

CHARTER SCHOOL PERFORMANCE METRICS SURVEY
Briefing Memorandum

Prepared for

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Overview

CREDO has been selected to help the Utah State Office of Education and the State Charter School Board create a Utah Performance Management Framework (PMF) for charter schools. In one of the activities in the Scope of Work, CREDO proposed to compile a list of metrics for charter school quality that could be considered for inclusion in the framework. This effort complements the initial suggestions presented at the June 2010 meeting of the State Charter School Board.

We took a two-tiered approach in creating the list. First, we cast a wide net to look nationally at what others in the charter school sector are doing. Next, we sought the input of the Utah charter school community. In this memo, CREDO presents the feedback from our research and survey. In the following sections we will share more detail about the metrics compiled from the national charter school sector, report feedback from the survey of Utah charter school community and provide recommendations about the use of metrics in the PMF.

Background

CREDO looked across the country to gather input into suggested metrics to be included in the PMF. The starting point for creating a list of proposed metrics was the Building Charter School Quality Initiative (BCSQ), a national project focused on creating common performance measures for quality charter schools. This project itself sought input from a broad set of charter school constituents, including schools, authorizers, charter school support organizations and funders of charter schools. In addition to the BCSQ metrics, we gathered current materials from state charter support organizations, state departments of education and authorizers in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, New Mexico and Texas. We combined the metrics to create a consolidated list that was used as the knowledge base to survey the Utah charter school community. The list on its own represents the most current practice on performance measurement, and thus is interesting in its own right.

There were two purposes to the survey. The first was to build an understanding of the views of each of the stakeholders concerning a “formula” for charter school quality, as revealed by their responses to a set of structured questions. The second was to provide an opportunity for engagement with the stakeholder groups at an important stage of the development cycle of the PMF.

Survey & Results

The survey distributed throughout the Utah charter school community was structured around the national list. We employed the hierarchy of Indicator / Measure / Metric that was made familiar through the Building Charter School Quality initiative. Table 1 displays the hierarchy used in the survey.

The focus of the survey was on metrics – the precise computations associated with school performance – since they are both granular and specific, characteristics that are necessary for a successful PMF. Metrics were grouped by measure and there was opportunity under each measure for respondents to add their own suggestions as well as on open comment box at the end of the survey.

For each metric we asked participants to give their thoughts on four dimensions:

- Do you already use this metric to monitor charter school performance? (Yes/No)
- How valuable to do you find this metric for managing charter school performance? (using a scale where 1 is Very Valuable and 5 is Not Valuable)
- How feasible is it to track and monitor this metric? (using a scale where 1 is Very Feasible and 5 is Not Feasible)
- How frequently do you feel this metric should be monitored and reported? (Never, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, Biannually, Annually)

As the State Charter School Board (SCSB) has already adopted a set of Financial Performance Metrics, these metrics were not included in this survey. However, we did ask respondents to assign weights to the entire set of Financial Performance Metrics as part of the PMF.

Surveys were sent to all school leaders and school board chairs for the active Utah charter schools as well as the State Charter School Board (SCSB), USOE Charter School Office staff and the leadership of the Utah State Charter School Association. The survey was sent to 172 people. Below is a summary of the respondents and their responses to metrics. .

Response Rates

Of the 172 people receiving the survey, 106 (61.6 percent) started the survey, but only a fraction of those (38.7 percent) completed the survey in its entirety. Table 1 shows a summary of those that started and completed the survey.

Table 1: Summary of Respondents by Type Who Started and Completed the Survey

	# Started	percent of Total Started	# Completed	percent of Total Completed	Completed as a percent of Started
School Leader	50	47.2 percent	22	53.6 percent	44.0 percent
School Board Member	44	41.5 percent	13	31.7 percent	29.5 percent
State Charter Association	4	3.8 percent	0	0.0 percent	0.0 percent
State Charter School Board	4	3.8 percent	2	4.9 percent	50.0 percent
Office of Charter Schools Staff	4	3.8 percent	4	9.8 percent	100.0 percent
Totals	106		41		38.7 percent

The representation of the 78 active charter schools is slightly lower, as only 28.2 percent (22) of the schools had someone complete the entire survey. Still we did receive partial input from 64.18 percent (50) of the schools.

