

2021 UMSL Annual Review Report - Part 1: Elements 1-8 The Biome

Contents:

Evaluation Standards

Ten elements of school evaluation:

- I. [Transformative and Innovative Vision](#)
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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.

I. Transformative and Innovative Vision A transformational school:		
Standard	Indicators	Evidence
a. Develops a transformational mission and vision for its students and their families.	i. Reaching the vision clearly places students on paths of greater opportunity in life.	Required Documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter Application: (Met as part of the charter application approval process.) • Approved Charter Amendments Other Evidence
b. Students, parents and staff understand and are invested in the mission and vision.	i. Students, parents and staff can articulate the mission and vision. ii. In their classrooms, teachers and students are mission driven as indicated by their enthusiasm, active and consistent participation and task completion.	Required Documents: Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student, parent and staff interviews and survey data • Classroom observations
COVID-19 RELATED		
c. Stakeholders address ramifications of COVID-19 on school's capacity to advance the school's mission.	i. All stakeholders have opportunities to provide input. ii. Academic and student support program adjustments are aligned to and effectively advance the school's mission.	Documents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School reopening plans Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board, leadership and staff interviews • Staff and parent survey data

Element I: Vision	
Areas of strength	Areas for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All stakeholders believe in the vision of the school. <p>COVID Related: The board and administration has maintained a strong commitment to The Biome's mission during the pandemic. School leaders and staff have gone the extra mile to try to meet the needs of all students and their families; especially those families who have not maintained a good connection with the school. The Biome has been successful in setting up a safe learning environment for staff and students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID Related: A year ago, this section of the review report raised two questions for the board, administration and staff to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How can we create a school that truly reflects our vision (STEAM and inquiry-based learning) 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? In SY21, dealing with the pandemic limited the capacity needed to address these questions. Unfortunately, the pandemic has made it even more challenging to ensure that students develop their basic skills, and it is likely that some have fallen further behind. This year, The Biome rightfully prioritized improving curriculum and instruction in ELA, reading and math over developing its STEAM program. It most likely will need to continue in this direction for SY22. That stated, if it turns out schools can return to pre-pandemic teaching and learning,

	<p>then The Biome community should prioritize time next year to grapple with these two questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The board and administration must consider how to overcome constraints on the school's capacity to reach its vision due to inadequate space in its current facilities.
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II. Responsible Governance The Board of Directors of a transformational school:		
Standard	Indicator	Evidence
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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Self-Evaluation • Proof of Insurance Policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Directors and Officer Coverage ○ General Liability ○ Professional Liability ○ Property ○ Workmen Compensation ○ Employee Dishonesty/Crime (minimum \$500k)
		Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Meeting Agenda • Board Meeting Calendar • Board Meeting Document Packets • Board Meeting Minutes - Approved
		Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of board meetings • Board meeting notices and signage

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d. Ensures that policies are complete, regularly reviewed, updated as needed, and followed in a fair and consistent manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<p>Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Policy Manual and Bylaws; <p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<p>Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Plan (same as for School Leader) <p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of board meetings • Board meeting approved minutes
f. Selects, supports, and annually evaluates the school leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<p>Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Evaluation of School Leader (blank template) <p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair and Director interviews • Board meeting observations
g. Monitors the school's education program, operational procedures, and fiscal health in cooperation with the sponsor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<p>Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Annual Self-Evaluation (same as for School Leader) <p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Reviews and approves annual budgets and budget amendments. ii. Reviews the school's monthly financial statements/spreadsheets that include updates on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Current enrollment 	<p>Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance and student data reporting internal control policy • Monthly financial reports to board to include Weighted Average Daily Attendance (WADA)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board meeting approved minutes <p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair and Director interviews • Board meeting observations
i. Fulfills its responsibilities to UMSL's sponsorship liaison.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Communicates in a timely manner with UMSL's sponsorship liaison about significant policy, personnel, school performance or legal issues. ii. Ensures that all required documents are submitted to UMSL in timely manner. iii. Formally reviews UMSL's Annual Review Report at its August, September or October board meeting. 	<p>Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board meeting approved minutes <p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board-UMSL sponsor communications • Board meeting approved minutes
COVID-19 RELATED		
j. Addresses ramifications of COVID-19 on school's capacity to advance the school's mission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Operates virtual meetings within the requirements of Missouri Sunshine Laws; including clear communication of meeting times. ii. Sets meeting dates and times such that families and community members can attend. iii. Provides strong oversight and monitoring of academic and student support programs in light of COVID-19. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Administration provides frequent and regular updates on the nature and effectiveness of academic and student support program adjustments necessitated by COVID-19 to the board. b. Administration regularly provides data from internal student achievement assessments to the board. iv. Carefully monitors attendance reporting, budget adjustments and financial operations to reflect changes in revenue streams resulting from COVID-19. 	<p>Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board meeting approved minutes. • School leader evaluation • Budget <p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board meeting observations. • Board member interviews.

	v. Ensures the school has the financial resources to fund adjustments to the academic and student support programs necessitated by COVID-19.	
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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	Areas for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (a) Operates in best interests of students and mission <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ COVID Related: The board worked very closely with the administration from the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 to ensure that The Biome was positioned as best as possible to meet the academic and socio-emotional needs of its students and safeguard the health of students, parents, and staff. ○ The board president is dedicated to the school and works well with President. ○ Board interviews indicated that board engagement in governance has increased this year. • (b) Recruits and maintains - Diverse backgrounds and skill sets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Board members bring knowledge and experience in these fields: Human resources, business practice, IT, brands and marketing, bio-chemistry/bio-medicine, diversity and inclusion, teaching, school administration, community development and partnerships, and financial services. • (c) Compliance with state-federal statutes and regulations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To the best of UMSL's knowledge, The Biome's board is compliant with state and federal statutes and regulations. • (d) Policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The board periodically reviews policies and updates as needed. • (e) Strategic approach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The board president runs meetings efficiently; keeping the board on task. ○ Observations and interviews indicate that board engagement and participation has increased the past few years, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (d) Policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ UMSL strongly recommends that The Biome post all board policies on their website, near the webpage on financial information.

demonstrating greater interest in the school's operations and performance.

- The board periodically revisits The Biome's strategic plan.
- The board is focused on addressing and monitoring key issues facing the school: student achievement and engagement, finances and spending, enrollment and parent relationships while respecting the line between governance and administration.
- The board has begun a process to develop a new strategic plan.
- (f) School leader relations and evaluation:
 - Relations between the board and President are characterized by open communication, trust and mutual respect.
 - The Biome has put together a formal evaluation process of the President that includes interview of all his direct reports.
 - The President is satisfied with the evaluation process.
- (g) Monitoring responsibility:
 - The board monitors student academic performance through review of The Biome's internal standardized assessments before the full board and the Academic Committee.
 - See directly below for financial oversight.
- (h) Fulfills its fiduciary responsibility
 - The board regularly reviews and monitors The Biome's finances and financial operations, approves the monthly check register, adjusts the annual budget as necessary and submits and publishes the annual audit.
 - The board finance committee prioritizes long term planning.
 - At this time, The Biome's financial situation is in good shape.
 - *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
 - The board fulfilled all of its responsibilities to UMSL's Charter Schools Office.

