

IDAHO SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY CHARTER SCHOOL

Final Report
Programmatic Audit Site Visit
Conducted August 19-20, 2010



Prepared by
Idaho Charter School Network
PO Box 5735
Boise, ID 83705

IDAHO SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY CHARTER SCHOOL

Address:

17North 550 West
Blackfoot, ID 83221

P.O. Box 291
Moreland, ID 83256

School Phone:

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School Fax:

208-785-9913

School website:

<http://www.idahoscitech.com>

Date School Opened: August 2009

Authorized by: Idaho Public Charter School Commission

Director: Dr. Fred Ball

fball@bcclc.com

Principal: Gary Larsen

gary.larsen@idahoscitech.com

Dean of Students: Joel F. Weaver

joel.weaver@idahoscitech.com

ADMINISTRATIVE SUMMARY

School Year represented by this data:	2009-2010	
Enrollment		
Range of grades offered:	6-8 th grades	
Students enrolled	90	
Student demographics		
Ethnicity:	Students	% of total
Caucasian	78	77.3%
Hispanic	8	4.1%
Black	1	1.0%
Asian	1	0.0%
Multi-racial		
Native American	4	6.2%
Other		
Wait list data:	0	
	Number	Percent
Free and reduced lunch	Compiling Data	N/A
Students with IEP & 504 plans	14	16%
English Language Learners	0	
Other special populations	0	
Staff Make Up:	Number	
Director	1	
Principal	1	
Dean of Students/Certified Teacher	1	
School Psychologist/Certified Teacher	1	
Director of Technology/Non-Certified Teacher	1	
Certified teachers	9	
Non-certified teachers/Education Assts.	.5	
Office/Administrative staff	1.5	

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

We submit this report to Idaho Science & Technology Charter School (ISTCS) and the Idaho Charter School Network (ICSN) as a summary of our observations. We recognize that in our brief visit, covering one and one half days, we were only able to see a cross-section of the school's full program. During this visit the team focused its attention on goals 1, 2 and 3 of the Accountability Plan since ISTCS is such a young school beginning its second year of operation. As such, observations relevant to goals 4 will be documented but no rating for those goals will be reported. In all areas, the team endeavored to triangulate data from several sources to provide evidence of discrete performance indicators.

We wish to express our gratitude to Idaho Science & Technology Charter School for extending hospitality and openness to us during our visit. They provided the team with thorough reflection on the Accountability Plan Critical Questions and an array of organized documents and artifacts as evidence of their progress in the areas identified in the Accountability Plan. We commend Director Fred Ball, Principal Gary Larsen, and Dean of Students Joel Weaver for their attention to preparation for this site visit. Additionally we would like to thank all members of the school community - students, parents and board members - who took an active role in the site visit by providing documentation, attending focus group discussions, inviting the team into their virtual classrooms or providing interviews.

To validate the performance of Idaho Science & Technology Charter School in all areas of school administration and performance relevant to the Accountability Plan, the site team conducted interviews and observations and reviewed school documents and records. The ICSN Accountability Plan for Idaho Public Charter Schools has four goals related to quality indicators for the operation of a charter school. The leadership of the ISTCS invited an outside team to the school to assess the school's performance on the four goals of the Accountability Plan; namely,

- 1) Governance and Administrative Obligation
- 2) Quality academic program,
- 3) Stakeholder support, involvement and satisfaction, and
- 4) Continuous school improvement.

Our general impression is that Idaho Science & Technology, a Public Charter School, successfully fulfills all governance and administrative obligations as provided in the state and federal law in fulfillment of their charter and in the execution of a learner-centered educational program. The team observed and documented a strong level of dedication and involvement from all stakeholders and improvements in all areas since our visit last year. This commitment has made it possible for the school to grow into the vision as described in the original charter document and to further develop these goals into the education program that exists at Idaho Science & Technology today. The stakeholders, including the board, parents, students and the school staff and leadership are very optimistic about the future of Idaho Science & Technology. Our team is grateful for the opportunity to visit and we submit our report in a spirit of collegiality and in the quest for educational excellence.

