

# BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of Achievement and Accountability  
Division of School Evaluation and Accountability

## School Effectiveness Review

Afya Public Charter School

April 17-18, 2012



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## Part I: Introduction and School Background

### ***Introduction to School Effectiveness Review***

The goal of the School Effectiveness Review (SER) is to provide an objective and research-based analysis of the work schools are doing to impact student achievement. Based on research and school-level best practices, four domains were identified for review: highly effective instruction, talented people, engaged families and community, and strategic leadership. In addition, a rubric was created to determine the extent to which each domain and accompanying key actions are being implemented. Each of these domains closely aligns with domains held by City Schools for great school leaders and great teachers and is observable in a set of key actions. Together, these Domains, key actions, and supporting indicators form the City Schools' School Effectiveness Standards.

An SER team, comprised of representatives from SchoolWorks (an educational consulting company) and representatives from City Schools who have extensive knowledge about schools and instruction, gathered information from teachers, students, parents, and leadership during a two-day site visit. During the visit, the SER team observed classrooms, reviewed selected school documents, and conducted focus groups and interviews with school leadership, teachers, students, and parents. The SER team analyzed evidence collected over the course of the SER to determine the extent to which key actions have been adopted and implemented at the school. This report summarizes the ratings in the four Domains and key actions, provides evidence to support the ratings, and – based on a rubric – allocates a performance level for each key action. More information about the SER process is detailed in the School Effectiveness Review protocol, available upon request from SchoolWorks and/or City Schools.

### ***School Background***

The Afya Public Charter School serves approximately 325 students in grades 6-8. The school is located on Brendan Avenue in the Belair-Edison neighborhood of Baltimore, Maryland. The principal has been at the school for four years. The following tables provide information about the school's student demographics and student achievement data.

**Student Demographics**

	Year		
	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009
<b>Student Race/Ethnicity (%)</b>			
African American	96.97	98.50	99.10
American Indian	0	0	0
Asian American	0	0	0
Hispanic	1	0.5	0
White	2	1	0.9
<b>Students Receiving Specialized Services</b>			
Special Education	18.48	17.1	11.7
FARM	82	84.3	78.4
English Language Learners (ELL)	0	0	0

**Student Achievement Data – Maryland State Assessment (MSA) Performance**

	Year		
	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009
<b>MSA Reading (% Proficient/Advanced)</b>	74.3	82.8	88.3
<b>MSA Mathematics (% Proficient/Advanced)</b>	68.9	71.7	81.6

## Part II: Summary of Performance Levels

Based on trends found in the collected evidence, the SER team assigns a performance level to each key action.

Domains and Key Actions	Performance Levels			
	Level 4: Highly Effective	Level 3: Effective	Level 2: Developing	Level 1: Not Effective
<b>Domain 1: Highly effective instruction</b>				
1.1 Teachers plan highly effective instruction.			<b>Effective</b>	
1.2 Teachers deliver highly effective instruction.			<b>Developing</b>	
1.3 Teachers use multiple data sources to adjust practice.			<b>Effective</b>	
1.4 School leadership supports highly effective instruction.	<b>Highly Effective</b>			
1.5 Teachers establish a classroom environment in which teaching and learning can occur.			<b>Effective</b>	
<b>Domain 2: Talented people</b>				
2.1 The school creates and implements systems to select, develop, and retain effective teachers and staff whose skills and beliefs represent the diverse needs of all students.	<b>Highly Effective</b>			
2.2 The school has created and implemented systems to evaluate teachers and staff against individual and school-wide goals, provide interventions to those who are not meeting expectations, and remove those who do not make reasonable improvement.			<b>Effective</b>	
<b>Domain 3: Engaged families and community</b>				
3.1 The school provides a safe and supportive learning environment for students, families, teachers, and staff.	<b>Highly Effective</b>			
3.2 The school cultivates and sustains open communication and decision-making opportunities with families about school events, policies, and the academic and social development of their children.	<b>Highly Effective</b>			
3.3 The culture of the school reflects and embraces student, staff, and community diversity.	<b>Highly Effective</b>			
<b>Domain 4: Strategic leadership</b>				
4.1 The school establishes growth goals that guide strategic planning, teaching, and adjusting of practice to meet student needs.			<b>Effective</b>	
4.2 The school allocates and deploys the resources of time, staff talent, and funding to address the priorities of growth goals for student achievement.	<b>Highly Effective</b>			
4.3 The school provides regular opportunities for teachers and staff to engage in job-embedded, collaborative planning and adjustment of practice.	<b>Highly Effective</b>			
4.4. The school's board of trustees (or operator) provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school.			<b>Effective</b>	