Survey Responses

A summary of the full results by metric can be found in Appendix 1. Our summary presents the survey findings groups by their associated measures.

Current Use and Perceived Value

Academic Status Metrics

The results about Academic Status metrics are not surprising. Over 90 percent of the respondents noted that they are currently using *Percentage of students scoring at proficiency* and *AYP* metrics. Both of these are currently mandated. About 84 percent of respondents used *Percentage of students scoring at each performance level* as a metric to measure current performance. High percentages of the respondents rated *Percentage of students scoring at proficiency* and *Percentage of students scoring at each performance level* in the two highest value categories. *AYP* was not seen as a high value metric as only 56 percent rated it in the two highest levels of value.

For the College Entrance Exam metrics, less than 30 percent of the respondents noted using any of the metrics. This low percentage is likely a reflection of the small number of charter high schools in Utah and the proportion of high school affiliated people who actually took the survey. Still, the fact that Utah charter high schools are paying this set of metrics heed distinguishes them as forward thinking compared to their peers nationally.

In the Other Academic Status metrics section, respondents listed other assessments that they felt should also be used to show mastery of skills and standards including national assessments such as Scantron, NWEA and Dibels as well as teacher-created assessments.

Academic Growth Metrics

The Academic Growth metrics as a whole were noted by the majority of the respondents as in use to measure current charter school performance. This group of metrics was also felt to have high value as each metric was rated in two highest value categories by over 80 percent of respondents.

Currently there is no growth metric being used in Utah for any of its public schools but it appears that respondents highly valued Academic Growth when evaluating the performance of Utah charter schools.

Post-secondary Readiness Metrics

Generally the Postsecondary Readiness Metrics were the lowest group of metrics reported being used and rated fairly low in terms of value. Again this is likely a function of a small proportion of charter high schools in Utah and the proportion that actually took the survey.

One other metric suggested in this area by a respondent was college credit accumulation while in high school and in college.

Student Engagement Metrics

In this area, the *Student Attendance*, *Continuous Enrollment* and *Discipline* metrics were rated as most commonly used and having the highest value to the respondents.

Board Performance Metrics

There are mixed results for the Board Performance metrics. For roughly half the metrics in this area respondents noted high use (70 percent or more). With the exception of three metrics -- *Board Member Skills, Knowledge and Commitment* -- respondents reported that metrics in this area were highly valuable, with over 70 percent of the respondents rated the metrics in the two highest value levels. This suggests that the respondents consider Board performance to be important when evaluating the performance of the whole school but that additional education around the necessary elements of good governance may be advisable.

Other suggested metrics for this area included *Parent satisfaction with a school's Board* and *Number of complaints made to a school's Board*.

Parent and Community Engagement Metrics

The Parent and Community Engagement metrics were not widely used according to the respondents. About 60 percent of the respondents noted using each of these metrics. However, they were noted as being valuable as 78 percent or more of the respondents rated the value in the two highest categories.

One suggestion was made to use *Parent volunteerism* as an additional metric in this area.

Mission-specific Metrics

There were few responses to Mission-specific metrics. Of the suggested metrics, the focus was around meeting personal goals for students, writing skills, and language mastery.

Estimated Weights of Performance Metrics

In addition to inquiring about the metrics to be included in PMF, the survey asked respondents to assign them weights. In our survey we asked respondents to first give overall weights broken out at the indicator level of Academic Performance, Financial & Operational Performance or Mission-Specific Performance. These results can be seen in Figure 1. Respondents reported that Academic Performance should count for almost half of the weight with Financial & Operational Performance and Mission-specific Performance each receiving about a quarter of the overall weight, with 27 percent for Financial & Operational Performance and 23 percent for Mission-Specific Performance.

