

Valhalla Community School
Valhalla Centre, Alberta

Final Version
Valhalla Community Charter
School Evaluation
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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

Valhalla Community School is a recently established, publically funded charter school located in the hamlet of Valhalla Centre, which is approximately 50 km northwest of Grande Prairie, Alberta which is now in its third year of operation.

The school's information indicates that the Valhalla School was opened in a home near the present hamlet in May, 1914. The first school building in the community was opened in 1916 when parent volunteers built a log school house.

The current school building was built in 1954, and is today owned and operated by the Valhalla Heritage Society.

Valhalla Community School was started by a group of parents and local residents when adjustments were made to the local school boundaries in early 2008, and the school was slated to close at the end of June, 2008. Parents and supporters formed a steering committee to explore and develop initiatives. This committee began a series of meetings with the stakeholders in the local education system, and the charter school was established in place of the closed public system school. Three school buses were purchased and delivered to Valhalla Centre by volunteer community members. Resource materials were obtained and school staff and bus drivers hired, and Valhalla Community School commenced classes on September 2nd, 2008.

Valhalla Community School offered Kindergarten to grade 6 during the 2008-2009 school year, has phased in a junior high program starting with grade 7 in 2009-2010, grade 8 in 2010-2011 and plans to offer grade 9 in 2011-2012.

The school facility is comprised of six classrooms, one of which serves as a combined school and community library, gymnasium (including stage), washrooms, a small office suite and a staffroom. At the time of the evaluation in February, 2011, the school employed six certificated teachers (5.32 FTE), including a principal and an AISI coordinator and four support staff. Support staff includes a business manager/school secretary, and teacher assistants. In addition to school based staff are a superintendent (.4 FTE), a secretary-treasurer (.4 FTE), a transportation director (.5 FTE) and four bus drivers. Enrolment per grade as of September 30, 2010 (unchanged at February 22, 2011) was as follows:

K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
11	12	12	9	11	14	6	11	13	0	99

Vision Statement (from 2010-2013 Three Year Education Plan)

The Valhalla Community School (VCS) aims to instil a readiness for leadership by equipping its rural students with both knowledge and skills that will enable them to make positive contributions at their future places of employment, as well as in the communities or groups with which they choose to associate.

Charter Goals: Mission (from 2010-2013 Three Year Education Plan)

The Valhalla Community School (VCS) prepares students with the attitudes, knowledge and skills necessary for success in a rapidly changing economy. Students will develop strong ethical and civic standards, a solid commitment to their families, neighbourhood, school, province, and country.

Philosophy and Principles (from 2010-2013 Three Year Education Plan)

The Valhalla School Foundation (VSF) views rural education as possessing unique and beneficial characteristics with the potential to maximize student learning. In general, rural students approach life from an entrepreneurial perspective and have close, personal ties to members of their family and community. According to the work of Gordon Neufeld (*Hold On To Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers*, Vintage Canada, 2005) the connectedness of a community has a significant impact on the “parent-orientation” of a child and, by extension, contributes to their success in school. Similarly, multi-grade groupings contribute to an environment that encourages this same sense of community connectedness.

The VSF believes the unique aspects of rural education that distinguish it from its urban cousin call for a diligent focus on structured teaching practises that maximize opportunities for all students. In addition, direct community involvement will underscore the importance of civic commitment and participation for the students of VCS. The VSF believes it must provide students with opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for success in both urban and rural settings.

The VSF recognizes the central role of parent and guardian in the life of a child and therefore sees itself as a partner commissioned to foster academic success as part of the overall process of child development. It is a priority that parents form a majority of the Foundation’s representatives.

The VSF recognizes that it is in the students’ best interest for the Foundation to support its educators by clearly defining all goals and expectations and providing the means necessary for them to be carried out. The VSF views self-confidence as a product of competence. It commits to student success in academics and leadership in an atmosphere of supportive encouragement.

The VSF holds in high regard for its students the skills of memorization of both prose and arithmetic, mental calculation and dignified visual presentation of written work in the form of excellent penmanship and recognizes the role of diligent drill and practise in fostering regular, automatic presentation of said mastered skills.

The VSF strongly upholds the skill of critical thinking as an important part of child development. It is a crucial tool for developing logic and the Foundation purports it is through the mastery of skills and the acquiring of knowledge that one formulates a basis for such critical analysis. As students advance, the focus on skills and knowledge can naturally lead to more opportunities for abstract reasoning, logic and self-reliant thought processes.

Curriculum and Methodology

The charter states that the school’s program will provide learning activities that enable students to extend their knowledge and skills beyond the requirements of *Alberta Programs of Study*. The charter indicates that the following instructional programs, resources and methods as identified by research will be used:

- Direct Instruction
- Sequential Mastery Learning
- Explicit Phonics

- Knowledge Enrichment
 - Cultural;
 - Second Language – French and/or German;
 - Rural Leadership; and
 - Etiquette.

Terms of Reference

The *Charter Schools Regulation* requires the Minister to conduct a minimum of one evaluation of each charter school within the term of its Charter. There are four purposes to an evaluation of a charter school:

1. To provide evidence to the Minister and the Board that the charter school is in compliance with provincial requirements and the requirements of the Charter, inclusive of charter amendments, approved by the Minister.
2. To report to staff, parents and the community as to the success of the charter school and to identify areas of strength and areas which require additional attention.
3. To focus the attention of the board and staff on the goals and objectives of the Charter and the need to establish and confirm measurable outcomes and measures.
4. To facilitate continuous improvement in the charter school consistent with the Accountability Pillar of the Renewed Funding Framework.

There are seven essential questions that govern the evaluation:

1. Are provincial requirements being met?
2. Does the school meet the terms and conditions of its Charter?
3. Do the students, parents, teachers and community members see the school as being effective and successful?
4. Is the school financially viable?
5. Are innovative practices and approaches to student learning and other charter innovations being used, effective and being shared?
6. Is the school being governed effectively?
7. Is the school being administered effectively?

Processes

The findings of the evaluation were established using the following processes and activities:

1. All five classrooms were observed during the evaluation to observe instruction and student activities. Lesson plans, course outlines and records of student achievement were reviewed after the classroom observations had taken place.
2. Interviews were held with all teaching staff. In combination, the visitations, interviews and surveys allowed for input from all staff members regarding instructional activities at the school.
3. A sample of 18 parents were interviewed in three group interviews held at the school to determine levels of satisfaction with the school and student progress.
4. A student survey was administered to all students in Grades 4-8 to determine satisfaction levels with the school program, organization and facility.
5. A staff survey was administered to all staff to determine satisfaction levels with school program, organization and facility.
6. A parent survey was administered to all 56 families of students attending the school to determine satisfaction levels with school program, organization and facility.

7. Material prepared by the school was reviewed including educational plans and results reports, handbooks and classroom schedules. Additional documentation and records regarding the school's administration and governance were examined on-site.
8. A Board of Directors' meeting was attended February 24, 2011 and its related documents were reviewed.
9. Interviews were conducted with four board members including the co-chairs; and also with the superintendent, the secretary-treasurer and the principal to acquire information about the administration and governance of the school.

II. EVALUATION FINDINGS

A: Are Provincial Requirements Being Met?

Yes No Unsure

1. The *Alberta Programs of Study* are being followed.

Yes No Unsure

Based upon interviews of principal and staff and direct observation of teachers and their year and unit plans:

- All of the teachers have access to the *Alberta Programs of Study* (both paper copies and digital access to the *Programs of Study* through the Alberta Education website are utilized);
- The teachers interviewed indicate that they make use of the *Programs of Study*; and
- A review of yearly and unit plans indicate that the teachers have identified learner outcomes based on the *Programs of Study*.

2. Students participate in Provincial Achievement Tests and Diploma Examinations.

Yes No Unsure

Based on interviews with principals and teachers and verified by a review of the *PAT* results:

- The participation rate for 2010 was 100% (10 of 10 grade three students and 16 of 16 grade six students); and
- Interviews indicated that exemptions from the *PATs* and absences on *PAT* test days are rare at VCS. There is a clear expectation that all students will write the tests.

3. The Charter meets the requirements and recommendations for instructional time.

Yes No Unsure

Based on direct observation, review of the school calendar, timetables, subject time allocation by grade, and principal/teacher interviews:

- Printed timetables and schedule of instructional days indicated a plan for more than 950 hours of access to instructional time for Grade 1-9:

Grade	Yearly Instructional Hours
Kindergarten	546
Grades 1-3	990
Grades 4-6	990
Grades 7-8	990

- Instructional time for Science and Social Studies is minimal and may not be adequate for students to master these courses in the junior high program; also
- While total instructional hours exceed provincial requirements it should be noted that the functional length of period 11 on the timetable (last period of the day) appears to be operationally shortened due to routine school closing activities.

4. Enrolment in the Charter School is adequate and in accordance with the *Charter School Regulations*.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of the school enrolment data and verified by the principal and superintendent interviews:

- The September 30 enrolment report indicated the following enrolment per grade as of September 30, 2010 (unchanged at February 22, 2011) was as follows:

K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
11	12	12	9	11	14	6	11	13	0	99

- Also, principal and superintendent interviews indicated that the enrolment is increasing more rapidly than anticipated in the charter submission.

5. School teaching and administrative staff members adhere to the requirements of the *Student Evaluation Regulation* and *Student Evaluation Policy*.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of the *PAT* participation rates and the school student evaluation policy and verified by the principal interview:

- In 2010 the participation rate was 100%: 10 grade 3 and 16 grade 6 students wrote *PAT*'s;
- The principal's interview confirmed that very few students are exempted from writing *PAT*'s; and
- The board's Student Evaluation Policy commits the school to the Provincial Achievement Testing program.

6. Student records meet the requirements of the *Student Record Regulation*.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a visual inspection of a sample of student records and verified by principal interview:

- It was observed that student records are kept in a locked filing cabinet in a secure room in the school office; and
- A review of a random sample of student records from each grade level indicated compliance with the Student Record Regulation.

7. Required provincial documents are completed and submitted on time.

Yes No Unsure

Based on reviewing documents and confirmed in interviews with the superintendent, principal and secretary-treasurer:

- The *Three Year Education Plans (3YEP)*, the *Annual Education Results Reports (AERR)*, *Budget Report Forms (BRF)* and *Audited Financial Statement (AFS)* for the last operating year indicates timely, substantive and compliant completion of the required documents.

8. The corporate body is in good standing in accordance with the *Societies Act* or the *Companies Act*.

Yes No Unsure

- Based on a review of the current Corporate Registry filing confirmation document dated 2011/01/21, the Valhalla School Foundation Society is up to date and in good standing.

9. Officials hired by the Board (superintendent, secretary-treasurer, principal and teachers) are qualified.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of documents and interviews with the superintendent, principal, secretary-treasurer and teachers:

- Personnel records confirmed that of the teaching staff and the principal have Alberta teaching certification; and
- A review of current superintendent, secretary-treasurer and principal qualifications confirmed their expertise for their respective roles.

10. The school council is active, involved and aware of its responsibilities.

Yes No Unsure

Based on parent and teacher surveys and verified in interviews with the parents, principal and board members:

- Stakeholders interviewed reported that the school council is an active and dedicated group of parents;
- 100% of parents and the principal interview confirmed that the school council is active, involved and aware of its responsibilities; and
- Friends of Valhalla Community School is in the process of being established as the fundraising organization in the school.

11. Requirements of the *Funding Manual for School Authorities* for the current school year are met.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of documents and interview with the secretary-treasurer:

- The secretary-treasurer verified requirements were met;
- The *AFS & BRF* for the last operating year were reviewed and are in order;
- The schedule of insurance coverage currently in place was reviewed and indicated appropriate insurance in place;
- A review of the Policy Manual indicated no general policy on transportation services; however there was a policy on Bus and School Operations during Inclement Weather.

12. Fees and school generated funds are appropriate and explained.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of documents, the school website, and interviews with the principal, parents, superintendent and secretary- treasurer:

- Parents pay the following fees:
 - Resource Fee: \$100;
 - Textbook Rental Fee: \$50; and
 - Family Maximum amount: \$300.
- While most of the students ride the bus to and from school, no transportation fee is charged to parents for this service;
- The fee information is available during the registration process; and
- The *AFS (2009-2010)* indicated net school generated funds for the year was \$12.00 and the residual unexpended SGF at yearend was \$13,470.00.

13. The school's facility is appropriate to the provision of student programming.

Yes No Unsure

Based on observations, survey results and confirmed in interviews with staff, parents and board members:

- There is adequate space for the number of students enrolled in the school and the classrooms are of good size and are in good condition;
- The principal and parent interviews indicated concern about limited space for growth; and
- Stakeholder interviews confirmed that a community addition to the facility is planned for construction in 2011, which will house the library so that the classroom currently used for this purpose will become available for instruction. An additional classroom area and storage are included in the planned addition.

14. Appropriate insurance is maintained for loss due to fire, theft or flood and to cover liability.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of documents:

- Certificates of insurance currently in place indicate appropriate coverage is in place for the following categories:
 - Property, including Dishonesty, Disappearance and Destruction;
 - Liability, including General and Umbrella; and
 - Automobile.
- Records indicate that the Secretary-Treasurer reviews all insurance coverage in the fall of each school year and renews insurance coverage as appropriate.

B: Does the School Meet the Terms and Conditions of its Charter?

Yes No Unsure

15. The specified teaching philosophy and methodology of the Charter are followed.

Yes No Unsure

Based a review of the charter, school information documents, classroom observations, interviews with teachers and parents and surveys of staff and parents, and examination of student records:

- Observations and interviews confirmed that direct instruction methodology was being used;
- Observations and interviews confirmed that learning mastery approaches were evident in Language Arts and Mathematics; and
- Observations and interviews confirmed that second languages and rural leadership components of the program were being provided.

16. The Charter is current.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of documents and board member interviews:

- The term of the current charter is from September 1, 2008 to August 31, 2013; and
- Board member interviews confirmed no changes to the charter have been proposed or are pending at this time.

17. Other charter requirements are evident in school operation.

Yes No Unsure

Based on observations and interviews:

- Observations confirmed that while the main elements of the charter were evident, specific attention to the penmanship, and critical thinking elements referred to in the charter was not apparent during the observation period;
- While students were consistently observed to be polite and well-behaved, no specific attention to etiquette was apparent during the observation period; also
- Interviews with staff indicated varying views of the appropriateness of the Singapore vs. Sexton math programs at the ECS and primary level.

18. Entrance and enrolment requirements are consistent with the Charter: clear, communicated and open.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of the school information documents, the charter, and the policy on student admissions and verified in interviews with teachers, parents and board members:

- The admission procedures are indicated on the school's website and are contained in the Student-Parent Handbook that is made available to parents;
- 96% of parents surveyed and were satisfied that the administration does a good job of explaining the mandate of the school; and
- The parents interviewed were satisfied that the entrance requirements were clear and consistent with the charter; also
- Board member and administrator interviews indicated awareness of the need to review the student admission policy as enrolment grows and space limitations and the enrolment cap become factors: in recognition of this a waiting list process has been established for 2011-2012.