## Part III: Findings on Domains of Effective Schools

Domains and Key Actions	Performance Levels			
	Level 4: Highly Effective	Level 3: Effective	Level 2: Developing	Level 1: Not Effective

### Domain 1: Highly Effective Instruction

<b>Key action 1.1: Teachers plan highly effective instruction.</b>	<b>Effective</b>
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- Teachers develop standards-based lessons. A review of sample lesson plans indicated that teachers design lessons using Maryland Content Standards and Indicator Objectives. In some cases, teachers identified multiple objectives in their lesson plans to describe concepts that “students will know” and skills “students will be able to do”. For example, one science lesson plan indicated that students will know “how the parts of seed plants are classified and be able to identify shared characteristics and functions.” In the same lesson, students will also be able to “analyze and categorize a variety of seed plants by reading, discussing, and labeling parts and functions.” Review of sample lesson plans revealed that teachers across grade levels and content areas develop objectives that are specific, measurable, and aligned to the state curriculum. Document review of lesson plans also indicated that teachers use a variety of templates and language when designing instruction. Lesson plan formats range from those that include a bulleted list of steps to those that organize lessons into clear parts/stages, including the warm up, the introduction, explanation, extension, and evaluation.
- The school provides teachers access to curriculum planning documents. In focus groups, teachers described accessing a variety of curricular resources to plan course content. In many cases, teachers referenced Baltimore City Public Schools System (City Schools) curriculum as their primary framework. For example, mathematics teachers cited Math Works, a City Schools program, as a core resource when planning instruction. Teachers also reported using other programs, as needed, to supplement the curriculum. In focus groups, leaders and teachers reported having multiple opportunities to plan together, beginning in the summer and continuing monthly throughout the year. Teachers also described meeting in subject area teams to develop and refine the scope and sequence used to guide daily instruction. Teachers added that, when appropriate, they continuously improve the curriculum by identifying course gaps and eliminating repetition. Teachers stated they work in vertical teams to ensure that the curriculum is coherent; they described vertical planning as a central priority and said this work had begun in the areas of mathematics, humanities, and science.
- Teachers create lessons that provide some opportunities for critical thinking. A review of sample lesson plans revealed that some teachers design lessons using current research on effective teaching and learning. Some teachers included essential questions, enduring understanding, and potential misconceptions in an effort to provide a rigorous classroom experience. For example, one teacher designed a lesson plan around the Dimensions of Learning – an instructional framework designed by Robert Marzano and Mid-continent for Education and Learning (McREL). The framework includes five dimensions of learning, moving from attitudes and procedures to meaningful learning and habits of mind.

**Key action 1.2: Teachers deliver highly effective instruction.****Developing**

- Interventions are provided for struggling students. In focus groups, leaders, teachers, and students reported that academic assistance is available to students who have not mastered state standards. According to teachers and leaders, teachers often provide tutoring during lunch and after school. A range of interventions is used to remediate learning gaps, including First in Math for mathematics and Word Generation for English language arts/humanities. A review of school documents indicated that interventions are widely communicated and often developed in collaboration with students, parents, and advisors. For example, sample mid-year conference data reveal that interventions are provided for students in the areas of health and fitness, academics, and socio-emotional learning. In focus groups, teachers described the Northwest Evaluation Assessment (NWEA) as a meaningful intervention – NWEA lexile range scores are used to drive independent reading time and to ensure that students read “just right” books.
- Not all teachers use questioning to bring students to higher-order thinking. Classroom observations conducted across the school indicated that teachers use a limited range of questions to advance student learning. For example, in 95% of classes observed (n=20), teachers required students to recall basic knowledge including facts and vocabulary definitions. Recall questions were posed throughout lessons, even in cases where students were beyond introductory knowledge levels. Typically, teachers did not require students to apply their knowledge (15%) or defend their answers (20%). A review of student work samples further indicated that the majority of tasks assigned to students were not challenging. For example, many writing assignments required students to create narratives versus argumentative or analytical writing as required by the Common Core Standards. Class observations further revealed that students were completing fill-in-the-blank worksheets, even when discussing sophisticated concepts such as slavery.
- Not all teachers facilitate student-to-student interaction and academic talk. In a majority of classrooms, teachers directed much of the learning process and required students to answer knowledge and comprehension questions periodically throughout the lesson. Students were often passive learners and typically engaged in lessons by paying attention and responding to teacher directives. In 20% of classes, students generated questions related to the lesson objective. For example, in one class, a student asked, “Why are they called astronauts?” and “How can a shuttle ride on a jet?” Typically, however, students asked procedural questions, such as “What do you mean by key?”