The survey probed deeper by including questions about how to allocate weight within each indicator among the associated measures. The revealed preferences of the respondents yield important information concerning the basic structure of the PMF. Figure 2 displays the average weights of the measures within the Academic Performance indicator. Respondents considered *Academic Status* to be the most important measure, accounting for over a third of the weight within the indicator. *Academic Growth* and *Student Engagement* received roughly equal weight on average (23 percent and 25 percent, respectively.) Measures related to *Post-Secondary Readiness* were weighed on average at 15 percent, with a smidgen allocated to other measures.

Figure 1: Respondents' Average Weighting by Indicator Area of Performance

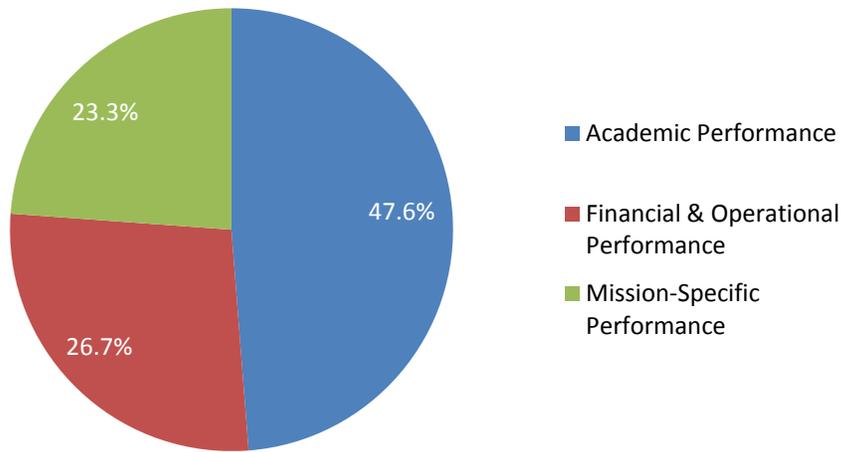
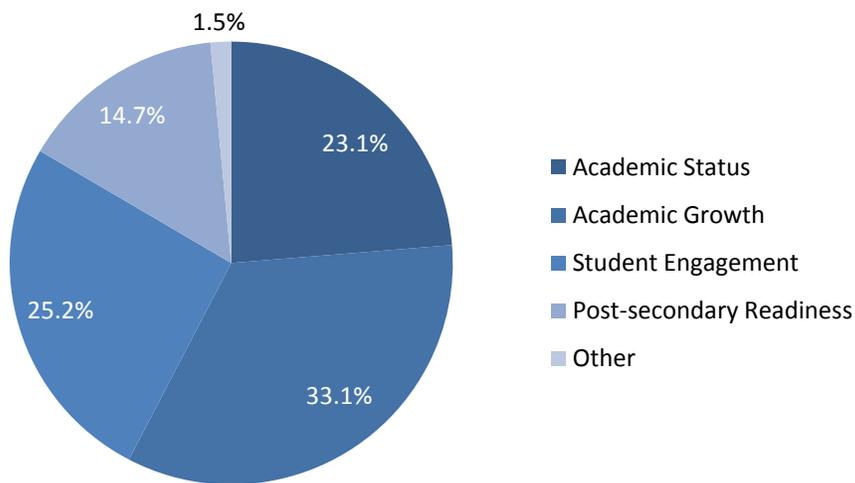
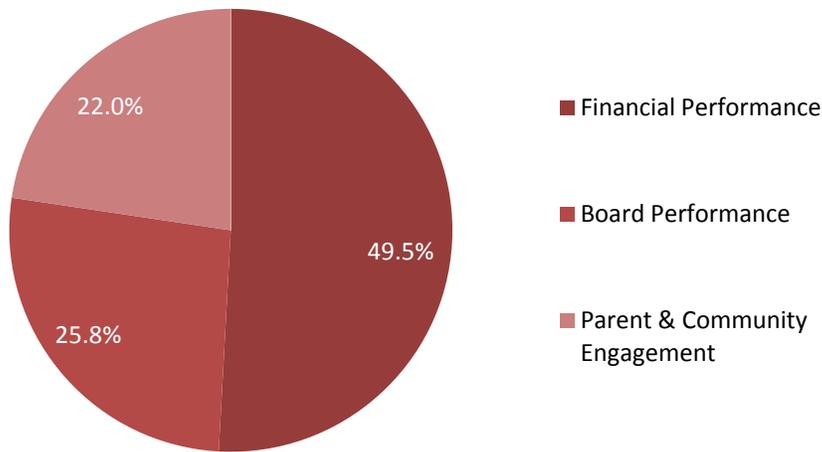


