



Oakland Unified School District

Charter School Renewal Site Visit Report

Oakland Military Institute

**3877 Lusk Street
Oakland, California 94608**

**Superintendent: Mark Ryan
Dates of review: December 8 - 9, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Renee Middleton – Cambridge Education
Team reviewer: Ting Sun – Cambridge Education**

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 School Quality Review criteria

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Oakland Military Institute (OMI), a public charter school currently in its eighth year of operations, serves 507 students in grade 6 through grade 12. Founded in 2001, OMI is a college preparatory academy which is modeled on a military framework with all students registered as members of the California Cadet Corps. All students or 'cadets' engage in a core academic curriculum that meets California content standards. The OMI military aspects of the school are based on a leadership structure that promotes students achieving ranks for their achievements both academically and within the context of building skills such as orienteering and outdoor physical exercise. All students participate in programs to develop skills such as information technology and citizenship activities such as community services.

The majority of OMI students currently enrolled are Hispanic/Latino (37%). The rest of the student body consists of 29% African-American, 25% Asian, 2% Pacific Islander, 1% White, and 6% Other. Over 75% of the student population is designated as socio-economically disadvantaged, and 40% are designated English Learners (EL). Four percent (4%) of the students at the school are designated with disabilities. Seventy-six percent (76%) of students are entitled to a free or subsidized lunch, which is a lower percentage than the district average. The OMI student attendance rate of 97% is above the averages for both state and similar schools.

OMI's Academic Performance Index (API) growth has improved from its 2007 base API of 636 to 694 in 2008, a gain of 58 points. The OMI API growth in 2008 is slightly lower than the median API for similar schools. The school has met its overall Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) with all subgroups meeting the AYP criteria. In 2008, the school achieved a statewide ranking of 3 and 1 among similar schools.

Part 2: Overview

School Strengths:

- The school's military and academic curricula are integrated to provide a framework for developing and improving student behavior and academic performance.
- Under new leadership, the school's mission is clearly communicated to all stakeholders.
- The OMI staff are dedicated to supporting their students' personal growth and academic achievement; students believe that the teachers care about their success.
- The Silicon Valley Math Initiative and Reading Apprenticeship models are beginning to impact instructional delivery.
- OMI implements an extensive outreach program that involves every student's participation in community services.
- Parents appreciate the structured and disciplined approach to OMI's daily routines for students.
- Fiscal procedures and budgeting structures are coherent and well managed to effectively inform the school's decisions.

School Challenges:

- The school's culture has not yet reached the high level of rigor and discipline envisioned in its charter.
- There are inconsistencies in the levels of challenge and pacing in lessons.
- There is limited use of technology across the curriculum to develop students' research and technological skills.
- The criteria for the assessment and use of data, benchmark outcome, and goal setting are not consistently aligned to the school's charter petition.
- The school's action plan of accountability is not based on explicitly measurable outcomes.

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation: The school's overall performance

This is an underdeveloped school overall with proficient features.

Is the School An Academic Success?

In the past year, Oakland Military Institute (OMI) has improved students' academic performance and has raised behavior expectations for its students, and most of its students reach these expectations. The school is developing strategies to support students in need of intervention particularly among those students who have not achieved above basic levels in comparison to state and similar school averages.

OMI's Academic Performance Index (API) growth has improved from its 2007 base API of 636 to 694 in 2008, a gain of 58 points. This API brings OMI's growth in 2008 close to the median API for similar schools (705). The school has met its overall Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) with all subgroups meeting the AYP criteria. Students perform better in English language arts (ELA) compared to their mathematics. English learners (EL) and African American boys are the lowest performing subgroups on all state tests. In the school's composite 2008 California State Tests (CST) results, OMI students achieved 36% proficient or advanced in the ELA compared to 25.4% of students who achieved proficient or advanced in mathematics. The 2008 CST results for history outcome is low at 20%. However, science results have improved on previous years with 50% of students tested achieving proficient or advanced. The 2008 grade 7 CST results are promising with 45% achieving proficient and above in ELA, 36% in mathematics, and 62% at proficient and above in Algebra 1.

The school's 2008 enrollment of 507 is a significant decrease from its 2007 student population of 546, a 7% loss. The school is oversubscribed in grade 6. It has a 3.9% dropout rate for 2007-08 which is below state and district averages. Some reasons for students leaving were the result of low performance, discipline issues, and/or move from the Oakland area. For those seniors that stayed on in 2007-08, 100% graduated with 73% of students accepted at 4-year universities.