- (f) School leader relations and evaluation:
 - Board interviews indicated uncertainty whether or not the formal evaluation process is rigorously followed. It is also unclear whether the full board reviews the final report.

Community Relations

- Almost all board members do not reside near or among The Biome's family community. There is little if any evidence that the board strives to develop relationships with school families or community leaders.

<p>Board Development and Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The administration and board put together a thorough development/training plan for the year to strengthen board capacity to provide strong academic and financial oversight. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For example, the UMSL sponsor made a presentation on understanding MAP Assessment data and its connection to The Biome’s performance contract. <p>Board Survey – Five Members took the survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results from the board survey revealed that board members consider the following areas as strengths: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developing the financial resources needed to support student performance and school success ○ Monitoring fiscal operations, including developing and approving a budget, monitoring expenses, and optimizing cash flow for all funding and expense streams ○ Ensuring the board and school are in compliance with all required laws and policies (conflict of interest, background checks, whistle-blower, non-discrimination, records, insurance, etc.) 	<p>COVID makes this particularly challenging, but the board should consider how it could build and strengthen its family and community relationships.</p> <p>Board Development and Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board member interviews revealed that board members could use more training in these areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Charter school law ○ Sunshine law ○ <i>See also directly below concerning new member orientation.</i> <p>Board Survey – Five Members took the survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results from the board survey revealed that board members consider the following as areas for improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tracking and assessing academic performance of the school based on the mission, vision, and charter goals. ○ Providing charter school orientation and training for new board members
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III. Strong School Leadership and Operations
A transformational school leader:

Standards	Indicators	Evidence
<p>a. Invests students, parents and staff in the mission and vision of the school.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Required Documents:</p> <p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leader interview • Student, staff and parent surveys and interviews • School publications such as newsletters and announcements
<p>b. Employs a clear strategic approach to meeting the goals of improving student academic achievement</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Required Documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Annual Calendar • Strategic plan • School Leader Mentoring Plan • School Leader Professional Development Plan • Student Assessment Plan <p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leader interview • School leadership team interviews • Teacher interviews • Student data analysis plans
<p>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</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Required Documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment Application • Marketing/Recruitment Materials <p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leader interview • Observation of lotteries • Enrollment and attendance data • Core data

	provide evidence that the school is a viable school of choice for the community.	
d. Develops and sustains a school culture conducive to student learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Maintains a clean and safe environment that supports the educational mission of the school. ii. Maintains open, consistent, clear communication among students, staff, parents, and administration iii. Maintains a school culture conducive to learning and continuous improvement iv. Communicates effectively to all stakeholder groups 	<p><i>Same evidence sources as described in Element IV above.</i></p> <p>Required Documents:</p> <p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onsite observations • Parent surveys and interviews • Student surveys and interviews • Staff surveys and interviews • Student support staff interviews (Counselors, nurses, social workers, School Psychologists) • Discipline, suspension and/or expulsion data • Parent complaint/grievance records
e. Employs qualified staff, provides professional development opportunities to improve their performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Conducts personnel procedures and practices in a manner that promotes instructional effectiveness and continuous school improvement. ii. Conducts personnel procedures and practices in a manner that promotes the recruitment and retention of an effective instructional staff. iii. Provides professional development opportunities for all staff members that are aligned to the school's vision and advances their effectiveness in their roles. 	<p>Required Documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Organization Chart • Employee School Handbook • Assurance of Faculty/Staff Background Checks (FCSR and fingerprinting) • Staff Professional Development Plan and Calendar • Staff Mentoring and Coaching Plan • Teacher Evaluation Plan (including blank evaluation forms) <p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leader interview • Staff interviews • Student interviews • Staff retention data
f. Understands and complies with the laws, policies, and state and federal requirements that govern charter schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Participates regularly in professional development opportunities, which provide insight into the trends, issues, and potential changes in the environment in which charter schools operate ii. Allocates resources based primarily on their impact on student achievement, learning, and well-being iii. Implements business policies and procedures that promote school sustainability, operational integrity, and a focus on student achievement and learning results 	<p>Required Documents:</p> <p>Health and Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Permits (food service) • Fire Safety Permit • Building Inspection/Certificate of Occupancy • Elevator Inspection Certificate <p>Special Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPED Compliance Plans (IDEA & 504)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iv. Establishes programs and policies that enable all students to be served effectively v. Ensures timely submission of required data and reporting 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Health and safety b) Student records: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<p>Title I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title I Parent Meetings (sign in sheets) • HQ Parent Notification Letters <p>Homeless and ELL Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELL Intervention Plan • ELL Pupil Count/Percentages • Homeless Student Policy <p>Fiscal Management (Refer to Element IX: Sound Financial Operations below)</p> <p>State Testing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Assurance – Grade Level Assessment Assurance Document • State Exam Security Policy • State Exam Testing Calendar <p>Other Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student/Parent Handbook • Media Policy <hr/> <p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
COVID-19 RELATED		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> g. Addresses ramifications of COVID-19 on school's capacity to advance the school's mission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. School leadership adjusts the following as necessitated by COVID-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Health and safety policies, procedures and practices b) Recruitment and enrollment strategies c) Staffing d) Curriculum and instruction e) Assessment of student learning f) Student support: including but not limited to SPED, ELL, dyslexia, homelessness, social-emotional needs. g) Communication with board, staff and families h) Teacher evaluation i) Professional development 	<p>Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Reopening Plans • Staff PD Plan • Teacher Evaluation Process <hr/> <p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Leader interview • Staff interviews

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> j) Technology resources: including software, devices and internet access k) Food disbursement l) Budget and financial operations 	
h. Ensures staff and students have access to technology and the knowledge base necessary to deliver the academic and student support programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The school quickly and efficiently assesses the technology needs of staff, families and students. ii. The school meets the technology needs of staff, families and students; especially students without access. iii. The school provides strong guidance on use of technology and remote learning plans and protocols to families and students. iv. The school provides strong professional development and training on remote learning curriculum and instruction and the use of the remote learning platform and associated software. 	<p>Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff PD Plan • Staff surveys <p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Leader interview • Staff interviews • Student interviews