Programmatic Audit Site Visit Team:

Diane Demarest, Executive Director, Idaho Charter School Network, Visit coordinator

Charlotte Shearer, Retired principal, White Pine Charter School

Tami Dortch, lead teacher, Blackfoot Community Learning Center Charter School

Leadership Team at Idaho Science & Technology Charter School:

Director :

Dr. Fred Ball

Principal:

Gary Larsen

Dean of Students:

Joel F. Weaver

Board of Directors:

Rich Dodds

Kelly Jo Fisk

Jennie Lilya

Mike Kitzmiller

Holly Lilya

Chairman

Vice Chairperson

Treasurer

Member

Member

Idaho Science & Technology Charter School

VISIT CONDUCTED, October 6-7, 2009

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Idaho Science & Technology Charter School is

It was very evident to the site visit team that Idaho Science & Technology Charter School is working to live fully into its vision - *“To give students hope and confidence by preparing them to make intelligent and appropriate decisions about their education and future careers in the global marketplace.”* We offer Idaho Science & Technology the following **commendations**:

Goal 1: Governance

- Strong board make up with very experienced chair and director
- All staff returned to the school in year two.
- Incorporating ISBA model policies and regular practice of reviewing and adopting at board meetings is commendable
- Strong business manager and fiscal processes in place
- All agendas and minutes posted on website and at school.
- Conservative financial strategies to support success of the school and begin building a permanent facility

Goal 2: Academic Program

- Robust professional learning community supported by alternative schedule.
- Active engagement of students in creative problem solving and hands-on learning
- Vision for continuous growth of technology is very exciting and consistent with charter. Technology is much more actively being used in all areas at this time.
- Culture of the school is positive and students feel that teachers are caring and respectful.
- Math and Science instruction and classroom management particularly strong.
- Career exploration very exciting; students exposed to careers not usually known to middle school students. Speakers bring outside expertise and expand opportunities
- Diverse instructional strategies observed in several classrooms.
- Special education teacher has very good communication with all teachers and presence in all classrooms
- Initiating Title I program with highly qualified teacher.
- Teachers noted the learning curve of students for school expectations and see a much easier start this fall.
- STEM project outlined and initiated this year with high expectations, cross curricular application and working on rubrics for scoring.

Goal 3: Stakeholder support and engagement

- Teachers seem very enthusiastic and invigorated at the beginning of this year.
- Parents value the school and the opportunities for their students
- Great deal of excitement about the beginning of the new building on the property
- “High acceptance for the diversity of the school in many areas – special education, racial, etc.
- Parents see students learning about computer and robotics, Lego® league, summer programs, parents seeing skills expanding better student opportunities.
- Parents really are hoping for a high school.
- Students feel positive about their learning and informed on their individual progress.

- Parents engaged in supporting the school with fun activities and supplies.
- Highly enthusiastic, optimistic and dedicated staff, teachers and administration.
- Students feel 'safe' to learn and be themselves.
- Good attention in the media and building community and industry relationships is commendable.

Based on observations and research conducted over one and one half days, the team had an opportunity to learn a great deal about the school; however, the group is also keenly aware that such a visit, while informative, offers a limited view of the school's characteristics. The collection of this data provides the basis for the following **opportunities** recommended by the visiting team to the board and educational leaders of Idaho Science & Technology.

Goal 1: Governance

- Follow through on adopting and customizing ISBA policy & procedures per charter
- Consider board training opportunities and board self-evaluation. The board chair is informally mentoring other members and we encourage him to continue in this role.
- Review all employee files for completeness especially documentation for background checks and highly qualified status
- Consider volunteer clerk of the board as a way to lighten the load of the business mgr
- Be certain that minutes reflect new open meeting regulations regarding executive session
- Continue promoting school in the community
- Consider engaging STEM professional on the board from business community
- Examine what the role of the board will be for fundraising as you build a new building
- After building is completed it will be helpful to engage a strategic planning process

Goal 2: Academic Program

- Explore strategies that will maintain high degree of teacher autonomy while supporting cross curricular efforts.
- Use Friday time to create opportunities to share instructional strategies among teachers. Disseminate strong teaching practices through the school by creating opportunities for teachers to observe one another and give feedback
- Follow-up on curriculum for computer and English classes and consider one with integrated assessments.
- Clarify homework policy and how it fits into the development of 'workforce' disposition as identified in your charter.
- Consider articulating connection between music/arts and math/sciences.
- Still seeing some downtime in classes and would encourage all teachers to teach to the highest level students so they remain challenged and engaged.
- Explore broad fitness program as facilities permit. Integrate Wii technology balanced with a more rigorous physical education program especially since the academic schedule does not allow for recesses.
- Continue to be data informed: Decide what you want to know and how you'll gather that information.

Goal 3: Stakeholder support and engagement

- Consider additional opportunities for parent engagement. Good participation in parent teacher conferences but continue to strive for higher participation this year.
- Continue the dialogue with students and stakeholders so that you can identify needs and gather feedback on program decisions.
- Consider identifying a volunteer, board member or staff person who can assist with effective public relations to promote the positive image of the school early in its development.
- Use your website to highlight student accomplishments and activities.
- Help parents understand about how they can access web site info for grades - consider tutoring for parents on technology.