OMI implements a standards-based curriculum, although the opportunity for students to develop their technological skills is limited. The teachers are beginning to develop high quality instructional strategies to support EL students' development of ELA skills and to target intervention for students with low reading skills. In the best practice, there are good opportunities for students to improve their learning and to think critically with good support structures implemented through after-school tutoring to help students improve their learning. The school provides a well-structured outdoor physical education program in addition to the core academic subjects. The curriculum is further enhanced through the Leaders of Character (LOC) program for character development. Students are also supported by advisory Teach, Assess, and Counsel (TAC) personnel who effectively monitoring individual student academic progress and behavior.

OMI has established a college readiness culture, including 73% of the 2008 graduating students successfully gaining places and grants for four-year universities such as Yale and West Point. The school has a 97% attendance rate which is above the state and similar schools' averages.

Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?

Organizational management at OMI is very effective, so that the school functions efficiently on a day-to-day basis. The new superintendent provides strong leadership for the school. However, he is yet to strengthen the instructional coaching and leadership skills of all members of the leadership team. The teaching faculty, general staff, and military personnel work well with the superintendent

who successfully focuses actions on improving the quality of the school's work, with particular emphasis on student achievement, the quality of their experiences, and their character development. Parents find the OMI staff very approachable and respect the disciplinary rigors the school offers. The faculty and staff support the decisions and changes made by the new superintendent and they value the communication and lead in the professional development that he has improved as a new leader. They find him decisive and respectful of both adults and students at OMI.

The OMI Board is committed to fulfilling its roles and responsibilities. The Board members are developing their decision-making skills, but lack a comprehensive school improvement plan with explicit and measurable performance indicators to work from, nor the means of monitoring the school's effectiveness in raising student achievement. The school has effective fiscal controls and budgetary monitoring to ensure that all students and staff are served well. There is a good level of financial expertise on the school's governing board. The school's finances are thoroughly monitored through the expertise of a financial advisor who has systematized many aspects of the financial operations to run efficiently. There is a strong commitment to ensuring that finances support the drive to achieve the school's mission and goals underpinned with rigorous operational protocols for dealing with the day-to-day running of the school's facilities, care, and safety.

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

The school meets the terms of its charter in the areas relating to student achievement, its curriculum delivery, and fiscal accountability. OMI maintains a safe and secure environment, which is supportive and enables learning. There is alignment in charter petition to the school's implementation of the school's instructional model by using varied learning activities to deliver a standards-based curriculum. However, for a few teachers, instruction lacks consistently effective practice in a few classes.

The school is yet to fully ensure that its culture reaches the high level of rigor and discipline envisioned in its charter. Implementing consistent, strong classroom management and center activities that facilitate and engage students fully are areas which require fuller examination and strategic development. Through the school's Leaders of Character program, expectations of student behavior and response to the military culture of the school are becoming more consistently high and the curriculum and curricular opportunities providing strong support for students' personal and character growth.

The new superintendent analyzes student assessment data and provides regularly scheduled time for teachers to discuss and analyze this data. However, the criteria for the assessment and use of data, benchmark outcome, and goal setting are not consistently aligned to the school's charter petition. There is much variance in how effectively teachers' use of a range of data to inform and differentiate lessons to meet all students' needs fully.

The OMI board governance of the school is beginning to effectively monitor the school's effectiveness, for example in developing and ensuring that expected policies and practice are securely in place. However, the school's action plan of accountability is not specifically monitored by the Board. Few actions are based on explicitly measurable outcomes for the school leadership and Board to know how effectively the school addresses priorities.

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.

Although OMI has made good API growth in past years, with an API growth of 694 in 2008, the school has not set out clear, measurable program goals and student learning objectives consistently across all grade levels. There are few measurable performance indicators to address how it will continue to close the achievement gaps among students.

The majority of students tested in 2008 performed mainly at basic to below basic in ELA. The 2008 grade 7 CST results are promising with 45% achieving proficient and above in ELA, 36% in mathematics, and 62% at proficient and above in Algebra 1. Students who have learning or other needs receive prompt and sensitive help and as a result achieve well. The school has responded quickly to the needs of special education students. These pupils are given good support, make good progress, and achieve well.

