



# **Executive Summary**

## **Cesar Chavez Academy**

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## **Introduction**

Every school system has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school system makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way a school system stays faithful to its vision. Many factors contribute to the overall narrative such as an identification of stakeholders, a description of stakeholder engagement, the trends and issues affecting the school system, and the kinds of programs and services that a school system implements to support student learning.

The purpose of the Executive Summary (ES) is to provide a school system with an opportunity to describe in narrative form the strengths and challenges it encounters. By doing so, the public and members of the community will have a more complete picture of how the school system perceives itself and the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement. This summary is structured for the school system to reflect on how it provides teaching and learning on a day to day basis.

## **Description of the School System**

**Describe the school system's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school system serves?**

Demographics and Challenges Impacting the César Chávez Academy District:

César Chávez Academy District (CCA) District is located in southwest Detroit which is home to the largest concentration of Hispanics in Michigan and has recently expanded to the eastside Detroit. The district has one of the largest concentrations of Spanish-speaking students in the state and Hispanic student demographics constitute more than 85% of district's enrollment. Spanish is the primary language spoken in the majority of homes and over 60% of the district's students require some level of English language support. The City of Detroit continues to be one of the most economically devastated cities in the United States with a current unemployment rate of over 30% and a functional illiteracy rate of almost 50%. The 48209 & 49210 zip codes constitutes about 95% of the Cesar Chavez Academy District school population and according to Census 2010 data, less than 60% of the residents, 25 years and older, have earned a high school graduation diploma.

The majority of area residents work in a severely depressed manufacturing/service industry. As a result, families become transient leaving the state to pursue job opportunities elsewhere, only to return to Detroit as seasonal work becomes available. Over 90% of CCA students qualify for Free or Reduced-price lunch. In addition, quality of life issues ranging from high crime rates to inadequate city services, coupled with immigration issues, requires the district to confront serious challenges that extend beyond the school.

In 2013-14, CCA opened its newest campus, providing an educational opportunity to students on Detroit's east side.

Features:

CCA District has earned a positive reputation over its 19 years of existence and remains the largest charter in Michigan. Cesar Chavez Academy is the first district to receive NCA District Accreditation. The district's strengths are many but can best be summed up by the district mission statement: "The mission of César Chávez Academy is to provide atmosphere of academic excellence that promotes thinkers and problem solvers who work cooperatively and respect in an inclusive environment". The district, in cooperation with The Leona Group (TLG) and Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU), works to improve effectiveness in every facet of its operations, including instruction, professional development, budget and finance, maintenance of facilities, parental involvement, and community partnerships. CCA District started in 1995 as a single, lower elementary campus site with approximately 200 students. Since then, the district has grown to nearly 2,200 students K-12 spread out across five locations: CCAE Lower K-2; CCAE Upper 3-5; CCA East K-5; CCAMS 6-8, and CCAHS 9-12. The district attributes its success in creating a safe, clean, and orderly student-centered learning environment to district leadership, staff, and strong support from The Leona Group and Saginaw Valley State University. As a result of the autonomy encouraged and supported by TLG, school leaders are able to interview and hire caring and competent staff who also meet NCLB/ESEA certified and highly qualified criteria. The District Leadership Team collects, reviews and analyzes student academic data regularly in order to meet students' academic needs. Response to Intervention (RtI) is strongly evident across the K-12 system.

District professional development plans are developed based on student academic performance and classroom observations (both formal and informal) conducted by school leaders, instructional coaches, district curriculum director, and district ELL coaches. District administrators, teachers, and support staff are provided extensive professional development opportunities during the school year. CCA District classroom observations and lesson plan feedback are conducted regularly, and all teachers receive performance reviews annually (utilizing the Educator Evaluation System). Immediate feedback from classroom observations is provided to teachers in one of these ways:

a.) verbal, b.) email, or c.) copy of written notes. Classroom observation training and tools are provided by TLG.

The CCA District offers its teachers and students much of the latest instructional technology resources. Promethean and Smart Boards can be found in every classroom throughout the district. In addition, each campus site is wireless and utilizes mobile laptop computer and iPad carts to enhance instruction and increase student engagement. In 2013, the high school constructed a state-of-the art media center. Since 2009-2010, the district has relied on an Curriculum Management Plan (CMP) sometimes referred to as our Educational Management Plan (EMP) in order to pull together its core service (teaching and learning) and to align assessments in each content area and across all grade levels. Like the school improvement plans, the CMP is a working document that is continuously evolving based on student needs and research/evidenced-based best practices.