19. The measurable outcomes and indicators of success are being evaluated and reported.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of the *AERR 2009-2010* and the *3YEP 2010-2013*, and verified in the superintendent and principal interviews:

- The superintendent and principal interviews confirmed that outcome indicators are evaluated and reported;
- The goals and outcomes in the *2010/11 – 2012/13 Three-Year Education Plan* are consistent with provincial requirements and the Charter;
- The school's website includes the current *AERR* and *Three-Year Education Plan*. Performance measures, targets and strategies are clearly articulated in the *Three-Year Education Plan*; and
- The *AERR* included a section reporting measures specifically linked to charter goals.

20. The Charter includes improved student learning outcomes that are, in turn reflected in education planning and results reporting.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of the Charter, the *AERR 2009-2010* and the *3YEP 2010-2013*, and verified in teacher, principal, superintendent and board member interviews, and by classroom observations:

- Interviews and observations confirmed an emphasis on direct instruction;
- Observations confirmed the use of mastery learning strategies with frequent assessment;

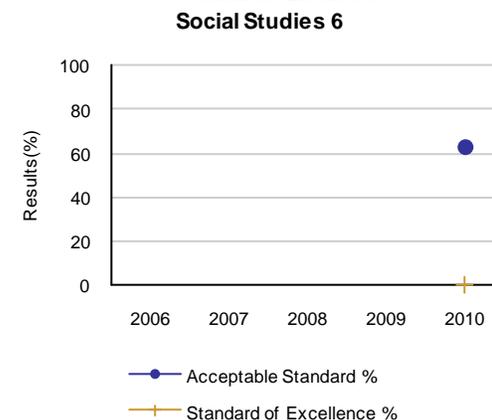
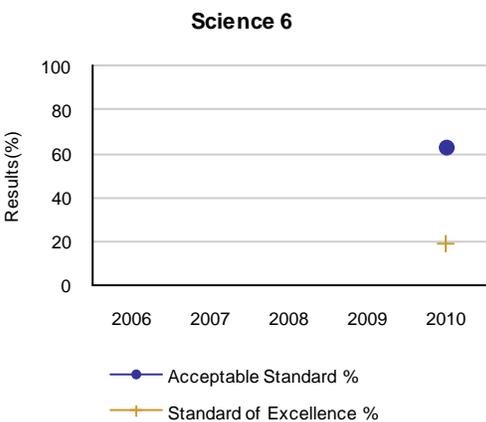
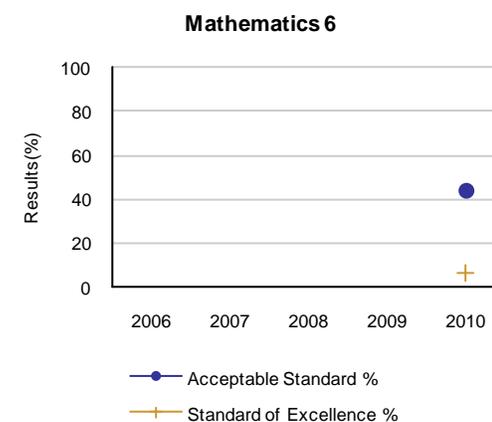
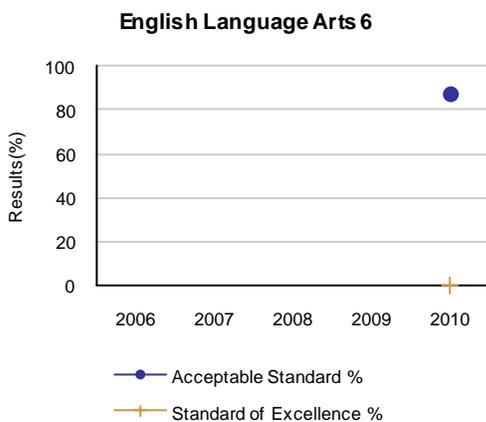
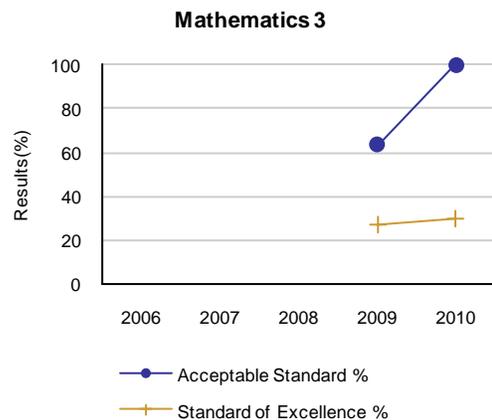
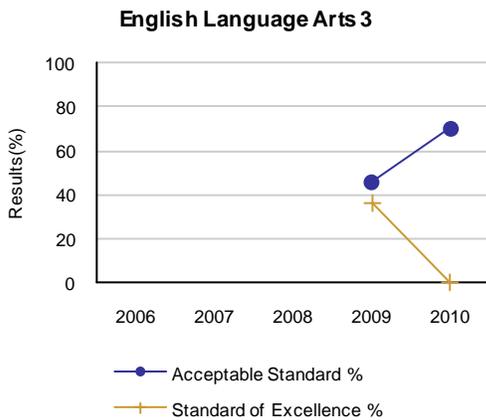
- Interviews and observations confirmed and extensive staff development and research project in progress with the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFI); and
- Review of student records confirmed tracking of longitudinal data from the Canadian Test of Basic Skills (CTBS).

21. Student achievement, as measured by provincial achievement testing and diploma examinations, demonstrates an upward trend over time.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of the data provided by Learner Assessment Branch as reported in the AERR, and superintendent, principal and teacher interviews:

- The school has only operated for two years so Provincial Achievement Test (PAT) data are minimal at this time and vary considerably from year to year, as would be expected within a school with such small class sizes; however the limited data indicated that some PAT performance is below provincial standards.
- The Accountability Pillar Summary showed the following results for Provincial Achievement Tests:



C. Do the Students, Parents, Teachers and Community Members See the School As Being Effective and Successful?

Yes No Unsure

Students, parents, teachers and community members regard the school as being effective and successful.

22. Students are made aware of and know the school's expectations of them.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of documents and verified by parent, student and teacher interviews and surveys:

- A student code of conduct is provided in the Student-Parent Information Handbook and in the Policy Manual;
- Interviews confirmed that some teachers provide course outlines to students/parents;
- The responses to the survey question *"The school has rules for the way that children should behave / The students are made aware of and know the school's expectations of them"* were:

Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Parents	67%	33%	100%
Students	54%	30%	84%
Staff	78%	22%	100%

- The responses to the survey question *"The rules are enforced fairly and consistently"* were:

Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Parents	79%	21%	100%
Students	42%	38%	80%
Staff	78%	22%	100%

23. Regular reporting is provided to parents and students.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of student records and report cards and verified by parent and teacher interviews and surveys:

- Generally, parents, students and staff are satisfied or very satisfied that the school provides enough information about what the students are expected to learn:

Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Parents	58%	31%	89%
Students	48%	46%	94%
Staff	56%	44%	100%

- Similarly, parents, students and staff are satisfied or very satisfied that the school provides enough information about student progress:

Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Parents	59%	29%	88%
Students	41%	44%	85%
Staff	56%	33%	89%

- There are three report cards and two parent teacher interviews in each school year;
- Regular reporting to parents was confirmed by review of documents, a sample of student records and parent interviews; and
- Interviews indicated that most parents believe there is good communication between parents, students and teachers and teachers are accessible to discuss parent concerns.

24. Parents support the school.

Yes No Unsure

Based on surveys and parent, teachers and board member interviews:

- The following chart shows a high level of satisfaction by parents, students and staff with the overall quality of education provided to students at the school:

Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Parents	72%	24%	96%
Students	50%	44%	94%
Staff	78%	22%	100%

- Parents were aware that the school was established by parents and continues to be governed by parents;
- Parents cited growing enrolment is evidence that parents support the school;
- Parents are very supportive of the fundraising done by Friends of VCS; and
- Parents recognize the school has many parent volunteers.

25. The stakeholders perceive that the school facility meets student needs.

Yes No Unsure

Based on observations and board member, parent, staff, student and administration interviews and surveys:

- Board member, parent, staff, student and administration interviews and surveys all support the adequacy of the facility, with the proviso that more space is needed; and
- Interviews indicated that a community addition to the building is planned for 2011 to relocate library and provide additional classroom space for grade 9 in 2011-12 school year; also
- Observations and principal interview indicated a moisture issue in the gymnasium in cold weather, and confirmed that measures were in place to minimize the effect and mitigate against mould which could compromise air quality.

D: Is the School Financially Viable?

Yes No Unsure

According to the *AFS*, the school ended the 2009-2010 school year with total net assets of \$11,997. Total revenue for the period was \$1,264,740 of which 91.7% was obtained from the Government of Alberta. The remainder was derived from a variety of sources such as instructional resources fees, investment income and net school generated funds. Total expenditure for the 2009-2010 school year was \$1,245,249.

The *BRF 2010-2011* indicates a planned surplus budget of \$48,695. Projected total revenue is \$1,297,395 and total expenditure budgeted is \$1,248,700. The accumulating operating surplus at the end of fiscal 2011 is projected to be \$28,022.

26. The financial position of the school is positive as demonstrated in the audited financial statement.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of the *BRF 2010-2011*, the *AFS 2009-2010* and verified in interviews with the secretary-treasurer and board members:

- Review of the last operating year *BRF* and *AFS* indicate the school has operated within its available revenues. Due to the initial accounting treatment of the acquisition of a major equipment item in 2008, there was an operating deficit of \$20,673 reported at the end of 2010, which is budgeted for recovery in the 2010 -2011 period; and
- The enrolment trend is positive; enrolment in the second and third years of operation has been higher than was initially anticipated. The January, 2011 enrolment was 99.

27. Expenditures for the current year are consistent with budgeted amounts.

Yes No Unsure

A review of the *BRF 2010-2011* and the year to date financial report presented to directors at the February 24, 2011 board meeting and interviews with the secretary-treasurer and board members confirmed:

- The secretary-treasurer provides a monthly report to the Board through the Board's finance committee;
- There are no significant variances between budget and expenditures at the time of the on-site evaluation; and
- Current year board and administrative costs are 7% of budgeted total revenue.

28. Recommendations, if any, made in the auditor's management letter are successfully addressed.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of documents and the secretary – treasurer and board member interviews:

- A review of the auditor's management letter for 2009-2010 and secretary-treasurer, superintendent and board member interviews, confirmed that an Action Plan has been implemented to address the recommendations in the management letter; and
- A review of personnel files confirmed follow-through pursuant to the action plan regarding documentation of salary grid placement.

29. Charter school budget information is shared with school stakeholder groups and is available for public review.

Yes No Unsure

Based on interviews with the superintendent, secretary-treasurer, board members, parents and staff:

- Accessibility of budget information was confirmed by superintendent, board member, teacher and parent interviews; the information is perceived to be available on request, but does not appear to be widely circulated;
- Parent and teacher interviews indicated that although involvement with budgeting was limited at this time that is not considered problematic; also
- At its spring annual general meeting, the board presents preliminary budget information and seeks input into budget allocations from their parent community.

30. Board budget planning reflects Board priorities.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of documents and verified in interviews with the superintendent, secretary-treasurer, board members and principal:

- Review of the BRF and related documents, and interviews with the superintendent, secretary-treasurer, board members and principal all confirmed that the budget reflects the board's priorities for the school.

E: Are Innovative Practices and Approaches to Student Learning and Other Charter Innovations Being Used, Effective and Shared?

Yes No Unsure

31. Educational innovations outlined in the Charter are evident in practice.

Yes No Unsure

Based on the charter, classroom observations, principal, parent and teacher interviews:

- Classroom observations and teacher interviews confirm that there is considerable emphasis on the direct instruction approach, mastery learning in language arts and mathematics, second languages and citizenship (rural leadership), all of which are identified in the charter as distinguishing features of the school's program;
- The school's AISI project is on the *SRA Reading Mastery Program*; and
- School-wide student leadership development projects (e.g. 4H public speaking) were evident and were supported by staff and parent interviews; however
- Also note reservations reported above in item #17 regarding uncertainty about other charter requirements.

32. Staff members have opportunities for in-service related to the Charter and individual growth plans.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of the Charter, in classroom observations and interviews with the superintendent, principal and teachers:

- Teacher and principal interviews confirmed that each teacher annually prepares a Professional Growth Plan which is submitted by all teachers to the principal;
- Observations and interviews confirmed that there is an emphasis on school-based professional development in the form of a major staff development and research project in conjunction with the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI) related to effective implementation of the Direct Instruction methodology; and
- Observations and interviews also noted the school's AISI project, which relates to mastery learning in language arts.

33. The school shares effective practices related to its charter mandate.

Yes No Unsure

Based on superintendent, principal and teacher interviews:

- The sharing of effective practices is not yet occurring because the staff is not yet ready for this, due to insufficient experience with direct instruction and other charter features;
- It is anticipated that as the school gains experience, there will be useful insights about instructional methodology to share with other interested schools; also

- Teacher interviews indicated that there was teacher interest for sharing information, but uncertainty about how to proceed.

F: Is the School Being Governed Effectively?

Yes No Unsure

Governance by the Board of Directors is recognized as critical to the success of the school. Adherence to charter bylaws and provincial legislation/regulations, emerging policy development, strong communication among stakeholders, an active school council and a commitment to the school's vision are all evident in the leadership to ensure that the school is effective.

34. The charter board adheres to the by-laws of the society or company operating the school.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of the policies approved by the board and board minutes and verified by board member interviews and observation of a board meeting:

- Compliance with legislative and procedural requirements was confirmed by board member interviews and observation of the February 24, 2011 board meeting;
- Promotional arrangements for the upcoming Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Valhalla School Foundation (e.g. recruitment for director nominations) were noted; and
- Board meeting agenda packages and minutes reflect adherence to the by-laws of the society and applicable governance procedures and requirements.

35. The charter board has developed appropriate by-laws and policies regarding board governance, the roles/responsibilities of the superintendent, the charter board, the principal, the teachers and the school council.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of the bylaws and policies regarding governance, and verified by superintendent and board member interviews:

- A review of the Policy Manual established that policies regarding governance and leadership roles/responsibilities are in place;
- Through direct observation, and confirmed in interviews, in the last two years there has been a clear delineation of roles between students, teachers, parents, administrators and board members in their roles; and
- The superintendent is working with the Board and the policy review committee on an ongoing basis to develop necessary policies. Policy development **has** been identified by the Board of Directors as a value added component of this evaluation.

36. The charter board is committed to achieving the charter school's vision.

Yes No Unsure

Based on parent surveys and superintendent, principal, board member and parent interviews:

- Parent, administration, board member and staff interviews all affirmed the Board's commitment to the charter's vision for the school;
- A review of the school website and school documents confirmed the Board's commitment to the charter's vision; and
- 100% of parents surveyed were very satisfied or satisfied that the Board is committed to achieving the school's vision.