**Key action 1.3: Teachers use multiple data sources to adjust practice.****Effective**

- Teachers use multiple assessments to measure student progress. The school administers a range of assessments, including the Maryland State Assessments (MSA), City Schools’ benchmarks in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics, and teacher-created assessments, such as quizzes and tests. This year, the school also administered the NWEA to determine strengths and weaknesses in student performance. In focus groups, leaders reported that they compared assessment data with report card grades in order to identify discrepancies in how they measure student success across the school. Leaders further noted that when discrepancies arose, they discussed implications with faculty and determined how to better achieve consistency across assessments and assessment metrics.
- Teachers analyze student data to identify strengths and weaknesses in skill and content area. As noted above, Afya administers the NWEA to obtain individualized student performance data. NWEA reports

are used to determine specific standards and skills that students have not mastered and to determine groups for re-teaching. In focus groups, teachers consistently praised NWEA for producing data specific to individual and groups of students. Teachers also reported that NWEA reports allowed them to isolate skill gaps in specific students, rather than re-teach all students.

- The school uses data to identify unique student needs and assign them to support services, interventions, and opportunities for acceleration. Leaders and teachers stated that – except in mathematics – students are organized homogeneously in classes based on performance. Afya uses the Response to Intervention (RtI) continuum to identify learning gaps and to document progress. Based on NWEA data, each student receives a Tier 1, 2, or 3 designation and corresponding supports. For example, according to the Afya RtI diagram, students designated as Tier 3 require a Child Study Team (CST) referral, regular parent contact, and consultation with designated City Schools’ staff. In focus groups, parents confirmed that students receive interventions specific to their needs. In focus groups, teachers also described efforts to accelerate student learning when possible. For example, teachers described providing targeted mathematics instruction during independent reading time for students who have strong reading scores and weak mathematics scores.

<b>Key action 1.4: School leadership supports highly effective instruction.</b>
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<b>Highly Effective</b>
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- School leadership ensures that teachers engage in ongoing discussions about teaching and learning. A review of school documents indicated that teachers meet frequently to discuss, analyze, and plan. Teachers meet daily in collaborative meetings to discuss units and daily lessons; weekly in content teams to discuss instructional goals; weekly in grade-level teams to discuss operations and student celebrations; and, quarterly in student progress meetings to discuss NWEA data and assign interventions. Leaders confirmed allocating time each summer, fall, and winter for teachers to collaborate. In fact, teachers commonly described having time to plan as a strength of the school. Teachers reported that while they are self-motivated to lead discussions about teaching and learning and to think about growth and improvement, they rely on the director of teaching and learning for additional guidance, facilitation, and leadership, particularly throughout data-driven discussions.
- School leadership provides formative feedback and guidance to teachers about the process and quality of teaching. In focus groups, teachers described informal dialogue, classroom visitation, and team meetings as opportunities for feedback. Teachers reported that leaders provide feedback that is constructive and focused on teaching and learning. In one example, a teacher described an impromptu observation during her first attempt with a Socratic Seminar; while she was ineffective, she was encouraged to practice rather than abandon the approach. In focus groups, teachers reported that feedback and observation occur informally; an administrator is present in their classrooms for 5-10 minutes each day. Many teachers stated, “You don’t even know that it’s happening, it’s so natural.” Leaders also provide guidance to help teachers adjust practice. For example, to support the transition to extended instructional blocks, leaders provided models to help teachers design effective lesson plans.
- School leadership provides professional development aligned to school-wide goals and initiatives. According to leadership, the school’s priority goals are to increase student achievement on reading and mathematics Maryland State Assessments by 10 percentage points. In focus groups, teachers described a variety of professional development opportunities in the school to help them achieve these goals. For example, school documents indicated that teachers received professional development in a range of techniques, including rigorous questioning, accountable talk, small group learning, co-teaching and team

