2020 UMSL Annual Review Report: Part 1
The Biome

Contents:

Summary Page (page 2)

Evaluation Standards
Ten elements of school evaluation:
I. Transformative and Innovative Vision
II. Responsible Board Governance
III. Strong School Leaders
IV. Transformational Curriculum
V. Empowering Culture of Achievement
VI. Transformational Teachers
VII. Engaged Parents and Community
VIII. Comprehensive Student Support System
IX. Substantive Student Academic Achievement
X. Sound Financial Operations

NOTE:
In the Evidence columns, under Required Documents:

- Documents in **bold blue** must be submitted to the Charter School Office.
- Documents in **bold black** must be on hand, but do not need to be submitted to the Charter School Office.
Summary Page

Please note that the comments in this report reflect our analysis as of April 2020.

1. **Areas of Strength**
   Here are the top strengths that you can leverage to continuously improve and move you towards your vision.
   - **Board Governance:**
     - Board restructuring and leadership changes provide opportunities to strengthen governance of The Biome.
   - **School Leadership:**
     - Confident, knowledgeable and experienced leadership proactively address challenges. They strengthen collaboration and partnership among staff and with parents and the larger community.
   - **Curriculum and Instruction:**
     - The Biome’s focus on strengthening literacy instruction continues to bear fruit.
     - The Biome reviewed the math curriculum and has begun to implement a process to strengthen the scope and sequence and instructional approach for that subject in SY21.
   - **Culture of Achievement:**
     - The Biome leadership and staff have created a safe, warm learning environment. Student behavior is improving.
   - **Teachers:**
     - Passionate and hardworking staff are instrumental in creating the school’s positive culture.
   - **Parent and Community Engagement:**
     - School-parent collaboration is strong.
     - The number and depth of school community partnerships represents a significant strength.
   - **Student Support System**
     - The Biome has made great progress; putting the Blue Room for socio-emotional support and the Tier 2/3 systems in place.

2. **Areas for Growth**
   Here are the key areas for growth that could move you towards your vision.
   - **Vision:**
     - All stakeholders should consider how The Biome can fit the current priority of improving students’ knowledge and skills in reading and math within the vision’s focus on creating a schoolwide learning environment that is student-centered, problem-based, and exploratory.
   - **Student Achievement - SY2019**
     - State outcomes were disappointing and complicated the charter renewal process. The Biome must improve student performance in ELA and math.
   - **Board Governance:**
     - With a new structure and several new members in place, prioritize board development and training to ensure it has the capacity to effectively govern the school.
     - Complete development of The Biome’s school leader evaluation process and begin implementation for SY2021.
     - Continue to review and update polices to ensure they’re still compliant with state and federal statutes, rules and regulations.
   - **School Leadership:**
     - Consider how to support the new principal’s efforts to strengthen the math program and empower staff to develop their curriculum design and instructional skills in the area of inquiry learning.
- **Curriculum and Instruction:**
  - Strengthen efforts to integrate student-centered, problem-based learning in all discipline areas and develop teacher instructional skills in this area.
  - Continue to focus on strengthening the math curriculum and its delivery.

- **Culture of Achievement**
  - The behavior of a small but significant group of students impacts culture in many classrooms. Teachers cite the discipline system as the key to a solution while leaders cite a need to improve teacher management skills and parent cooperation. School leaders and staff should collaborate to clarify and reach consensus on what The Biome’s culture of achievement should look like.

- **Teachers:**
  - Continue to develop teacher knowledge and skills in inquiry-based curriculum design and pedagogy, math instruction, balanced literacy and behavior management.

- **Student Support System**
  - Consider providing more support for the Student Support Services coordinator and the delivery of SPED services to students.
I. Transformative and Innovative Vision

A transformational school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Develops a transformational mission and vision for its students and their families.</td>
<td>i. Reaching the vision clearly places students on paths of greater opportunity in life.</td>
<td>Required Documents:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Charter Application: (Met as part of the charter application approval process.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Approved Charter Amendments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Students, parents and staff understand and are invested in the mission and vision. | a) Students, parents and staff can articulate the mission and vision. | Required Documents: |
| | b) In their classrooms, teachers and students are mission driven as indicated by their enthusiasm, active and consistent participation and task completion. | Other Evidence |
| | | • Student, parent and staff interviews and survey data |
| | | • Classroom observations |