Element III: School Leadership and Operations	
Areas of Strength	Areas for Growth
<p>President</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (a) Investment of others: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The president works closely with the building principal to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure alignment to school priorities ▪ Collaborate on problem solving. ▪ Keep her informed about what's going on at other levels of the school. ▪ Provide support as needed. ○ Board interviews indicated the board is pleased with the President's efforts to strengthen his relationships with teachers and front office staff. ○ The operations staff feel supported by the administration. • (b) Strategic approach towards student achievement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ COVID Related: The Biome prepared well for adjustments necessitated by the pandemic. This includes providing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Devices and hot spots for students who needed them ▪ Support and professional development to teachers to help them adjust instructional methods for online teaching. ▪ Strengthening partnerships with parents and families. ○ The President prioritized raising student achievement in ELA and Math. 	<p>President</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (b) Strategic approach towards student achievement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The President does not have a formal evaluation process in place for the principal position. Consider starting one this coming summer by working with the principal to formulate formal performance goals for SY22. ○ As of the date of this report, The Biome has not set specific student performance targets in its school improvement plan.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This included developing a school improvement plan with the UMSL Charter School Office. ▪ The president and principal prioritized sharing student performance data with the leadership team and teaching staff. Weekly staff meetings focus on student data. ○ Board interviews indicated that the President prioritizes parent communication, especially with those whose children are struggling to attend school either online or in-person. ○ The Biome's finances are in good shape. ○ The President identified several areas for his professional growth and indicated he is taking steps to address them. For example, he is participating in Harvard's school leadership program to improve his general leadership and business skills. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (c) Recruitment and enrollment strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Board interviews indicated the President has improved The Biome's student recruitment process over the past two years. • (d) Culture building: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stakeholder interviews indicated that the President sets a tone that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commitment to the vision. ▪ High standards for staff and expectations for students. ▪ Straightforward and honest communication. ▪ Teamwork and collaboration. ○ Teacher interviews note that the Biome has a real sense of community and family connection. • (e) Employment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The hire decision for the principal's position turned out to be a very good one. ○ SY20 to SY21 retention across all levels of staff was 100%. • (f) Compliance with state-federal statutes and regulations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To the best of UMSL's knowledge, The Biome's administration is compliant with state and federal statutes and regulations except where specifically noted in the right-hand column of this report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (c) Recruitment and enrollment strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ COVID Related: Total student enrollment dropped between September and November from 203 to 182. Though this can be understood in light of the pandemic, consider whether there were other factors related to the decline. • (d) Culture building: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher and student interviews indicated they would like The Biome to develop a recycling program/system. • (e) Employment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher interviews indicated that staff retention following SY20 was concerning. They specifically cited the loss of the entire Kindergarten team. • (f) Compliance with state-federal statutes and regulations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Biome website does not include a link to its SY2020 Annual Report Card (160.522, RSMo). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This document can be accessed from DESE's website and should be accessible from The Biome's website. ○ The Biome should prepare to post its first Annual Performance Report (APR) whenever it receives one from DESE (most likely sometime in the fall of 2021).
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- (g) Responsibilities to UMSL
 - The Biome administration fulfilled all of its responsibilities to UMSL's Charter Schools Office.
 - Required documents were thorough and submitted on time.

School Principal

- (a) Investment of others:
 - Teacher interviews and survey indicated the principal:
 - Has strengthened community among the staff.
 - Has created an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect and excitement around the mission.
 - Holds high expectations for staff and students.
 - Gives them a voice in decisions that directly impact their work.
 - Trusts and empowers them to make their own decisions when appropriate.
 - Encourages them to participate in leadership roles.
 - Works with them to problem solve.
 - Supports them in general; and specifically related to parental issues.
 - Appreciates and values them.
- (b) Strategic approach towards student achievement:
 - Teacher and school leader interviews indicated that the Principal prioritizes reaching out to parents whose students are not regularly engaging in the online learning setting.
 - The principal targeted stronger student performance in math. She:
 - Revised the scope and sequence to strengthen the curriculum.
 - Provided PD on math instruction to build teacher knowledge and skills.
 - Plans on hiring a Math coach/specialist for the next school year.
 - Teachers work in professional learning communities (PLCs) to develop and align instructional practice. This involves focusing on student data:
 - One teacher respondent on the survey stated: "The Biome has drastically increased its level of focus on data that drives instruction. The introduction of PLCs makes our entire staff have more of a 'stake' in the growth of the school. In a stressful school year, I feel

School Principal

- (b) Strategic approach towards student achievement:
 - **COVID Related:**
 - The teacher survey indicated they need more planning time during the school day.
 - Teacher interviews indicated they understand the limits on the principal's capacity, but they would appreciate more observations and feedback from her.
 - The principal acknowledged that "chasing families whose children aren't attending" in the virtual setting has seriously detracted from time she would prefer to spend observing in-person and virtual classrooms.
 - Stakeholder interviewees, including the principal, identified these areas of growth for her performance:
 - Understanding the curriculum standards and content in K-5 ELA, reading, science and social studies.
 - Clarifying and establishing her role and the role of others in the building, especially for the time when The Biome returns to a pre-pandemic teaching and learning program.

the overall stress of the school has sufficiently decreased. It feels like The Biome is hitting a new stride.”

- Teacher interviews indicated that there is a strong spirit of teamwork and collaboration among staff.
 - The teacher survey indicated teachers:
 - Have the technological resources they need to support their instruction.
 - The PD plan is closely aligned to the school’s school improvement plan.
 - Class size has been kept lower than state averages.
- (d) Culture building:
 - The initiatives described in (a) and (b) directly above have strengthened teamwork, collaboration and self-agency among staff.

Discipline

- The teacher survey and interviews indicated:
 - Students understand expectations for their conduct.
 - School administrators enforce rules for student conduct consistently.
 - School administrators support teachers’ efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom.
 - Student behavior has significantly improved since a year ago.

Operations/HR/Facilities

- Many processes in operations have been streamlined and automated.
- Operations staff are proficient in their roles.
- DESE expressed no concerns around Federal Programs compliance.
- All MOSIS deadlines were efficiently met and completed
- They have a voice in decisions that impact their work.
- There are no concerns with the attendance tracking system.
- The school has added *AIM CHECKS* to streamline the background check process and have encountered no issues with monitoring background checks. All background checks are in place.
- Employment staff tracks certification and assures that it is in place for all instructional staff.
- The Biome’s physical space still provides a challenge due to its size but portable buildings are in place and nearing completion.

- Understanding the finance side of school operations.
- Federal and state regulations that impact how public schools operate: For example: Special education programs.

- (d) Culture building:
 - Stakeholder interviews indicated teachers need more non-instructional time during the day to de-stress.

Discipline

- School leader and teacher interviews indicated that there has been a noticeable uptick in troubling student behavior now that they’ve been in the building for a few months. Several interviewees specifically cited the great work of the social worker, but everyone agrees that the school needs more student support staff to address students’ social-emotional needs.
 - Related to this, some teacher interviews indicated concern about tardiness and absenteeism.

Operations/HR/Facilities

- Related to a comment in *Element I: Vision* above, stakeholder interviews indicated that one of The Biome’s greatest needs is more space. The school has already outgrown its recent building expansion. There’s not enough space for support staff. Lack of space has already impacted program and staffing decisions. As the school’s enrollment and programs continue to grow, constraints due to lack of space will increase.
Refer below to Element VII: Student Support System for more about this concern.

- A program called BAMBOO HR has really streamlined the onboarding of new staff—virtually.
- The administration has been quick to provide materials and supplies to teachers when requested.
- The school has no concerns with the lunch program and is happy with how it operates.
- The procurement system seems to have all necessary checks in place to operate safely.
- The school is in the process of purchasing an online inventory tracker.