37. Long-term commitments are reasonable and minimal.

Yes No Unsure

Based on review of documents and interviews with the board chair, superintendent and secretary-treasurer:

- Interviews with the board chair, superintendent and secretary-treasurer confirmed that the Valhalla School Foundation has no long-term commitments beyond the charter term or outside of the charter mandate; and
- A review of the facility lease with the Valhalla Heritage Society confirmed its term (to September 31, 2013) was consistent with the term of the charter.

38. Recommendations of past reviews and evaluations have been successfully addressed.

Yes No Unsure **Not Applicable**

Superintendent and board member interviews confirmed that there have been no previous reviews or evaluations of this Charter School.

39. Communication among the charter board, superintendent and staff is effective and in the best interests of the school.

Yes No Unsure

Based on surveys and the superintendent, principal, board member and teacher interviews and observation of a board meeting:

- Board member interviews indicated an excellent working relationship with the superintendent, school administration and the staff;
- 100% of the parents surveyed were very satisfied or satisfied with the commitment of the Board to achieving the school's vision;
- The Board informs the parents through the board newsletter and school council of important board matters;
- 89% of teachers surveyed indicated satisfaction that the school administration takes appropriate action to resolve the concerns of parents; and
- Teacher interviews indicated very good communication with administration and the board of directors.

40. Charter board decisions are communicated to the public regularly in an open manner.

Yes No Unsure

Based on surveys, superintendent, principal, board member and parent interviews, and a review of the school website:

- Regular board highlights are included in regular school newsletters; the newsletters are issued frequently and are available on the school website;
- 98% of the parents surveyed are satisfied that the administration and staff work well together;
- 89% of staff and 100% of parents surveyed were satisfied with the commitment of the Board of Directors to achieving the school's vision; and
- Interviews with parents and the principal confirmed that the Board communicates effectively with stakeholders; 'word-of-mouth' is recognized as an important communication tool in the rural community.

41. The charter board maintains effective and appropriate relationships with partners, associations and societies.

Yes No Unsure

Based on superintendent/secretary treasurer, principal and board member interviews:

- The Board is an active member in the Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools;
- Valhalla Heritage Society and Valhalla Library Society are key relationships which are strongly and effectively maintained; also
- Interviews identified arrangements with neighbouring schools regarding school extracurricular sports and with Peace Wapiti Regional Division regarding temporary lease of a spare school bus as initial elements of developing a new relationship with the surrounding school jurisdiction after the school closure and charter school establishment phase.

42. Members of the charter board take advantage of their opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills in charter school governance.

Yes No Unsure

Based on board member and superintendent interviews:

- Superintendent and board member interviews confirmed participation in the Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools;
- Board member interviews indicated that the board is engaged in an ongoing board development training workshop program; and
- A work plan for the 2011-2012 year was discussed at the February 24 board meeting.

G: Is the School Being Administered Effectively?

Yes No Unsure

With an enrolment of 99 students, VCS is being administered by a capable administrative team. The expectations and duties of the administrative team (superintendent, secretary-treasurer, principal and school secretary) are extensive and the services appear to be provided with the best interests of the school community in mind.

43. Staff members are involved in decision-making and program development, implementation and review.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of the staff satisfaction surveys, staff meeting agenda and verified in teacher and principal interviews:

- The responses to the survey question *“The teaching and administration staff at the school work well together”* were:

Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Staff	89%	11%	100%

- The responses to the survey question *“You have opportunities for input into school decision-making”* were:

Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Staff	89%	11%	100%

- The teachers interviewed confirmed satisfaction with their opportunities to be involved in decision-making at the school; and

- Administration and board member interviews confirmed a high level of informal involvement of staff input, particularly through the principal; however there was little documentary evidence (e.g. in staff meeting minutes).

44. Classroom and grade organization are appropriate.

Yes No Unsure

Based on classroom observations, the assignment of grades to particular rooms, class lists, and parent and teacher interviews:

- Observation indicated that the classroom assignments are appropriate, and that teachers makes effective use of ability groupings within the grade organization structure; and
- Teacher and parent interviews confirmed that the classroom and grade organization are appropriate.

45. Safety procedures are in place.

Yes No Unsure

Based on a review of the policy manual and a visual inspection of the facility and verified by staff, principal and parent interviews and by satisfaction surveys:

- Safety procedures were confirmed by review of school policies, staff handbook provisions, discussions with teachers and fire drill record. Playground and lunch supervision is provided by a team consisting of parents and teachers;
- The school’s supervision schedule was reviewed;
- Observation of organization for student arrivals and departures from the school indicated attention to student safety with the principal often providing direct supervision; and
- Appropriate attention to student safety was confirmed by parent, principal and teacher interviews and surveys, as was indicated by the response to the survey question related to whether students feel safe at school:

Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Parents	88%	12%	100%
Students	54%	30%	84%
Staff	89%	11%	100%

- Superintendent and principal interviews indicated that a Crisis Response Plan Manual has not yet been developed for the school.

46. The school facility meets provincial health, safety and building standards and is suitable for operation as a charter school.

Yes No Unsure

Based on parent interviews, secretary-treasurer interview, review of the inspection documents and verified by the superintendent, principal and board member interviews:

- The parent, principal and superintendent interviews confirmed that the health, safety and building standards inspections are ongoing throughout the school year;
- Facility health, safety and fire inspection records were reviewed and follow-up on identified deficiencies were confirmed with the principal; however
- It was observed that A/V equipment and cross-country ski equipment stored in and adjacent to NE entrance may present an emergency egress problem, and noted in the principal interview that this was a temporary situation.

Value Added Component: Policy Development

The *Charter School Evaluation Model (2010)* used to complete the VCS evaluation has a “value added” component which provides an opportunity for the school to customize the evaluation by gathering data and investigating area(s) of interest to the school. The VCS Board of Directors identified policy development as an area of interest in this regard. Accordingly, the lead evaluator provided additional focus on policy related considerations in discussions with the superintendent, board members and principal; and reviewed the board’s Policy Manual in this regard.

Value Added Findings and Recommendations

Discussion with board members considered on policy development to this point and the question of ‘importing’ policies developed elsewhere in order to quickly have a complete policy framework in place. Generally it seems appropriate for an operation of VCS scope to continue developing policy based on needs identified by operational experience, rather than importing extensive policy developed by other organizations that may not really fit the local situation, which may inadvertently give rise to unintended compliance gaps.

The board might consider using the frequency with which it finds itself dealing with an issue or topic as a guide for developing policy: a frequently recurring question before the board is likely a good item for policy that provides direction to staff and parents on how the board sees the matter being handled. Notwithstanding this approach, there are some priority areas for which the establishment of policy should be considered:

- The current definition of the school’s official boundary description or map to be used in conjunction with the Student Selection Criteria policy (which refers to “students living within the designated Valhalla Community School boundary) is problematic. It is recommended that Valhalla board policy should address matters related to “student access” to school program, thereby eliminating the need for reference to “attendance boundaries”.
- A “policy on policy making” that sets out for example: process for bringing policy proposals forward, drafting, consultation, approval and dissemination. This policy should also provide for regular, cyclical review of all policy to ensure its continued currency over time.
- Given the significance of student transportation to the viability of the school, a transportation service policy should likely be established.
- A communications policy that provides context and structure for the effective practices which have already been established and mandates a communication plan to ensure the function remains strong over time.
- The Parent Handbook conveys considerable regulatory information about the school’s operation: a policy should be established to mandate its production and updating (e.g. under the direction of the Superintendent).
- A policy mandate for establishment and maintenance of a Crisis Response Plan / Manual.
- A Board Procedures policy that sets out the board’s operational arrangements, likely in more detail than is provided in the VSF’s by-laws.
- Formalizing a planning and reporting process that commits to using the reporting and analysis of performance measures as an ongoing component of planning for continuous improvement.

There are also some topics, while not current priorities, for which policy should be put in place to provide direction for staff in advance of it ever being needed in potentially difficult or sensitive circumstances; also, in some instances where there is a regulatory or statutory requirement on staff.

- access to student records
- sexual abuse / harassment allegations & human rights complaints

- media relations
- controversial issues / challenged materials (e.g. instructional or library resources)
- human sexuality
- copyright
- student promotion, placement and retention
- interrogation of pupils, searches of persons and property, & young offender information sharing
- reporting child abuse
- electronic mail and computer network use, information technology security
- safeguarding money and valuables.

III. EVALUATION CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and evidence obtained throughout the evaluation process, VCS meets the evaluation criteria on the seven essential questions of a Charter School Evaluation. The specific conclusions are as follows:

1. Are the provincial requirements being met?

Yes

Based on the findings and evidence, VCS meets the provincial requirements of the *Charter Schools Regulation* and the *School Act*. The school follows the *Alberta Programs of Study* and provides the required amount of instructional time and students participate in the *PAT* program. The school complies with Alberta Education planning and reporting and funding requirements in providing complete and timely information.

2. Does the school meet the terms and conditions of its Charter?

On balance yes

The school does provide a distinctive education program to its students which fundamentally meets the terms and conditions of the charter. In particular the emphasis on direct instruction, mastery learning and citizenship for rural leadership are evident; however other elements referred to in the charter were not apparent during the observation period.

3. Do the students, parents, teachers and community members see the school as being effective and successful?

Yes

The vast majority of students, parents and staff see the school as being effective and successful. There is strong stakeholder support for most critical areas of the school operation including the delivery of the instructional program. Survey results show high satisfaction with the overall quality of the education at the school.

4. Is the school financially viable?

Yes

Based on a review of financial information and interviews with appropriate stakeholders, the VCS is in a positive financial position for the current fiscal period. The board is managing the financial resources in a responsible manner and has identified priority spending areas.

5. Are innovative approaches to student learning and other charter innovations being used, effective and shared?

Used: yes; Effective: unsure; Shared: no

The teaching staff regularly incorporates the use of direct instruction, second languages citizenship/leadership.

At present, the school has not undertaken sharing its innovative practices in the broader educational community because it does not yet feel it is ready to do this.

6. Is the school being governed effectively?

Yes

The board is effective, well intended, committed to the vision of the school and is communicating with the school community. Stakeholder surveys and interviews confirmed that the board is viewed as effective governors by the majority of stakeholders and consequently the board enjoys the support of the school community. It is clear that the board wants to provide the best possible education for the students. The board members are taking advantage of opportunities to improve

their leadership capacity. The board is establishing an effective policy development process that is resulting in ongoing policy development and renewal based on stakeholder input.

7. Is the school being administered effectively?

Yes

VCS is being effectively administered by a focused and committed administrative team including the superintendent, office manager and secretary-treasurer. The superintendent and principal have a strong working relationship. The secretary-treasurer is an experienced financial manager and works effectively to ensure the administrative team and board have accurate financial information to make informed decisions. The school leadership team is committed to working with the students, staff and parents. All required documentation is submitted in a complete and timely manner. The administrative team follows the legislation, regulatory and policy requirements of Alberta Education and the Board.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND REQUIRED CHANGES

Commendations

It was observed through the evaluation process that Valhalla Charter School has much strength. There are a number of areas of operation of the school that deserve special commendation:

- Valhalla Charter School parents indicate a high degree of satisfaction with all aspects of the school.
- A positive school climate is evident in student behaviour and in staff interaction with students
- The high level of commitment and effort demonstrated by the board, administration and staff in working to implement the features of the charter is noteworthy.
- Student time-on-task is observed to be high and effective.
- The Valhalla Charter School Council is active and supportive of the activities of the school.
- The staff and administration of Valhalla Charter School demonstrate positive working relationships.
- The continuing effort by Valhalla Charter School to foster positive relationships with neighbouring schools and jurisdictions is paying dividends.

Recommendations for Consideration

While this evaluation focuses on the current situation of the school, reflection on its findings gives rise to a number of suggestions to support future development:

- Review the distribution of instructional time with respect to the allocation currently provided for Science and Social Studies, particularly at the junior high level.
- Ensure that teacher expertise in math / science specialization is sufficient to support the needs of junior high students, particularly as the program expands to include grade nine courses.
- Consider having staff develop one or more group staff presentations based on teacher experiences and learning outcomes associated with implementation of direct instruction.
- Develop a strategic plan for sharing outcomes and disseminating promising instructional practices related to the use of the school's direct instruction and mastery learning approaches.
- Develop a formalized and multi-faceted communications plan, including routine posting of board meeting minutes (in addition to highlights, for example in the community library), so that information is available to parents, but also to community members who do not routinely access website based data and those members of the community who do not have children in Valhalla Charter School.
- Include in the communications plan a provision for teachers' systematic communication to parents about instructional strategies being used with their children and the students' progress with these strategies.
- Investigate using social media as a vehicle for sharing the school's experiences and learnings, about its methodology and approaches, with university faculties of education.
- Strengthen school council and staff engagement processes with respect to budget development. As the school reaches its full capacity (K – 9) and the enrolment pattern changes from one of growth to steady-state, budgeting will likely present additional challenges that will benefit from a more extensive engagement process.

Required Changes:

The following items must be addressed:

- Develop a more extensive school wide assessment repertoire to ensure baseline and growth measures are regularly available to demonstrate student growth outcomes over time. It is important for Valhalla Charter School to demonstrate improved student learning outcomes across the core curriculum areas.
 - The addition of written language assessments such as Highest Level of Achievement Tests (HLATs) could complement assessment information provided by PATs and the CTBS; and
 - The use of an enhanced repertoire of assessment instruments also should be matched by greater staff analysis of results to inform instructional planning for improving learning outcomes over the entire curriculum; and the analysis should be used to improve Board of Directors' understanding.
- Ensure that new or updated policies are in place to cover all regulated matters (e.g. student records, student placement, student selection, student access to school program, student transportation, reporting abuse, crisis response).
- Make more explicit and measurable the school's education plan references to character development, citizenship and penmanship, as these elements are currently charter requirements.
- Ensure the NE entrance area of the school is kept clear of school materials and equipment, as required by fire code standards.

APPENDIX A

Charter School Evaluation Template

Charter School: Valhalla Community School

Evaluators: D. van Tamelen & D. Bischoff

Dates: February 22 – 25, 2011

Are provincial requirements being met?

Please Check

1. The Alberta *Programs of Study* are being followed?

- Yes
 No
 Unsure
-

Indicators:

- Teachers have current programs of study.
- Teacher long-range plans are based upon the Alberta *Programs of Study*.
- Daily planning.

Data Sources:

- Classroom visitations.
- Long range plans.
- Teacher interview.
- Principal interview.

Evidence:

- All of the teachers have access to the *Alberta Programs of Study* (both paper copies and digital access to the *Programs of Study* through the Alberta Education website are utilized).
- The teachers interviewed indicate that they make use of the *Programs of Study*; and
- A review of yearly and unit plans indicate that the teachers have identified learner outcomes based on the *Programs of Study*.