Element I: Vision

- According to its website homepage, The Biome “offers customized, project-based and student-centered learning opportunities with an emphasis on growth mindset and STEAM.” If the school truly embodied this vision, one would instantly feel it in the halls and classrooms throughout the building, find its structural foundations within the written curriculum, and most important, observe it in the classrooms where students actively engage in “project based and student centered” experiences. The Biome’s culture is very positive and academically oriented, and pieces of the vision are in place; but the culture does not embody the vision. That stated, as the renewal process and meeting before the State Board of Education in January 2020 revealed, The Biome must improve in developing student knowledge and skills in reading and math. This challenge, one that all St. Louis charter schools face, has been front and center at The Biome since year two and it must continue to be. Fitting this priority within the school’s original vision has not been easy. The board, administration and teachers will have to address these questions:
  - How can we create a school that truly reflects our vision while ensuring that our students develop their basic skills?
  - Are there untapped areas within the current academic program that we can develop into more robust problem-based, exploratory approaches to student learning?
- Related to the comment above, board interviews strongly indicate the board is “in flux” given its new board structure, a new board chair and new members. The board’s understanding of the challenge concerning The Biome’s vision lacks depth. The Board must meet this concern head on.
## II. Responsible Governance
The Board of Directors of a transformational school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| a. Operates legitimately and in the best interest of its students and mission. | i. Considers implications of decisions on the mission of the school.  
   ii. The Board annually self-evaluates using a standardized tool that assesses performance based on setting goals, developing policy, communication with the school and community and oversight of school leadership.  
   iii. Ensures the board and school have all necessary insurance policies in place including:  
       a. Director and Officers  
       b. General Liability  
       c. Professional Liability  
       d. Property  
       e. Workmen’s Compensation  
       f. Employee Dishonesty | Documents  
   • Board Self-Evaluation  
   • Proof of Insurance Policies  
       o Directors and Officer Coverage  
       o General Liability  
       o Professional Liability  
       o Property  
       o Workmen Compensation  
       o Employee Dishonesty/Crime (minimum $500k)  
   Other Evidence  
   • Observation of board meetings  
   • UMSL Sponsor communication with board president and/or directors |
| b. Recruits and maintains a strong governing board with diverse backgrounds and skills sets | i. Includes individuals who are experienced in managing organizations and well versed in charter law  
   ii. Maintains among its Directors a balance of skills and professional expertise (i.e. K-12 education, business, marketing, legal, accounting, fundraising, real estate etc.) necessary to fulfill all Board obligations.  
   iii. Provides new board members a formal orientation on the purpose and educational vision of the school, the school’s performance objectives, and their roles and legal responsibilities  
   iv. Seeks information and professional development opportunities related to charter operation, laws, and effective non-profit board work | Documents  
   • Board Organizational Structure Chart  
   • Board Director Profiles/Contact Information  
   • Assurance of Board Criminal Background and FCSR (child abuse registry) Checks  
   • Board Development Plans  
   • Board Member Financial Disclosure Confirmation  
   Other Evidence  
   • Director interviews |
| c. Conducts its business in compliance with all state statutes and regulations | i. Meetings are regularly scheduled and appropriately conducted.  
   ii. Governance records and documentation are appropriately created and maintained.  
   iii. School business is conducted in a transparent manner subject to the provisions and sections 610.010 to 610.030, open meetings law; free of conflict of interest, and models best practices regarding governance roles and responsibilities. | Documents  
   • Board Meeting Agenda  
   • Board Meeting Calendar  
   • Board Meeting Document Packets  
   • Board Meeting Minutes - Approved  
   Other Evidence  
   • Observation of board meetings  
   • Board meeting notices and signage |
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **d.** Ensures that policies are complete, regularly reviewed, updated as needed, and followed in a fair and consistent manner | i. Develops, adopts, and follows a comprehensive set of bylaws which at a minimum include conflicts of interest policies, meeting protocols and procedures, and formal delineations of roles and authorities within the charter school  
ii. Regularly reviews board policies, updating as necessary.  
iii. Organizes and makes available to the public the school policies utilizing multiple forms of communication | Documents  
- **Board Policy Manual and Bylaws**;  
Other Evidence  
- Observation of board meetings  
- Board meeting agendas and minutes  
- Evidence in board minutes that check registry has been reviewed and approved by the board. |
| **e.** Employs a clear strategic approach to meeting the school’s vision | i. With the school leaders, develops strategic plans that ensure fidelity to the school’s vision by addressing critical issues; including school performance, financial management, human resource management, facilities, and quality improvement.  
ii. Monitors progress towards goals identified in the strategic plans | Documents  
- **Strategic Plan** (same as for School Leader)  
Other Evidence  
- Observation of board meetings  
- Board meeting approved minutes |
| **f.** Selects, supports, and annually evaluates the school leader | i. Selects a highly qualified school leader and defines the role the leader plays in the overall operation of the charter school.  
ii. Supports the administrator’s decision making  
iii. Establishes clear expectations of and assesses the performance of the school leader using a consistent evaluation instrument reflecting the mission and vision of the school, the performance goals set forth in the performance contract, the day-to-day management of the school and progress made on yearly school goals. | Documents  
- **Board Evaluation of School Leader** (blank template)  
Other Evidence  
- Chair and Director interviews  
- Board meeting observations |
| **g.** Monitors the school’s education program, operational procedures, and fiscal health in cooperation with the sponsor. | i. Directs the school leader to provide an annual self-evaluation to the sponsor and regular reports of student performance, academic progress, and the school’s fiscal health to the sponsor and to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.  
ii. Monitors student academic performance, curriculum and instruction, and operational procedures and fiscal management. | Documents  
- **School Annual Self-Evaluation** (same as for School Leader)  
Other Evidence  
- Chair and Director interviews  
- Board meeting observations  
- Board meeting approved minutes |
| **h.** Fulfills its fiduciary responsibility for public funds by ensuring the school operates in a fiscally sound and appropriate manner. | i. Reviews and approves annual budgets and budget amendments.  
ii. Reviews the school’s monthly financial statements/spreadsheets that include updates on:  
  a. Current enrollment | Documents  
- Attendance and student data reporting  
- Monthly financial reports to board to include **Weighted Average Daily Attendance (WADA)** |
| b. | Average Daily Attendance (body count and percentage) |
| c. | Number of students enrolled who receive Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL) |
| d. | Number of students enrolled with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) |
| e. | Number of students enrolled and identified with a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) |

iii. Reviews and approves monthly check register.
iv. Provides oversight of school leader’s handling of cash accounts and credit card accounts.
v. Provides oversight of school leader’s handling of attendance reporting.

---

### Element II: Board Governance

**Recommendation: Board Policy Review**

Our office strongly recommends that each of our boards regularly review board policies to ensure that they are current with Missouri statutes.

#### Areas of Strength

- (a) Operates in best interests of students and mission
  - Board meetings and individual member interviews strongly indicate that the board cares deeply about the educational mission of the school and operates with the best interests of students in mind.

- (b) Recruits and maintains - Diverse backgrounds and skill sets:
  - Under a new chair, the board remains diverse and represents important knowledge and experience in business management, marketing, finance, diversity and inclusion, civic engagement and development, technology, entrepreneurship, and educational leadership.

#### Areas for Growth

- (a) Operates in best interests of students and mission
  - Refer to the comments in **Element I: Vision** above.

- (b) Recruits and maintains - Diverse backgrounds and skill sets:
  - Currently, only one member brings strong knowledge and experience specific to school administration and leadership to the board. Consider adding members with experience specifically related to elementary education, school leadership, students with special needs, and curriculum and instruction.
• (c) Compliance with state-federal statutes and regulations:
  o To the best of UMSL’s knowledge, The Biome’s board is compliant with state and federal statutes and regulations except where specifically noted in the right-hand column of this report.
  o All board members have cleared Criminal Background checks and FCSR registration.
  o The board is compliant with Missouri’s Sunshine Law.

• (d) Policies:
  o The Biome’s most recent policy review occurred in 2018, leading to a total update of the 4000 series. Other updates occurred in 2019. Continue to review and update polices to ensure they’re still compliant with state and federal statutes, rules and regulations.
    ▪ Related to this, please submit your most current and complete policy manual to UMSL’s required documents site.
  o A suicide prevention-intervention policy has not been adopted by the Biome board. This is required by statute.

• (e) Strategic approach:
  o The Biome has a Strategic Plan in place driving an Annual Action Plan that includes:
    ▪ Five Initiatives that appropriately target The Biome’s significant challenges
    ▪ Measurable outcomes for each initiative
    ▪ Action steps, stewards and benchmarks for each outcome

• (f) School leader relations and evaluation:
  o Leader and board interviews indicate that the relationship between the board and the President/CEO of The Biome is characterized by respect, trust and collaboration.
  o The Board Chair put together a brief framework for the President/CEO annual evaluation.

• (d) Policies:
  o The school has faced a lot of challenges this past year, including a new board structure, a new board chair, the departure of a key staff person in operations, weaker than expected state assessment outcomes, and an impending change in the principal position. These impacted board cohesiveness and efficacy; which in turn has impacted progress on the five strategic plan initiatives.
  o Board and school leader interviews indicate that tight finances pose a significant challenge. The Biome needs more resources to fully address the needs of a wide-range of students with many learning differences.
  o Board interviews indicate that some would like written definitions and expectations for their roles, including those related to fundraising.

• (f) School leader relations and evaluation:
  o Per the comment in the left-hand column, UMSL expects the board to build upon the framework for its school leader evaluation and submit a thorough evaluation process to UMSL’s required documents site due Sept. 1, 2020.
    ▪ Strongly consider revisiting the framework to ensure it reflects best practice:
• (g) Monitoring responsibility:
  o The board monitors ED performance, student achievement and financials.
  o Board interviews indicate that the board is aware of the key challenges and issues school leadership faces and provides appropriate support.
• (h) Fulfills its fiduciary responsibility
  o The Biome board fulfills its fiduciary responsibility.
  o Refer also to Element X when UMSL’s Charter School Office submits Part 2 of the annual review to the board.
• (i) Responsibilities to UMSL
  o With the exception of how the board evaluates the President and CEO of The Biome, it fulfills its responsibilities to UMSL, as defined in the contract between the two institutions. Refer to comments in the right-hand column under the subhead: “(f) School leader relations and evaluation.”