teaching. Some teachers stated, however, that the most effective professional development occurred in the school’s academic program. For example, one teacher described preparing and leading mid-year conferences – a time for teachers, students, and families to reflect on learning and next steps – as a significant learning opportunity. She added, “This [mid-year conferences] is when you learn the most about students.” Teachers further described professional learning communities and team meetings as an integral time for teachers to collaborate around and measure school goals.

<b>Key action 1.5: Teachers establish a classroom environment in which teaching and learning can occur.</b>	<b>Effective</b>
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- Teachers build a positive classroom culture. In focus groups, students described classroom space as clean, organized, and motivating. Behavioral expectations, norms, and rules were posted in 80% of classrooms observed (n=20). Teachers and students demonstrated commitment to the school’s values through positive and respectful interactions. Classroom observations indicated that students interacted with teachers in a positive and respectful manner 90% of the time. PATHS to PAX – a universal intervention strategy used to inspire good behavior in students – is also implemented across the school. Teachers track behavior and use incentives and disincentives to encourage students to make healthy decisions – all elements of the PAX program.
- Teachers implement routines to maximize instructional time. As observed during the visit and described by teachers, the school uses a common approach to transition students from class-to-class to ensure that students are ready to learn. Upon arrival, students are greeted by name at the door, prompted to shake hands with teachers, and given immediate directions for the opening task. Upon departure, students discuss what they learned that day. Consistent routines are also used to ensure that in-class transitions are smooth. For example, Sparks are used to give students a mental break during the 110-minute instructional blocks. Physical education teachers push into core instruction by engaging students in physical games like “keep it up” or “wall sits.” Classroom observations indicated that less than 10% of time was used for transitions in all classes.
- Teachers reinforce positive behavior, redirect off-task behavior, and de-escalate challenging behavior. Teachers use a variety of approaches to direct and redirect student behavior. Example strategies observed included playing a single note on the harmonica, using 1-2-3 eyes on me, counting down from 5-4-3-2-1, and using physical movement like snaps and stomps. Some teachers use positive behavior to model expectations. For example, one teacher said, “I like the way she got ready right away.” In a majority of classrooms, students were on-task and attentive. In 80% of classes observed, teachers used less than 10% of instructional time redirecting students.

## Domain 2: Talented People

**Key action 2.1: The school creates and implements systems to select, develop, and retain effective teachers and staff whose skills and beliefs represent the diverse needs of all students.**

**Highly Effective**

- School leadership uses multiple measures to assess each candidate’s alignment with the skills required for the position, as well as core beliefs held by the school community. In focus groups, teachers described participating in several components of the hiring process, including: observing the school in action on multiple occasions (including after school); observing candidates as they interact with students; observing candidates as they deliver instruction to students at their home school; discussing student work, projects, and writing assignments with Afya school leadership; and having informal conversations with Afya’s leadership team on educational philosophy. In focus groups, teachers described recruitment and selection as a strength of the school.
- School leadership has created informal mentoring programs to support teacher development. According to school documents, new teachers receive ongoing support. Teachers reported that while teacher mentoring is informal, it occurs naturally in the building. Teachers described their peers and school leaders as accessible and helpful. Supports include informal check-ins, visits, and resource sharing. Teachers say they “...arrive with the expectation that we should help each other.” As noted earlier, teachers participate in an array of teams and meetings to sustain professional growth and a focus on teaching and learning. Interviews with stakeholders across the school characterized the school culture as collaborative and motivating.
- School leadership acknowledges and celebrates the accomplishments of teachers. In focus groups, teachers described efforts made by the leadership team to create a healthy working environment for teachers. Examples include sponsoring baby and wedding showers for teachers; initiating March madness events; sending weekly emails; providing snacks for team meetings and lunches for teachers; and giving sweatshirts to teachers to wear to show school pride. In focus groups, teachers frequently made statements such as, “I wouldn’t teach anywhere else;” and “I love it here.”