The school faces the challenge of ensuring that all teachers maintain high expectations. The teachers are supported opportunities to plan collaboratively, and by working to a standards-based curriculum. However, they lack guidance and strategies for effective implementation of technology to enhance their lessons and to impact students' learning. The school's curriculum does not always identify essential skills and knowledge to move students' learning forward with rigor and good pacing. The core curriculum is structured well within a grade level, but lacks the grade-by-grade sequence, scaffolding language and mathematics skills with assessments to effectively support students' mastery across all subjects. There are also inconsistencies in the instructional strategies implemented to ensure that all lessons are paced well and engaging. Some lessons are not sufficiently rigorous in the use of high order questioning and opportunities for students to think critically to prepare them adequately for college.

Although the superintendent, LOC and TAC officers, and teachers clearly articulate the school's mission of raising student achievement, not all students demonstrate the high expectations outlined in the school's charter petition. The discipline policies are favored by parents, staff and most students. However, there has been a 7% drop in the school's enrollment partially due to students not being able to meet the school's academic and behavior requirements.

The school is beginning to close the achievement gap for most students through the use of effective intervention strategies to meet a greater range of abilities and needs of students, including those students who are English Learners and those with special educational needs. The Silicon Valley Math Initiative and Reading Apprenticeship models are beginning to impact instructional delivery. For those students who fall behind or require support, the school implements effective strategies to address their needs, such as tutoring and TAC officers' counseling. Most students have positive responses in lessons, participation in after-school programs, and work diligently to learn more and to move up in rank.

The school has ample space conducive to learning with welcoming and well-resourced classrooms. There is good maintenance of the school site with watchful security ensuring the safety of students, including rigorous emergency procedures and crisis plans ready for implementation. There is mutual respect and trust among adults and students as exemplified the whole school commitment of "Age Quod Agis," – "Do Well Whatever You Do.". Through the LOC program, some students are developing good citizenship by serving in their local community such as helping the elderly and community clean-up. The school makes a concerted effort to address the well-being of the students through a rigorous outdoor physical education regime. Policies are effectively implemented to sustain students taking responsibility for their behavior.

The school has developed effective systems for ensuring that all stakeholders receive consistent and clear communication on a regular basis through frequent newsletters, workshops, and events to draw parents into the life of the school. Most parents are clear that the school expects its students to be prepared for and to go to college. Parents praise the military discipline expected of students,

welcome the uniform, and day-to-day routines 'to bring some order to their lives' as quoted by one parent.

While the school's vision and mission are communicated in various forms such as newsletters, emails, the school website, and personal contacts, the superintendent recognizes the need for parents to be more active as part of the school's support system and representative on the Board and Parent Advisory Council. Few parents actively engage in the daily life of the school or play an explicit role in monitoring and using assessment data relating to their own children's progress and achievement.

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.

The superintendent puts most of his efforts into formally monitoring and evaluation of the school's programs, especially in his lesson observations to better inform classroom practice. The school leadership fosters learning, a strong community and positive behaviors. The OMI facility is organized and structured so that it is safe, orderly space where students are the priority. The superintendent promotes high standards for academic achievement and behavior and utilizes systems of "non-negotiables" which is beginning to drive the whole school culture to positively impact on learning. The school has worked extensively and with success in developing positive student behavior through the LOC program for developing their citizenship and personal character. Students, staff and parents are proud of the school and easily discuss the importance of being part of a 'squad.' However, the opportunities provided for students to demonstrate the LOC model of discipline and community spirit from class to class is varied.

The teachers express that they are given some degree of flexibility within their planning and implementation of instructional strategies. They value the opportunities to work together in teams with protected schedules for lesson preparation and collaboration. Teachers understand, and for the most part adhere to, the high expectation set by the school superintendent, but they do not receive a coherent coaching program to effectively and consistently support their instruction. Although teachers meet often to discuss student achievement, individual cases for intervention and share instructional strategies, less time is spent using data to inform their planning and how best to differentiate lessons. There are few opportunities provided to increase instructional effectiveness and consistency of expectations through peer observations and effective coaching support.

The school respects the diversity and needs of the staff, students, parents, and community. As an example, OMI celebrates Hispanic and Black History month with links to their social studies and US History syllabi. Recruitment plans focus on inclusive principles to attract a diverse and range of learners to the school with clear and open enrollment procedures and a public lottery process for the over-subscribed grade 6 enrollment.