Board Development and Training
• As communicated in December, 2019, The Biome board did not submit its Board Development Plan to UMSL. This is a requirement of UMSL’s contractual agreement with The Biome. The purpose of the development plan is to ensure that the board is continually improving its capacity to govern by increasing knowledge and skills related to school governance. UMSL’s Charter Schools Office is willing to work with the Board to develop a plan.
• Board interviews indicate a need for:
  o Training on board governance as part of the orientation for new board members.
  o Training on curriculum theory and practice as it relates to student academic achievement.
- Training on charter school law and school finance.
- Training on school administration related to hiring practices and handling of discipline.
- More background on the charter school landscape.

### Development (Fundraising)
- School leader and board interviews identified establishing a solid and consistent donor flow as an ongoing challenge.
### III. Strong School Leadership and Operations

A transformational school leader:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| a) Invests students, parents and staff in the mission and vision of the school. | i. Communicates the mission and vision on a frequent basis to students, parents and staff.  
ii. Monitors students, parents and staff to gauge their understanding of the mission and vision and the extent to which they're striving to reach it.                                                                                                                             | Required Documents:  
- Other Evidence  
  - School leader interview  
  - Student, staff and parent surveys and interviews  
  - School publications such as newsletters and announcements                                                                                                       |  
| b) Employs a clear strategic approach to meeting the goals of improving student academic achievement | i. With the Board of Directors, develops strategic plans that ensure fidelity to the school's vision by addressing critical issues; including school performance, financial management, human resource management, facilities, and quality improvement  
ii. Articulates and monitors the goals identified in the strategic plans.  
iii. Holds him/herself accountable for specific outcomes outlined in the charter and detailed in the school's performance contract with the sponsor  
iv. Engages in ongoing relevant professional development  
v. Utilizes an effective data communication instrument providing consistent, timely data regarding the school's progress toward meeting agreed upon performance expectations (academic, operational, and financial)  
vi. Implements the academic program in alignment with the school's charter and Missouri Common Core Standards  
vii. Collects, assimilates, and disseminates student achievement data to inform a continuous cycle of school improvement | Required Documents:  
- School Annual Calendar  
- Strategic plan  
- School Leader Mentoring Plan  
- School Leader Professional Development Plan  
- Student Assessment Plan  
- Other Evidence  
  - School leader interview  
  - School leadership team interviews  
  - Teacher interviews  
  - Student data analysis plans                                                                                                                                                  |  
| c) Implements recruitment and enrollment strategies and practices that respect diversity and are consistent with the school’s charter, mission, and vision, as well as federal and state regulations | i. Implements student recruitment strategies that focus on the targeted population stated in its charter and that are inclusive of a diverse range of learners  
ii. Utilizes a public lottery process for open enrollment  
iii. Ensures no practices are implemented which may limit the opportunity for students with special needs to enroll  
iv. Ensures that student enrollment and attendance numbers are in line with the charter agreement, and provide evidence that the school is a viable school of choice for the community. | Required Documents:  
- Enrollment Application  
- Marketing/Recruitment Materials  
- Other Evidence  
  - School leader interview  
  - Observation of lotteries  
  - Enrollment and attendance data  
  - Core data                                                                                                         |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>d)</th>
<th>Develops and sustains a school culture conducive to student learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Maintains a clean and safe environment that supports the educational mission of the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Maintains open, consistent, clear communication among students, staff, parents, and administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>Maintains a school culture conducive to learning and continuous improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv.</td>
<td>Communicates effectively to all stakeholder groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same evidence sources as described in Element IV above.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required Documents:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Onsite observations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parent surveys and interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student surveys and interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff surveys and interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student support staff interviews (Counselors, nurses, social workers, School Psychologists)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discipline, suspension and/or expulsion data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parent complaint/grievance records</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>e)</th>
<th>Employs qualified staff, provides professional development opportunities to improve their performance.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Conducts personnel procedures and practices in a manner that promotes instructional effectiveness and continuous school improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Conducts personnel procedures and practices in a manner that promotes the recruitment and retention of an effective instructional staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>Provides professional development opportunities for all staff members that are aligned to the school’s vision and advances their effectiveness in their roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required Documents:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff Organization Chart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Employee School Handbook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assurance of Faculty/Staff Background Checks (FCSR and fingerprinting)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff Professional Development Plan and Calendar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff Mentoring and Coaching Plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher Evaluation Plan (including blank evaluation forms)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School leader interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff retention data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>f)</th>
<th>Understands and complies with the laws, policies, and state and federal requirements that govern charter schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Participates regularly in professional development opportunities, which provide insight into the trends, issues, and potential changes in the environment in which charter schools operate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Allocates resources based primarily on their impact on student achievement, learning, and well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>Implements business policies and procedures that promote school sustainability, operational integrity, and a focus on student achievement and learning results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv.</td>
<td>Establishes programs and policies that enable all students to be served effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>Ensures timely submission of required data and reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required Documents:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Health Permits (food service)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fire Safety Permit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Building Inspection/Certificate of Occupancy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Elevator Inspection Certificate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• SPED Compliance Plans (IDEA &amp; 504)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Title I Parent Meetings (sign in sheets)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• HQ Parent Notification Letters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
vi. Ensures that school is in compliance with state and federal laws, policies and requirements and provisions in its contract with UMSL in these areas:
   a. Health and safety
   b. Student records:
      i. Thorough and comprehensive
      ii. Secure and confidential
      iii. Appropriate employee access to the data system
   c. Special Education
   d. Title I
   e. Free and reduced lunch
   f. Homeless and ELL students
   g. Fiscal management
   h. State testing
   i. Other operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homeless and ELL Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• ELL Intervention Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ELL Pupil Count/Percentages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Homeless Student Policy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fiscal Management**
(Refer to Element IX: Sound Financial Operations below)

**State Testing**
- Quality Assurance – Grade Level Assessment Assurance Document
- State Exam Security Policy
- State Exam Testing Calendar

**Other Operations**
- Student/Parent Handbook
- Media Policy

**Other Evidence**
- School leader interview
- Document/MOSIS submission history with UMSL and DESE
- Interviews with consultants: Shannon Spradling and Thurma DeLoach
- FERPA compliance procedures
- Student record keeping system

### Element III: School Leadership and Operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Strength</th>
<th>Areas for Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>President</strong></td>
<td><strong>President</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Investment of others:</td>
<td>(a) Investment of others:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The principal and front office staff expressed deep appreciation for The President’s leadership and support.</td>
<td>o Teacher interviews indicate they have opportunities to provide input to school leaders on decisions that impact their work but they don’t think their input is taken seriously enough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Strategic approach towards student achievement:</td>
<td>(b) Strategic approach towards student achievement:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Board interviews indicate confidence in the President’s leadership.</td>
<td>o Refer to comments above in Element II: Board Governance under the “(e) Strategic Approach” subhead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The first initiative of the Annual Action Plan addresses student learning and academic achievement.</td>
<td>o Board and leader interviews identify increased understanding of curriculum and instruction and student academic performance is an area for growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The President has prioritized strengthening the school’s informational infrastructure to increase organizational cohesion and efficiency (data bases and reporting systems).</td>
<td>(c) Recruitment and enrollment strategies:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The President has created an external advisory body of prominent educators to increase his understanding of student academic achievement.</td>
<td>o Some board interviews indicate that the recruitment and application process need to be more consistent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Though a priority, the president stated that it is still a struggle to recruit and hire African-American staff.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

---
(e) Employment:
  o Teaching staff retention from SY19 was 70%. This represents a significant increase over SY18.
  o Support staff retention from SY19 was 82%.