**Key action 2.2: The school has created and implemented systems to evaluate teachers and staff against individual and school-wide goals, provide interventions to those who are not meeting expectations, and remove those who do not make reasonable improvement.**

**Effective**

- School leadership uses the City Schools Performance Based Evaluation System (PBES) to measure and support teacher performance. The evaluation process includes several steps, including initial planning conferences, pre-observation conferences, formal observations and feedback, and planning for individual development and goal setting. Sample observation and feedback forms indicated that teachers receive feedback aligned to school-wide initiatives, including providing specific feedback to students on Afya classroom expectations at the start of the year.
- Teachers and staff are aware of performance expectations. Leaders communicate expectations to staff in a variety of ways, including through the documentation of school procedures and standards. School leaders created guidance for teachers to use in planning the first 30 days of school. An example of guidance includes identifying goals for students, teachers, advisors, classrooms, and the school as a whole to achieve. Teachers are expected to “...create a community of learners, manage extending blocks

of times to meet the needs of all learners, and assess students for baseline data” during the first 30 days in their classrooms.

- School leadership provides support and interventions for teachers. School leaders described differentiating support provided to teachers. In focus groups, leaders described working with small groups of teachers on skills, including classroom management. As noted above, the leadership team also engages teachers informally through individual and small group interactions. Teachers further reported that, each year, the principal creates five goals for teachers on which to work. Goals are crafted and aligned to the school’s mission of ensuring that students are academically, physically, and socio-emotionally healthy.

**Domain 3: Engaged Families and Community**

<b>Key action 3.1: The school provides a safe and supportive learning environment for students, families, teachers, and staff.</b>	<b>Highly Effective</b>
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- The school community shares an understanding of, and commitment to, the school mission, vision, and values. The school’s mission is to develop students who are academically, physically, and socio-emotionally healthy. When asked to describe the mission, all stakeholders referenced the three pillars of academic, physical, and socio-emotional health. Staff and student uniforms, staffing structures, and programming evidence the school’s commitment to physical fitness. Members of the leadership team, teachers, and students dress in clothing appropriate for gym; the school employs five physical education teachers to support health instruction, Sparks, and gym. To support socio-emotional growth, the school captures “Hopes and Dreams” for each student and posts them in hallways around the school. Teachers also eat and work out with students in order to build caring and close relationships.
- Students, staff, and families feel physically and emotionally safe. In focus groups, parents and students described the school as safe. Parents reported that administration and teachers are present in the parking lot to monitor arrival and dismissal. Students further reported that cameras are placed strategically around the school. Leaders and teachers also reported working to create a positive climate by celebrating student accomplishments with awards.

<b>Key action 3.2: The school cultivates and sustains open communication and decision-making opportunities with families about school events, policies, and the academic and social development of their children.</b>	<b>Highly Effective</b>
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- The school uses multiple strategies to encourage parent participation. School leadership reported using Friday Messages to communicate key information to families and to strategically motivate participation in critical initiatives, including mid-year conferences. Both teachers and leaders noted that, as a result of consistent communication leading up to the event, 98% of families attended the January 2012 mid-year conferences. School leaders also use incentives to focus teachers on family engagement at key events. For example, teachers received \$50 when parent participation exceeded 90% for the mid-year conference.
- The school uses multiple strategies to communicate information about school policies, events, and the academic and social development of students to families and communities. As noted above, a range of strategies are used to communicate events and initiatives to families. Student achievement is also made

public with families through letters, telephone calls, mid-year conference reports, and in-class data walls. Class observations indicated that teachers track student progress toward the school-wide goal of 80% mastery. Stars are used to reflect individual student progress and to communicate class-wide performance. The school also partners with the Belair-Edison Neighborhood Newspaper to give voice to student ideas and school events. Sample Belair-Edison newspapers revealed that Afya students were featured in several editions, including the Winter 2008, April 2010, and June 2011 editions.

- Families are active participants in school events. Board members, leaders, and teachers described family engagement as critical to the school’s success. To ensure that families engage meaningfully to support student learning and the school at large, leaders and teachers reported encouraging 100% attendance at five core events: orientation, the Afya one-mile race, the American Education week breakfast and mid-year conferences, 8<sup>th</sup> grade closing meetings, and high school choice meetings. Parents are also voting members of the board and are beginning to join subcommittees. Board members and leaders confirmed a desire to include parents in financial and budgetary decisions. Finally, school leadership administers surveys each year to generate ideas for parent volunteerism across the school. Stakeholders across the school expressed a desire for continued and increased parent involvement.