Teacher Evaluation, Mentoring and Professional Development

- The principal scripts her classroom observations, following up with a debrief conversation. By year's end, every teacher will have a review in hand detailing areas of strength and growth.
- New teachers are assigned a mentor and a mentoring program is in place.
- The Biome developed a detailed staff PD plan for SY21.
- Teacher interviews and survey indicated:
 - **COVID Related:** They appreciate the school's thorough approach to preparing them to teach in a virtual setting.
 - Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice.
 - PD sessions provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate with colleagues.
 - As stated above, PLCs have made a big impact on teacher development.

Teacher Evaluation, Mentoring and Professional Development

- As stated above, teacher interviews indicated they'd like more observations and feedback.
- Teacher interviews and indicated that:
 - **COVID Related:** Most PD is about problem-solving to improve students' learning experiences in the midst of the pandemic and less about teacher professional growth.
 - At times, PD should be differentiated to meet teachers' individual needs.
 - Teachers should have an opportunity to provide feedback on the PD sessions at their conclusion.

IV. Transformational Curriculum A transformational school:		
Standards	Indicators	Evidence
a. Curriculum and instruction are aligned to the mission, vision and educational philosophy of the school.	i. Curriculum scope and sequence provide opportunities for students to reach the school's mission and vision. ii. Instructional practices provide opportunities for students to reach the school's mission and vision. iii. Curriculum and instruction are aligned to the educational philosophy of the school as described in the charter.	Required Documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schoolwide Curriculum Scope and Sequence
		Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom observations – including SPED and Title 1 programs • Student and staff interviews • Sample unit and lesson plans • Student work •
b. Provides a challenging, engaging, coherent, transformational curriculum that meets the academic needs of all students	i. Implements curriculum that clearly identifies and builds essential and enduring knowledge. ii. Structures a curriculum scope and sequence aligned to Missouri's Common Core Standards. iii. Ensures that the curriculum invests and prepares students to extend their learning and be successful beyond the classroom and beyond their school career (life-long learning, career readiness, college readiness, active citizenship). iv. Uses a variety of instructional techniques to enhance content acquisition and meet the needs of a diverse student population. v. Develops and implements clearly defined strategies to meet the needs of a diverse student population. vi. Utilizes high quality instructional materials, including technology, to support the curriculum	Required Documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above
		Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above • MSIP-5 student achievement, attendance and retention data
COVID-19 RELATED		
c. Ensures that curriculum and instruction adjustments for remote learning provide a challenging, engaging, coherent learning experience that meets the academic needs of all students.	i. The school prioritizes core content and learning standards. ii. The school adapts as necessary the curriculum and student assessment to identify and support all students' learning needs within a distance learning environment iii. Curriculum resources and instructional strategies facilitate effective presentation and interaction in a remote setting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The remote learning experience is both rigorous and engaging 	Documents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal assessment data • Staff surveys • Parent surveys
		Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leader interview • Staff interviews • Student interviews

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For math, school leaders and staff have strengthened curriculum and instruction to address student gaps in foundational knowledge and skills. • (b) Challenging, engaging and coherent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher interviews indicated their reading and math expectations are appropriately rigorous. ○ In math, teachers are expecting students to explain their reasoning to ensure they are mastering skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School leader and teacher interviews indicate that The Biome does not have a reading curriculum. Teachers create their own lessons and have to find materials to support the guided reading program. ○ The Biome lost its PE teacher and no longer offers PE on site. • (b) Challenging, engaging and coherent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ COVID Related: Virtual teacher and school leader interviews revealed concerns about virtual learning. Consistent attendance and engagement are a challenge for some virtual students, and though teachers are putting forth their best efforts, these students are falling further behind in terms of growth compared to The Biome’s in-person students. The in-person students also haven’t progressed as far as if there had been no COVID. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assuming that The Biome has set norms for online engagement (camera on, aimed at student’s face, student sitting upright and so on), it is challenging for teachers to hold virtual students to the norms. In almost every observed class featuring virtual students, there were a few who didn’t turn the camera on at all, were not on screen (views of the ceiling) or lying down and barely paying attention. Virtual teacher interviews cite this concern as well. ▪ Virtual teacher interviewees indicate that they have one to two students (and in a few cases, more) whom they rarely if ever see. <p>Almost all stakeholders agreed that in-person learning was more effective in terms of student engagement and learning.</p> ○ Teacher interviews indicated that word problems in the math curriculum are not accessible to emerging readers. Consider PD on how to adapt word problems to account for student reading issues. ○ The large gaps among students within the same grade level adds to the challenge of meeting their needs. One teacher stated: “For those at the bottom, I can’t spur the growth they need. They need daily sustained attention that I can’t give them.” ○ If The Biome’s new math specialist needs development or mentoring, keep in mind that UMSL’s math education faculty member, Dr. Amber Candela might be willing to provide support. She has worked with teachers in other UMSL charter schools.
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- Student Assessment Plan
 - The Biome has implemented a thorough plan that includes administration of the following:
 - Fountas & Pinnell
 - Running Records
 - Dyslexia screening
 - Star Early Literacy
 - Star Reading
 - Star Math
 - Dibels
 - MAP
 - Students take Star Tests fall, winter and spring to track growth for SY21.

V. Empowering Culture of Achievement A transformational school:		
Standard	Indicators	Evidence
a. Supports students in a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment that invests them in achievement, builds character, increases responsibility, fosters inclusion and inspires joy.	i. Creates a school environment conducive to learning and growth. ii. Maintains a safe school environment free of violence and the threat of violence. iii. Implements processes to promote student health and wellness. iv. Ensures that students feel supported and respected by teachers and staff. 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.	Required Documents:
		Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
COVID-19 RELATED		
b. Plans and implements processes and procedures to reduce COVID-19 transmission.	i. Follows current safety guidelines and government health agency mandates related to COVID-19. ii. Implements multiple COVID-19 mitigation strategies in ways that are developmentally appropriate for students, teachers and staff. iii. Educates students about COVID-19 disease prevention.	Documents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AMI, AMI-X and reopening plans
		Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leader interview • Parent surveys and interviews • Student surveys and interviews • Staff surveys interviews • Student support staff interviews (Counselors, nurses, social workers, School Psychologists)

Element V: Culture of Achievement	
Areas of Strength	Areas for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher survey indicated teachers believe the school environment is safe. • School leader interviews and teacher interviews and survey indicated that the culture in the building is positive and fun for students. Students want to be there and bring high energy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID Related: The Biome's fixed blended model along with social distancing and movement restrictions necessary to follow safety guidelines has made it very challenging to maintain the strong sense of community that existed prior to the pandemic's onset. • The President indicated that The Biome needs to strengthen its culture around high expectations for student achievement; especially among the students themselves.