(f) Compliance with state-federal statutes and regulations:
  o With the exceptions noted in the right-hand column, the school is compliant with state and federal statutes.
  o The Biome has a MOCAP board policy in place that complies with RSMo: Section 161.670. MOCAP program availability is featured on the home page of The Biome’s website per statute.
  o All Biome staff have cleared Criminal Background checks and FCSR registration.
  o The Biome limits access to MOSIS and Core Data to appropriate staff as needed by their roles.

Head of School
  • (a) Investment of others:
    o The principal stated that many decisions are made with the teachers through the Principal’s Advisory Council. Many initiatives are driven by the teachers.
    o The SY19 parent survey indicates very strong satisfaction with principal.
    o Teacher interviews and the SY19 teacher survey indicates their belief that the principal supports them and encourages their leadership and instructional decision-making.
    o The SY19 teacher survey indicates school leadership holds them to high standards
  • (b) Strategic approach towards student achievement:
    o The SY19 teacher survey indicates school leadership encourages and facilitates analyzing data to improve student learning.

(d) Culture building:
  o Consider strengthening the staff survey by including questions that address communication and trust between staff and school leadership.

(f) Compliance with state-federal statutes and regulations:
  o The Biome’s Enrollment Application and Family Handbook do not comply with the most recent virtual learning statute (RSMo: Section 161.670). “Availability of the program shall be made clear in the parent handbook, registration documents, and featured on the home page of the school district or charter school’s website.”
  o The Biome does not create or publish an Annual Report Card as mandated by RSMo. Section 160.522. This document is distinct from the school’s Annual Performance Report and involves communication of data and information about the school that goes well beyond student performance on the state assessments. Refer to the statute for guidance.
  o Beginning next year, The Biome must publish the school’s most recent Annual Performance Report (APR) on its website.
Teacher and student interviews indicate they like having the AmeriCorps teachers at the school and enjoy working with them.

- (d) Culture building:
  - Teacher interviews indicate that:
    - The Biome has strong parent engagement.
    - Generally, there’s a collaborative spirit among the teaching staff – especially within grade levels.

- (f) Compliance with state and federal statutes:
  - With exceptions noted in the right-hand column, the school is compliant with state and federal statutes.

**Discipline**

- Teacher and leader interviews indicate that in general, students are well-behaved.
- The principal and teacher interviews cite improvements in school-wide behavior management over previous years. They give credit to a revamped student support/SPED team that is now in place.

**Discipline**

- Some teacher interviews indicate concern that many of their students bring trauma with them, making it challenging to manage behavior in positive ways.
  - They cite a lack of restorative practice in how discipline is handled.
  - Related to this, they cite inconsistencies when the school applies the discipline policy to the most extreme/challenging of students.
    - They believe that these students are left in the classroom too long before external interventions kick in, leading to disruptions to the education of other students.

- Leader interviews indicate teachers need to improve classroom management skills that effectively address challenging student behaviors.
- The principal would like greater parent involvement and support in building their own child’s commitment to success in school.

**Communication**

- As in previous years, teacher interviews indicate concerns about the timeliness of internal school communications; important information arrives too late to make adequate preparations or schedule adjustments.
**Operations/HR/Facilities**
- Individuals involved in the Biome’s management, operations and HR wear many hats but have come together to create a solid team that address a wide spectrum of duties.
- The Biome students participate in fire, earthquake, tornado and active shooter/intruder response drills.
- The SY19 teacher survey indicated satisfaction with the facility and resources (instructional materials, technology, supplies) available to them.
  - The administration has been quick to provide materials and supplies to teachers when requested.
- The Biome is satisfied with the quality of food and service provided by its food vendor.
- DESE expressed no concerns around Federal Programs compliance.
- All MOSIS deadlines were efficiently met and completed.
- Interviews indicate the operations staff feel supported by the school leader. They have a voice in decisions that impact their work.
- There are no attendance tracking concerns.
- The school has added AIM CHECKS to streamline the background check process and have encountered no issues with monitoring background checks.
- HR tracks certification and assures that it is in place for all instructional staff.
- The new Bamboo HR online program has really streamlined the onboarding of new staff.
- The new annex has added a significant amount of space for The Biome, alleviating much of the over-crowdedness of the previous two years.

**Teacher Evaluation, Mentoring and Professional Development**
- The Biome has a performance-based teacher evaluation and professional development system in place featuring:
  - Goal setting specific to each teacher
  - Coaching program
  - Principal-teacher, staff and team meetings
  - Mentor program
  - Half and full-day PD
  - Observations and drop ins
  - Professional reading
- The Biome has a Mentor Program in place that meets state guidelines.

**Operations/HR/Facilities**
- The school is frustrated with the attendance tracking portion of Infinite Campus, the school student information system, and is exploring other options.

**Teacher Evaluation, Mentoring and Professional Development**
- The principal and teacher interviews indicate teachers need more PD and/or coaching on:
  - Incorporating problem-based, student-centered learning into their curriculum and instruction.
  - Implementing the balanced-literacy model.
  - Implementing the math curriculum.
  - Managing behaviors of very challenging students.
- Teacher interviews indicate they appreciate the principal’s method of teacher assessment—formative and summative throughout the year with feedback.
- Teachers interviews indicate they find the PD offerings to be relevant and useful; but they would appreciate some customization to meet individual growth areas.
### IV. Transformational Curriculum

**A transformational school:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Curriculum and instruction are aligned to the mission, vision and</td>
<td>i. Curriculum scope and sequence provide opportunities for</td>
<td>Required Documents:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educational philosophy of the school.</td>
<td>students to reach the school’s mission and vision.</td>
<td>• Schoolwide Curriculum Scope and Sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Instructional practices provide opportunities for students to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reach the school’s mission and vision.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii. Curriculum and instruction are aligned to the educational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>philosophy of the school as described in the charter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Provides a challenging, engaging, coherent, transformational</td>
<td>i. Implements curriculum that clearly identifies and builds</td>
<td>Required Documents:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>curriculum that meets the academic needs of all students</td>
<td>essential and enduring knowledge.</td>
<td>• Same as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Structures a curriculum scope and sequence aligned to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missouri’s Common Core Standards.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii. Ensures that the curriculum invests and prepares students to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>extend their learning and be successful beyond the classroom and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>beyond their school career (life-long learning, career readiness,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>college readiness, active citizenship).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv. Uses a variety of instructional techniques to enhance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>content acquisition and meet the needs of a diverse student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>population.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>v. Develops and implements clearly defined strategies to meet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the needs of a diverse student population.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vi. Utilizes high quality instructional materials, including</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>technology, to support the curriculum.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Element IV: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

**Areas of Strength**

- Documented Curriculum
  - The Biome has made progress in developing a written curriculum. It has a scope and sequence in place that includes the following:
    - School-wide and grade-level overviews
    - Standards by grade level for ELA and Math that are aligned to Missouri Learning Standards.