There are valuable contributions of the students to helping their community, as exemplified by helping the elderly, fund-raising to help the needy, and neighborhood environment improvement projects. These opportunities are making an impact on improving students' attitudes to others and in becoming active citizens. However, the school is yet to productively engage a greater number of the community members and partners as part of the school's support system.

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.

The school has sufficient systems implemented for the management of student information and use of assessment data as exemplified in the school's administration of the mandated State tests and in

carrying out its own interim benchmark assessments. Additionally, the superintendent provides teachers with the summary of students' Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) data, outlining trends and disaggregated significant subgroup performance. Teachers are still becoming familiar with using assessment outcome as a tool for instruction and still gaining the skills to know what needs to be taught, how to effectively differentiate lessons, and what grouping strategies would best meet the needs of all students. A few teachers devise their own assessments, producing data that is not consistently or directly linked back to the State standards for accurate comparisons. For example, teachers' own tests delineate the proficiency levels of their students on the mechanics of the content area, but not necessarily on testing students' analytical skills and use of higher order thinking skills to further raise their levels of mastery.

There is insufficient focus in professional development on how best to use data by regularly engaging teachers in "a cycle of inquiry," such as the identification of student performance trends and calibration of student work across the school monitor progress in alignment with state expectations. Although teachers meet in grade levels and within their specific subject areas, instructional strategies or skills focused areas are not sufficiently developed and applied within and across grade-levels to enhance and personalize student learning. Teachers are working to improve their use of rubrics to communicate to students the skills they need to improve their learning. They confer with their students on a daily basis and meetings with parents are implemented quarterly to keep parents informed of their children's progress. As needs are identified, students receive additional support in areas where improvement is needed through additional tutoring and teachers' advice on homework. Being able to identify and address more effectively the learning gaps and needs of the significant number of new students at basic or far below basic levels of achievement remains a challenge for the school if it is to make continuous improvement.

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 underdeveloped.

The school has sound legal and financial structures to ensure that the Board effectively carries out its duties. The budget is adopted according to the district requirements and interim reports created in a timely manner. Some OMI Board members are fairly new to their roles and responsibilities and are developing their decision-making skills and understanding of the curriculum and analysis of student performance data. They work collaboratively with the superintendent in identifying key priorities but lack a comprehensive school improvement plan with explicit and measurable performance indicators to work from, nor the means of monitoring the school's effectiveness in raising student achievement.

The Board receives monthly fiscal reports with the superintendent's updates on expenditures. However, there are few well-defined measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's improvement strategies and progress made in addressing the identified priorities, Board members' regularly visit the school and participate in events such as the Pass in Review Ceremonies. There are clearly defined complaint procedures which are documented and accessible. There are adopted set of bylaws which include policies for meeting protocols, procedures, and formal financial systems within the school. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed, developed and duly adhered to, as noted in Board minutes. The superintendent and finance officer thoroughly monitor the Board for possible conflict of interest.

The OMI Parent and Advisory Council (PAC) is in an early stage of understanding its role and how best to support the superintendent and Board decisions. PAC is strategizing to help the school align its governance to its charter petition by providing opportunities for strong ties to families and the community and with some involvement in decision making although further parent and community representation is needed.

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.

The school is in full compliance with financial reporting and management. The school has maintained yearly positive balance sheets, a small reserve, long range budget projections, and grant development which demonstrate its financial viability. The superintendent's on-site operational management and financial overview of the school are very good and the finances are secure. The finance officer provides timely budgetary information, updates, and demonstrates her involvement in monitoring the working budget accordingly. Such careful scrutiny allows the school to support student learning through funding ample classroom resources and academic staffing support. Financial management practices are comprehensive and transparent. Good communication ensures the school's fiscal integrity and sustainability.

The school supports an environment conducive to student learning by maintaining a spacious and accommodating facility. This allows for the flexible use of space for varied student groupings. The budget is well-managed to provide necessary classroom resources and supplies within a clean and safe school site. However, the allocation of resources is not consistently aligned to the budget with or based on explicit educational goals.

The school has a comprehensive set of fiscal policies governing the fiduciary responsibilities within the school. In turn, the school aligns its mission and vision with fiscal policies and procedures. Communication is maintained with the authorizers and district policies. It is clear that internal controls are deeply embedded in the superintendent's understanding of fiscal matters. Annual audits are available and transparent for OUSD and the public to be aware of the school's financial status. The most recent audit indicates that the school is in compliance with all of the district's required documentation.

School name: Oakland Military Institute

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			