VI. Transformational Teachers A transformational teacher:		
Standard	Indicator	Evidence
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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. vi. Is passionate about the content of the curriculum and conveys that passion to students.	Required Documents:
		Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Are tightly aligned to course learning objectives and desired student outcomes. b) 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. c) Engage students with thought-provoking and ambiguous texts/materials that challenge their thinking and feelings. d) Give students opportunities to conduct research to answer a question, explore and take a stand on an issue, or develop solutions to a problem. e) Use writing to communicate their reflections and understandings f) Incorporate a variety of teaching methods that meet the needs of diverse student learning styles 	Required Documents:
		Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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)

d. Employs best instructional practices to engage students in learning and raise academic achievement.	i. Keeps instruction student centered and inquiry oriented ii. Continually orients students to content iii. Continually orients students to each other iv. Continually checks for student understanding and makes appropriate adjustments as necessary	Required Documents:
		Other Evidence • School leader/Curriculum leader interviews • Teacher interviews • Classroom observations
e. Tracks student progress towards academic and personal growth goals and adjusts as necessary.	i. Uses multiple forms of assessment, including growth-measures assessments, to inform instructional decision-making. ii. Evaluates students' progress towards meeting course and school performance goals and modifies goals, as needed, to improve student achievement. iii. Tracks and disseminates growth data for students over time using both norm referenced measures and state assessments. iv. Builds student skills in tracking their own progress and motivates them to take charge of their own academic and personal growth. v. Pursues professional development opportunities to address areas for growth in their own teaching.	Required Documents:
		Other Evidence • School leader/Curriculum leader interviews • Classroom observations • Teacher surveys • Course scope and sequence, unit and lesson plans • Assessment plans/performance tracking systems • Student performance data (including state, formative and internal benchmark assessments)
COVID-19 RELATED		
f. Adjust curriculum and instruction as well as student support approaches to accommodate changes in the teaching and learning environment necessitated by COVID-19.	i. Pursue professional development to address areas for growth in teaching remotely. ii. Adjust curriculum plans, units and lessons to align with various teaching platforms to provide rigorous and engaging instruction for all students. iii. Adjust student data collection strategies to drive instructional decision-making. iv. Adjust student-monitoring strategies to support students' social-emotional needs. v. Pursues collaboration with school leaders and families to strengthen student achievement.	Documents • Staff PD Plan
		Other Evidence • School leader interview • Staff surveys and interviews

Element VI: Teachers	
Areas of Strength	Areas for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (a) Belief in the vision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher and leader interviews and the teacher survey indicated teachers deeply believe in The Biome's vision and mission. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All stakeholder interviews indicated teacher dedication is a strength of The Biome. ○ School leader interviews indicated that teachers have been very supportive of the new principal. • (b) Student investment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher and school leader interviews indicated that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ COVID Related: Teachers have prioritized reaching out to parents whose students are not regularly engaging in the online learning setting. ▪ Teachers use a variety of methods to communicate with families on a regular and frequent basis concerning student progress and support. • (c) Curriculum development and implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The teacher survey indicated that they participate in curriculum development through PLC work. ○ Related to comments in the right-hand column under <i>Element IV: Curriculum</i> above, teacher interviews indicated they work hard to fill in curriculum gaps to provide students with a challenging learning experience. ○ Virtual classroom observations revealed that all lessons incorporated learning objectives aligned to foundational knowledge and skills in ELA and math. • (d) Instructional practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Observations and teacher interviews indicate teachers differentiate instruction and utilize a variety of pedagogical approaches. ○ Virtual classroom observations indicated that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Most students were engaged in the lessons. ▪ Some of the lessons pushed student thinking. • (e) Student progress-tracking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher interviews and survey indicated that they utilize a variety of assessments (formal and informal) to track progress, differentiate learning goals, group students and offer targeted intervention approaches to meet students where they are. PLCs support teacher growth in this skill. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (b) Student investment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ COVID Related: Although teachers have worked extremely hard on student investment, they have not been able to make the same level of progress compared to prior years. ○ • (c) Curriculum development and implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Refer to comments under <i>Element IV: Curriculum</i> above.
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VII. Engaged Parents and Community A transformational school:		
Standard	Indicator	Evidence
a. Engages parents and community stakeholders in the vision and mission of the school	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	Documents Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent interviews • Parent and community communication/involvement plan • Data on parent and community participation in school events • Parent-teacher contact data • Newsletters and other communications • Parent survey data • Board meeting agendas, notices, minutes and supporting documentation
	ii. Ensures the active engagement of administrators, board members, parents, and staff in communication and outreach planning and implementation	
iii. Communicates and engages all stakeholders in the mission and vision of the school		
iv. Involves students, parents, and community members as part of the school's support system.		
v. Fosters strong relationships between school staff and parents.		
b. Seeks input from relevant, critical, impacted stakeholders	i. Establishes regular opportunities and methods of communication among the stakeholders, administration, and the board	
	ii. Conducts its meetings regularly and in an open, organized, and effective manner	
	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	
COVID-19 RELATED		
c. Addresses ramifications of COVID-19 on school's capacity to engage and seek input from parents and community members.	i. Collaborates with families in decisions driven by COVID-19 that directly impact their children's access to learning.	Documents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leader board reports
	ii. Provides frequent opportunities for families to give feedback.	
iii. Ensures that all families have access to the school's distant learning platforms.	Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent surveys and interviews • School leader interviews 	

Element VII: Parents and Community	
Areas of Strength	Areas for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (a) Parent and community engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Biome prioritized strengthening relationships and communication with parents as part of the response to the pandemic. ○ Teacher interviews and survey indicated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The school is effective in getting parents involved. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are clear expectations for their role supporting children’s learning. • Many parents help their children to achieve academic goals. ▪ Parents/guardians know what’s going on in the school and with their children. Teachers communicate regularly via DoJo, emails, calls and texts. ▪ The community is supportive of the school. <p><i>See also Element III: Leadership comments under the “President” sub-heading, item “(b) Strategic Approach” above.</i></p> • (b) Input from stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Title I Parent/Guardian Survey (N = 30) indicated that The Biome: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides a welcoming environment. ▪ Provides opportunities to share feedback and ideas ▪ Developed a report card that is clear and easy to follow. ▪ Is effective at communicating school-wide information. ○ The Title I Parent Survey indicated that parents/guardians: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide homework support at least several times a week. ▪ Communicates with their children about information in the report card ▪ Believe teachers are effective at communicating information on their children’s progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (a) Parent and community engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher interviews indicated that a small minority of parents are not engaged in supporting their children’s learning in spite of multiple efforts to communicate with them. It appears they do not review school communications and are hard to reach by phone or email. • (b) Input from stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strongly consider sending out a survey to parents/guardians of all students, not just those eligible for Title I services. Survey questions should broaden out seeking feedback on all parent and child-facing elements of The Biome’s operations and programs.