**Key action 3.3: The culture of the school reflects and embraces student, staff, and community diversity.**

**Highly Effective**

- The school’s academic program reflects a commitment to provide a supportive learning environment for all students. In focus groups, leaders and teachers referenced developmentally appropriate practices for middle school students. For example, leaders and teachers described differentiating advisory curriculum to ensure that students focus on critical aspects of their development, including developing study skills in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, finding similarities in peers in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and developing emotional self-control in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The culminating wellness project also increases in responsibility based on grade level. For example, students in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade focus on completing the one-mile Afya run, seventh grade students prepare a healthy community meal, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students develop a community health fair. According to leadership, a variety of structures ensure that diversity is celebrated in the student body: class libraries are differentiated based on student interest, including opportunities to read Shakespeare, as well as Asian and Jewish literature; counselors increase support for 7<sup>th</sup> grade students since scores achieved this year determine high school placements; all special education students are included in physical education classes; and, posters designating Afya as a safe and inclusive space for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students and their allies.
- The school’s data indicate that school staff is diverse in terms of race and teaching experience. School demographic data indicate that teachers are ethnically diverse: 31% of teachers are African American, 12% are Asian American, 4% are Hispanic, and 54% are White. Teachers also have varying levels of education: 65% of teachers hold Master’s degrees, 4% hold Doctorates, and 31% hold Bachelor degrees. Leadership reported that diversity in teaching experience is important to the life of a school. Data reveal that teaching expertise is balanced across the school: 46% of teachers have five years of experience or less, 42% have between five and ten years experience, and 12% have worked for more than ten years.
- Community partners provide services to meet the needs of students and the school. In focus groups, leaders described a number of partnerships to increase opportunities for students. Partnerships include the Middle Grades Partnership for summer programming; the Belair-Edison community paper to communicate school events to the local neighborhood; the Family League for after-school programming,

and the Baltimore Urban Debate League for student debate. The school also partners with Johns Hopkins University for student interventions and support for school-wide implementation of the PAX program.

**Domain 4: Strategic Leadership**

<b>Key action 4.1: The school establishes growth goals that guide strategic planning, teaching, and adjusting of practice to meet student needs.</b>	<b>Effective</b>
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- School leadership is required to create an action plan that is based on data related to student learning. According to school and district documents, City Schools, this year, created the School Performance Planning (SPP) process to help schools make data-driven decisions. Afya school leadership developed the School Performance Plan (SPP) to guide decisions for the 2011-12 school year. The SPP includes a needs assessment and annual measurable objectives (AMO) per grade level. The SPP also contains an action planning worksheet including evaluation measures, person responsible, timeline, and resources.
- School leadership establishes goals for student learning. The SPP includes annual measurable objectives for school-wide student performance on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) in reading, mathematics, and science. The number of students scoring proficient is expected to increase by 10 percentage points at all grade levels. Interviews with teachers and leaders revealed that consistent growth goals have also been set for classrooms across the school. Students in each class are expected to master 80% of all course standards. Classroom observations confirmed that mastery goals are set, posted, and tracked by some teachers. PAX challenges are also set to encourage positive behavioral choices.
- Teachers and staff participate in a regular analysis of data but do not always specify plans for re-teaching or adjustment of practice. School documents indicated that data reports are used to group students by performance. In focus groups, leaders and teachers reported that NWEA data inform re-teaching plans, as well as identify additional student needs, including mathematics or reading interventions. Teachers and leaders participate in quarterly student progress meetings to analyze individual, class, and grade-level data. Sample minutes indicated that teachers receive specific data about individual learning gaps, such as multiplying and dividing decimals. The analysis also yields specific performance bands for each student, identifying students scoring below 80, 60, and 50 percentage points. School documents further revealed that teachers are beginning to develop re-teaching plans. A review of these plans confirmed that while teachers use data to analyze performance and to begin to organize plans for re-teaching, specific interventions and re-teaching strategies are not identified.