The team was unanimous in its optimism that Idaho Science & Technology is well positioned to continue the important work of implementing its mission. Noticeable improvements and growth have occurred from year one to the beginning of year two. The first year of opening a school is an exhausting one and the teaching and administrative staff have worked hard together to start year two strongly. There is evidence that school leaders and staff are reflective, collaborative and seeking more effective ways of implementing their school mission and realizing goals set forth in the school charter. Their vision, while an ambitious one, has strong support among their stakeholders. They have strong administrative and board leadership to realize this vision.

Goal One: The charter school will fulfill all governance and administrative obligations as provided in state and federal law and in the school's charter.

Purpose/Intent of Goal: Ensure that the charter is currently meeting all legal requirements including being aware of and abiding by current and relevant state and federal statutes, creating and maintaining an effective governance structure, filling required reports in a timely and accurate manner, maintaining a fiscally sound budget and practices, and providing strong administrative leadership for the school.

Six areas of governance were reviewed including: documents, relevant federal and state laws and procedures, governance structure, financials, administrative leadership and federal and state reporting and testing requirements. Overall Idaho Science & Technology Charter School can be described as meeting the standard. A rating is assigned for each of the six areas of governance and administrative obligation so that strengths and opportunities are more readily discerned.

DOCUMENTS

- Exceeds Standards
- Meets Standards
- Progressing Toward Standards
- In Need of Improvement
- Not Progressing Toward Standards

Observations: The visiting team observed the school has retained all legal documents pertaining to school opening, operating and reporting progress toward goals specified in the charter. The documents were provided to the entire team for the review process. Student and employee records are retained in fire-proof, locked file cabinets in the main office of the school. The secretary and business manager have efficient systems to insure that all records are in order. The school has adopted the policy and procedure manual from the Idaho School Boards Association and will continue to adjust policies to meet the specific needs of ISTCS.

Documentation Examined:

- Charter
- Bylaws
- Adopted Policy & Procedure Manual
- Parent - Student handbook
- Board minutes
- Employee files, certified and non-certified
- Student files

RELEVANT FEDERAL & STATE LAWS AND PROCEDURES:

- Exceeds Standards
- Meets Standards
- Progressing Toward Standards
- In Need of Improvement
- Not Progressing Toward Standards

Observations: The team collected data from a variety of sources including interviews with the director, board members, staff, parents and students. The team feels that at this time the school is in compliance with state and federal laws including the Open Meetings Law, the Public Charter School Act, Idaho Education Code and appropriate Idaho Board of Education rulings. Director Dr. Fred Ball and board chair Rich Dodds demonstrated thorough knowledge and compliance with relevant school law and procedures related to hiring, the lottery, due process, reporting and governance. The board has engaged in board training and continues to do so informally on a regular basis.

ISTCS reports annually to the Idaho Commission of Public Charter Schools, their authorizer. During the most recent report the school received a letter of defect for not meeting their stated education goals in the charter. ISAT scores for 2009-2010 for Grade 8 were:

Subject	# Students tested	% Prof and/or Adv	Average Score
Reading	22	68.2%	224 Proficient
Mathematics	22	63.6%	234 Proficient
Language Usage	22	50.9%	221 Proficient

The ISTCS charter states, "Students continuously enrolled at ISTCS from the beginning of each academic year will demonstrate academic improvement through the following: 80% of all students will earn a score of proficient or advanced in each subject area of the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT)." It also states that, "The school's overall academic goal will be to accomplish the above standards by the end of the 2012-2013 school year". The letter of defect issued to ISTCS seems premature as they recognized in the charter that in the first year there is no baseline data from which to make claims of students achieving at a given level. The results will inform the practice of the school and while they are approaching the state goals in reading and math and are likely to exceed them next year with strong instruction, the language usage may need considerable attention. It is also important for those interpreting the data of a small school to recognize that in any category less than 10% may represent only one student in a sample like the one above. The team encourages the Commission to reconsider the letter of defect in light of the clarification of the time frame (year 3: 2012-2013) stated in the charter.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

- Exceeds Standards
- Meets Standards
- Progressing Toward Standards
- In Need of Improvement
- Not Progressing Toward Standards

Observations: The ISTCS Board is a 6-member board currently made up of community members with backgrounds in education, business and other professional work. Several board members are parents of students enrolled in the Blackfoot Community Learning Center Charter as well as parents of students in ISTCS. The board is very interested in attracting new board members from industry and business while maintaining a high degree of parent involvement. The board is fully aware of open meeting law and evidence suggests that they comply with state guidelines. The clerk of the board was advised to include additional details about moving in and out of executive session as outlined in the revised Open Meeting Law. Records do not indicate any breach of open meeting law. Board meeting minutes are in good order and Chairman Rich Dodds is a very experienced board leader.