VIII. Comprehensive Student Support System The support staff of a transformational school:		
Standard	Indicators	Evidence
a. Develops and utilizes a comprehensive, developmental student support system that proactively assists all students to develop and apply knowledge, skills and mindsets for maximum academic, career, and personal/social growth during the school years.	i. Collects and uses academic, behavior and attendance data to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Plan appropriate programs for students both individually and collectively. b) 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPED Compliance Plans (IDEA & 504) • ELL Intervention Policy • Title I Needs Assessment and Plan
		Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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:
		Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student support team interviews • School leader interviews • Staff, student and parent surveys
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
		Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student support team interviews • School leader interviews • DESE CAPs • Staff, student and parent surveys
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless Student Policy

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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student support team interviews • School leader interviews • DESE compliance reports • Staff, student and parent surveys
e. Develops and implements policies and procedures to ensure that all children who qualify as ELL receive necessary services and support to meet their specific needs.	i. Develops and implements a plan that's in compliance with state and federal guidelines that ensures ELL students receive necessary services and support to meet their specific needs.	Required Documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELL Intervention Plan Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student support team interviews • School leader interviews • DESE compliance reports • Staff, student and parent surveys
COVID-19 RELATED		
f. Addresses ramifications of COVID-19 on the school's capacity to proactively assist all students to develop and apply knowledge, skills and mindsets for maximum academic, career, and personal/social growth during the school years.	i. Develops and implements a plan that is in compliance with state and federal guidelines and ensures the school effectively assists all students operating in a remote learning environment.	Documents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reopening Plans Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leader interviews • Staff interviews • Staff, student and parent surveys

Element VIII: Student Support System	
Areas of Strength	Areas for Growth
Dr. Thurma DeLoach's Review	
Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new principal joined The Biome team this school year. Being an experienced teacher and administrator, she quickly engaged with the school community to create the safety plan, learning schedule and calendar for the start of school in August. Navigating virtual, in-person and hybrid teaching and student/staff safety were necessarily the top priority. • The principal's engagement, support and confidence in The Biome student support team is strong. She exudes a strong sense of mission around responding to student and family needs. • Student Support staff reported feeling respected, trusted and valued for their expertise. They are comfortable going to the principal for 	Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biome's student support programs have evolved over the past 6 years and now provide a wide range of supports and services for its students and families. Staff report satisfaction and confidence in the systems of supports and services that are available and checks indicate that requirements and procedures are in place. Continuing to be proactive and to recognize new areas for enhancement can be challenging when things are perceived to be running well. Consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As school settles back down in the fall, the student support team may benefit from a more in-depth program review to clarify programmatic goals, outcomes, and strategies for achieving those goals. Consideration could be given to

support or to discuss issues. She is viewed as an authentic, approachable, direct, and responsive school leader by this team.

- The principal identified learning federal and state requirements for special education, intervention, dyslexia, and Federal programs as a personal goal moving forward.
- The President reflected on the growth and development of student support services at The Biome—specifically the addition of the Blue Room as a social-emotional support center, the skill of the student support staff in building relationships and communicating with families, and the flexibility of the teachers “*to do what it takes*” to meet the needs of their students were specifically mentioned. The literacy support program was described as especially strong.
- Priorities for the next school year include curriculum writing and focused professional development, extended learning opportunities through the summer and virtual tools (e.g., MO Cap). A consultant from the Danforth Foundation has been secured to assist with science curriculum

Covid response—school safety and shift to virtual instruction

- A planning committee comprised of administrators, teachers, and parents convened early in the summer to develop a detailed road map for safe opening of school and the shift to virtual when school was closed. They used their learning from successes and challenges in the prior spring to inform their planning.
 - A detailed Family Guide on Re-opening was written and posted of The Biome website. This guide is comprehensive and easy to understand. Well done.
 - Administration reported that frequent and transparent communication with staff and families was key to the successful return to campus. The science behind human safety during the Covid pandemic was emphasized.
 - Classroom teachers teach in person 2 days a week and virtually 2 days a week. Specific content areas for in person and virtual are determined at the grade level.
 - Teachers reported a strong sense of comradery and support from each other as they learned how to teach virtually and to use virtual tools. At the time of the interviews, teachers reported they are generally at ease with virtual instruction and are confident in making this shift if needed in the future.
- Biome opened school 100% virtual and gradually returned to a blend of in-person and virtual learning.
 - Although some staff reported being concerned about safety at school, the gradual re-opening starting with a few grade levels

identifying student outcome goals, data collection, and results to be reported annually to the board of directors.

- Current service models are primarily pull-out. A program review/improvement plan that includes strategies for increasing push-in supports and co-teaching models for upper elementary would enhance current services. Co-teaching models may require additional staff but are effective in supporting more students (not just students with IEPs) master grade level expectations.

and small classrooms enabled staff to learn the protocols and feel secure that the appropriate precautions were in place.

- Staff indicated a strong desire to return to campus knowing that in-person learning is most effective with most students.
- Teachers reported that student performance is best in-person but that those students who participated regularly virtually were learning and on track with the essentials of grade level curriculum upon their return to school. Students whose virtual attendance was inconsistent and those with minimal support available at home struggled the most to stay engaged and are off track on grade level expectations.
 - The Biome is developing a plan for summer school—both in-person and virtual opportunities as a strategy to address any essential learning gaps due to the reduced in-person learning schedule and limitations of virtual learning.
- The Biome staff navigated the safety precautions of Covid without the assistance of an on-campus medical professional/school nurse. Budget has been allocated to hire a part time nurse in partnership with Children’s Hospital Healthy Kids Healthy Minds

Special Education Services

- Biome currently serves 21 students with IEPs. At the time of the spring review, an additional 3 students were being evaluated and expected to be eligible for special education. Currently all students with IEPs spend 80% or more of their school day in the General Education classroom. A full range of special education services are available.
- Special education staffing includes an academic skills (literacy & math) special education teacher—on campus 4 days a week, a part time speech language pathologist, and part time occupational therapist.
 - The student support services coordinator also provides direct academic and behavioral support services for students with IEPs.
 - The part time special education teacher added more days/hours to her schedule this year to accommodate the increased instructional needs of current students—including sufficient time for both in person and virtual instruction
 - The literacy specialist and clinical social worker/behavioral specialist for Biome also support students with IEPs.
- Special education teachers worked with parents in August using Form G to plan for individualized and responsive virtual services. Parents participated well and the planning process was effective in figuring out how to address highest priority needs virtually. Most virtual instruction was conducted 1-1. The reviewer observed several lessons and

Special Education Services

- Current special education staffing allows for only minimal push-in support in the general education classroom. Several classroom teachers expressed interest in more in-class support and co-teaching schedules. They also shared concern that the multiple demands on the student services coordinator often prevent her from providing direct supports in the classroom—even when they are scheduled. Consider the following:
 - Responsibilities of the current student support coordinator may be too varied or unpredictable to ensure consistent push in services. As this service model is often more effective and less disruptive to student learning—the roles of current instructional staff should be reviewed to determine how time/schedules could be revised to ensure consistent in-class support.
 - As funding improves (perhaps with the extra federal CARES funding available to address learning gaps due to school closures) adding part time staffing for push in support of students with IEPs and other intervention needs should be considered.
- Grade level assessments are used to determine students for retention. This process is also used for students with IEPs. Although it is useful to know how a student with a disability performs on grade level expectations, it is generally considered inappropriate to retain students

found students to be engaged most of the time. A few students have difficulty with connectivity. One student did not have support at home and did not participate fully during the lesson.