Are provincial requirements being met?

Please Check

2. Students participate in provincial achievement and diploma exams.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure
-

Indicators:

- Participation rates are appropriate and show improvement, if warranted.

Data Sources:

- Student evaluation policy.
- Alberta Education Achievement Test School Report 2009-2010

- AERR.
- Principal interview.

Evidence:

- The participation rate for 2010 was 100% (10 of 10 grade three students and 16 or 16 grade six students)
- Interviews indicated that exemptions from the *PATs* and absences on *PAT* test days are rare at VCS. There is a clear expectation that all students will write the tests.

Are provincial requirements being met?

3. The charter school meets the requirements and recommendations for instructional time.

Please Check

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Grade 1-9: 950 hours.
- Grade 10-12: 1000 hours.
- High School Subjects: 25 hours per credit.
- Teacher and student timetables.
- Recommended subject time allocations in the current edition of the *Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12*.

Data Sources:

- School master timetable.
- Principal interview.
- Teacher interview.
- Teacher and student timetables.
- Subject time allocations per grade.

Evidence:

- Printed timetables and schedule of instructional days indicated a plan for more than 950 hours of access to instructional time for Grade 1-9:

Grade	Yearly Instructional Hours *
Kindergarten	546
Grades 1-2	990
Grades 3-4	990
Grades 5-6	990
Grades 7-8	990

	Alberta Education Guidelines (1-2)	VCS Grades 1-2	Alberta Education Guidelines (3-6)	VCS Grades 3-4	VCS Grades 5-6	Alberta Education Guidelines (7-9)	VCS Grades 7-8
Language Arts	30%	32%	25%	27%	26%	150 hrs	270 hr
Mathematics	15%	23%	15%	23%	18%	100 hrs	170 hr
Science	10%	14%	15%	14%	14%	100 hrs	100 hr
Social Studies	10%	9%	10%	13%	10%	100 hrs	100hr
Art & Music	10%	4 %	10%	5%		May vary	50hr
Health & P.E	10%	9%	10%	9%	11%	50+75 hrs	110hr
Time for Other Subjects	15%	9%	15%	9%	20%	French German 95 hrs	90hr (Fr) 100hr (Ger)

- Instructional time for Science and Social Studies is minimal and may not be adequate for students to master these courses in the junior high program.
- While total instructional hours exceed provincial requirements it should be noted that the functional length of period 11 on the timetable (last period of the day) appears to be operationally shortened due to routine school closing activities.

Are provincial requirements being met?**Please Check**

4. Enrolment in the charter school is adequate and in accordance with the *Charter Schools Regulation* and the enrolment cap established by the Minister.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Minimum 100 students or number approved by the Minister.
- Enrolment is at or below the enrolment cap established by the Minister.

Data Sources:

- September 30 enrolment figures supplied to Alberta Education.
- Principal interview.

Evidence:

- The September 30 enrolment report indicated the following enrolment per grade as of September 30, 2010 (unchanged at February 22, 2011) was as follows:

K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
11	12	12	9	11	14	6	11	13	0	99

- Principal and superintendent interviews indicated that the enrolment is increasing more rapidly than anticipated in the charter submission which projected the following Student Enrolment and Grade Distribution:

Year	ECS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total K-6	Total K-9
2008/09	10	10	9	9	7	10	10				65	
2009/10	10	10	10	9	9	7	10	10			65	75
2010/11	11	10	10	10	9	9	7	10	10		66	86
2011/12	11	11	10	10	10	9	9	7	10	10	70	97
2012/13	12	11	11	10	10	10	9	9	7	10	73	96
2013/14	12	12	11	11	10	10	10	9	9	7	76	101

- Principal and superintendent interviews indicated that additional instructional space in the school facility is needed to accommodate growth to include grade 9, to the enrolment cap of 110 students;
- It was noted that enrolment is school bus transportation service dependent.

Are provincial requirements being met?

Please Check

5. School teaching and administrative staff members adhere to the requirements of the *Student Evaluation Regulation, the Student Evaluation Policy, the Use and Reporting of Results on Provincial Assessments Policy and current research on school and classroom assessment.*

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Charter school supports provincial examinations.
- Provincial examinations are conducted in a manner consistent with provincial requirements.
- Program evaluations are conducted.
- Teachers effectively plan, administer and use assessment for, as and of learning.
- Parents and students are satisfied with reporting of student achievement.

Data Sources:

- Alberta Education multi-year PAT and Diploma Examination reports.
- School policy on excusing students.
- Principal interview.

Evidence:

- In 2010 the participation rate was 100%: 10 grade 3 and 16 grade 6 students wrote PAT's
- The principal's interview confirmed that very few students are exempted from writing PAT's; and
- The board's Student Evaluation Policy commits the school to the Provincial Achievement Testing program.

Are provincial requirements being met?

Please Check

6. Student records meet the requirements of the *Student Record Regulation.*

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Student records are maintained securely.
- Student records are current.
- Student records contain required information.

Data Sources:

- Student Record Regulation.
- Sample of student records.
- Principal interview.

Evidence:

- It was observed that student records are kept in a locked filing cabinet in a secure room in the school office
- A review of a random sample of student records from each grade level indicated compliance with the Student Record Regulation

Are provincial requirements being met?

7. Required provincial documents are completed and submitted on time.

Please Check

- Yes
 No
 Unsure
-

Indicators:

- Dates of submission correspond to deadlines.
- Documents require minimal revision based upon manager feedback
- Budget Report Form (BRF) and Audited Financial Statement (AFS) are submitted as required.
- Feedback on AFS and BRF over the past three years is available and has been appropriately addressed.

Data Sources:

- Documents including BRF, AFS, AERR, Three-Year Education Plan.
- Secretary-treasurer interview.
- Superintendent interview.

Evidence:

- Confirmed in interviews with the superintendent, principal and secretary-treasurer
- The *Three Year Education Plans (3YEP)*, the *Annual Education Results Reports (AERR)*, *Budget Report Forms (BRF)* and *Audited Financial Statement (AFS)* for the last operating year indicates timely, substantive and compliant completion of the required documents.

Are provincial requirements being met?

8. The corporate body is in good standing in accordance with the *Societies Act* or the *Companies Act*.

Please Check

- Yes
 No
 Unsure
-

Indicators:

- Corporate Registry indicates the Society or Company is in good standing.

Data Sources:

- Alberta Education corporate search.

Evidence:

- Based on a review of the current Corporate Registry filing confirmation document dated 2011/01/21, the Valhalla School Foundation Society is up to date and in good standing.

Are provincial requirements being met?

Please Check

9. Officials hired by the board (superintendent, secretary-treasurer, principal, teachers) are qualified.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure
-

Indicators:

- Superintendent is approved by Alberta Education and has educational expertise.
- Secretary-treasurer is appointed in accordance with the *School Act* and has required expertise.
- Principal and teachers have Alberta teacher certification and required expertise.

Data Sources:

- Ministerial approval letter for superintendent appointment.
- Secretary-treasurer qualifications as identified in resume.
- Principal's and teachers' teaching certificate numbers and resumes.
- Superintendent interview.
- Board member interview.

Evidence:

- A review of personnel records confirmed that of the teaching staff and the principal have Alberta teaching certification.
- A review of current superintendent, secretary-treasurer and principal qualifications confirmed their expertise for their respective roles.

Are provincial requirements being met?

Please Check

10. The school council is active, involved, and aware of its responsibilities.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure
-

Indicators:

- Documents relating to the establishment and operation of the school council are consistent with the *School Council Regulation*.
- The school council supports the charter board.
- The school council successfully addresses activities it has chosen to undertake.

Data Sources:

- School council documents.
- School council minutes.
- Communication by the school council with the community.

- Parent interviews.
- Interview with school council chair.
- Principal interview.

Evidence:

- Stakeholders interviewed reported that the school council is an active and dedicated group of parents;
- 100% of parents and the principal interview confirmed that the school council is active, involved and aware of its responsibilities;
- Friends of Valhalla Community School is in the process of establishing itself as a registered society to function as the fundraising organization in the school, independently of the school council. This group is very active and has made significant financial contribution to the school, in particular from the proceeds of operating the local ski hill.

Are provincial requirements being met?

Please Check

11. Requirements of the *Funding Manual for School Authorities* for the current school year are met.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Transportation, if provided, is consistent with section 1.26.
- Students are appropriately identified as required for funding purposes.
- Insurance and bonds are in place.

Data Sources:

- Transportation policy in policy manual.
- Management letters provided by Auditor.
- Insurance policy in effect.
- SIS information and related school documentation.

Evidence:

- Interview with the secretary-treasurer verified requirements were met
- The *AFS & BRF* for the last operating year were reviewed and are in order
- The schedule of insurance coverage currently in place was reviewed and indicated appropriate insurance in place; however
- A review of the Policy Manual indicated a policy on Bus and School Operations during Inclement Weather, but no general policy on transportation services.

Are provincial requirements being met?

Please Check

12. Fees and School-Generated Funds (SGFs) are appropriate and explained.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Fee schedules contain appropriate fees.
- Accounting for school fees and SGFs is consistent with department requirements.

Data Sources:

- AFS
- Principal interview.
- Parent interview.
- Superintendent interview.
- Secretary-treasurer interview.
- School Website.

Evidence:

- Parents pay the following fees:
 - Resource Fee: \$100
 - Textbook Rental Fee: \$50
 - Family Maximum amount: \$300
- While most of the students ride the bus to and from school, no transportation fee is charged to parents for this service;
- The fee information is available during the registration process, and in the parent handbook, including on the school website
- The *AFS (2009-2010)* indicated net school generated funds for the year was \$ 12 and the residual unexpended SGF at yearend was \$13,470

Are provincial requirements being met?

13. The school's facility is appropriate to the provision of student programming.

Please Check

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Adequate classroom space is available for the number of students housed in the school.
- Ancillary spaces are adequate, e.g., laboratories and Career and Technology Study facilities.
- The facility is safe.

Data Sources:

- School map.
- Demographic information.
- Principal interview.

Evidence:

- There is adequate space for the number of students enrolled in the school and the classrooms are of good size and are in good condition;
- The principal and parent interviews indicated concern about limited space for growth
- Stakeholder interviews confirmed that a community addition to the facility is planned for construction in 2011, which will house the library so that the classroom currently used for this purpose will become available for instruction. An additional classroom area and storage are included in the planned addition.

Are provincial requirements being met?

Please Check

14. Appropriate insurance is maintained for loss due to fire, theft, or flood and to cover liability.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure
-

Indicators:

- Policy in place protects the charter board for potential losses.
- Charter board is named as a co-insured when a building is leased.
- Records are safely maintained, including back up.

Data Sources:

- Insurance policy.

Evidence:

- Review of certificates of insurance currently in place verified appropriate coverage is in place for the following categories:
 - Property, including Dishonesty, Disappearance and Destruction
 - Liability, including General and Umbrella
 - Automobile
- Review of records indicates that the Secretary-Treasurer reviews all insurance coverage in the fall of each school year and renews insurance coverage as appropriate.

Does the school meet the terms and conditions of its charter?

Please Check

15. The specified teaching philosophy and methodology of the charter are followed.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure
-

Indicators:

- Classroom instruction reflects individual charter school mandate.
- Reporting to parents reflects individual charter school mandate.

Data Sources:

- Charter that outlines pedagogical or instructional techniques for the school.
- School Website.
- Classroom observations.
- School information documents.
- Teacher interview.
- Superintendent interview.
- Parent interview.
- Principal interview.
- Board member survey. (Optional if all directors are interviewed)
- Staff survey.

Evidence:

- Observations and interviews confirmed that direct instruction methodology was being used
- Observations and interviews confirmed that learning mastery approaches were evident in Language Arts and Mathematics
- Observations and interviews confirmed that second languages and rural leadership components of the program were being provided.

Please Check

Does the school meet the terms and conditions of its charter?

16. The charter is current.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Indicators:

- The charter school reviews new research related to its charter goal.
- Requirements contained in provincial documents (e.g., *Charter Schools Handbook*) are reflected in the charter.
- The school has plan to review its charter periodically.

Data Sources:

- Charter documents.
- Board member interview.
- Superintendent interview.
- Requests for charter school amendments.
- Board agendas and minutes.

Evidence:

- The term of the current charter is from September 1, 2008 to August 31, 2013
- Board member interviews confirmed no changes to the charter have been proposed or are pending at this time

Does the school meet the terms and conditions of its charter?

17. Other charter requirements are

evident in school operation.

Please Check

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Indicators:

- Grade configurations are consistent with the charter and appropriate to the facility.
- Facility enhancements are consistent with the charter.
- Timetabling is consistent with the charter.
- Staff development activities reflect the charter.

Data Sources:

- Charter identifies grade levels to be served; grades are consistent with charter.
- Capital Plan.
- School's annual professional development plan and professional growth plans (PGPs) identify professional development activities to enhance staff capacity in areas identified in the charter.
- Principal interview.
- Teacher interview.
- Parent interview.

Evidence:

- Observations confirmed that while the main elements of the charter were evident, specific attention to the penmanship, etiquette and critical thinking elements referred to in the charter was not apparent during the observation period.
- Interviews with staff indicated varying views of the appropriateness of the Singapore vs. Sexton math programs at the ECS and primary level.

Does the school meet the terms and conditions of its charter?

Please Check

18. Entrance and enrolment requirements are consistent with the charter and are clearly communicated

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Indicators:

- Policy is established, consistent with the charter requirement, to describe students the school intends to serve.
- Parent registration information, consistent with the charter requirement, describes students the school intends to serve.
- Registration procedures, consistent with the charter requirement, describe students the school intends to serve.

Data Sources:

- School information documents about the nature of the charter school and the students the school serves.

- Charter.
- Policy on registration of students.
- Website.
- Board member interview.
- Teacher interview.
- Principal interview.
- Parent interview.
- Parent survey.

Evidence:

- The admission procedures are indicated on the school’s website and are contained in the Student-Parent Handbook that is made available to parents
- 96% of parents surveyed and were satisfied that the administration does a good job of explaining the mandate of the school; and
- The parents interviewed were satisfied that the entrance requirements were clear and consistent with the charter
- Board member and administrator interviews indicated awareness of the need to review the student admission policy as enrolment grows and space limitations and the enrolment cap become factors: in recognition of this a waiting list process has been established for 2011-2012.

Does the school meet the terms and conditions of its charter?

Please Check

19. The measurable outcomes and indicators of success are evaluated and reported.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Indicators:

- Goals and outcomes contained in AERRs are consistent with the charter approved by the Minister.
- Measures appropriate to the focus of the charter are identified in the Three-Year Education Plan and reported in the AERR.
- Superintendent and board evaluation of results are included in the AERR and priority areas of improvement identified.
- Provincial requirements are met in the AERR and the Three-Year Education Plan.

Data Sources:

- AERR and Three-Year Education Plan.
- School Website.
- Superintendent interview.
- Board member interviews.
- Board member survey.