The Board minutes indicate regular and effective meetings. The board has not yet created a board development/training plan or plans for formally evaluating itself. We recommend that the board add these items to their list and when time permits develop both a training and evaluation plan.

The board works well together and have high expectations and confidence in their director and principal. The team encourages the board to engage an annual evaluation of the director to support continuous growth and improvement and clear communication of expectations.

The school currently has a student/parent handbook includes the policies from the school's policy and procedure manual that are pertinent to students and parents.

FINANCIAL

- Exceeds Standards
- Meets Standards
- Progressing Toward Standards
- In Need of Improvement
- Not Progressing Toward Standards

Observations: The team observed that in the area of financial operations the leadership of the school exercises its mission. The board, director and business manager have been successful in insuring the fiscal health of the school. The business manager, Chantelle Macy is experienced in charter school finance and operation and holds the same position for the Blackfoot Charter School. The school secretary was a strong organizer and Chantelle trained her well, however, she has left the position because the school realizes they need a full time secretary at the school. She will be training a new secretary. Together, the business manager, director and staff, and board develop a conservative budget. There are strong internal policies for handling receipts. The school has implemented various checks and balances for internal control and uses the 2M program to monitor financials. A recent fiscal audit was conducted and provided a very favorable report of the fiscal health of the school. The only material weakness is segregation of duties typical in a small organization.

The board and director are overseeing the plan to build a school facility on their current site. The builders have broken ground and they are optimistic that the building could be completed by January. In the mean time, the staff has created a very functional and spacious learning environment using portable classrooms. The leadership continues to look for cost effective strategies for the school and collaborative efforts to be as efficient as possible.

ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP

- Exceeds Standards
- Meets Standards
- Progressing Toward Standards
- In Need of Improvement
- Not Progressing Toward Standards

Observations: The visiting team met with focus groups and interviewed Board members, parents, teachers and students, the director, principal and dean of students in addition to reviewing documentation. Parents and students were invited to participate in focus groups. The principal and teachers were interviewed by members of the team.

Idaho Science & Technology Charter School is currently under the leadership of the founding director, Dr. Fred Ball and founding principal Gary Larsen. While ISTCS is a unique charter and not the replication of Blackfoot Community Charter, there is no doubt that it has benefitted tremendously from the experience, leadership and lessons learned over the course of the life of the Blackfoot Charter.

The principal oversees all of the daily operations, educational program and the teachers while the director supports the financial infrastructure and the relationship with the board. The teachers at ISTCS are an impressive group comprised of very experienced teachers, a few newer teachers and professionals who have moved from industry to teaching. The culture of collaboration is evident among the group. Teachers report that Mr. Larsen is very supportive and knowledgeable as a master teacher himself they feel they can look to him for strategies to help students. Teachers also report that they had more than their share of behavior challenges last year and at the beginning of this school year there seems to be a much more manageable load of discipline issues. They are hopeful this will have an overall positive impact on classroom operations.

All teachers were evaluated at the end of the last school year and all returned this year to their respective positions. The one change that was made was to increase the paraprofessional's role from an assistant to the Title 1 teacher position. She is qualified and experienced in this role.

In meeting with parents and students the team found that there is a high level of confidence and satisfaction with the school and leadership. The teachers express high regard for the principal and appreciation for the staff development opportunities and the freedom to help shape the school's academic and curricular choices.

The director has worked to promote a visible and positive image of ISTCS in the Idaho. They continue to strive for a positive working relationship with the district and the broader community. Mr. Majeski, the technology teacher has gotten support from the director to get students involved in a number of technology competitions and experiences in the community.

FEDERAL AND STATE REPORTS AND TESTING REQUIREMENTS:

- Exceeds Standards
- Meets Standards
- Progressing Toward Standards
- In Need of Improvement

Not Progressing Toward Standards

Observations: ISTCS met the expectations of testing all students on the ISAT and DMA and DWA in the spring of the 2009-2010 school year. Generally scores were good for a first year school, especially with a 24% special education enrollment. Additionally, in a first year charter beginning at the 6th grade and accepting all students, there is no control for the level of proficiency that students arrive with. Results are included in appendix. The teaching established baselines for proficiency in math, reading and language and are eager to analyze the most recent testing results. In the area of science they were very disappointed and the science teacher feels that the areas covered in the test were not aligned with the curriculum she taught this year. She is making adjustments for next year. They are very aware of the issues as they go forward especially in light of the high percent of students with IEPs or 504's among the enrollment. In the 2010-2011 school year the percent of students on IEPs has dropped to 14% (still above the state average) and they have 2 students on alternative assessments.

