

**Section 1. Mission, Vision and Education Program**

State the mission and vision of the proposed school. Provide a synopsis of the proposed educational program including key components of the education model and any unique or innovative features of the school. Include the key design elements of the school(s) or program(s). Discuss how the school's educational program will serve the proposed school population.

The Mission of Ocean Academy Charter School is to provide elementary students with a rigorous curriculum in a safe nurturing environment, so that all students achieve their highest level of academic success. This will be accomplished through the implementation of a rigorous curriculum differentiated to meet the needs of each student within a climate of high expectations. At least 80% of students will meet or exceed proficiency standards on the State Assessments.

Ocean Academy Charter School will achieve its mission by:

- Utilizing a multi-modality program where the learning needs of each student are taken into account so as to promote strong critical thinking and academic skills.
- Each student will have a learning plan that will be shaped by an initial benchmark and subsequent periodic assessments to measure achievement of student growth objectives.
- Students will engage in hands-on and inter-disciplinary learning inside and outside the classroom by infusing local resources into the curriculum.
- The students' cultures, including music, art, and traditions, will be infused into the curriculum through cross-curriculum, project-based learning that links the classroom to the student's world outside of school.
- Students will be engaged in a diverse learning experience which will be anchored by the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and the Common Core Standards.
- Educators will promote academic excellence through collaboration in their planning and in professional learning communities.
- Educators will participate in professional development programs that will be designed on the specific needs of the teachers and students.
- Best practices will be continually reviewed, updated and applied as warranted.
- Parents will be encouraged to be active in school events, participate in classroom activities, and support their child's learning efforts at home.

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The Educational Program will be student centered to address academic needs and growth. The faculty will use key educational strategies to reach each student and work with them to master lesson content. These will include the identification and use of:

- Howard Gardner's Learning Styles,
- Differentiated Instruction techniques and strategies that address the various learning styles of the students in the classroom,
- Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (Scaffolding strategies) and cooperative learning opportunities.

The Founders recognize that the Lakewood Public Schools have a distinct student population with needs that will need to be addressed by the charter school.

While National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results show that, over time, black and Hispanic students have made great strides in improving performance in reading and mathematics, a breach still separated them from their white peers. For example, special analyses by the National Center for Education Statistics in 2009 and 2011 showed that black and Hispanic students trailed their white peers by an average of more than 20 test-score points on the NAEP math and reading assessments at 4th and 8th grades, a difference of about two grade levels. These gaps persisted even though the score differentials between black and white students narrowed between 1992 and 2007 in 4th grade math and reading and 8th grade math (NCES, 2009, 2011). Source: Education Week, published August 3, 2004; updated July 7, 2011. Retrieved from website <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/achievement-gap/>

The U.S Department of Education conducted a study of successful charter schools that are addressing the achievement gap for low income students and identified common themes that all the schools emphasized to create the environment for success. (Retrieved from: <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/comm/choice/charterk-8/index.html>) These include:

1. Mission driven - having a shared vision of all stakeholders focusing on student achievement.
2. Teaching for mastery and understanding - monitor student progress
3. Positive School Culture - a safe learning environment and school culture
4. Families as partners in learning
5. Holding themselves accountable with strong active boards empowering administrators
6. Innovation including a longer school day, staffing solutions and utilize community organizations
7. Continuous professional development to respond to school/student needs
8. All leading to closing the achievement gap in low income, urban settings.

The students of Ocean Academy Charter School will be culturally diverse, and the founders believe that the use differentiated instruction is essential. It is the expectation that the classrooms will contain students with a wide range of abilities and varied experiential backgrounds. These students learn at different rates and in different ways. Differentiation is



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important because students' early experiences have a profound impact on their views of school, their understanding of the learning process, and their views of themselves as learners.

The effect of the identification and classroom use of student's Learning Styles demonstrates that there are positive effects in urban settings. (Examining the Effects of Multiple Intelligence Instruction on Math Performance Dillihunt, Monica L.; Tyler, Kenneth M.; Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research, v2 p131-150 2006) The Education Research Information Center (ERIC) cites numerous studies involving urban populations that benefit students by identifying the learning styles of students for lesson planning and delivery.