- Some students were allowed to come into school for their IEP services.
- Teachers observed that some students did better than expected virtually.
- Assessments on IEP goals when students returned to in-person from virtual did not show significant skill regression.
- The student support/spec ed coordinator manages all aspects of IEP development and review. She is the IEP point person for classroom teacher collaboration and support for accommodations & modifications in the gen ed classroom.
- Classroom teachers believe their students with IEPs are benefitting from their special education services and are making progress.
- Referral for evaluation and evaluation compliance procedures are managed by the speech language pathologist. She partners with an experienced school psychologist (individual contract) to conduct special education evaluations. Very few initial evaluations have been conducted this year—likely down from prior years because of the limited number of students attending in person. This arrangement has worked well and will be continued for the 2021-22 SY.
 - School-initiated referrals for special education evaluation are made by the Student Support Team.
 - Parent-initiated referrals are managed by the evaluation coordinator (i.e., speech language pathologist).
- The Biome completed its tri-annual DESE special education self-assessment this year. All reviewed files were found to be 100% in compliance. No Corrective Action Plans are anticipated at this time. This reviewer was not able to review student files this year due to pandemic precautions; however, Biome files were in good order during the prior year site review.
- The Biome currently identifies approximately 10% of its students for special education. This is in line with incidence rates for schools with strong tier 2 and 3 intervention systems Teachers and administrators believe the current Student Support Team process and The Biome intervention programs are effective in helping identify those students who may have disabilities and should be evaluated for special education eligibility.
- Special education staff report having sufficient instructional resources and opportunities for professional development.

with disabilities who have not met grade level expectations, i.e., the IEP is the individualized plan that identifies the appropriate goals, services, and outcomes for the individual student.

- 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. As noted above under Element III, adequate instructional space for student support services continues to be a concern among staff.
- 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.

- 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. The collaborative spirit within this team is to be commended.

Dyslexia Screening & Intervention Supports

- Starting in August of 2019, All Missouri public schools were required to annually screen students for potential reading challenges related to dyslexia. The Biome has consistently met these requirements—despite school closure due to Covid. The literacy specialist completed all required screenings for the fall and winter of 2020-21 and met all screening timelines. Spring screening is scheduled for May
 - All students in grades 1-5 were initially screened for reading skills using the Ekwall-Shanker and Dibels assessments. Screenings were conducted virtually in September and either in-person or virtually in January.
 - Screening results were analyzed with classroom teachers during Tier 2 grade level meetings. Classroom teachers reported that screening information was very informative. They use it to determine small instructional groups and to target key skills for reteaching.
 - Phonemic awareness and phonics development are high priority areas for targeted and intense intervention at all grade levels.
 - Cut scores were used to identify those students most at risk for reading difficult. Approximately 45 students were identified as at risk for reading difficulty. Appropriate interventions within the classroom were designed as part of the grade level team problem solving process—planning lead by the literacy specialist.
 - Notification of screening results were sent to all parents after the fall screening; Letters were only sent to parents of students who continued to show risk in the winter screening.
 - Entering kindergarteners will be screened in May of this year using the Dial 4. Speech-language screening will be included in this process. This data will help inform KG teachers of student readiness at the start of the fall semester. All students entering The Biome in the fall will be screened for academic,

Dyslexia Screening and Intervention Support

- Including annual dyslexia screening requirements in the parent handbook with anticipated time frames, procedures, and expectations for use of the screening results in the parent handbook is recommended.
- LETRS training for classroom teachers will be available again this summer (2021) through EdPlus and again in the fall of 2021. The special education and speech language pathologist are participating LETRS training this summer. LETRS training is recommended for all classroom literacy teachers as well.

social -emotional and speech/language readiness at the start of the new school year.

- All 45 identified students are receiving additional supplemental or intensive reading supports facilitated by the literacy intervention team. Interventions include:
 - Leveled Literacy Intervention
 - Equipped for Reading Success (David Kilpatrick)
 - Barton Reading and Spelling System—a 1-1 intensive tutorial intervention and phonemic program based on Orton Gillingham methods.
- One full-time and 2 part-time literacy specialists are on staff. Classroom teachers perceive this team to be highly effective—a highlight of student support at The Biome. The full-time specialist meets weekly with the other part time specialists to review student progress and revise intervention plans based on progress data. She also meets monthly with the grade level teams and the principal to review benchmark data. This is a strong, collaborative team.
- The Biome supports professional learning using the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). PLCs meet this year for literacy, math, school culture and others. The literacy specialist facilitates the literacy PLC. Home literacy is the theme for the 2020-21 SY.
- The 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. She identifies appropriate curricular resources/tools for virtual classroom use and provides regular professional development workshops. Classroom teachers reported that this support has been tremendously helpful and that their students are showing significant improvement in reading. Classroom teachers have confidence in the literacy specialist and consider her to be resourceful in identifying seeker effective literacy tools and strategies.
- The literacy intervention framework is a primary strength within The Biome’s system of student support. Multiple data sources are used to identify needs and monitor progress. Evidence-based instructional resources are available for intervention in and out of the classroom. Strong collaboration occurs among classroom teachers and other student support teachers. The literacy team and school staff are to be

commended for developing effective systems for screening, diagnosing and supporting literacy instruction and intervention.

Social Emotional Behavioral Supports and Intervention

- The **Blue Room** was launched in 2019-20 to provide Tier 2 and 3 Social-emotional-behavioral (SEB) supports and interventions to students identified with moderate to severe SEB needs. The clinical social worker who started the program moved out of St. Louis in late spring 2020 and another experienced clinical social worker was hired to facilitate the program. Despite starting the school year 100% virtually, the new social worker connected immediately with high priority students and families to develop supportive, trusting relationships, and assist families/students access necessary resources. Staff reported that the new social worker communicates frequently with them and with parents they perceive her to be highly responsive to the needs of students, families, and classrooms.
- As students gradually transitioned back to campus in November, a variety of school-based services were offered including:
 - 1-1 and small group counseling for a variety of student needs (e.g., trauma, anger management, self-regulation strategies, anxiety management, hygiene, bullying)
 - Scheduled movement & sensory breaks
 - Social skill training
 - Hygiene
 - Crisis intervention and dis-regulation support
 - Family supports, resources (e.g. Food, shelter, uniforms) and community referrals (e.g., Places for People virtual parent group).
- Twenty-five students are identified for the direct services caseload. Treatment plans with goals and progress monitoring data are developed for individual students on the caseload. These plans are maintained and monitored as Google Docs.
- Additional students may access Blue Room serves for crisis intervention or short-term support. Referrals come primarily through the Student Support Team, the principal or direct referrals from teacher/parents due to acute trauma.
- The occupational therapist shares Blue room space and collaborates with the social worker on development of movement break sequences, visual maps, yoga sequences and breath work as self-regulation strategies. This appears to be an effective partnership that should continue to evolve as Biome returns to full in-person learning in the fall.