Goal 1 Commendations: The team would like to commend the Idaho Science & Technology Charter School on the following:

- Strong board make up with very experienced chair and director
- All staff returned to the school in year two.
- Incorporating ISBA model policies and regular practice of reviewing and adopting at board meetings is commendable
- Strong business manager and fiscal processes in place
- All agendas and minutes posted on website and at school.
- Conservative financial strategies to support building a permanent facility
- The ISTCS board is clear about the mission, diverse and lead by very experienced chair.
- Strong internal fiscal policies and procedures are established and favorable fiscal audit completed.
- ISTCS adopting ISBA policy manual. Practice of reviewing and adopting policies at board meetings is commendable.
- The charter has retained legal documents for stakeholder/director access.
- Documentation is well organized and complete. We encourage the new office staff to review the staff files and bring them all up to date.
- A review of randomly selected student files and Special Education student files showed them to be in good order with appropriate transfer records, grades and test scores, immunization and birth records. Files were appropriately stored in a fire-proof, locked cabinet to protect confidentiality and integrity of information.
- Good working relationship between board and administration. Segregation of duties clearly understood.

Recommendations: The team respectfully recommends that ISTCS:

- Follow through on adopting and customizing Blackfoot Charter School's policy & procedures per charter
- Consider board training opportunities and board self-evaluation. The board chair is informally mentoring other members and we encourage him to continue in this role.
- Review all employee files for completeness. Personnel files need to include highly qualified documentation and fingerprinting in all files. A checklist would be useful in all files.
- All teachers and paraprofessionals should be evaluated by the principal.
- Analyze all testing data and create an action plan for improvement.

Goal Two: The charter school will demonstrate a successful academic program. Goal 2 includes the areas of school culture, curriculum & instruction, and assessment and reporting.

- Exceeds Standards
- Meets Standards
- Progressing Toward Standards
- In Need of Improvement
- Not Progressing Toward Standards

INFRASTRUCTURE (School Culture): The intent of this portion of Goal 2 is to ensure that the charter has proper infrastructure to enable students and staff to achieve educational goals.

Observations: Based on teacher, parent and student interviews, and classroom observations, it is apparent that the teachers and leadership of the school are working hard to implement the intentions of the charter. Idaho Science & Technology has a clear vision for their students. Their charter states that “students will develop a strong sense of self-worth and a respect for others as they receive a solid academic foundation; explore a broad range of options; recognize their unique interests, aptitudes and abilities; and contribute productively to society. The messages throughout the school clearly point students to this disposition. Additionally, ISTCS believes that a safe environment creates the setting where both remedial development and accelerated learning best occur. To this end, ISTCS is committed to a school environment free from taunting, teasing, ridicule or violence.

The team observed classroom activities that underscore the values of the school. In each subject area students experience ample hands-on learning and creative problem solving. The science classroom, for instance, is replete with ongoing experiments that students are engaged in. The level of their investigations and the sophistication of their inquiries outpacing what one might observe in a typical middle school. Most classes are small and allow for high teacher-student engagement.

Now in its second year of operation with school just opened one week, the team found that students were getting the basics of passwords and instruction on the use of technology. Still, the computer lab and classrooms are well appointed with many computers and smart boards. There are some limitations in the band width available on their network which will be improved dramatically in their permanent facility. The team conducted observations in all classrooms and found teachers actively using smart boards. In several cases, within a 10-15 minute observation in an English class the teacher modeled and walked students through problem solving using a smart board, first to project a short writing assignment, as the students began he helped a student move briefly to the internet to check the spelling of a word, looked up another term and moved the group on to a grammar lesson with an interactive program. In a geography classroom the teacher used the smart board to illustrate an assignment, instruct students on finding current events, showed a short video clip and talked students through the assignment. Technology is used to enhance instruction in music art and math as well.

The amount of time that students are interfacing with technology or instruction is enhanced by technology is quite remarkable and not typical in most middle schools. The faculty are exploring other technologies like using cell phone apps for students recording their assignments, individual teacher and class sites and student websites. Parents reported that they see their students learning about computer and robotics,

participating in Lego league and summer computer programs, and that they see the development of these skills expanding opportunities for their children. Parents also report that they observe the skills their students have developed in their application of these skills at home. Students learn web design, html coding and computer hardware operations. Teachers and parents report that the students are equipped to assist them when they need help.