<b>Key action 4.2: The school allocates and deploys the resources of time, staff talent, and funding to address the priorities of growth goals for student achievement.</b>	<b>Highly Effective</b>
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- Budget distributions and resource allocations support teaching and learning. Board members reported, and a review of the school’s budget confirmed, that the school relies almost exclusively on per pupil funding to operate Afya. The school received an unqualified opinion on its most recent financial audit and is considered fiscally sound. In focus groups, teachers reported that they have sufficient instructional materials. Classroom observations indicated that classrooms are print- and resource-rich

with ample supplies to support instruction, including smart boards, classroom libraries, and classroom sets of laptops.

- School leadership leverages teacher and staff talent. In focus groups, leaders and teachers described comprehensive selection processes to ensure the fit of applicants with Afya’s culture and an intention to build teacher leaders in Afya. Many teachers expressed confidence in the expertise of their peers, as well as in the school’s essential priorities. Teachers described taking on informal leadership roles like professional learning community (PLC) head or content-based instructional lead. Teachers further reported that leaders make strategic decisions on when teachers join the decision-making process. While leaders solicit teacher input on operational decisions like master scheduling and behavior incentives, they ensure that teachers can focus on teaching. Teachers described the staff climate as strategic and collaborative.
- The school’s schedule maximizes time for student and staff learning. In focus groups, school leaders described revising the master schedule to lengthen instructional time with students. The schedule shifted by increasing two humanities periods by 45 minutes each day. The school schedule also provides two daily planning periods for teachers to plan independently and with peers. In focus groups, teachers described feeling satisfied with the amount of planning time provided each day. In addition, classical music plays to signal transitions and to set a positive tone as students move between classes.

**Key action 4.3: The school provides regular opportunities for teachers and staff to engage in job embedded, collaborative planning and adjustment of practice.**

**Highly Effective**

- School leadership facilitates purposeful collaborations that enhance school culture and student learning. School structures such as mid-year conferences facilitate collaborative planning with multiple stakeholders. Students, parents, and advisors described conferences as an opportunity to meet annually to discuss student progress and consider interventions in the areas of pertaining to academic, physical, and socio-emotional health. Teachers also reported that the pay for performance structure motivates teachers to assume more responsibility; teachers receive compensation for additional hours they spend developing curricula. The school’s facility also supports an open school culture. Couches are situated in hallways to encourage parent involvement and teacher collaboration. On the day of the visit, the site visit team observed parents, teachers, and leaders engaging in such collaborations in open space around the school. As noted above, teachers participate in a variety of teams to ensure they collaborate in meaningful ways.
- Teachers and staff participate in the planning and implementation of school events. Focus groups with students, teachers, leaders, and parents indicated that a range of clubs is available to support student interest. Leaders reported that clubs are developed based on teacher capacity and interest. Students reported participating in athletic, dance, art, and thematic clubs, including Summer Olympics, lawn games, soccer, modern dance, arts and design, drawing and lettering, master chef, chess and checkers, rocketry club, sign language, and red carpet divas extraordinaire.

**Key action 4.4: The school’s board of trustees (or operator) provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school.**

**Effective**

- The governing board maintains essential knowledge of the school. In a focus group, board members evidenced knowledge of the school and its performance. Board members described differences in

school performance between both schools managed by Afya Corporation – Afya and Tunbridge. For example, board members compared reading scores and parent engagement at both schools. Board members were also familiar with aspects of the academic program specific to Afya, including NWEA, the Afya mile, and teacher-student lunches. Board members also reported on financial information, including cash flow, audit results, and fundraising plans for the school.

- The governing board maintains effective governance practices to ensure organizational viability. School documents indicated that the board created a mission to guide decision making at the board level. A portion of the Afya board mission is to “manage finances and facilities of both schools with integrity and responsibility; develop and strengthen the overall organizational capacity and the long term viability; and, recruit, train, and evaluate the highest quality school principals and organizational leadership.” In focus groups, board members describe other effective practices; including drafting a board manual to ensure that new members are clear on Afya bylaws and expectations. The board further reported that they are focused on rethinking the school’s organizational and staffing structure to ensure organizational viability. One member noted a desire to create a more sustainable staffing structure – one that did not depend on the energy of the founders. Board members also reported conducting a comprehensive mid-year evaluation of the principal, although this is not a City Schools requirement.
- The governing board is developing processes to provide strong oversight of the academic program. Board members reported they receive monthly data reports from school leadership, including NWEA and MSA results. Minutes taken from August and November board meetings indicated an ongoing focus on the school’s academic performance. For example, board members allocate a majority of committee discussion to setting and reviewing MSA benchmark goals (e.g., monitor student progress) and discussing key policies, including teacher evaluations. Leaders also reported that they have begun to use learning walks to observe the academic program and to prioritize the most important data for the board to gather and monitor. Board members reported the first learning walk occurred in the fall; a second is planned for the spring.

