Renewal Charter Petition for Synergy Charter Academy

Submitted October 10, 2011

We are Synergy!

P.O. Box 78999 • Los Angeles, CA 90016 • (323) 235-7960
# Renewal Charter Petition for Synergy Charter Academy

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LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Innovation and Charter Schools Division

Letter of Intent to Apply for a Charter School

Name of Proposed Charter School: Synergy Charter Academy
General Location of proposed charter: 900 E 33rd St, Los Angeles, 90011
Projected Grade Levels-Year 1: K-5  Projected Grade Levels-Year 5: K-5
Projected Enrollment -Year 1: 312  Projected Enrollment -Year 5: 312

Lead Petitioner Information:

Name: Jennifer Epps
Address: 900 E 33rd St, Los Angeles, CA 90011
Phone Number: 323-235-7960, 323-605-8589
Email address: jennepps@gmail.com  Fax: 323-235-7970

Other members of the Charter Development team

Meg Palisoc
Erika Chua
Randy Palisoc

Certifications:

_____ I/We certify that we are interested in applying for a charter school within LAUSD boundaries.

__X__ I/We have participated in the Orientation Meeting given by the LAUSD Charter Schools Division.

_____ I/We did not participate in the Orientation Meeting given by the LAUSD Charter Schools Division.

Jennifer Epps
PRINT NAME  SIGNATURE  DATE
Name of Organization Applying for Charter: Synergy Charter Academy

Projected Grades Served - Year 1: K-5  Projected Grades Served - Year 5: K-5
Projected Enrollment - Year 1: 312  Projected Enrollment - Year 5: 312

Location Address or Target Neighborhood: 900 E. 33rd Street, Los Angeles, CA 90011

Facility Status/Location: Currently located on an LAUSD campus and in a collaborative partnership with Quincy Jones Elementary School, a traditional LAUSD school

Prop. 39 Application Submitted?: No

Does the location meet Board Policy? (low API, overcrowded): Yes, Synergy is located in an overcrowded area (the Jefferson complex) where they are still building one more new elementary school to relieve the overcrowded schools in the community. Also, the most recent median API rank of the five closest LAUSD elementary schools was 1.0.

Board of Directors: Please see the attached list of Synergy’s Board of Directors.

Description of Mission: The Mission of Synergy Charter Academy is to eliminate the achievement gap that has persisted for generations among educationally disadvantaged students.

Description of Vision: Our Vision for our students is that they will meet or exceed the California Content Standards and take college-preparatory classes in high school so that they can eventually attend the four-year university of their choice.

Source/Core of Money: The majority of Synergy’s money comes from its Average Daily Attendance.

3 – 5 Top Leaders/Charter Development Team: Jennifer Epps, Director/Principal and Founding Teacher, Synergy Charter Academy; Meg Palisoc, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Synergy Academies; and Erika C. Chua, Director of Operations, Synergy Academies

Has your charter applied to any other jurisdiction for approval? No

Are there any sister charters? Yes: Synergy Kinetic Academy and Synergy Quantum Academy

What innovative elements of your charter could be considered “best practices” and replicated by other schools?

Since the beginning, Synergy’s goal has been to make its educational program replicable. For that reason, Synergy chose not to extend its school day or school year. This makes Synergy unique since many other urban charter schools have chosen to operate with longer school days and longer school years. Synergy teaches a complete, standards-based curriculum that promotes two innovative instructional approaches that Synergy’s Co-Founder and Chief Achievement Officer Randy Palisoc has coined as “Power Over Words” and “Power Over Numbers.” These two approaches can be used synergistically within an existing research-based educational infrastructure. Another best practice is Synergy’s structured recess and lunch playground activities that empower students to exercise every day while minimizing behavior problems outside of the classroom. Synergy has already begun sharing these best practices with LAUSD’s Quincy Jones Elementary School.
Synergy Charter Academy

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Synergy’s Board of Directors currently include the following individuals who have a variety of knowledge and success in organizational leadership and public education, including professional experience relevant to the focus and mission of the educational program of the school:

• **Masako Carpenter** (Interim Treasurer), Former Audit Partner – KPMG, LLP. Masako brings experience as a former auditor and a certified public accountant. She helps provide oversight to Synergy’s staff to ensure that our organization and schools are fiscally responsible.

• **Christopher Chandler**, Former Development Associate – Outward Bound Adventures. Chris has experience with fundraising and development as well as with working directly with under-resourced youth.