The enthusiasm of the teaching and administrative staff is so readily apparent and well noticed by the students and parents. When teachers were interviewed they consistently identified their common commitment to thinking outside the box, getting students ready for the future, having more rigorous expectations and being invited into collaboration as features that make ISTCS unique. Students and teachers talk about getting students prepared for careers that may not even be on the horizon right now but will be in the future.

CURRICULUM and INSTRUCTION (Academic goals, quality of instruction, student performance)

The intent of this portion of the goal 2 is to ensure that the school has curriculum that is aligned with educational goals and state standards; and proven instructional strategies that meet the needs of different student populations.

Observations: The team was able to observe in nearly all classrooms and found that teachers were well prepared, classrooms were focused and on task and students were actively engaged. ISTCS has a four day student week, with Fridays set aside for targeted professional development. The resultant school day is a bit longer than the district middle schools in order to meet the attendance guidelines.

Teachers express a great deal of enthusiasm for the opportunity for collaboration and cross-curricular planning. Since the school is still very new, this time has been very valuable to build infrastructure and team work. Teachers were very involved in selecting curriculum materials in each of their respective specialties. They describe their current work environment as a “real learning community”. The curriculum in Science is Foss and in Math CPM. The curriculum for technology/careers is *Pitsco Education – Hands-on Real-world K-12 Curriculum* for science, technology, engineering and math. Character Counts is the curriculum for character education. The school has plans for expanding the Pitsco stations available. In the content area of English they are still waiting on curriculum materials. They have consulted with curriculum experts and are moving ahead in this area. One of the English teachers is the most novice and a strong curriculum will help with alignment and outcomes.

ISTCS students participate in art and music which support the core subjects. All students are involved in either instrumental or voice classes. The team encourages ISTCS to explore the research and articulate the important connections between music/art learning and math and science learning. They are providing a meaningful and exciting opportunity for students, again, not typical in surrounding schools.

The school counselor and special education teacher meet weekly. This year 16% of the currently enrolled students have IEPs or 504 plans. This has proven to be more manageable number than last year when 25% of the enrolled students had an IEP. The difference represents students who advanced to ninth grade or who moved to another school. Special education students are instructed in ways that closely match their individual needs. All of the students are integrated into the classrooms and additionally, some students receive instruction in small groups with the special education teacher. This year ISTCS has started a Title I program. They moved their special education aide into that role since she was experienced and qualified. The entire staff takes a hands-on approach with students of every proficiency level. Throughout the school one does not hear reference to special education, rather, the special education teacher and her classes are referred to as study skills.

ASSESSMENT and REPORTING: The intent of this portion of the Goal: Ensure that charter has multiple methods for assessing progress of students and staff and methods for reporting progress to stakeholders.

Observations: Idaho Science & Technology Charter School will participate in all of the state required assessments. Students participated in the state ISAT this spring. While this new school did not make AYP goals they came very close. They are focusing additional resources on the needs of the Title I program and better alignment between their curriculum and the testing especially in the science area. ISTCS uses Power School to track student progress.

Goal 2 Commendations: The team would like to commend ISTCS in the following areas:

- Robust professional learning community supported by alternative schedule.
- Active engagement of students in creative problem solving and hands-on learning
- Vision for continuous growth of technology is very exciting and consistent with charter. Technology is much more actively being used in all areas at this time.
- Culture of the school is positive and students feel that teachers are caring and respectful.
- Math and Science instruction and classroom management particularly strong.
- Career exploration very exciting; students exposed to careers not usually known to middle school students. Speakers bring outside expertise and expand opportunities
- Diverse instructional strategies observed in several classrooms.
- Special education teacher has very good communication with all teachers and presence in all classrooms
- Initiating Title I program with highly qualified teacher.
- Teachers noted the learning curve of students for school expectations and see a much easier start this fall.
- STEM project outlined and initiated this year with high expectations, cross curricular application and working on rubrics for scoring.

Recommendations: The team respectfully recommends to ISTCS that:

- Explore strategies that will maintain high degree of teacher autonomy while supporting cross curricular efforts.
- Use Friday time to create opportunities to share instructional strategies among teachers. Disseminate strong teaching practices through the school by creating opportunities for teachers to observe one another and give feedback
- Follow-up on curriculum for computer and English classes and consider one with integrated assessments.
- Clarify homework policy and how it fits into the development of 'workforce' disposition as identified in your charter.
- Consider articulating connection between music/arts and math/sciences.
- Still seeing some downtime in classes and would encourage all teachers to teach to the highest level students so they remain challenged and engaged.
- Explore broad fitness program as facilities permit. Integrate Wii technology balanced with a more rigorous physical education program especially since the academic schedule does not allow for recesses.
- Continue to be data informed: Decide what you want to know and how you'll gather that information.