**Challenges:**

The CCA District needs vary from building to building, but there is consensus regarding a few key areas. First, a need for greater parental involvement at the secondary level. While CCA District Parent-Teacher Conferences typically yield a 95% turnout at the elementary buildings, 65% attendance rate is found at the middle and high school levels. Both CCAE lower and upper campus sites have established weekly parent group meetings where parents learn how they can become active participants in their child's education. Speakers and local community based organizations are brought in to share information about services families are eligible to receive. CCAMS and CCAHS offer monthly parenting group meetings and have increased the parent participation over the past 2 years. Stakeholder involvement also represents a needs area for the CCA District. Individual campus sites have made aggressive efforts to reach out to the larger community, which has yielded a series of strong relationships. Community liaisons in the school buildings have made strides by establishing connections with businesses and service organizations. For example, school partner with United Way to provide coats for kids, Southwest Solution to offers our families mental health, the Kwainas club who provides books, and local churches who provide food baskets to most families.

Finally, language represents a two-fold challenge for CCA District. On the one hand, the large percentage of student who qualify for some degree of English Language services makes it necessary for the schools to put programs in place to address these needs. Secondly, with many CCA parents being of limited English proficiency themselves, even basic interactions between the school and the home require the use of translators/translations in order to make communications effective.

## **System's Purpose**

**Provide the school system's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school system embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.**

### **Our Mission**

César Chávez Academy, in cooperation with parents and the community, will provide for the unique needs of our students through innovative experiences in a fully inclusive, safe, and nurturing environment. Cesar Chavez Academy provides an opportunity for all students to learn in a safe atmosphere of academic excellence.

### **Our Vision**

Our vision at César Chávez Academy is to become the premier college preparatory school district in the state of Michigan. The statement that supports our foundation. "Sí Se Puede - Yes, We Can", reflects the belief that every student is capable of greatness.

### **We believe...**

We believe and envision that every child is entitled to a quality education.

We believe all children will grow academically, socially and physically.

We believe every child is entitled to a safe and orderly learning environment.

We believe that family involvement in the educational process is essential to the success of the child.

We believe in meeting the diverse needs of our parents.

We believe all students will be prepared to become positive, productive members of the community.

We believe that in education, creativity is an essential part of the learning process.

## **Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement**

**Describe the school system's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school system is striving to achieve in the next three years.**

### Notable Achievements:

Cesar Chavez Academy (CCA) District has served the students (and their families) in Southwest Detroit since 1995 and has expanded to the eastside of Detroit in 2013. The longevity of the academy and the commitment demonstrated by the school staff and administration during this time has made a difference in the lives of our students and families. CCA was the first NCA Accredited Multi-Campus Charter School District/System in the State of Michigan.

The Mackinac Center awarded CCA MS a State Rank of 109 and the Upper Elementary a State Rank of 209 out of 2562 elementary and middle schools in the state. CCA was recognized by Bridge Magazine / The Center for Michigan as a 2013 Academic State Champ, for being among the Top 10 Charter Schools in Michigan. CCA HS was ranked among the Best High Schools 2013 by U.S. News & World Report and it boasts an 85% 4-year graduation rate.

The Leona Group (TLG) and the CCA Board of Directors have adopted the Inclusion Model . The Inclusion Model operates on the premise that all students, regardless of unique background circumstances, receive education services in a regular classroom. Research suggests that this model is the best means of delivering instruction for most special needs students, and it is a defining characteristic of all TLG-operated academies.

### Areas of Improvement:

Improved building capacity to secure updated technology

Getting students adequately prepared to meet the increasingly stringent academic demands that are placed on them

Transient student population in the East campus as neighborhoods continue to be eroded

Maintaining enrollment targets as the educational options available to parents increases with the opening of new charter schools in an already saturated market

## **Additional Information**

**Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.**

As it is communicated in the Curriculum Management Plan (CMP), the Cesar Chavez Academy District has adopted the S.I.O.P. (Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol) model. This instructional strategy provides the most equitable language support available for the predominant ELL population. However S.I.O.P. is not limited to English Language Learners, and it continues to be used as an instructional best practice to meet the specific academic needs of all demographic sub-groups. As a Michigan Public School Academy, CCA District is required by law and by its authorizer, to adhere to all state and federal guidelines.

With the full support of TLG, CCA District demonstrates compliance through various Michigan Department of Education and federal reporting requirements. Our district's Balance Assessment system, affords the academy the opportunity to monitor students progress.

Additional strengths include:

- Student-centered, learner focused learning environments
- Clean, safe, healthy, orderly, and strongly supportive learning environments.
- High parent and student satisfaction ratings
- Very minimal teacher attrition
- Commitment to continuous improvement
- Very strong working relationships and support from The Leona Group and Saginaw Valley State University
- Balanced budget and healthy fund balance
- Strong teacher support and professional development
- Instructional technology tools
- Supplemental instructional resources
- Opportunities for extra-curricular activities beyond the regular school day
- Response To Intervention (Rtl)
- Support staff / Interventionist Support