**Areas for Growth**

- Documented Curriculum
  - The documented curriculum does not incorporate deeper thinking, problem-based, student-centered learning standards, content and activities. Consider how to integrate this approach – the heart of the school’s vision – into the scope and sequence for each core discipline.
  - Teacher interviews indicate that though progress has been made, not all the necessary curriculum materials are in place.
- High-level statement of themes and enduring understandings by grade level for Science and Social Studies
- High level overview of Adaptive Thinking, Music, and Mind and Movement programs
- High level overview by grade-level outcomes for Social Emotional Learning
  This is helpful for teachers new to the school.

- (a) Curriculum alignment to vision and philosophy:
  - The adaptive thinking program develops creativity and challenges students to problem solve.
  - Teacher interviews indicate they are pleased with the approach the school has chosen to teach literacy.
  - The math curriculum builds in differentiation and intervention components.

- (b) Challenging, engaging and coherent:
  - Observations revealed quality lessons characterized by student engagement, partnering, and flexibility.
  - Teacher interviews indicate that the math and writing curricula are challenging and rigorous.
  - The SY19 parent survey indicated very strong satisfaction with The Biome’s enrichment classes.
  - The Biome conducted a thorough review of the math curriculum and is planning major changes for SY21.

- (a) Curriculum alignment to vision and philosophy:
  - As stated in Element I above, though a STEAM curriculum lies at the core of The Biome’s vision; in reality, the current curriculum favors a more traditional approach to teaching and learning and fails to guide teachers towards a problem-based and student-centered approach:
    - Classroom observations did not reveal any inquiry-based lessons or project-based learning.
    - Teacher interviews indicate that most teachers have concerns around the lack of a strong project-based element to teaching and learning.
    - There’s a disconnect between conducting an occasional hands-on classroom project versus incorporating an authentic project-based learning approach that’s deeply integrated in the curriculum.

  Focus on ways to increase opportunities for students to engage in “deeper learning” and problem solving.

- (b) Challenging, engaging and coherent:
  - Continue to focus on improving math curriculum and instruction that will improve student performance outcomes:
    - Related to this, leader and several teacher interviews indicate agreement that teachers need more PD to improve instructional skills in math.
  - Some students request books of higher difficulty for reading.
  - Teacher interviews indicate that some find:
    - Lucy Calkins to be too rigorous.
    - Envision isn’t appropriate and moves too fast for students.

  to support teachers. Some units “have to be built from the ground up.” Continue to flesh out the scope and sequence:
  - Expand documentation at the unit level for ELA and math with unit objectives, pacing charts and sample lessons.
  - Develop the social studies and science curriculum by identifying learning standards and objectives for each grade level, and expanding documentation at the unit level same as directly above.
  - Add model assessments – aligned to standards and objectives - at the unit level for all grades and subjects.
  - Strengthen alignment and flow between grade levels.
- **Student Assessment Plan**
  - The Biome has a plan in place and uses a variety of assessments including but not limited to Fountas & Pinnel, STAR, Dibels and the MAP.

- The Science and Social Studies curriculum needs much greater depth to effectively support teacher unit and lesson planning.
## V. Empowering Culture of Achievement

**A transformational school:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Supports students in a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment that invests them in achievement, builds character, increases responsibility, fosters inclusion and inspires joy.</td>
<td>i. Creates a school environment conducive to learning and growth.</td>
<td>Required Documents:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Maintains a safe school environment free of violence and the threat of violence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii. Implements processes to promote student health and wellness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv. Ensures that students feel supported and respected by teachers and staff.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>v. Communicates and consistently implements a comprehensive student discipline policy that complies with the Missouri Safe School Act and the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Required Documents:

- Other Evidence
  - Onsite observations
  - Parent surveys and interviews
  - Student surveys and interviews
  - Staff surveys interviews
  - Student support staff interviews (Counselors, nurses, social workers, School Psychologists)
  - Parent complaint/grievance records
  - Discipline, suspension and/or expulsion data

## Element V: Culture of Achievement

### Areas of Strength

- Observations and teacher interviews strongly indicate there is a very positive culture that is geared to student learning in the building.
  - Teachers are dedicated to their students and deeply care about their academic and social-emotional growth.
  - In general, students are engaged in challenging lessons.
  - Several teachers described the culture as warm and joyful.
- The SY19 parent survey indicated very strong satisfaction with the educational services provided by the school.

### Areas for Growth

- Refer to comments above in Element III: School Leadership and Operations under the “Discipline” subhead.
- Leader interviews indicate that while they’re seeing progress, the culture is not where it needs to be in terms of high expectations for student achievement.
## VI. Transformational Teachers

A transformational teacher:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| a. Understands and believes in the vision and innovative identity of the school | i. Develops an ambitious, measurable and inspiring course vision and goals aligned to the school’s vision and innovative identity.  
ii. Provides students with a clear picture of what reaching the vision and goals looks like. | Required Documents:                                                        |
|                                                                          |                                                                           | Other Evidence:                                                        |
|                                                                          |                                                                           | • Teacher and student surveys and interviews  
|                                                                          |                                                                           | • Classroom observations |
| b. Takes responsibility for investing students in reaching their academic and personal growth goals | i. Believes that all students can learn.  
ii. Holds high expectations for all students  
iii. Inspires and motivates students to reach the vision and goals.  
iv. Builds a strong culture of achievement where the classroom environment is conducive to learning and growing.  
v. Builds strong, trusting relationships with students and their families.  
v. Is passionate about the content of the curriculum and conveys that passion to students. | Required Documents:                                                        |
|                                                                          |                                                                           | Other Evidence:                                                        |
|                                                                          |                                                                           | • Teacher surveys and interviews  
|                                                                          |                                                                           | • Classroom observations  
|                                                                          |                                                                           | • Student and parent surveys and interviews  
|                                                                          |                                                                           | • Course scope and sequence, unit and lesson plans |
| c. Develops and/or implements curriculum that is strongly aligned to student academic achievement and personal growth goals | i. Designs a course scope and sequence that is tightly aligned to the vision and goals.  
ii. Designs a course that engages students in both critical thinking and meaningful discourse around enduring understandings and essential questions.  
iii. Designs units and lessons that:  
   o Are tightly aligned to course learning objectives and desired student outcomes.  
   o Build on what students already know and do and provide the scaffolding they need to reach the level of success commensurate with the vision and goals.  
   o Engage students with thought-provoking and ambiguous texts/materials that challenge their thinking and feelings.  
   o Give students opportunities to conduct research to answer a question, explore and take a stand on an issue, or develop solutions to a problem.  
   o Use writing to communicate their reflections and understandings  
   o Incorporate a variety of teaching methods that meet the needs of diverse student learning styles | Required Documents:                                                        |
|                                                                          |                                                                           | Other Evidence:                                                        |
|                                                                          |                                                                           | • School leader/Curriculum leader interview  
|                                                                          |                                                                           | • Teacher surveys and interviews  
|                                                                          |                                                                           | • Classroom observations  
|                                                                          |                                                                           | • Course scope and sequence, unit and lesson plans  
|                                                                          |                                                                           | • Assessment plans/performance tracking systems  
|                                                                          |                                                                           | • Student performance data (including state, formative and internal benchmark assessments) |
### Element VI: Teachers

#### Areas of Strength

- **(a) Belief in the vision:**
  - Teachers believe in the school’s overall mission and strive to help students reach it.
  - The SY19 parent survey indicated very strong satisfaction with teaching staff.
- **(b) Student investment:**
  - Student class size is small, allowing teachers to give more attention to each student.
  - Classrooms are warm and inviting.
  - Students indicate that they get help when they need it.
- **(c) Curriculum development and implementation:**
  - Teachers are very involved in developing The Biome’s curriculum scope and sequence.
- **(d) Instructional practice:**
  - Teachers use assessment data both formal and informal to inform instruction and adjust as necessary.
  - Observations reveal that:
    - Students are aware of routines and procedures and follow them.