Evidence:

- Superintendent/secretary-treasurer and principal interviews verified that outcome indicators are evaluated and reported

- The goals and outcomes in the *2010/11 – 2012/13 Three-Year Education Plan* are consistent with provincial requirements and the Charter
- The school’s website includes the current *AERR* and *Three-Year Education Plan*. Performance measures, targets and strategies are clearly articulated in the *Three-Year Education Plan*.
- The *AERR* included a section reporting measures specifically linked to charter goal

Does the school meet the terms and conditions of its charter?

Please Check

20. The charter includes improved student learning outcomes that are, in turn, included in education planning and results reporting.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Charter school program as originally approved is different from other programs available in the local community or within the public school districts adjacent to the charter school.
- The difference in program is communicated to parents and the community.
- The charter school develops innovations related to its charter goals.
- Improved student learning outcomes associated with the charter focus are included in education plans and results reports.
- The charter school uses trends in results to inform subsequent education planning by determining priority areas for improvement and building on areas of strength.
- Three-Year Education Plans and AERRs for the current charter term identify realistic and appropriate targets for student achievement inclusive of results associate with the charter goals and provide explanations when results do not meet or exceed performance targets.
- Percentage of students achieving the acceptable standard and standard of excellence on PATs (cohort) and Diploma Examinations for the past five year period in relation to provincial and local targets.
- Student reporting includes information on the improved student learning outcomes identified in the charter.
- Students in non-PAT grades succeed in achieving learning outcomes.
- Students leaving the school continue to experience success.

Data Sources:

- Charter to determine nature and type of enhanced instructional program.
- Description of program as offered.
- Communications to parents about innovations being added to program.
- October Accountability Pillar Summary Reports
- Education Plans and AERRs identify innovations added based on research.
- Research substantiating the innovations.
- Superintendent interview.
- Principal interview
- Board member interview.
- Parent interview.
- Student survey.
- Parent survey.
- Staff survey.

- Longitudinal data on student success.

Evidence:

- Interviews and observations confirmed an emphasis on direct instruction
- Observations confirmed the use of mastery learning strategies with frequent assessment
- Interviews and observations confirmed and extensive staff development and research project in progress with the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI)
- Review of student records confirmed tracking of longitudinal data from the Canadian Test of Basic Skills (CTBS)

Does the school meet the terms and conditions of its charter?

Please Check

21. Student achievement as measured by provincial achievement testing and diploma examinations demonstrates a consistent high level of success or an upward trend over time.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Student achievement on PATs (cohort) results are high or trends upward during the past five years.
- Student achievement results meet or exceed school and provincial targets.
- Value-added trend lines are positive for students in Grade 3 to Grade 6 and Grade 6 to Grade 9.
- Participation rates are similar to or exceed provincial participation rates.
- Staff planning includes the use of PAT results.

Data Sources:

- Multi-year reports provided by Learner Assessment Branch.
- October Accountability Pillar Summary reports
- AERR and Three-Year Education Plan.
- Staff meeting minutes.
- Teacher interview.
- Superintendent interview.
- Principal interview.

Evidence:

- The school has only operated for two years so Provincial Achievement Test data are minimal at this time and vary considerably from year to year, as would be expected within a school with such small class sizes (the school encompasses grades K-8 only, so there are no diploma examinations)
- The Accountability Pillar Summary showed the following results for Provincial Achievement Tests:

		Results (in percentages)									
		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010	
		A	E	A	E	A	E	A	E	A	E
English Language Arts 3	Authority	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	45.5	36.4	70.0	0.0
	Province	81.3	14.1	80.3	17.7	80.1	16.1	81.3	18.2	81.6	19.5
French Language Arts 3	Authority	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Province	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	83.8	15.8	84.1	16.3
Français 3	Authority	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Province	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	82.5	16.3	86.4	16.3
Mathematics 3	Authority	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	63.6	27.3	100.0	30.0
	Province	82.0	26.9	79.9	23.5	78.7	23.9	79.7	26.8	76.4	24.8
English Language Arts 6	Authority	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	*	*	87.5	0.0
	Province	79.0	15.9	80.3	19.8	81.1	21.0	81.8	18.9	83.3	18.9
French Language Arts 6	Authority	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Province	87.5	11.2	88.1	11.0	87.7	14.2	91.5	15.9	88.3	15.9
Français 6	Authority	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Province	94.5	19.7	93.0	18.0	94.3	17.1	92.6	18.7	91.3	18.3
Mathematics 6	Authority	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	*	*	43.8	6.3
	Province	75.2	15.6	74.0	14.5	74.6	15.9	76.6	16.8	74.3	16.5
Science 6	Authority	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	*	*	62.5	18.8
	Province	78.1	27.7	75.2	26.6	74.8	24.1	76.5	24.8	76.8	26.4
Social Studies 6	Authority	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	62.5	0.0
	Province	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	71.0	16.4

Do the students, parents, teachers, and community members see the school as being effective and successful?

Please Check

22. Students are made aware of and know the school's expectations of them.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Teacher, parent, student, and board agreement that students are safe at school, are learning the importance of caring for others, are learning respect for others, and are treated fairly in school.
- The school has written behavioural standards and implements these standards on a consistent basis.
- The school communicates standards for student behaviour and the school rules to parents and students.
- Course outlines provide students with information about course content, expectations, and evaluation methodology.

Data Sources:

- School and provincial satisfaction survey data and AERR.
- Parent and student handbooks.
- *Student Evaluation Policy*.

- Course outlines.
- Teacher interviews.
- Principal interview.
- Parent interview.
- Student survey.
- Parent survey.
- Staff survey.

Evidence:

- A student code of conduct is provided in the Student-Parent Information Handbook and in the Policy Manual
- Interviews confirmed that some teachers provide course outlines to students/parents
- The responses to the survey question *“The school has rules for the way that children should behave / The students are made aware of and know the school’s expectations of them”* were:

Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Parents	67%	33%	100%
Students	54%	30%	84%
Staff	78%	22%	100%

- The responses to the survey question *“The rules are enforced fairly and consistently”* were”

Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Parents	79%	21%	100%
Students	42%	38%	80%
Staff	78%	22%	100%

Do the students, parents, teachers, and community members see the school as being effective and successful?

Please Check

23. Regular reporting is provided to parents and students.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Frequency of reporting and adequacy of information reported for individual students.
- Teacher, parent, student, and board satisfaction with parental and student involvement in decisions about their children’s/the student’s education.

Data Sources:

- Student evaluation policy and course outlines.
- Provincial satisfaction survey results; AERR.
- IPP information about reporting to parents.
- Report cards and Individual Student Profiles for PATs.
- Students’ cumulative records.

- Principal interview
- Parent interview
- Student survey
- Parent survey.
- Staff survey.
- Teacher interviews.
- Class observations

Evidence:

- Generally, parents, students and staff are satisfied or very satisfied that the school provides enough information about what the students are expected to learn:

Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Parents	58%	31%	89%
Students	48%	46%	94%
Staff	56%	44%	100%

- Similarly, parents, students and staff are satisfied or very satisfied that the school provides enough information about student progress:

Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Parents	59%	29%	88%
Students	41%	44%	85%
Staff	56%	33%	89%

- There are three report cards and two parent teacher interviews and a September orientation and meet the teacher event in each school year
- Regular reporting to parents was confirmed by review of documents, a sample of student records and parent interviews
- Interviews indicated that most parents believe there is good communication between parents, students and teachers and teachers are accessible to discuss parent concerns

Do the students, parents, teachers, and community members see the school as being effective and successful?

Please Check

24. Parents support the school.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Indicators:

- Teacher, parent, and student satisfaction with the opportunity for students to receive a broad program of studies including fine arts, career, technology, health, and physical education.
- Teacher, parent, student, and board satisfaction with the overall quality of education in the charter school.
- Percentage of students who remain in the charter school after their first year of enrolling in the school.

Data Sources:

- Provincial and local satisfaction survey data; AERR.
- Accountability Pillar results
- Enrolment data.
- Parent interview.
- Principal interview.
- Board member interview.
- Teacher interview.
- Board member survey. (Optional if all directors are interviewed)
- Parent survey.
- Staff survey.

Evidence:

- The following chart shows a high level of satisfaction by parents, students and staff with the overall quality of education provided to students at the school:

Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Parents	72%	24%	96%
Students	50%	44%	94%
Staff	78%	22%	100%

- Parents were aware that the school was established by parents and continues to be governed by parents;
- Parents cited growing enrolment is evidence that parents support the school;
- Parents are very supportive of the fundraising done by Friends of VCS;
- Parents recognize the school has many parent volunteers.

Do the students, parents, teachers, and community members see the school as being effective and successful?

Please Check

25. Stakeholders perceive that the school facility meets student needs.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Indicators:

- Stakeholders are satisfied that the school facility is adequate.

Data Sources:

- Board member survey.
- Board member interview.
- Parent survey.
- Parent Interview.
- Staff survey.
- Teacher Interview.
- Student survey.
- Principal interview.

- Superintendent interviews.
- Evaluation team observations.

Evidence:

- Board member, parent, staff, student and administration interviews and surveys all support the adequacy of the facility with the proviso that more space is needed;
- Interviews indicated that a community addition to the building is planned for 2011 to relocate library and provide additional classroom space for grade 9 in 2011-12 school year.
- Observations and principal interview indicated a moisture issue in the gymnasium in cold weather, and confirmed that measures were in place to minimize the effect and mitigate against mould which could compromise air quality

Is the school financially viable?

Please Check

26. The financial position of the school is positive as demonstrated in the AFS.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Indicators:

- Budget is balanced.
- Improvement in accumulated operating surplus over three years.
- Enrolment trends support the charter school’s financial position.

Data Sources:

- BRF.
- AFS.
- Secretary-treasurer interview.
- Board member interviews.

Evidence:

- According to the *AFS*, the school ended the 2009-2010 school year with total net assets of \$11,997. Total revenue for the period was \$1,264,740 of which 91.7% was obtained from the Government of Alberta. The remainder was derived from a variety of sources such as instructional resources fees, investment income, transportation fees and net school generated funds. Total expenditure for the 2009-2010 school year was \$1,245,249.
- The *BRF 2010-2011* indicates a planned surplus budget of \$48,695. Projected total revenue is \$1,297,395 and total expenditure budgeted is \$1,248,700. The accumulating operating surplus at the end of fiscal 2011 is projected to be \$28,022.
- Interviews with the Secretary-Treasurer and Board Members verified that the school has operated within its available revenues. Due to the initial accounting treatment of the acquisition of a major equipment item in 2008, there was an operating deficit of \$20,673 reported at the end of 2010, which is budgeted for recovery in the 2010 -2011 period.
- The enrolment trend is positive; enrolment in the second and third years of operation has been higher than was initially anticipated. The January, 2010 enrolment was 99.

Is the school financially viable?

Please Check

27. Expenditures for the current year are consistent with budgeted amounts.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure
-

Indicators:

- Variances between budget and AFS are reasonable (over the last three years).
- Personnel expenses are in keeping with enrolment of the charter school.

Data Sources:

- BRF.
- YTD financial report.
- Secretary-treasurer interview.
- Board member interview.

Evidence:

- The year to date financial report presented to directors at the February 24, 2011 board meeting and interviews with the secretary-treasurer and board members confirmed:
 - The secretary-treasurer provides a monthly financial report to the Board comparing year-to-date- actual with budget; and
 - There are no significant variances between budget and expenditures at the time of the on-site evaluation.
- Current year board and administrative costs are 7% of budgeted total revenue.

Is the school financially viable?

Please Check

28. Recommendations, if any, made in the auditor's management letter are successfully addressed.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure
-

Indicators:

- Management letters are addressed appropriately.
- Actions are documented addressing any requirements.
- Requirements are reflected in practice.

Data Sources:

- Management letters provided by the Board auditor for the past three years.
- Documented changes that address issues identified in the management letters.
- Secretary-treasurer interview.
- Board member interviews.

Evidence:

- A review of the auditor’s management letter for 2009-2010 and secretary-treasurer, superintendent and board member interviews, confirmed that an Action Plan has been implemented to address the recommendations in the management letter.
- A review of personnel files confirmed follow-through pursuant to the action plan regarding documentation of salary grid placement.

Is the school financially viable?

Please Check

29. Charter school budget information is shared with school stakeholder groups and is available for public review.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Budget information in Three-Year Education Plan and AERR meets provincial planning requirements.
- Information is provided as to how and where budget information can be accessed.

Data Sources:

- Superintendent interview.
- Three-Year Education Plan and AERR.
- Teacher interview.
- Principal interview.
- Superintendent interview.
- Board member interview.
- Parent interview.

Evidence:

- Accessibility of budget information was confirmed by superintendent, board member, teacher and parent interviews; the information is perceived to be available on request, but does not appear to be widely circulated.
- Parent and teacher interviews indicated that although involvement with budgeting was limited at this time that is not considered problematic.
- The Board conducts an annual general meeting to share budget information and have the parents of the society approve the budget.

Is the school financially viable?

Please Check

30. Board budget planning reflects board priorities.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Superintendent can identify board priorities in budget.

- Resources are available to support board financial priorities.

Data Sources:

- Budget document, BRF, and AFS.
- Board minutes.
- Board member interview.
- Superintendent interview.

Evidence:

- Review of the BRF and related documents, and interviews with the superintendent, secretary-treasurer, board members and principal verified that the budget reflects the board’s priorities for the school.

Are innovative practices and approaches to student learning and other charter innovations being used, and are they effective and shared?

Please Check

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

31. Educational innovations outlined in the charter are evident in practice and are effective.

Indicators:

- Classroom instruction demonstrates strategies related to charter school innovations.
- Reporting to parents and students reflects student success in areas relating to charter school innovations.
- AERR contains results obtained from measures pertaining to charter school innovations.
- Administrative practices in the charter school support unique education practices defined in the charter.

Data Sources:

- Charter to determine educational innovations offered in the charter school.
- Measures identified in Three-Year Education Plan to determine results for expected outcomes of the innovations.
- AERR.
- Principal interview.
- Teacher interview.
- Superintendent interview.
- Board member interview.
- Parent interview.

Evidence:

- Classroom observations and teacher interviews confirm that there is considerable emphasis on the direct instruction approach, mastery learning in language arts and mathematics, second languages and citizenship (rural leadership); all of which are identified in the charter as distinguishing features of the school’s program
- The school’s AISI project is on the SRA Reading Mastery Program.
- School-wide student leadership development projects (e.g. 4H public speaking) were evident and were supported by staff and parent interviews.

Are innovative practices and approaches to student learning and other charter innovations being used, and are they effective and shared?

Please Check

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

32. Staff have opportunities for professional learning related to the charter and professional growth plans (PGPs) align with the charter.

