the CMO-wide benchmark assessments. Results from the fall (October 2007) administration of the benchmarks have been discussed with individual teachers, and the results of the winter (December 2007) assessments are now being reviewed. Overall, students are showing growth in all subject areas

between the two assessment administrations. Trends within subgroups have not yet been analyzed and understanding the cause and effect that impacted this growth may be limited until further data is collected throughout the year. Although individual student performance is shared with parents, there is no evidence that school wide performance on these assessments nor on other performance such as STAR is communicated to parents or students so that there is a better understanding of how that student is performing compared to statewide student performance.

The school site leadership is further supported by the leadership team of the LPS charter management organization, who have expertise and direct experience in working with the policies and laws that govern charter schools. There is solid support from the LPS leadership to making the LPS sure the vision and mission is realized at this school as evidenced by the allocation of additional resources to the site for a counselor, a dean of students, an EL specialist and additional LPS educational team/coaching support.

To support student academic and emotional needs, the school leadership has engaged in a few community partnerships with organizations such as the UC Berkeley College of Engineering, and the Children's hospital at Youth Uprising to support students at the school. LPS also holds a three-day Freshman Academy at Stanford University in the late summer to induct middle schoolers into a college-preparatory high school. The school principal and counselor understand these partnerships are still limited and would like to engage in more community partnerships to better and more fully serve their students' needs. The school is also making more efforts to increase parental involvement in the school through family meetings and raffle activities.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The significant drop in API scores last year coupled with clearer and more specific expectations from the CMO home office has resulted in a much more focused and systematic review and analysis of the LPS College Parks' student performance and progress this year. Processes and structures have now been put in place to monitor student progress more closely and with the intent to make necessary adjustments for improvements in teaching and learning. Using the results of the October benchmark assessments, the principal met with each teacher to discuss progress, areas of strength and areas in need of improvement on specific academic content standard areas. The teacher observation/evaluation system also reflects an emphasis on student performance results. The college counselor is just starting to put a "student progress check" system in place for students with low GPAs. It is too soon, however, to measure the impact of these newly created systems on overall teaching and learning or student engagement.

The school has not yet developed a comprehensive student progress/monitoring system that would enable it to assess progress and comparison of grades, credit completion, and/or GPA to student performance on benchmark assessments, CAHSEE and STAR. As the use of student data is just beginning, there is little analysis relative to trends in student performance by subgroups nor has the school specifically identified areas for schoolwide focus other than the need to provide more support for EL students in the area of English/Language Arts.

The LPS home office is also closely tracking and monitoring the school's performance data on these benchmarks in comparison with other LPS sites. Based on STAR results from the last school year, the LPS home office has both re-allocated and enhanced support services throughout the LPS network by providing more curriculum support and coaching from the LPS educational team and access to an LPS data coordinator, as well as specifically at the College Park site, a dedicated full-time counselor and future EL support. It is too soon to assess the effectiveness and impact of these additional resources at the school.

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.

LPS College Park is managed by Leadership Public Schools, a public non-profit charter management organization. LPS has a twenty-member board made up of individuals with impressive experience and expertise in business, education, charter schools and fundraising. The board has monthly meetings which are notified at all LPS sites, and a parent and a teacher representative sit as members of the board. All LPS board meetings are held in compliance with the Brown Act.

There is good evidence that the LPS administrative team provides regular reports of its schools' progress, including College Park and that the board monitors the performance of its schools. In addition to presentations and analysis of overall student performance on STAR and on benchmark assessments, the principal reports and regular "dashboards," LPS board members are assigned to specific LPS "site support teams" and make occasional site visits to the schools for which they are assigned.

Board meetings are open and minutes can be made available to the public upon request. Board agendas are posted at school sites and on the LPS website. There is solid evidence that board bylaws and policies are in place and there are comprehensive policies on conflicts of interest and address the disqualifications of interested parties. There is also a community complaints procedure to ensure adequate resolution of any parent or community concerns – however, this may not be clearly noticed to parents as it is not in the parent/student handbook. Input from parents can also directed through parent councils at each LPS site. In the case of LPS College Park, the parents involved in the council were asked to join by the principal and provide him with feedback on the school.

The LPS board president has a very clear understanding of his role and the role of the board to accomplish the school mission by providing strategic direction and fiscal management and support. There is also recognition by the board that LPS College Park, as a site, is still in the early stages of working to accomplish the broader LPS mission. Because of this, the CMO has been putting more focused attention to assisting the school to become more successful.

All required reports to the district have been submitted in accordance with timelines established.

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 proficient with excellent features.

The LPS board and management team work to closely to effectively monitor the financial plans of Leadership Public Schools as well as the specific budget at each school site through a formal budget process that adheres to required timelines . The College Park principal works with LPS fiscal director to develop its annual budget and reports that he has a good degree of "creativity" which enables him to build a budget specific to his site. Various check points are made throughout the year on expenditures and attendance to make sure that the school is adhering to its adopted budget.

The LPS adheres to the audit requirements in law for charter schools, and audits are preformed in accordance with Government Auditing Standards. Audit reports for the past two fiscal years show no exceptions or significant deficiencies and delineate income and expenditures by school site. An administration fee of 7% of state and federal revenues is charged to each school site to cover services

from the CMO home office. The LPS Chief Executive officer reported that 20% of the College Park school budget went to facilities last year. This year, that percentage has lowered to 4%, allowing more of the budget to go to directly supporting students. Currently, the classrooms have adequate supplies and materials to support the curriculum, though more enrichment and academic support is needed to fully accomplish the LPS's mission and goals. These include extracurricular activities such as art, music, student clubs and an athletics program, all of which are envisioned to develop well-rounded student leaders who are prepared to succeed in college. The board realizes that as all of the LPS school sites shift from "start-up" to "sustainability" the focus of its fundraising will have to shift to these areas as well and has developed a plan to raise \$800,000 - \$1 million to support these efforts, with \$400,000 already raised.

School name: LPS College Park

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			