#### Areas for Growth

- **(c) Curriculum development and implementation:**
  - Refer to comments above in *Element IV: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment.*
- **(d) Instructional practice:**
  - Refer to comments above in *Element III: Leadership and Operations* under the subhead: “Teacher Evaluation, Mentoring and Professional Development”
  - Refer to comments above in *Element IV: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment.*
- Lessons are well-paced and engaging
- Teachers design lessons employing a variety of learning modes (whole class, small group, independent learning).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(e) Student progress-tracking:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o There are some bulletin boards designated towards student growth monitoring in upper grades.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(e) Student progress-tracking:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o Teacher interviews indicate that some need to involve students more in owning and tracking learning goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## VII. Engaged Parents and Community

A transformational school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Engages parents and community stakeholders in the vision and mission of the school</td>
<td>i. Develops and implements an effective communications plan consistently engaging the community in becoming educated regarding quality education and developing support for their charter school</td>
<td>Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Ensures the active engagement of administrators, board members, parents, and staff in communication and outreach planning and implementation</td>
<td><strong>Other Evidence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii. Communicates and engages all stakeholders in the mission and vision of the school</td>
<td>• Parent interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv. Involves students, parents, and community members as part of the school’s support system.</td>
<td>• Parent and community communication/involvement plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>v. Fosters strong relationships between school staff and parents.</td>
<td>• Data on parent and community participation in school events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Seeks input from relevant, critical, impacted stakeholders</td>
<td>i. Establishes regular opportunities and methods of communication among the stakeholders, administration, and the board</td>
<td>• Parent-teacher contact data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Conducts its meetings regularly and in an open, organized, and effective manner</td>
<td>• Newsletters and other communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii. Operates within the requirements of the Missouri Sunshine Law ensuring board meeting agendas and meeting minutes are posted in a timely manner for broad public review and all state non-profit requirements are met</td>
<td>• Parent survey data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Element VII: Parents and Community

#### Areas of Strength

- (a) Parent and community engagement:
  - Teacher, school leader and board interviews all indicate community as a significant strength of The Biome. The number of parents who are true partners with the school is growing.
  - The SY19 parent survey indicated very strong satisfaction with parent and family education and engagement.
  - Teacher interviews strongly indicate they frequently communicate with parents using a variety of modes: DoJo, conferences, texts, phone calls, emails, face-to-face during drop off and pick up time, and so on.

### Areas for Growth

- (a) Parent and community engagement:
  - Leader interviews indicate:
    - Teachers need to focus more capacity on involving parents in their child’s learning. New systems for sharing student work with parents could be helpful here as well as training on how to build relationships with parents.
    - The school still has work to do to change negative and confrontational mindsets within a small group of parents and help them become partners with the school. (Refer to Element III: School Leadership above under the subhead, “Discipline.”)
| Teacher interviews and the SY19 teacher survey indicate satisfaction with parent support and involvement.  
| The Biome has formed partnerships with a wide variety of institutions to support the academic program and financial operations. This is a significant strength that was specifically cited and praised by a member of the State Board of Education during the renewal hearing.  
| (b) Input from stakeholders:  
| Parents have many opportunities and means to provide input directly to teachers and school leaders.  
| 17% (26 out of 149) of Biome families participated in the end-of-year SY19 survey. Consider ways to increase participation.  
| On the SY19 parent survey, 31% of parents and guardians indicate that they are not receiving an adequate amount of helpful information from The Biome regarding child development, health and nutrition, and other similar topics. |
### VIII. Comprehensive Student Support System

The support staff of a transformational school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| a. Develops and utilizes a comprehensive, developmental student support system that proactively assists all students to develop and apply skills for maximum academic, career, and personal/social growth during the school years. | i. Collects and uses academic, behavior and attendance data to: o Plan appropriate programs for students both individually and collectively. o Monitor student performance and provide appropriate interventions in cooperation with all stakeholders for student success. ii. Assists all students with developing academic, career, and personal/social skills; helping them to utilize reasoning, understand connections and make complex choices. iii. Uses a variety of activities, resources and strategies; including individual and group counseling, classroom presentations, academic advising, parent education and other responsive services. | Required Documents:  
- SPED Compliance Plans (IDEA & 504)  
- ELL Intervention Policy  
- Title I Needs Assessment and Plan  

Other Evidence  
- Student support team interviews  
- School leader interviews |
| b. Advocates for students and provides professional expertise to help school personnel, parents/guardians and community members to increase the effectiveness of student success. | i. Proactively facilitates communication and collaboration within and among the school, home and community to promote and build trust, understanding and partnerships with all segments of the school community. ii. Seeks solutions and provide referrals to overcome barriers to effective involvement in education and success of students. | Required Documents: |
| c. Develops and implements policies and procedures to ensure that all children with disabilities are identified and evaluated; and if eligible, receive services that meet their specific needs. | i. Ensure that teachers have the expertise to identify students who may have special needs and communicates regularly with teachers to share concerns. ii. Follows protocol related to parent concerns in a timely manner. iii. Develops and implements a system (internal or external) to evaluate students. iv. Develops and implements appropriate services that meet each student’s individual needs. v. Is in compliance with all special education statutes and procedures. | Required Documents:  
- Homeless Student Policy |
| d. Develops and implements policies and procedures to ensure that all children who | i. Develops and implements a plan that’s in compliance with state and federal guidelines that | Required Documents: |

July 21, 2020  FINAL  

FINAL Form 200407 wlm  

27
qualify as homeless receive all necessary services and support to meet their specific needs. ensures homeless students have an equal opportunity to a public education.