Indicators:

- Professional learning is provided to staff related to charter goals.
- Alignment exists among the charter, Three-Year Education Plan, the charter school professional development plan, and staff PGPs.
- The *Teacher Growth Supervision and Evaluation Policy* is appropriately implemented.
 - Percentage of teachers having a PGP;
 - Percentage of PGPs that address school professional development priorities for the year;
 - Administration discusses PGPs with each staff member; and
 - Superintendent reviews progress in and results of staff development programs.
- Percentage of teachers who agree that professional learning opportunities provided by the charter school have:
 - Effectively addressed professional development needs; and
 - Contributed significantly to on-going professional development.

Data Sources:

- Professional development plan for the school.
- Individual teacher PGPs.
- Principal interview.
- Superintendent interview
- Teacher interview.
- Board member interview.
- Board member survey. (Optional if all directors are interviewed)

Evidence:

- Teacher and principal interviews confirmed that each teacher annually prepares a Professional Growth Plan which is submitted by all teachers to the principal.
- Observations and interviews confirmed that there is an emphasis on school-based professional development in the form of a major staff development and research project in conjunction with the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI) related to effective implementation of the Direct Instruction methodology.
- Observations and interviews also noted the school's AISI project, which relates to mastery learning in language arts.

Are innovative practices and approaches to student learning and other charter innovations being used, and are they effective and shared.

Please Check

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

33. The school shares effective practices related to its charter mandate with school authorities in Alberta.

Indicators:

- Communication plan for sharing innovations, results achieved, and lessons learned.
- Tracking of activities by which innovations/effective practices are shared with the education community.
- The school can identify learnings transferable to other schools.
- The superintendent and board can identify school authorities that have adopted, adapted or scaled the charter school's innovations.

Data Sources:

- Superintendent interview.
- Principal interview.
- Teacher interview.

Evidence:

- Interviews indicated that this is not yet occurring because the staff is not yet ready due to insufficient experience with direct instruction and other charter features.
- It is anticipated that as the school gains experience, there will be useful insights about instructional methodology to share with other interested schools.
- Teacher interviews indicated that there was teacher interest for sharing information, but uncertainty about how to proceed.

Is the school being governed effectively?

Please Check

34. The charter board adheres to the by-laws of the society or company operating the charter school and complies with governance procedures and legislations.

- Yes
 - No
 - Unsure
-

Indicators:

- By-laws, policy manual, and board minutes are consistent with legislation, regulation, and Alberta Education policy.
- Policy manual is current and available to the public.
- Policy development is governed by Policy on Policy Development and reflects a systematic review process.
- Appointment or election of board members is consistent with by-laws.

Data Sources:

- Board minutes.
- Policy manual.
- Board agenda packages.
- Appropriate provincial policies and regulations.
- School Website.
- Board member interview.

Evidence:

- Compliance with legislative and procedural requirements was confirmed by board member interviews and observation of the February 24, 2011 board meeting.
- Promotional arrangements for the upcoming Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Valhalla School Foundation (e.g. recruitment for director nominations) were noted.
- Board meeting agenda packages and minutes reflect adherence to the by-laws of the society and applicable governance procedures and requirements.

Is the school being governed effectively?

Please Check

35. The charter board has developed appropriate policies regarding board governance, the role/responsibilities of the superintendent, the charter board, the principal, the teachers and the school council.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Indicators:

- Personnel and governance policies are consistent with by-laws and provincial legislation, regulation, and policy.
- Personnel and governance policies are followed.
- Governance of the charter school is reported to be effective.
- Board attends to governance activities, leaving administrative tasks to staff.

Data Sources:

- Bylaws.
- Policy manual.
- Superintendent duties (either in policy or in contract) and role of the board chair in contracts.
- Principal interview.
- Board member interview.
- Teacher interview.
- Superintendent interview.

Evidence:

- A review of the Policy Manual established that policies regarding governance and leadership roles/responsibilities are in place.
- Through direct observation, and confirmed in interviews, in the last two years there has been a clear delineation of roles between students, teachers, parents, administrators and board members in their roles.

- The superintendent is working with the Board and the policy review committee on an ongoing basis to develop appropriate policies. Policy development has been identified by the Board of Directors as a value added component of this evaluation.

Is the school being governed effectively?

Please Check

36. The charter board is committed to achieving the charter school's vision.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- The vision identified in the charter is accurately reflected in education planning and results reporting.

Data Sources:

- Vision statement in the charter.
- Three-Year Education Plan.
- AERR documenting results achieved in realizing the vision.
- School Website.
- Superintendent interview.
- Principal interview.
- Board member interview.
- Parent interview.
- Parent survey.
- Staff survey.

Evidence:

- Parent, administration, board member and staff interviews all affirmed the Board's commitment to the charter's vision for the school.
- A review of the school website and school documents confirmed the Board's commitment to the charter's vision.
- 100% of parents surveyed were very satisfied or satisfied that the Board is committed to achieving the school's vision.

Is the school being governed effectively?

Please Check

37. Long-term commitments are reasonable and minimal.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Financial commitments do not extend beyond the charter term (facility, service and employment).

Data Sources:

- Contracts, leases, Minister’s letter of approval for the charter, and term of the charter.
- Minister’s letter regarding the appointment of the superintendent.
- Superintendent and Secretary-treasurer interview.
- Board member interview.

Evidence:

- Interviews with the board chair, superintendent and secretary-treasurer confirmed that the Valhalla School Foundation has no long-term commitments beyond the charter term or outside of the charter mandate.
- A review of the facility lease with the Valhalla Heritage Society confirmed its term (to September 31, 2013) was consistent with the term of the charter.

Is the school being governed effectively?

Please Check

38. Recommendations of past reviews and evaluations have been successfully addressed.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure
- Not Applicable**

Indicators:

- Recommendations and required changes identified in action plans from past evaluations have been addressed.

Data Sources:

- Board member interview.
- Superintendent interview.
- Principal interview.

Evidence:

- Interviews established that there have been no previous reviews or evaluations of this Charter School.

Is the school being governed effectively?

Please Check

39. Communication among the charter board, superintendent, and staff is effective, efficient and in the best of interests of the school.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Indicators:

- Satisfaction of staff, superintendent, and board members that communication is efficient and in the best interests of the school.
- Board minutes reflect positive communication.
- Satisfaction of staff, parents and students that the staff and administration work well together as a team.

- Satisfaction of that the administration and staff work well together as a team.

Data Sources:

- Local survey conducted during evaluation.
- AERR.
- Board minutes.
- Board member interview.
- Teacher interview.
- Superintendent interview.
- Principal interview.
- Student survey.
- Parent survey.
- Staff survey.

Evidence:

- Board members interviews indicated an excellent working relationship with the superintendent, school administration and the staff;
- 100% of the parents surveyed were very satisfied or satisfied with the commitment of the Board to achieving the school’s vision;
- The Board informs the parents through the board newsletter and school council of important board matters;
- 89% of teachers surveyed indicated satisfaction that the school administration takes appropriate action to resolve the concerns of parents;
- Teacher interviews indicated very good communication with administration and the board of directors.

Is the school being governed effectively?

Please Check

40. Charter board decisions are communicated to the charter school community regularly and in an open manner.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Indicators:

- Board motions are identified in the minutes.
- Those affected by board decisions are aware of those decisions.
- The board uses a variety of means to communicate its decisions to staff and parents.

Data Sources:

- Board minutes.
- Interviews with parents and principal.
- Website.
- Newsletters.
- Principal interview.
- Teacher interview.
- Superintendent interview.
- Board member interview.

- Parent interview.

Evidence:

- It was observed that board highlights are regularly included in school newsletters; and that the newsletters are issued frequently.
- Current and archived newsletters and highlights are available on the school website.
- 98% of the parents surveyed are satisfied that the administration and staff work well together
- Interviews with parents and the principal confirmed that the Board communicates effectively with stakeholders; ‘word-of-mouth’ is recognized as an important communication tool in the rural community.

Is the school being governed effectively?

Please Check

41. The charter board maintains effective and appropriate relationships with partners, associations, and societies.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Agreements, donations, joint projects and minutes of meetings are documented and maintained appropriately.
- Societies and companies file annual reports with Corporate Registries.
- Students benefit from the relationships.

Data Sources:

- Documentation.
- School Website.
- Board member interview.
- Superintendent Interview.

Evidence:

- Superintendent/secretary treasurer, principal and board member interviews confirmed that:
 - The Board is an active member in the Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools; and
 - Valhalla Heritage Society and Valhalla Library Society are key relationships which are strongly and effectively maintained.
- Interviews identified arrangements with neighbouring schools regarding school extracurricular sports and with Peace Wapiti Regional Division regarding temporary lease of a spare school bus as initial elements of developing a new relationship with the surrounding school jurisdiction after the school closure and charter school establishment phase.

Is the school being governed effectively?

Please Check

42. Members of the charter board take advantage of opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills in charter school governance.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Charter board members attend board meetings regularly.
- The board has developed an annual development plan with evaluation processes.
- Charter board members attend and report back to the charter board on activities related to improving their knowledge and skills.
- Percentage of charter board members who attend at least one professional development activity per year to enhance capacity as a board member.

Data Sources:

- Board minutes.
- Board development plan/annual calendar.
- Board self evaluations.
- Board motions approving attendance of board members at professional development activities.
- Board member interview.
- Superintendent interview.

Evidence:

- Superintendent and board member interviews confirmed participation in the Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools;
- Board member interviews indicated that the board is engaged in an ongoing board development training workshop program.
- A work plan for the 2011-2012 year was discussed at the February 24 board meeting.

Is the school being administered effectively?**Please Check**

43. Staff members are involved in decision-making about program development, implementation, and review and about policy development.

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

Indicators:

- Minutes and schedule of staff meetings/groups.
- Staff satisfaction with staff group working outcomes.
- Staff involvement in decision-making.

Data Sources:

- Staff meeting minutes and yearly schedule.
- Teacher interview.
- Board member interview.
- Superintendent interview.
- Principal interview.
- Staff survey.

Evidence:

- The responses to the survey question “The teaching and administration staff at the school work well together” were:

Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Staff	89%	11%	100%

- The responses to the survey question “You have opportunities for input into school decision-making” were:

Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Staff	89%	11%	100%

- The teachers interviewed confirmed satisfaction with their opportunities to be involved in decision-making at the school.
- Administration and board member interviews confirmed a high level of informal involvement of staff input, particularly through the principal; however there was little documentary evidence (e.g. in staff meeting minutes).

Is the school being administered effectively?

Please Check

44. Classroom and grade organization are appropriate to meet the charter goals.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Indicators:

- Instructional groupings reflect the needs of students and charter goals.

Data Sources:

- Assignment of grades to particular rooms.
- Class lists.
- Principal interview.
- Teacher interview.
- Parent interview.

Evidence:

- Observation indicated that the classroom assignments are appropriate; and that teachers makes effective use of ability groupings within the grade organization structure.
- Teacher and parent interviews confirmed that the classroom and grade organization are appropriate.

Is the school being administered effectively?

Please Check

45. Safety procedures are in place.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Indicators:

- Policy ensures student and staff safety.
- Supervision is appropriate to the number of students, the school facility and grounds.
- Teachers, parents, students and board members agree students are safe at school.
- Number of fire drills/lock down drills held per year.

Data Sources:

- Policy manual.
- Student and staff handbooks.
- Supervision schedule.
- Record of fire drills held.
- Provincial satisfaction survey and AERR.
- Teacher interview.
- Principal interview.
- Parent interview.
- Board member survey.
- Student survey.
- Parent survey.
- Staff survey.

Evidence:

- Safety procedures were confirmed by review of school policies, staff handbook provisions, interviews with administration and teachers and a review of the fire drill record.
- The school's supervision schedule was reviewed.
- Observation of organization for student arrivals and departures from the school indicated attention to student safety with the principal often providing direct supervision; and
- Appropriate attention to student safety was confirmed by parent, principal and teacher interviews and surveys, as was indicated by the response to the survey question related to whether students feel safe at school:

Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Parents	88%	12%	100%
Students	54%	30%	84%
Staff	89%	11%	100%

- Superintendent and principal interviews indicated that a Crisis Response Plan Manual has not yet been developed for the school

Is the school being administered effectively?

46. The school facility meets provincial health, safety and building standards and is suitable for operation as a charter school.

Please Check

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Indicators:

- Inspection reports from the fire department and health units are recent.
- School Capital Plan is complete.
- Facility leases.

Data Sources:

- Inspection reports.
- Evaluator's observations.
- Superintendent / Secretary-Treasurer interview.
- Principal Interview.

Evidence:

- The parent, principal and superintendent / secretary - treasurer interviews confirmed that the health, safety and building standards inspections are ongoing throughout the school year.
- Facility health, safety and fire inspection records were reviewed and follow-up on identified deficiencies were confirmed with the principal.
- It was observed that A/V equipment and cross-country ski equipment stored in and adjacent to NE entrance may present an emergency egress problem, and noted in the principal interview that this was a temporary situation.

APPENDIX B: Student Survey Results

A total of 50 of 55 students completed surveys in each of the grades 4 to 8. A few students did not respond to all the questions.

Valhalla Community School Student Survey

We are conducting a review of your charter school. Your feedback is valuable and will help us to determine your satisfaction with the programs and services offered by the school. Please indicate your level of satisfaction by responding to the questions below. Check one box per question.

How satisfied are you:	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Don't Know
1. With the education you are receiving at the school?	25 50%	22 44%	2 4%		1 2%
2. That the teachers help you understand the education program at the school?	25 50%	19 38%	1 2%		5 10%
3. That you receive enough information about what you are expected to learn?	24 48%	23 46%	2 4%		1 2%
4. That you receive regular information about your progress?	21 41%	22 44%	2 4%		4 8%
5. That you receive the help you need to succeed at school?	31 62%	16 32%	2 2%		2 4%
6. That the teaching and administration staff at the school works well together?	33 66%	11 22%	2 4%		4 8%
7. That the school has rules for the way that children should behave?	27 54%	15 30%	4 8%	1 2%	1 2%
8. That you are treated fairly and consistently?	21 42%	19 38%	6 12%		2 4%
9. That you are safe at school?	27 54%	15 30%	1 2%	1 2%	3 6%
10. That you are safe on the way to and from school?	31 62%	14 28%		1 2%	2 4%

How satisfied are you:	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Don't Know
11. That you have improved your academic achievement as a result of attending the charter school?	22 44%	18 36%		1 2%	7 14%

The results have been consolidated for reporting.

Findings

- A very high proportion of students (94%) are *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with the education they are receiving at the school;
- A very high proportion of students (94%) are *very satisfied* or *satisfied* that they receive enough information about what they are expected to learn;
- A very high proportion of students (94%) are *very satisfied* or *satisfied* that they receive the help they need to succeed at school;
- A very high proportion of students (90%) are *very satisfied* or *satisfied* that they are safe on the way to and from school;
- A high proportion of students (88%) are *very satisfied* or *satisfied* that their teachers help them understand the education program at the school;
- A high proportion of students (84%) are *very satisfied* or *satisfied* that the school has rules for the way that children should behave;
- A high proportion of students (84%) are *very satisfied* or *satisfied* they are safe at school;
- A high proportion of students (88%) are *very satisfied* or *satisfied* that the teaching and administration staff at the school works well together;
- A high proportion of students (80%) are *very satisfied* or *satisfied* that they are treated fairly and consistently;
- A high proportion of students (85%) are *very satisfied* or *satisfied* that they receive regular information about their progress; and
- A high proportion of students (80%) are *very satisfied* or *satisfied* that they have improved their academic achievement as a result of attending the charter school.