Goal Three: The charter school will show and plan for strong stakeholder support, involvement and satisfaction

Purpose/Intent of this Goal: Ensure the charter has stakeholders who are supportive, well informed and involved in the charter school.

- Exceeds Standards
- Meets Standards
- Progressing Toward Standards
- In Need of Improvement
- Not Progressing Toward Standards

Observations: Idaho Science & Technology is strongly supported by their founding board. The parents and students that we had the opportunity to speak with are also very satisfied and committed customers. Teachers are pleased about the learning community they are experiencing as Idaho Science & Technology faculty.

Parents feel that the school administration and the board communicate through the website and newsletter. All board meetings are open to the public and some participation has been noted. The school is getting ready to activate a new website which will have additional materials available to the community and students. They feel that teachers are available and dedicated.

Parents were particularly impressive in sharing how they see the impact of the technology environment on their students competence in the home. Parents report that students troubleshoot home computer problems, that they explore information and strategies not observed before in using programs and the internet, and that they are very enthusiastic about the summer and after school opportunities that support technology learning. Within the group of six or seven parents, each reported that their child struggled in the larger, traditional public school with bullying, social interactions, feeling left out or being marginalized. All parents were relieved and pleased that their children were thriving at ISTCS and praised the inclusive culture that has been created at the charter.

Commendations: The team would like to commend ISTCS in the following areas:

- Teachers seem very enthusiastic and invigorated at the beginning of this year.
- Parents value the school and the opportunities for their students
- Great deal of excitement about the beginning of the new building on the property
- “High acceptance for the diversity of the school in many areas – special education, racial, etc.
- Parents see students learning about computer and robotics, Lego® league, summer programs, parents seeing skills expanding better student opportunities.
- Parents really are hoping for a high school.
- Students feel positive about their learning and informed on their individual progress.
- Parents engaged in supporting the school with fun activities and supplies.
- Highly enthusiastic, optimistic and dedicated staff, teachers and administration.
- Students feel ‘safe’ to learn and be themselves.
- Good attention in the media and building community and industry relationships is commendable.

Recommendations: The team respectfully recommends to ISTCS that:

- Consider additional opportunities for parent engagement. Good participation in parent teacher conferences but continue to strive for higher participation this year.
- Continue the dialogue with students and stakeholders so that you can identify needs and gather feedback on program decisions.
- Consider identifying a volunteer, board member or staff person who can assist with effective public relations to promote the positive image of the school early in its development.
- Use your website to highlight student accomplishments and activities.
- Help parents understand about how they can access web site info for grades - consider tutoring for parents on technology.

<p>Goal Four: The charter school will plan for short and long term continuous improvement.</p>

Purpose/Intent of this Goal: Ensure the charter clearly recognizes where growth is essential.

Observations: The team visited ISTCS during the first week of the new school year. This is perhaps not the best time to observe for continuous improvement. It is noteworthy, however, that the team noted many changes since last fall's visit. The teachers are more confident and unified in their approaches. The school, while it continues to be housed in portables, feels more settled and organized. Students are actively engaged in music and art programs, really engaged in science experiments already this year and well adjusted to the routines and cultural expectations of the school.

During the first year of a school's operation there are so many things going on and both teachers and students are learning to function in a new space with new expectations. The team felt that the teachers were making good use of longer classes. They were making very good use of their Friday meetings to create a supportive professional development community. Teachers were evaluated in the spring using the Danielson framework and they felt it provided valuable and formative feedback. Teachers are eager to enhance their instruction and use technology to expand the opportunities for learning. They feel that their principal and technology staff provide the resources to accomplish both of these.

The team was especially impressed with the vision that the teachers hold for the future of the school. Everyone is very excited about the new school building and the opportunities it will allow for, but the vision for the learning opportunities is an even more exciting one. We commend ISTCS for the growth they have accomplished in year one and we look forward to seeing their growth and maturing in the coming year.