### Other Evidence
- Student support team interviews
- School leader interviews
- DESE compliance reports
- Staff, student and parent surveys

**Required Documents:**
- ELL Intervention Plan

### Other Evidence
- Student support team interviews
- School leader interviews
- DESE compliance reports
- Staff, student and parent surveys

## Element VIII: Student Support System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Strength</th>
<th>Areas for Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher interviews indicate they deeply appreciate the hard work and collaborative spirit of the SPED staff.</td>
<td>• Teacher interviews indicate they believe that the SPED staff is stretched too far and needs more support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Dr. Thurma DeLoach’s Review

#### Leadership
- Biome’s administrative team supports high expectations for responsive services for all students. Funding, leadership and space were provided this year for several new in-house student support services and procedures including: Social-emotional-behavioral intervention (Blue Room), on staff occupational therapist, additional literacy intervention staff, and a clearly defined and scheduled structure for Tier 2 and 3 problem solving. The Executive Director expressed a strong sense of mission around responding quickly to student needs and not relying on special education to be the solution.
- The Executive Director expressed confidence in his student support team. He believes they are effective advocates who have exceptional expertise in designing and implementing services that are not only compliant but effectively support students, families, and classroom teachers. His office is located in a central location in the building the year and although space is at a premium, staff members stated he now has first-hand knowledge of daily life at the Biome. Staff reported that he has a greater understanding of the range of student needs and how staff support those needs.
- Biome’s principal is retiring at the end of this school year. She shared that she believes she is leaving with the right people in the right student support services roles. She has confidence that the student support services team is capable of addressing virtually any issue that

#### Leadership
- The Student Support Services coordinator has significant and varied responsibilities. Teachers shared that she is always willing to help and steps up to provide support and guidance. However, they also see that she is spread too thin across the many functions she provides.
  - Now that The Biome is a school of well over 200 students with two classrooms per grade level and numerous student support services and functions, the range of responsibilities for this position should be reviewed and consideration given to re-assigning some of the functions to others (e.g. re-assigning the SE direct teaching services to another certified special educator)
  - The new Biome principal is transitioning from an independent school and may not have the experience or knowledge base about special education and other student support service requirements in public schools. It will be important for the new principal to learn compliance and service requirements and to allow the student support services staff to share Biome’s journey and current successes as Biome continues to enhance student support services and systems.
arises, works effectively with parents, and steps up to do what is needed. She expressed great pride in how the team is now able to work collaboratively with autonomy and confidence.

**Special Education Services**

- Biome currently serves 20 students with IEPs. At the time of the site visit, an additional 4 students were being evaluated and expected to be eligible for special education. Many of these students have multiple special education service needs including academic instruction, speech/language, social skills, behavior supports, and occupational therapy. Most students spend 80% or more of their school day in the General Education classroom with many special education services provided through push in support in the general ed classroom.

- Teachers and administrators believe that current Tier 2 and 3 intervention systems are effective in helping identify those students who may have disabilities and should be evaluated for special education eligibility. Biome currently identifies approximately 10% of its students for special education and this is in line with incidence rates for schools with strong tier 2 and 3 intervention systems.

- Special education staffing includes a part time special education teacher, a part time speech language pathologist, and part time occupational therapist. Evaluation services are provided by a private agency as needed. The literacy specialist and clinical social worker/behavioral specialist for Biome also support students with IEPs.

- Special education staff report having sufficient instructional resources and opportunities for professional development. Concerns about adequate space for special education staff were addressed this year when the new building opened. It will be important for the administrative team to continue to monitor that special education space allocation continues to be equitable as the school adds an additional grade 5 classroom in the 2020-21 SY.

- Significant collaboration and alignment of instructional techniques and resources exists between special education staff, literacy, and behavior support staff. The student support services team meets weekly and more often as needed to problem solve, share strategies and coordinate around shared student needs.

- Two special education legal access files and transfer students’ documentation were reviewed as part of this site visit. Both files and all required documentation appeared to be in good order. Biome will go through its second DESE Self-assessment year in 2020-21. It is

**Special Education Services**

- Several teachers expressed concern about adequate special education staffing to appropriately service students with math needs. Although available staffing is not to be a consideration when IEP teams are determining minutes or services, it may become an issue for a single special education teacher attempting to provide all areas of academics, plus other services across 6 grade levels.

  - Special education service minutes and schedules should be reviewed regularly to ensure that adequate time and scheduling flexibility exists to appropriately serve all areas of special education eligibility—including math—across all grade levels. Annual budgets may need to include reserve funding for additional special education staffing as needs increase due to student transfers, IEP revisions or initial evaluations during the school year.

- Due to a variety of issues, Biome did not continue its partnership with the UMSL School Psychologist Internship program for the 2020-21 SY opting instead to contract with a private agency for evaluations. This arrangement appears to have met Biome’s testing needs; however, the workload on the special education team increased significantly—e.g. documentation of referral, Review of Existing Data meetings, required notifications, monitoring of timelines, conducting eligibility meetings, writing and disseminating reports. The increase in workload was greater than anticipated when this decision was made and had impact on other staff duties.

  - Consideration could be given to hiring a part time school psychologist as a Biome staff member responsible for all aspects of the evaluation process. It is possible that this position could be shared with another UMSL Charter school with similar needs for a part time school psychologist. Such an arrangement could be structured to provide more services without adding significantly to the budget.

  - It may be appropriate to re-consider participation in the school psychologist internship partnership in the future, based on the availability of strong internship candidates.
anticipated that Biome will meet compliance standards in their upcoming review.

**Dyslexia Screening & Intervention Supports**

- Starting in August of 2019, all MO. public schools were required to annually screen students for potential reading challenges related to dyslexia. The Biome conducted all required screening procedures for the fall and winter and met all screening timelines. Spring screening was not required after school closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
  - Screening was conducted in two stages
    - All students screening using the STAR assessment
    - 2nd screening for all students below grade expectations on the STAR using Dibels and Ekwald Shanker assessments.
    - Screening results were analyzed with classroom teachers during Tier 2 grade level meetings.
    - 45 Students were identified as at risk for reading difficulty and appropriate interventions designed as part of the grade level team problem solving process—lead by the literacy specialist
  - All identified students are receiving supplemental or intensive reading supports—1 full time and 2 part time literacy specialists are on staff
    - Leveled Literacy Intervention
    - Equipped for Reading Success (David Kilpatrick)
    - 1-1 intensive intervention and phonemic work
- Biome’s literacy specialist completed LETRS training through EdPlus in the summer of 2019. LETRS is a research-based approach to teaching reading (not a specific program) which emphasizes early development of phonological, phonemic, and phonics skills. She is using this advanced literacy training to intensify her own programming and to coach classroom teachers on effective reading instruction with a strong emphasis of phonemic development and phonics.
- The literacy specialist provides significant coaching and modeling to classroom teachers. Classroom teachers reported that this support has been tremendously helpful and that their students are showing significant improvement in reading as a result of this collaboration and the Tier 2/3 interventions that are in place. Others reported that she is a resourceful seeker of the current and effective resources and strategies. This reviewer observed a short literacy lesson in which evidence-based strategies for direct instruction/modeling, corrective feedback, data collection and student engagement were readily observed.