APPENDIX C: Parent Survey Results and Interview Summary

Survey

In February, 2011, the school distributed parent surveys to all 56 school families. As of February 22, 2011, 42 surveys had been returned anonymously for a response rate of 75%.

Charter School Parent Survey

We are conducting a review of your charter school. Your feedback is valuable and will help us to determine your satisfaction with the programs and services offered by the school. Please indicate your level of satisfaction by responding to the questions below. Check one box per question.

How satisfied are you:	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Don't Know
1. That the administration helped you understand the mandate or reason for the education program at the school?	26 63%	14 33%	1 2%		1 2%
2. That the staff helped you understand the mandate or reason for the education program at the school?	22 54%	17 40%	1 2%		1 2%
3. That you receive enough information about what your child is expected to learn?	24 58%	13 31%	3 7%	1 2%	1 2%
4. That your child has improved his/her academic achievement as a result of attending the charter school?	28 68%	11 26%	2 4%		1 2%
5. That your child receives the help needed to succeed at school?	29 70%	11 26%	2 4%		
6. That the school has rules for the way that children should behave?	28 67%	14 33%			
7. That your child is treated fairly and consistently?	33 79%	9 21%			

How satisfied are you:	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Don't Know
8. That you receive regular information about your child's progress?	25 59%	12 29%	2 4%	1 2%	1 2%
9. With the overall quality of education that your child is receiving at the school?	30 72%	10 24%	1 2%		1 2%
10. That the school facility meets student needs?	19 46%	21 50%	1 2%		1 2%
11. That the board is committed to achieving the school's vision?	32 76%	10 24%			
12. That the teaching and administration staff at the school works well together?	31 74%	10 24%	1 2%		
13. That the school administration takes appropriate action to resolve the concerns of parents?	26 63%	14 33%	1 2%		1 2%
14. That your child is safe at school?	37 88%	5 12%			
15. That your child is safe on the way to and from school?	35 83%	7 17%			

Note: The percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding errors; also in a few cases not all respondents replied to all the questions.

Write-in comments mentioned a very high level of satisfaction regarding item 4 (improved academic achievement) and the school's structured openness; concern was mentioned about staff – parent communication and school bus ride time.

Survey Findings:

Parent expressed a very high degree of satisfaction on all 15 survey questions. [On all of the questions, parents were very satisfied or satisfied within a range of 88% to 100%;]

Respondents were very satisfied or satisfied at the 100% level on 5 questions, and on two more at the 99% and 98% level.

The highest degree of dissatisfaction on any questions was 9%. This occurred on the questions about the information that the parents receive about their child's progress at school.

Charter School Evaluation – Parent Interview Summary

Charter School: Valhalla Community School

Evaluator: Dale Bischoff and David van Tamelen

Person Interviewed: Parents were interviewed in three small groups ranging in size from 6-8 people. 18 parents were interviewed at the school. These parents represent a total of 32% of the school’s family population.

Date: February 23 & 24, 2011

Item	Please check	Indicators	Evidence
Provincial Requirements			
1. The school council is active, involved and aware of its responsibilities.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents relating to the establishment and operation of the school council are consistent with the School Council Regulation • The school council supports the charter board. • The school council successfully addresses activities it has chosen to undertake. 	<p>The school council meets monthly. Minutes from the school council meetings are posted in the school newsletter.</p> <p>Parent council members and other parents volunteer in the school when teachers request help. There was a good turnout of parents at the year end BBQ celebration.</p>
2. Fees and school-generated funds are appropriate and explained.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fee schedules contain appropriate fees. • Accounting for school fees and School Generated Funds (SGF) is consistent with department requirements. 	<p>Parents understand that fees are \$150 annually for each student but families are charged a maximum of \$300 per year if they have multiple children enrolled.</p> <p>The school council generated funding by operating the local ski hill. A parent thought about \$9000 was raised in the last year.</p> <p>School generated funds are used to pay for school trips, swimming lessons, desks and lockers purchased.</p>

Conditions of Charter			
<p>3. The specified teaching philosophy and methodology of the charter is followed.</p>	<p>➤ Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom instruction reflects individual charter school mandate. • Reporting to parents reflects individual charter school mandate. 	<p>Parents believed that instruction was individualized to meet student needs. Children are challenged to reach their full potential. For example, the students planned and led a student assembly and Halloween celebration.</p> <p>One parent remarked that the school had direct instruction like when I was a kid. Another parent liked that students were taught leadership in the 4H program and that the older students read to the younger ones. One parent stated that he was blown away by the quality of public speeches on leadership made by the 4H student group. Teachers are there for the parents and down to earth. One parent was worried that the intense needs of some problem students might overwhelm the teachers.</p>
<p>4. Other charter requirements are evident in school operation.</p>	<p>➤ Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade configurations are consistent with the terms of the Charter and appropriate to the facility. • Facility enhancements are consistent with the charter. • Timetabling is consistent with the charter. • Staff development reflect the charter. 	<p>Parents liked the split grade classes because the teachers are organized and support students.</p> <p>One parent stated that he absolutely felt the split grade classes were consistent with the charter.</p> <p>Another parent explained that she moved her children from the public school with one grade in the class and found more individualized attention to her students in a Valhalla split grade class.</p>

<p>5. Entrance and enrolment requirements are consistent with the charter, clear, communicated, and open.</p>	<p>➤ Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy is established, consistent with the charter requirement, to describe students the school intends to serve. • Parent registration information, consistent with the charter requirement, describes students the school intends to serve. • Registration procedures, consistent with the charter requirement, describe students the school intends to serve. 	<p>Parent registration clearly identifies the specific philosophy and practices of the charter.</p> <p>The parents understand that the school may well be full next year and that there is criteria for limiting enrolment and establishing a waiting list for new students.</p> <p>One parent expressed that the special needs students should be clearly identified as a challenge before enrolment as the school cannot be expected to take too many problem children.</p> <p>One parent wanted to be assured that her younger children could attend Valhalla. She felt she was assured because her older child was already attending.</p>
<p>6. The charter includes improved student learning outcomes that are, in turn, included in education planning and results reporting.</p>	<p>➤ Unsure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter school program as originally approved is different from other programs available in the local community or within the public school districts adjacent to the charter school. • The difference in program is communicated to parents and the community. • The charter school develops innovations related to its charter goals. • Improved student learning outcomes associated with the charter focus are included in education plans and results reports. • The charter school uses trends in results to inform subsequent education planning by determining priority areas for 	<p>Parents stated that charter school was different from the previous public school in several ways. Differences identified included the student leadership emphasis (big kids look after the little ones), second language learning and direct instruction with drill and practice.</p> <p>One parent stated that we have direct instruction and teachers are on the same page.</p> <p>One parent said, unlike the public school, Valhalla teachers have a passion for teaching, it's not just a job.</p> <p>In spite of parents support for what they believe are good student learning outcomes, parents are unaware of the school Three Year Plan or any targets for improved student</p>

		<p>improvement and building on areas of strength.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three-Year Education Plans and AERRs for the current charter term identify realistic and appropriate targets for student achievement inclusive of results associate with the charter goals and provide explanations when results do not meet or exceed performance targets. • Percentage of students achieving the acceptable standard and standard of excellence on PATs (cohort) and Diploma Examinations for the past five year period in relation to provincial and local targets. • Student reporting includes information on the improved student learning outcomes identified in the charter. • Students in non-PAT grades succeed in achieving learning outcomes. • Students leaving the school continue to experience success. 	<p>learning.</p> <p>Parents are also unaware of the PAT scores that school students have achieved.</p> <p>One parent did state that teachers take to time to send work home and help parents so that they can assist their children with homework.</p>
School is Successful			
7. Students are made aware of and know the school's expectations of them.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, parent, student, and board agreement that students are safe at school, are learning the importance of caring for others, are learning respect for others, and are treated fairly in school. • The school has written behavioral standards and implements these standards on a consistent basis. • The school communicates standards for student behavior and the school rules to 	<p>Parents believe that students respect their classmates, their teachers and the school. They thought there was no bullying but if there was, the teachers would nip it in the bud.</p> <p>At recess there was always two staff members outside to help the kids.</p> <p>The school had regular school assemblies where the student code of conduct (among other issues) was discussed. The code of</p>

		<p>parents and students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course outlines provide students with the information about course content, expectations, and evaluation methodology. 	<p>conduct is signed by all parents.</p> <p>Some parents indicated that they had received a parent handbook in the fall and some class or grade outlines that explained school expectations for student learning and discipline.</p>
8. Regular reporting is provided to parents.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency of reporting and adequacy of information reported for individual students. • Teacher, parent, student, and board satisfaction with parental involvement in decisions about their children's education. 	<p>Parents indicated that there were three report cards (fall, spring and final) plus parent teacher interviews after the first two reporting periods. One parent also remembered the September evening meet the teacher meeting.</p> <p>Parents were also appreciative of regular school newsletter.</p>
9. Parents support the school.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers, parent, and student satisfaction with the opportunity for students to receive a broad program of studies including fine arts, career, technology, health, and physical education. • Teacher, parent, student, and board satisfaction with the overall quality of education. • Percentage of students who remain in the charter school after their first year of enrolling in the school. 	<p>Parents were firmly supportive of the school. One parent stated that <i>we`re welcome here.</i> Parents believe that the school is a safe and caring place. One parent said <i>we`re lucky to have this little school.</i></p> <p>A large sample size of parents were interviewed and there was good consensus that parents were solidly in support. Families that enrol their children have remained with the exception of a couple of students that left in grade 7. It was assumed by other parents and teachers that these students had left for a more comprehensive educational program in a larger public school.</p>

<p>10. Stakeholders perceive that the school facility meets student needs.</p>	<p>➤ Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders are satisfied that the school facility is adequate. 	<p>One parent stated that the school was old but it works. Another complimented the contract cleaner. The school is clean and the bathrooms are always spotless. Parents said the school was small but adequate. There were a few maintenance issues but generally parents were happy to have a school that met their needs.</p>
<p>School is Viable</p>			
<p>11. Charter school budget information is shared with school stakeholder groups and is available for public review.</p>	<p>➤ Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget information in Three-Year Education Plan and AERR meets provincial planning requirements. Information is provided as to how and where budget information can be accessed. 	<p>Parents were generally unaware and uninterested in the charter school budget information. However they stated that the parent council had sent home the budget at the end of last year so the charter school budget information is available.</p>
<p>Innovation is Shared</p>			
<p>12. Educational innovations outlined in the charter are successfully evident.</p>	<p>➤ Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom instruction incorporates strategies consistent with charter school innovations. Reporting to parents reflects student success in areas reflecting charter school innovations. AERR contains results obtained from measures pertaining to charter school innovations. 	<p>Parents are aware that teachers are employing a direct instruction approach. Parents are not entirely sure what this means but they are supportive. One parent stated that direct instruction helps children learn.</p> <p>Parents are happy with the opportunity for second language instruction from kindergarten up (German) and a choice to move to French language instruction starting in grade 4.</p>

Effective Governance			
13. The charter board is committed to achieving the charter school's vision.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The vision identified in the charter is accurately reflected in education planning and results reporting. 	Parents believe that the Board is fully committed to the school. One parent stated that all six board members have children attending the school.
14. Charter board decisions are communicated to the public regularly and in an open manner.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board motions are identified in the minutes. Those affected by Board decisions are aware of those decisions. The board uses a variety of means to communicate its decisions to staff and parents. 	<p>Monthly board meetings are open to the public.</p> <p>Board decisions are communicated via school newsletter and board highlights are posted on the school website.</p> <p>All Board motions are identified in the Board meeting minutes and posted on the website.</p>
Effective Administration			
15. Classroom and grade organization are appropriate.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional groupings reflect student needs, and charter goals. 	<p>One parent stated that they were happy that their child could move in class to an appropriate ability group that was working at another grade level.</p> <p>Parents agree that the split grade classrooms provide every opportunity for students.</p>
16. Safety procedures are in place.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy ensures student and staff safety. Supervision is appropriate to the number of students, the school facility and grounds. Teachers, parents, students and board members agree that students are safe at school. Number of fire drills/lock down drills held per year. 	<p>One parent stated that at the public school their child was picked on about clothing but since going to Valhalla bullying was no longer a problem. Socially kids support one another.</p> <p>Another parent remarked that it was nice that the principal or other teachers greeted students exiting the bus and entering the school in the morning. Kids felt safe and secure.</p>

17. The school facility meets provincial health, safety and building standards and is suitable for operation as a charter school.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inspection reports from the fire department and health units are recent.• School Capital Plan is complete.• Facility leases.	Parents are aware that the school has practiced fire drills and a school lock down drill.

APPENDIX D: Staff Survey Results and Teacher Interview Summary

Valhalla Community School Staff Survey

We are conducting a review of your charter school. Your feedback is valuable and will help us to determine your satisfaction with the programs and services offered by the school. Please indicate your level of satisfaction by responding to the questions below. Check one box per question.

How satisfied are you:	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Don't Know
1. That the mandate of the school's Charter is reflected in the teaching and the administration of the school?	8/9 88%	1/9 12%			
2. That the school's charter includes improved student learning outcomes?	7 78%	2 22%			
3. That students are made aware of and know school's expectations of them?	7 78%	2 22%			
4. That the rules are enforced fairly and consistently?	7 78%	2 22%			
5. That the school provides enough information to parents about what their children are expected to learn?	5 56%	4 44%			
6. That the school provides enough information to parents about their children's progress?	5 56%	3 33%			1 11%
7. That parents support the school?	5 56%	3 33%			1 11%
8. With the overall quality of education provided to students at the school?	7 78%	2 22%			

How satisfied are you:	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Don't Know
9. That the school facility meets student needs?	4 44%	2 22%	3 33%		
10. That the board is committed to the school's vision?	6 67%	2 22%			1 11%
11. That communication among the charter board, superintendent, and staff is effective, efficient and in the best interests of the school?	7 78%	2 22%			
12. That the teaching and administration staff at the school work well together?	8 89%	1 11%			
13. That the school administration takes appropriate action to resolve the concerns of parents?	7 78%	1 11%			1 11%
14. That you have opportunities for input into school decision – making?	8 89%	1 11%			
15. That the school is a safe and caring place for students and staff?	8 89%	1 11%			

Note: The percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding errors.

Findings

- The respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with all items except the school facility, where 33% were dissatisfied.