Commendations: The team would like to commend ISTCS in the following areas:

- Commendable growth accomplished this year
- Dynamic vision for the future

Recommendations: The team respectfully recommends to ISTCS that:

- Keep up the good work
- Continue to support the robust professional learning community so that teachers benefit from one another
- Stay focused on student achievement and growth

TEAM CONTACT INFORMATION

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Goal	Rating	Commendations	Recommendations
<p>1. Governance: <i>The Charter School will fulfill all governance and administrative obligations as provided in state & federal law and in the school's charters.</i></p>	<p>Meets Standard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong board make up with very experienced chair and director • All staff returned to the school in year two. • Incorporating ISBA model policies and regular practice of reviewing and adopting at board meetings is commendable • Strong business manager and fiscal processes in place • All agendas and minutes posted on website and at school. • Conservative financial strategies to support building a permanent facility • The ISTCS board is clear about the mission, diverse and lead by very experienced chair. • Strong internal fiscal policies and procedures are established and favorable fiscal audit completed. • ISTCS adopting ISBA policy manual. Practice of reviewing and adopting policies at board meetings is commendable. • The charter has retained legal documents for stakeholder/director access. • Documentation is well organized and complete. We encourage the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow through on adopting and customizing Blackfoot Charter School's policy & procedures per charter • Consider board training opportunities and board self-evaluation. The board chair is informally mentoring other members and we encourage him to continue in this role. • Review all employee files for completeness. Personnel files need to include highly qualified documentation and fingerprinting in all files. A checklist would be useful in all files. • All teachers and paraprofessionals should be evaluated by the principal. • Analyze all testing data and create an action plan for improvement.

		<p>new office staff to review the staff files and bring them all up to date.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of randomly selected student files and Special Education student files showed them to be in good order with appropriate transfer records, grades and test scores, immunization and birth records. Files were appropriately stored in a fire-proof, locked cabinet to protect confidentiality and integrity of information. • Good working relationship between board and administration. Segregation of duties clearly understood. 	
<p>2. Academic Program: <i>The charter school will demonstrate a successful academic program</i></p>	<p>Progressing Toward Standard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust professional learning community supported by alternative schedule. • Active engagement of students in creative problem solving and hands-on learning • Vision for continuous growth of technology is very exciting and consistent with charter. Technology is much more actively being used in all areas at this time. • Culture of the school is positive and students feel that teachers are caring and respectful. • Math and Science instruction and classroom management particularly strong. • Career exploration very exciting; students exposed to careers not usually known to middle school students. Speakers bring outside 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore strategies that will maintain high degree of teacher autonomy while supporting cross curricular efforts. • Use Friday time to create opportunities to share instructional strategies among teachers. Disseminate strong teaching practices through the school by creating opportunities for teachers to observe one another and give feedback • Follow-up on curriculum for computer and English classes and consider one with integrated assessments. • Clarify homework policy and how it fits into the development of 'workforce' disposition as identified in your charter. • Consider articulating connection between music/arts and math/sciences. • Still seeing some downtime in classes and would encourage all teachers to teach to the highest level students so they remain challenged and engaged.

		<p>expertise and expand opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse instructional strategies observed in several classrooms. • Special education teacher has very good communication with all teachers and presence in all classrooms • Initiating Title I program with highly qualified teacher. • Teachers noted the learning curve of students for school expectations and see a much easier start this fall. • STEM project outlined and initiated this year with high expectations, cross curricular application and working on rubrics for scoring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore broad fitness program as facilities permit. Integrate Wii technology balanced with a more rigorous physical education program especially since the academic schedule does not allow for recesses. • Continue to be data informed: Decide what you want to know and how you'll gather that information.
<p>3. Stakeholder Support: <i>The charter school will show and plan for strong stakeholder support, involvement and satisfaction</i></p>	<p>Meets Standard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers seem very enthusiastic and invigorated at the beginning of this year. • Parents value the school and the opportunities for their students • Great deal of excitement about the beginning of the new building on the property • "High acceptance for the diversity of the school in many areas – special education, racial, etc. • Parents see students learning about computer and robotics, Lego® league, summer programs, parents seeing skills expanding better student opportunities. • Parents really are hoping for a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider additional opportunities for parent engagement. Good participation in parent teacher conferences but continue to strive for higher participation this year. • Continue the dialogue with students and stakeholders so that you can identify needs and gather feedback on program decisions. • Consider identifying a volunteer, board member or staff person who can assist with effective public relations to promote the positive image of the school early in its development. • Use your website to highlight student accomplishments and activities. • Help parents understand about how they can access web site info for grades - consider tutoring for parents on technology.

		<p>high school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students feel positive about their learning and informed on their individual progress. • Parents engaged in supporting the school with fun activities and supplies. • Highly enthusiastic, optimistic and dedicated staff, teachers and administration. • Students feel 'safe' to learn and be themselves. • Good attention in the media and building community and industry relationships is commendable. 	
<p>4. Continuous Improvement: <i>The charter school will plan for short and long term continuous improvement.</i></p>	Meets Standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commendable growth accomplished this year • Dynamic vision for the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep up the good work • Continue to support the robust professional learning community so that teachers benefit from one another • Stay focused on student achievement and growth