**Dyslexia Screening and Intervention Support**

- Required parent notification of dyslexia screening results was not completed as of the time of this review. Parents were notified of intervention services. A sample parent notification letter was shared with the literacy specialist and plans are in place to ensure this notification is conducted for 2020-21.
- Including the annual dyslexia screening requirements in the parent handbook with anticipated time frames, procedures, and expectations for use of the screening results should be considered.
- LETRS training for classroom teachers will be available again this summer through EdPlus and again in the fall of 2021. Consideration of offering this training to other primary-grade teachers is recommended.
Social Emotional Behavioral Supports and Intervention

- The Blue Room was launched this school year to provide Tier 2 and 3 Social-emotional-behavioral (SEB) supports and interventions to students identified with moderate to severe SEB support needs as well as students with IEPs that include SEB supports. A clinical social worker, also trained in Applied Behavior Analysis, in collaboration with the Student Support Services coordinator, developed the program model. The clinical social worker with the assistance of an America Corps volunteer, provides a variety of services including:
  - Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPS) and data management
  - 1-1 and small group counseling for a variety of student needs (e.g. anger management, self-regulation strategies, anxiety management)
  - Movement & Sensory Breaks
  - Mindfulness strategies
  - Social skill training
  - Peer mediation
  - Crisis intervention and support
  - Family supports and community referrals (e.g. Places for People)

- The Blue Room serves over 50 students on a regular basis. In addition to these direct services, the clinical social worker provides in-class support and modeling for classroom teachers. When a Biome student was killed earlier in the fall, she provided grief support to students and staff.

- Teachers report that the supports provided by the Blue Room staff have been effective in reducing the behavioral disruptions in the regular classroom. Out of school suspensions have been significantly reduced and staff attribute this to the early intervention and supports available through the Blue Room. When OSS is necessary, it is typically assigned for only single days out of school. This is a major change from prior years. Classrooms, hallways, and meeting spaces observed during the review had a noticeably calmer ambiance in comparison to prior site visits.

- The Blue Room facilitator participates in all Tier 2/3 grade level meetings and provides significant guidance and direct intervention support for students identified with SEB support needs.

- Biome has started Medicaid billing for mental health services. This is going well and the social worker reports that the documentation process has been useful in creating and monitoring treatment plans. She is working collaboratively with the Medicaid support from MSBA to ensure that all services eligible for reimbursement are appropriately documented and claimed.

Social Emotional Behavioral Supports and Intervention

- Referrals for services through the Blue Room are currently made through the Tier 2/3 intervention team meetings. This process appears to be appropriately identifying those students whose behaviors are externalized or disruptive. However, students whose emotional needs are more internalized may not be as apparent.
  - A variety of basic SEB screening tools are available such as the Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS)—a research-based screener that helps schools identify both externalizing and internalizing risk profiles. A SEB screening tool used 2-3 times a year could help quickly identify those students with similar needs within a grade level/span for small group intervention. It would also provide a direct measure for progress monitoring.

- An active caseload of 50 students is significant for a single person and creates concern for staff burn out and even loss of effectiveness.
  - A system for triaging student needs may be necessary until additional staffing support (e.g. additional AmeriCorps volunteers, trained mental health aide) can be provided.

- The Blue Room is designed to be a mental health and behavior intervention and support program. Its effectiveness is based on the supportive relationships formed between its staff, students, and parents. The use of these programs for student discipline is inappropriate and likely would reduce the effectiveness of these supports. Although this does not appear to be the current practice, just a cautionary reminder about this risk as a new principal is transitioning to Biome.
• All Biome staff participated in De-escalation training with Bruce Hunter from Character Plus in August. Although use of restraint is discouraged, a core team of 8 staff members was trained in Non-violent Crisis Intervention/Physical Restraint for crisis situations when a student requires that level of safety support.

• Staff expressed interest in more professional development on the impact of trauma on student learning and development. There is also interest in enhancing restorative practices as part of the disciplinary framework. Character Plus offers a number of professional development opportunities and school cohort work in these areas to member schools at a reduced cost. Biome is a Character Plus member.

**Tier 2 and Tier 3 Problem Solving Procedures**

• A well-defined process for problem solving around student academic and SEB needs is implemented by the Student Support Services coordinator. A core team of intervention staff, including the literacy specialist, Blue Room clinical social worker, principal, and the SSS coordinator meet regularly with each classroom teacher to review student academic and behavioral data and other observations. Areas of concern are identified, and specific supports and interventions are assigned to intervention staff and the classroom teacher. All problem-solving discussions are documented in a shared file and reviewed on a scheduled basis.

• Tier 3 problem solving is used when students are not responding adequately to the Tier 2 intervention plan. This level of problem solving is designed to provide a more intense and individualized plan. It also is used to determine which students may have disabilities and should be referred for evaluation. The team reports that this structure is working well and that school-generated referrals appear to be appropriate.

**General Compliance: Student Support Policies and Procedures**

• These policies were available for review and all were found to be appropriate, manageable and compliant
  - Child Find
  - Homeless
  - ELL
  - Physical Restraint, Isolation, Seclusion
  - Bullying
  - Federal Programs EESA—
    - Parental complaints
    - Parent involvement

**Tier 2 and Tier 3 Problem Solving Procedures**

• Implementation of a strong tiered intervention problem solving process typically takes 3-5 years to run smoothly. Continued practice and training will help the team grow in effectiveness and in depth of intervention resources. Suggestions for enhancement include:
  - Create no more than 2-3 specific goals for Tier 3 plans; write the goals in a format that is measurable and collect and graph data specific to the goal to assist the team determine how the student is responding to the intervention. Typically, 3-5 data points over 4 to 6 weeks will reveal if the plan is working or if a change needs to be considered.

**General Compliance: Student Support Policies and Procedures**

• The required Child Find notification should be posted on the Biome website and included in the parent handbook in addition to posting in the school office.

• Biome does not currently have students identified as ELL and has not developed a specific plan for assessing and serving these students should one or be identified.
  - A basic ELL assessment and services plan (LAU) plan should be developed now in anticipation of future student enrollment. This would ensure that a plan exists to guide responsible staff through this unfamiliar process. A sample of a basic plan that
- Parents Right to Know
- School-parent Compact

### Annual Staff Training
- Dyslexia—August, and embedded in Tier 2 screening data review meeting
- De-escalation—conducted on site by Bruce Hunter through Character Plus
- Physical Restraint—8 staff members have been trained by Bruce Hunter
- Suicide and Bullying—conducted as part of the August back to school workshops

### Annual Federal Programs (Title 1) parent meeting
- Held in September 2019 as part of the monthly “Parent Chat” with the principal.

### Other
- The Student Support Services Staff rallied quickly to plan for Continuity of Instruction when schools closed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In a short period of time, plans were developed to provide on-going virtual support for all students on student support services caseloads. The efforts of this team and all Biome staff to provide for their students during these challenging times are to be commended.

- During the site visit and at other times throughout the year, conversations with Biome staff and observations of students in interventions and classrooms indicate a growing confidence in staff and maturity of operations and processes. Although crisis and unexpected needs/incidents can’t be prevented completely, the student support team appears prepared to handle whatever presents itself. They are responsive and resourceful. A strong sense of collaboration and respect for the work and expertise on the team is apparent. The team has worked together for several years and this stability is clearly responsible for the strength of this team.

- Biome could customize for its own use will be provided by this reviewer.

- Given the significant increase and concern for student mental health as it relates to suicide in recent years, The Biome ensures the school and staff are prepared to prevent, intervene, and respond should there be a need in the future.

- Given the significant increase and concern for student mental health related to suicide in recent years, the Biome may want to consider developing a basic process and procedures to ensure that the school and staff are prepared to prevent, intervene, and respond should there be a need in the future. Though charter schools may be exempt from developing a formal policy in this area, advance preparation for such incidents is best practice for all schools.