Social Emotional Behavioral Supports and Intervention

- A consistent Tier 1 classroom Social Emotional Learning curriculum/program is not currently used at The Biome. Cloud 9 has been used inconsistently in the past. Given the anticipated social-emotional needs of students returning to campus in the fall of 2021, social emotional learning within the general education classroom (Tier 1) should be a high priority.
 - **2nd Step**, an evidenced-based Tier 1 SEL program, would be one to consider. It is based on the CASEL (Collaborative Academic, Social, Emotional Learning) standards. 2nd Step is designed for easy implementation in the classroom using class meetings once a week for teaching key concepts/strategies with minimal teacher preparation required. It has been adopted by numerous districts in the St. Louis area.
- School-wide screening for Social Emotional Behavioral concerns is not currently conducted at The Biome. Panorama provides some useful data; however, it is not used to inform staff of specific students in need of direct intervention or support
 - A simple screening tool like the Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS) or the SABERS could be used to screen students throughout the school year for potential intervention needs. It would also provide a direct measure for progress monitoring.
- Annual professional learning on topics related to social emotional behavioral learning should be included on the annual Professional Development calendar. Character Plus offers a number of professional development opportunities to member schools at a reduced cost. Key topics mentioned in staff interviews included:
 - Responding to disruptive behaviors
 - De-escalation strategies (DESE requires this for all staff annually)
 - Building trusting relationships
 - Restorative discipline
 - Social justice (for different age spans)

- The Blue Room facilitator participates in all Tier 2 grade level and Tier 3 individual student support meetings. Teachers report that she provides significant guidance as well as direct intervention support for students identified with SEB support needs. They commented on her strong connections with families and with students—both virtually and in-person. She also meets weekly with the administrative and student support leadership team to ensure everyone is up to date on student needs.
- Panorama surveys are completed by staff, students and parents. These surveys provide information on perceptions of school culture, safety, and student empowerment. It is unclear how this data is used to inform school practices.
- Teachers report that behavioral disruptions are significantly down this year compared to prior years. Some of this is due to the reduced number of students on campus for in-person learning. Teachers also attribute these changes to the positive impact of having therapeutic intervention available to any student in need immediately at school. As of this review—no out of school suspensions had been assigned for the year. This is a major change from prior years. Staff report that classrooms, hallways, and meeting spaces are appropriately calm.
- The Biome attempted to start Medicaid billing for mental health services last school year. However, several roadblocks in the billing systems were identified by MSBA and are yet to be resolved. The Biome’s Medicaid facilitator is hopeful these issues can be resolved and billing initiated in the upcoming school year.
- The Biome staff did not complete the required annual de-escalation training because of the pandemic restrictions. This is tentatively planned for August 2021 when all staff are available for training on campus. Crisis team responders did participate in the refresh CPI training with Bruce Hunter from Character Plus this year.

Tier 2 and Tier 3 Problem Solving Procedures

- The Biome has developed a strong multi-tiered process for identifying students who need academic or social emotional behavioral support. The first tier starts with grade level teachers meeting monthly with the principal and literacy specialist to review student progress and identify strategies for supporting students within the classroom—classroom strategies and small group interventions.
- When student needs are more involved or the student is not responding to the classroom strategies, a referral is made to the Tier 3 problem solving team. This team is comprised of the coordinator for student support (facilitator for the process), literacy specialist, clinical

Tier 2 and Tier 3 Problem Solving Procedures

- As the team continues to practice problem solving and develop responsive intervention, the process will become more time efficient and additional intervention resources/strategies will emerge. 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.
 - 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.

social worker, speech language pathologist, special education teacher, classroom teacher and principal. Data and observations about the target student are shared and intervention strategies identified. An individualized plan is created and staff to implement the plan and support the classroom teacher are identified. All problem-solving discussions are documented in a shared file and reviewed on a scheduled basis. Parents are contacted by one of the team members to share what has been developed to support their child.

- The speech language pathologist offers Tier 2 and Tier 3 speech and language interventions prior to referral for evaluation in these areas.
- Tier 3 problem solving is used to determine which students may have disabilities and should be referred for evaluation.
- Staff report that this structure is working better than ever this year and that the interventions available to students are very robust. This reviewer observed a Tier 3 meeting in which the intervention plans and progress of several students were discussed. The process appeared to be effective; all team members were engaged and contributing to the discussion.

General Compliance: Student Support Policies and Procedures

- The enrollment form includes all necessary requests for information about prior IEPs, special services, homeless, migrant, home language survey, and health information.
- These policies were available for review and all were found to be appropriate, manageable and compliant. Some are included in the parent handbook.
 - Child Find
 - Homeless
 - ELL
 - Physical Restraint, Isolation, Seclusion
 - Bullying
 - Federal Programs EESA—
 - Parental complaints
 - Parent involvement
 - Parents Right to Know
 - School-parent Compact—for distance learning
- Annual Staff Training
 - 2 Hour Dyslexia training—10/12/20
 - De-escalation—was not conducted this year due to Covid related school closure over the year—this is planned for early in the fall semester

- The Special education teacher does not currently offer any tiered interventions for students who do not have IEPs. A period of diagnostic teaching with the special education teacher as an intervention either before a decision to refer for evaluation or during the evaluation time period might be helpful to some students.
- Tiered intervention in math is not currently available beyond what the classroom teacher can provide. A math intervention position is currently posted but qualified applicants are limited. This significant gap in intervention resources may need to be addressed through in-house training

General Compliance: Student Support Policies and Procedures

- Child Find notification should be posted on the Biome website and included in the parent handbook in addition to posting in the school office.
- Board policies are not posted on the website. Policies most relevant to parents/community could be posted on the website to make them accessible to all.
- The Biome does not currently have students identified as ELL and has not written a specific plan for assessing and serving these students should one be identified. Staff reported that the student support services coordinator would be responsible for this.
 - A basic ELL assessment and services plan (LAU) plan is included in the parent handbook. If the student support coordinator is ready to expand this basic plan, examples of plans that could be customized for the Biome are available from this reviewer.
- Given the significant increase and concern for student mental health and suicide in recent years, it is recommended that Biome develop a basic suicide prevention policy/procedure that ensures the school and staff are prepared to prevent, intervene, and respond should there be a need in the future. Advance preparation for such incidents is best practice for all schools.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Physical Restraint—Crisis support staff completed refresher training with Bruce Hunter ○ Suicide and Bullying—conducted as part of the Safe Schools on-line training in August back to school workshops ● Annual Federal Programs (Title 1) parent meeting—8/06/20 ● Relevant student support policies are included in the parent handbook. They are clearly labeled and easy to find. ● Student support services at The Biome have evolved and matured over the past 6 years—specifically literacy, social-emotional-behavior, special education and Student Support Team. These programs are considered effective and responsive. They’re significant strengths in The Biome’s student support system. The consistency of vision and collaborative leadership has enabled this to happen. Keep it going! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Biome might consider asking parents to provide health insurance information as part of the annual enrollment update. This information would enable the school nurse/social worker to quickly identify those students without insurance and assist families with Medicaid enrollment.
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