## Appendix A: SER Team Members

The SER visit to the Afya Public Charter School was conducted on April 17-18, 2012 by a team of representatives from SchoolWorks and City Schools.

**Carlton Jordan Jr., Team Leader.** Carlton is a consultant for SchoolWorks. A former senior associate with The Education Trust, he works nationally, helping schools understand and implement effective literacy strategies. He has served as a coach for urban teachers in Philadelphia, Lancaster, Los Angeles, Portland and Washington DC. He is featured in the ASCD video series, *Examining Student Work*, which captures aspects of The Education Trust's Standard In Practice work in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Prior to joining the Trust in August 1998, Mr. Jordan taught middle and high school English language arts in Montclair, New Jersey. He was a key member of a team that created a detracked middle school in Montclair, called Renaissance, and an untracked ninth-grade English language arts course called World Literature. The World Literature work is featured in the videotape, *Off Track: Classroom Privilege For All*, winner of the Silver Apple Education Award. Before teaching in Montclair, Mr. Jordan was an adjunct lecturer at the State University of New York at Albany in the Africana Studies Department and a writing instructor for the EOP Department. He holds his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Albany State University in New York.

**Jenai Emmel, Team Writer.** Jenai is a consultant and a former project manager for SchoolWorks. While there, she oversaw the charter expansion, renewal, and diagnostic process on behalf of the Chicago Public Schools. Since beginning school inspection work in 2009, she has evaluated nearly 100 public and public charter schools across the country. Jenai began her career as a high school English teacher through Teach for America and, in 2003, was selected as Georgia Teacher of the Year by Junior Achievement. Over the span of 14 years, she's held a number of roles focused on district and school improvement, including change management associate for the NYC Department of Education, director of instructional solutions for KIPP AMP Academy, and assistant principal for the Inner City Education Foundation. She brings expertise in teaching, change management, leadership coaching and training, school evaluation, and more than 12 years of university, school, and not-for-profit governance experience. She holds an undergraduate degree in English Language and Literature from the University of Virginia and a Masters in Education Policy and Management from Harvard University. Today, Jenai sits on the Teachers21 Board of Directors and devotes the majority of her time to Schools That Can, where she builds a citywide collaborative around networks of high performing faith-based, district, independent, and charter schools.

**Paige Isaacson.** Paige is the Manager for the School Effectiveness Reviews in the Office of Achievement and Accountability (OAA) in Baltimore City Public Schools. Prior to joining OAA, Ms. Isaacson was a Team Lead in the Office of School Support Networks. Ms. Isaacson is also a former teacher in Baltimore City Schools in traditional, charter, and non-public schools. She has experience teaching kindergarten through sixth grades. Ms. Isaacson is a Teach for America alumna and holds a B.A. in Business Administration from the University of Kansas and an Ed.M. in Education with a focus on Administration and Supervision and Data-Based Decision Making from Johns Hopkins University.

**Dwayne Smith.** Dwayne has been a data analyst in the School Evaluation and Accountability division of the Office of Achievement and Accountability since 2009. He developed the Rapid Response Tool, which tracks various school-level metrics monthly over the course of the school year. The Tool supports the district's Student Support Networks with strategic planning and interventions. Mr. Smith also conducts ad-hoc data requests, provides data support to the Turnaround Schools Office and to the Expanding Great Options committee. Previously, he worked for eight years as a research associate at Policy Studies Associates in

Washington, DC. There, he managed research projects using qualitative and quantitative research methods to evaluate youth development and youth enrichment programs across the country.



## Appendix B: School Report Comments

### Domain 1: Highly Effective Instruction

None

### Domain 2: Talented People

None

### Domain 3: Engaged Families and Communities

None

### Domain 4: Strategic Leadership

None

### Additional Comments

None