The learning will be active, exploratory and cooperative supporting the students learning needs and styles. Learning will also be inter-disciplinary. Teachers will utilize learning centers with activities that reinforce concepts, connect concepts across the curriculum, make connections to prior learning and promote mastery of the material. Community resources will be employed to support learning and promote cultural understanding and to provide real life examples and demonstration of classroom material.

A review of the literature available through ERIC (<http://eric.ed.gov/>) cites multiple studies reporting the successful use of Differentiated Instruction strategies in almost all areas of the curriculum and with students exhibiting different degrees of struggle, different grades, demographics of the community, gender, and English language development. These studies include positive effects for Language Arts and reading, Mathematics, Special Education programs, General Education programs with Inclusion programs. The studies identified the need for teacher training in the effective use of Differentiated Instruction strategies and the use of collaborative planning time, both of which will be addressed in the professional development program for Ocean Academy Charter School.

Each student will have their own Personal Learning Plan that will be developed cooperatively between parents and teachers. The plan will note the student's learning styles, the results of any benchmark assessments with the identification of academic gaps and strategies to close any knowledge gaps. These plans will also include annual goals for each student. They will be reviewed at least 4 times per year (at the end of each marking period) and reviewed and/or revised in consultation with parents. The data collected through class assessments will be included, analyzed and coordinated to inform lesson plans, student growth objectives, student interests, and next steps for each students' achievement.

According to a report by Educational World ([http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_issues/schools/schools005.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_issues/schools/schools005.shtml)), in a study of KIPP Academy, Mother Hale Academy, and Crossroad Schools, all highly effective schools in New York City's most disadvantaged neighborhoods, there are six key shared elements that nurtures student achievement and personal development:

- Teachers engage students.
- Student settings, either class size or student population, are small.
- Ground rules set the tone for respectful behavior.
- High expectations and clear consequences are articulated to students frequently.
- Staff is dedicated and caring.
- Structured daily and classroom routines provide stability and direction.

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The Founders believe these elements, which reflect Ocean Academy Charter School's mission, will be a part of the foundation of the school.

The annual Professional Development program will be developed each year to assist teachers meet the learning needs of the students in the classroom. The initial program will include sessions that address the use of the Common Core State Standards in the curriculum as well as the Core Curriculum Content Standards. Data collection, analysis and integration to inform individual and group educational needs will be highlighted. Reviews of the educational program and the tools and strategies to be used will also be conducted to ensure teachers have what is needed to educate the students. Workshops during the school year will focus on topics that the teachers identify to help them meet the needs of their students.

The founders recognize the issues facing the Lakewood Public Schools. The issues are broader than poor educational achievement. The efforts by the board of trustees, administrators, faculty, students' parents and the Lakewood community will, by policy, action and consistency implement a holistic approach to learning by embracing the principles listed below as recommended by the NJ Department of Education in order to create an atmosphere for success and for the school to become a model for the Lakewood Public Schools by achieving academic and social success with the students.

This effort is meant to be preemptive; recognizing what needs to be addressed in addition to a focus on the individual student to create a successful, achievement orientated program.

These principles include:

- School Leadership: Ensuring that the principal has the ability to lead the effort;
- School Climate and Culture: Establishing school environments with a climate conducive to learning and a culture of high expectations;
- Effective Instruction: Ensuring teachers utilize research-based effective instruction to meet the needs of all students;
- Curriculum, Assessment, and Intervention System: Ensuring teachers have the foundational documents and instructional materials needed to teach to the rigorous college and career ready standards that have been adopted;
- Effective Staffing Practices: Developing the skills to better recruit, retain and develop effective teachers;
- Enabling the Effective Use of Data: Ensuring school-wide use of data focused on improving teaching and learning, as well as climate and culture;
- Effective Use of Time: Redesigning time to better meet student needs and increase teacher collaboration focused on improving teaching and learning; and
- Effective Family and Community Engagement: Increasing academically focused family and community engagement.

These principles will be included in the policies of the school and achievement will be measured through surveys of involved parties and evaluations of staff.



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The school community (parents, teachers, staff, students, & board members) will be educated on the importance of student standardized assessments, the Common Core Standards, and NJ's Core Curriculum Standards.

Ocean Academy Charter School Founders believe that with such key design elements as cited above combined with high quality teaching staff and community involvement, the school will be able to be successful in realizing its vision and mission.