Figure 2: Respondents' Average Weighting of Measures within the Academic Performance Indicator



For the Financial & Operational Performance indicator, respondents revealed that half the weight should be devoted to *Financial Performance* measures. *Board Performance* and *Parent & Community Engagement* split the remaining half fairly evenly with *Board Performance* making up 26 percent and *Parent & Community Engagement* making up the remaining 22 percent.

Figure 3: Respondents' Average Weighting of Measures within the Financial and Operational Performance Indicator



Differences by Respondent Group

The survey results revealed significantly different views on the importance of key areas of performance across the groups of respondents. The divergence has clear implications for the feasibility and ease of creating a PMF that enjoys widespread and enduring support. In Table 2, below, the average weighting of each group of respondents is presented.

At the Indicator level, the State Charter School Board and the staff at the Utah State Office of Education's Charter School Program consider Academic Performance to be the most important area of performance, with school-based respondents giving it less importance. The extent of the divergence between School leaders and School Board members is slight, but is significantly different from the State Charter School Board and members of the Charter School Program staff. The difference is largest on the weights for *Mission-Specific Performance*, an area for which objective and reliable measures and metrics are hard to find.

The difference in perception between the State Charter School Board and the USOE staff is noteworthy, and may present challenges as the details of the Performance Framework move towards finalization.

Once the focus shifts to allocating the weights of metrics within each Indicator area, the Board and USOE charter school staff are completely aligned. Their views, however, differ dramatically from those of the school-level respondents, especially regarding the measures of *Academic Status*, *Academic Growth* and *Financial Performance*. School-affiliated respondents on average considered that *Academic Growth* should have more weight than *Academic Status* where the SCSB and USOE Charter School Staff

felt the opposite. The school-affiliated respondents also gave less weight to the *Financial Performance* measures which were more highly weighted by the SCSB and USOE Charter School Staff.

Table 2: Respondents' Average Weighting by Measure by Respondent Type

	All Respondents (n=41)	School Leader (n=22)	School Board (n=13)	Charter Association (n=0)	SCSB (n=2)	USOE Charter Staff (n=4)
Overall Weights						
Academic Performance	47.6 percent	45.3 percent	47.2 percent	N/A	65.0 percent	52.5 percent
Financial & Operational Performance	26.7 percent	26.3 percent	26.5 percent	N/A	21.5 percent	32.5 percent
Mission-Specific Performance	23.3 percent	23.8 percent	26.4 percent	N/A	13.5 percent	15.0 percent
Academic Performance Weights						
Academic Status	23.1 percent	23.1 percent	17.3 percent	N/A	50.0 percent	50.0 percent
Academic Growth	33.1 percent	32.0 percent	37.5 percent	N/A	12.5 percent	12.5 percent
Student Engagement	25.2 percent	24.7 percent	30.2 percent	N/A	10.5 percent	10.5 percent
Post-secondary Readiness	14.7 percent	15.7 percent	11.8 percent	N/A	17.0 percent	17.0 percent
Other	1.5 percent	0.0 percent	3.1 percent	N/A	10.0 percent	10.0 percent
Financial & Operational Performance Weights						
Financial Performance	49.5 percent	51.7 percent	42.8 percent	N/A	65.0 percent	65.0 percent
Board Performance	25.8 percent	23.4 percent	30.1 percent	N/A	17.5 percent	17.5 percent
Parent & Community Engagement	22.0 percent	19.9 percent	27.0 percent	N/A	17.5 percent	17.5 percent
Other	0.0 percent	0.0 percent	0.0 percent	N/A	0.0 percent	0.0 percent