Charter School Evaluation - Teacher Interview Summary

Charter School: Valhalla Community School

Evaluator: Dale Bischoff

Person Interviewed: All six teachers were interviewed

Date: February 23 & 24, 2010

Item	Please check	Suggested Indicators	Evidence
Provincial Requirements			
1. The Alberta Programs of Study are being followed.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers have current programs of study. • Teacher long-range plans are based upon the Alberta Programs of Study. • Daily planning. 	<p>Teacher long range and short range plans are based on the Alberta program of studies and identify student leaving outcomes that align with the Alberta program of studies.</p> <p>All teachers have day plans on their desks (albeit some extensive while other plans are less detailed).</p> <p>Alberta program of studies are available with hard copy on some teacher desks (while other claim to review PDF copies).</p> <p>Teacher long range plans were on school file and several teachers had long range plans readily available during the classroom observation period.</p> <p>The Science program utilizes Alberta prescribed resources (Focus series) and aligns with the Alberta program of studies student learning outcomes which are included in the teacher long range unit plans.</p> <p>In the Math program there is some debate about the continuity of the two Math programs in use (Saxon and Singapore). However, student outcomes are identified in teacher plans and these align with the</p>

			<p>Alberta program of studies.</p> <p>The Social Studies program in grades 7 and 8 use Alberta prescribed resources and student outcomes required by the Alberta program of studies are identified in teacher instructional plans.</p> <p>The ELA program utilizes SRA reading g series and supporting materials. It focuses on reading and phonetics, with mastery learning. There is a strong level of instructional hours devoted to ELA especially in the junior high program (from 320 hours in grades 1-2 and decreasing to 270 hours of instruction in grades 7-8).</p> <p>Some teachers send home in September a subject course outline for parents. The Kindergarten teacher sends home a year plan and a Kindergarten parent handbook.</p>
2. The charter school meets the requirements and recommendations for instructional time.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 1-9: 950 hours • Grade 10-12: 1000 hours • High School Subjects: 25 hours per credit. • Teacher and student timetables. 	Total instructional hours (990) exceeds provincial requirements. ELA and Mathematics instructional hours is Grade 1\2 split ELA class 320 hrs of total 980 hour program.
Conditions of Charter			
3. The specified teaching philosophy and methodology of the charter is followed.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom instruction reflects individual charter school mandate. • Reporting to parents reflects individual charter school mandate. 	<p>Classroom instruction (reading mastery) and frequent reporting to parents regarding home reading points program clearly reflects charter mandate.</p> <p>Direct instruction is visible in classrooms, especially in ELA and Mathematics.</p>

			<p>A leadership program is provided in the junior high program (40 hours annually). Students take responsibility for the younger students. The leadership program is delivered in conjunction with a 4H program. Penmanship, while identified in the charter and a targeted goal, was not very evident. Teacher response to question about penmanship mentioned that there was not a lot of time to do cursive practice. A second language program is compulsory from grades K-8.</p>
<p>4. Other charter requirements are evident in school operation.</p>	<p>➤ Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade configurations are consistent with the charter and appropriate to the facility. • Facility enhancements are consistent with the charter. • Timetabling is consistent with the charter. • Staff development activities reflect the charter. 	<p>Split classes (1-2, 3-4, 5-6, and 7-8) are mandated by the school charter and appear to be working well. Ability grouping were evident in elementary English Language Arts (ELA) and some students needed to move to other classes to meet with their ability groups. One teacher stated – I love the splits because it helps me to develop flexible regrouping based on student ability. Ability groups are flexible and sometimes change according to student skills. Timetabling of morning core is consistent with charter so that groups (school wide) in ELA and Math are interchangeable regardless of grade. Staff PD has monthly (sometimes weekly) SKYPE meetings with instructional coaches in the USA (National Institute For Direct Instruction). The teacher practice to provide points</p>

			(positive reinforcement) for on task class behaviour in the following domains: a) listen together, b) answer together, and c) work together, is consistent across grades. This continuity reinforces school order by making clear student expectations during classroom drill and practice.
5. Entrance and enrolment requirements are consistent with the charter, and clearly communicated.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy is consistent with the charter requirement to describe students the school intends to serve. • Parent registration information, consistent with the charter requirement, describes students the school intends to serve. • Registration procedures, consistent with the charter requirement, describe students the school intends to serve. 	<p>Parent enrolment procedures/policy is explained in a parent handbook. One teacher stated that the enrolment procedures and school expectations were clear and that parents supported these. She stated that enrolment was up because parents understood and supported the way we do things. While enrolment practices have not been an issue with growing enrolment the school is expected to be full next year and enrolment will need to be closely monitored. One teacher would like to see student wait list criterion added to the registration procedures.</p>
6. Student achievement as measured by provincial achievement testing and diploma examinations demonstrates a consistent high level of success or an upward trend over time.	➤ No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student achievement on PATs (cohort) and Diploma Examination results are high or trends upward during the past five years. • Student achievement results meet or exceed school and provincial targets. • Value-added trend lines are positive for students in Grade 3 to Grade 6 and Grade 6 to Grade 9. • Participation rates are similar to or 	<p>While student PAT scores are available from the pre-charter Valhalla years and for the initial two years of the charter school, these data may not provide a full measure. Teachers claim the pre-charter school was dissimilar to the new charter school and had a different student population. Staff members currently do not consider PAT results when planning the Valhalla instructional program.</p>

		<p>exceed provincial participation rates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff planning includes the use of PAT and Diploma Examination results. 	<p>The teachers are reluctant to consider pre-charter Valhalla PAT data and the sample size of the charter school student data is too small to provide good measures. Participation rates are high for new baseline data PAT (and CTBS) examinations for the first two years of the charter operation. Teachers and administration indicate that they will increase attention to these data. Staff members express pride in the schools increasing scores in CTBS examinations.</p>
School is Successful			
<p>7. Students are made aware of and know the school's expectations of them.</p>	<p>➤ Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement that students are safe at school, are learning the importance of caring for others, are learning respect for others, and are treated fairly in school. • The school has written behavioral standards and implements these standards on a consistent basis. • The school communicates standards for student behavior and the school rules to parents and students. • Course outlines provide students with the information about course content, expectations, and evaluation methodology. 	<p>The school is a safe and caring environment where expectations are clear. The school has a written student code of conduct posted (apple poster). Individual classes also have specific class/teacher expectations posted. Students participate in class development of rules. Teachers said classroom rules were easy to implement when the students assisted with the writing. Teachers use a positive reinforcement technique in all classes, giving points on the board for appropriate/positive class behaviours and taking points away for poor behaviour. Points are tallied and student given rewards for good behaviour. Teachers suggest that the school is a safe and caring place where monthly school assemblies welcome students and older students take care of the younger ones. Bullying is minimal do to the student</p>

			<p>leadership program and quick teacher response to problems.</p> <p>A good example of student leadership and responsibility if that grade 5 students visit the kindergarten class and read to the children.</p>
8. Regular reporting is provided to parents.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency of reporting and adequacy of information reported for individual students. • Satisfaction with parental involvement in decisions about their children's education. 	<p>Frequency of school reporting with families is good.</p> <p>Teachers write notes to parents in the student agenda and sometimes ask for parent signatures on returned student exams. Examples of teacher feedback in student agendas included comments about home work and classroom behaviour.</p> <p>The school has three formal report cards (fall, spring and final) with parent-teacher evening interviews in September and after the first two reporting periods.</p> <p>The K class provides a monthly newsletter and encourages parent volunteers. Parent volunteer visits to class enhances home-school communication.</p>
9. Parents support the school.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, parent, and student satisfaction with the opportunity for students to receive a broad program of studies including fine arts, career, technology, health, and physical education. • Teacher, parent, student, and board satisfaction with the overall quality of education in the charter school. • Percentage of students who remain in the charter school after their first year of 	<p>Teachers are supportive of the overall program and instructional approach as identified in the school charter.</p> <p>Teachers believe that parents are supportive. As this is a small community, parents are often in the school and communicate with teachers outside of school hours.</p> <p>Teachers stated that increased enrolment was proof that parents supported the school. The weekly school newsletter is followed by</p>

		enrolling in the school.	parents and this assisted communication between home and school.
10. Stakeholders perceive that the school facility meets student needs.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders are satisfied that the school facility is adequate. 	<p>Teachers and parents appear to be satisfied that the school facility is adequate. Teachers are satisfied with the school facility but commented that the school was small and that the roof leaks. Staff members are concerned about lack of storage space, lack of a science lab and that there is only one set of wash rooms. One teacher complained about humidity and heat in the gymnasium. Maintenance is needed. One teacher stated that while to school was small it could be improved cheaply with a coat of paint.</p>
School is Viable			
11. Charter school budget information is shared with school stakeholder groups and is available for public review.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information is provided as to how and where budget information can be accessed. 	<p>Teachers are aware that the budget is accessible on the school website but expressed that they were not concerned (key word is accessible). One teacher wanted to order student equipment/resources but was unsure of the budget approval process for ordering.</p>

Innovation is Shared			
<p>12. Educational innovations outlined in the charter are successfully evident.</p>	<p>➤ Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom instruction demonstrates strategies related to charter school innovations. • Reporting to parents and students reflects student success in areas relating to charter school innovations. • AERR contains results obtained from measures pertaining to charter school innovations. • Administrative practices in the charter school support unique education practices defined in the charter. 	<p>Direct instruction is clearly evident in the school program, especially in the English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics programs. Assessment is frequent and feedback timely. Students must master work before moving ahead.</p> <p>In ELA, there is a clear focus on phonetics and drill and practice.</p> <p>Mastery learning is evident in the Math. No calculators are allowed and frequent testing (every five lessons).</p> <p>Second language instruction is given to the entire student population from K-8.</p> <p>While PAT scores as of yet do not indicate any upward trend, teachers expect that the schools' PAT scores will increase once the direct instruction approach has had more time.</p> <p>The school mandate to provide opportunities for school leadership is successful. Students had a Halloween celebration where the older students responsibly planned, implemented and supervised the activities. The 4H student group also successfully hosted an evening speech night and were fund raising for school sports.</p>

<p>13. Staff have opportunities for professional learning related to the charter and professional growth plans (PGPs) align with the charter.</p>	<p>➤ Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional learning is provided to staff related to charter goals. • Alignment exists among the charter, Three-Year Education Plan, the charter school professional development plan, and staff PGPs. • The <i>Teacher Growth Supervision and Evaluation Policy</i> is appropriately implemented. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Percentage of teachers having a PGP; – Percentage of PGPs that address school professional development priorities for the year; – Administration discusses PGPs with each staff member; and – Superintendent reviews progress in and results of staff development programs. • Percentage of teachers who agree that professional learning opportunities provided by the charter school have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effectively addressed professional development needs; and - Contributed significantly to on-going professional development. 	<p>All teachers have PDG plans that are submitted to the principal. Professional Development (PD) for improvement in direct instruction is provided to all instructional staff by the National Institute For Direct Instruction (NIFDI). Teachers are also provided with PD on smart board use. In response to one student diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), two teachers were sent to an autism workshop. PD at Valhalla effectively addresses the needs of the teaching staff and enables instructional continuity of program delivery (i.e. direct instruction and mastery learning) across grades.</p>
<p>14. The school shares effective practices related to its charter mandate.</p>	<p>➤ Unsure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication plan for sharing innovations, results achieved, and lessons learned. • Tracking of activities by which innovations/effective practices are shared with the education community. • The school can identify learnings transferable to other schools. 	<p>There is no evidence that teachers are sharing innovations, results achieved or tracking effective practices that might be applicable in other schools. However, the staff is talking about sharing and looking for opportunities to discuss their instructional program with other teachers in their immediate region.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The superintendent and board can identify school authorities that have duplicated the charter school's innovations. 	<p>The administration is exploring communicating school experiences with the academic community via blog or other electronic media.</p> <p>Teachers talk informally with teachers in nearby schools. They said that neighbouring teachers were interested in their progress and wished them success.</p> <p>There is informal professional dialogue with teacher colleagues from surrounding school jurisdictions at the Mighty Peace Teachers Convention.</p>
Effective Governance			
15. The charter board has developed appropriate by-laws and policies regarding board governance, the role/responsibilities of the superintendent, the charter board, the principal, the teachers and the school council.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personnel and governance policies are consistent with by-laws and provincial legislation, regulation, and policy. Personnel and governance policies are followed. Governance of the charter school is reported to be effective. Board attends to governance activities, leaving administrative tasks to staff. 	<p>Teachers perceive support from the board and believe that governance policies are effective and appropriate.</p> <p>Governance policies and school practices are shared in a school distributed Parent Handbook which all families receive in the fall.</p>
16. Communication among the charter board, superintendent and staff is effective, efficient and in the best of interests of the school.	➤ Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfaction that communication is efficient and in the best interests of the school. Satisfaction that the staff and administration work well as a team. 	<p>All of the board members have children in the school and therefore board members are often in the school and communicate directly with teachers and school staff.</p> <p>Teacher expressed that while the superintendent is from Edmonton, he has made a good effort to be visible and</p>

			<p>participate in school functions and celebrations (i.e. Christmas concert, volleyball game).</p> <p>A teacher expressed that the superintendent is approachable and board governance was effective. Another teacher indicated that they felt the principal was awesome.</p>
<p>17. Charter board decisions are communicated to the charter school community regularly and in an open manner.</p>	<p>➤ Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board motions are identified in the minutes. • Those affected by board decisions are aware of those decisions. • The board uses a variety of means to communicate its decisions to staff and parents. 	<p>Board decisions are communicated to all stakeholders in a weekly school newsletter which reports board highlights.</p> <p>The board minutes were regularly posted on the school website.</p> <p>One board member attends all parent council meetings.</p>
Effective Administration			
<p>18. Staff members are involved in decision-making about program development, implementation, and review and about policy development.</p>	<p>➤ Unsure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes and schedule of staff meetings/groups. • Staff satisfaction with staff group working outcomes. • Staff involvement in decision-making. 	<p>One teacher stated that the school was positive because the staff got on so well together and that the principal consulted with the staff.</p> <p>Staff members stated that the principal wanted teachers and staff to be like a family but no examples were provided about issues that he consulted teachers on.</p> <p>Staff is unaware (but also unconcerned) about the school budget.</p> <p>Another teacher stated that the Principal valued teacher opinion and wanted all teachers to be on the same page.</p>

<p>19. Classroom and grade organization are appropriate.</p>	<p>➤ Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional groupings reflect the needs of students and charter goals. 	<p>Split classes (1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8) are mandated by the school charter and appear to be working well. With core instruction for all students in the morning (ELA and Math) there is possible movement of students into ability groupings for mastery learning.</p>
<p>20. Safety procedures are in place.</p>	<p>➤ Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy ensures student and staff safety. • Supervision is appropriate to the number of students, the school facility and grounds. • Teachers, parents, students and board members agree students are safe at school. • Number of fire drills/lock down drills held per year. 	<p>During recess periods and the lunch break two staff members are always on student supervision. Staff expressed that the school was safe and policy/practice was in place to ensure safety. The school had two fire drills and one school lock down drill in the fall of 2010. More safety drills were expected in the spring.</p>