• **Brian Holman**, Partner, Musick Peeler – Brian is an attorney who advises and represents charter schools in financing transactions and general corporate matters. He is also on the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles County Bar Foundation and is a former member of the City of Pasadena’s Utility Advisory Commission.

• **JoAnn Koplin**, Principal, Educational Planning – TFO Architecture. JoAnn has extensive knowledge about charter school facilities and she also has experience serving as the former President of the Beverly Hills Board of Education.

• **Eric Medina**, Program Officer – LA84 Foundation. Eric has previous experience with charter school operations when he worked for ExED, a back office service provider for charter schools. He also has experience assisting non-profits via Community Partners.

• **Jenny Peña** (President), Senior Regional Human Resources Manager – ARINC. Jenny has extensive knowledge in human resources management and has assisted Synergy with evaluating the feasibility of our school and personnel expansion plans.

• **Tiffany Sanders**, Assistant Vice President, Investment Specialist – Nuveen Investments. Tiffany is a successful African American woman who used to volunteer to work with middle school students at John Adams Middle School in Synergy Academies target neighborhood, which gives her a hands-on perspective of the community and its needs. Tiffany also served as Synergy’s Board President for multiple years.

• **Jared Sopko** (Secretary), Project Manager – Global Inheritance. Jared was a former job captain for Osborn Architects and has experience working on both traditional school and charter school facilities projects in LAUSD.

• **Ana Teresa Dahan**, Principal Strategist – Student Focused Solutions. Ana has extensive public school education experience as both a former Special Assistant of Strategic Initiatives for the LAUSD Office of the Superintendent, former staff member of the California Charter Schools Association, and a graduate from LAUSD’s Belmont High School.

• **Ashwin Vasavada**, Deputy Project Scientist – NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Ashwin has a background in science and engineering which is an asset to Synergy’s secondary schools’ focus on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

• **David Woollard**, Former Senior Software Engineer – NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory. David has a background in computer science and engineering, and is committed to assisting Synergy with its efforts to strengthen inner-city schools’ instruction in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).
Los Angeles Unified School District  
Innovation and Charter Schools Division

CHARTER SCHOOLS GUIDELINES CHECKLIST – INITIAL SCREENING

Charter School Name: ___________________________ Date: ____________________
Contact Person: ___________________________ Phone No.: ____________________ Fax No.: ____________________

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<td>2. Assurances that school will:</td>
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<td>- be non-sectarian in programs, admission policies, employment practices and other operations</td>
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<td>- not charge tuition</td>
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<td>- not discriminate against any student on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender or physical or mental disability (religion, race, color, medical condition, sexual condition, sexual orientation)</td>
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<td>- not enroll pupils over 19 years of age unless continuously enrolled in public school and making satisfactory progress toward high school diploma requirements</td>
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<td>- not require any child to attend a charter school nor any employee to work at a charter school</td>
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<td>- if pupil is expelled or leaves the charter school without graduating or completing the school year for any reason, the charter school shall notify the superintendent of the school district of the pupil’s last known address within 30 days, and shall, upon request, provide that school district with a copy of the cumulative record of the pupil, including a transcript of grades or report card, and health information.</td>
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<td>- A charter school shall admit all students who wish to attend</td>
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<td>3. Description of which students will attend the school</td>
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<td>4. Duration of initial charter petition: 5 years</td>
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<td>47607 (a) (1)</td>
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<td>5. Renewal process/timeline</td>
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<td>47607 (a) (1) (2)</td>
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<td>6. How the Board of Education and the charter school can monitor the progress in meeting student outcomes</td>
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<td>47607 (a) (1) 47607 (b)</td>
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<td>7. Accepts and understands the grounds on which a charter may be revoked</td>
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<td>47607 (b) (1-4) (c)</td>
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<td>8. Accepts and understands obligations to comply with specific sections of the Education Code: § 47611 (STRS) and 41365 (Revolving Loan Fund), and all laws establishing minimum age for public school attendance</td>
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<td>151-153</td>
<td>9. How district/county facilities will be maintained, insured and used by the charter school, if applicable</td>
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<td>152</td>
<td>10. How changes, additions or alterations to the facility will be accomplished and the district/county role in the process</td>
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| 113   | 11. How school personnel, district/county will be insured against liability claims resulting from school operations  
- description of type/scope of legal services to be used  
- plans for insurance liability and legal issues to be dealt with collectively and individually |     |    |     |    |                                       | 47605 (g)         |
<p>| 125-126 | 12. Agreement between the charter school and the sponsoring agency detailing process and responsibility for operations, i.e., accounting, budgeting, payroll, liability insurance, and the like and contracted services and supervisorial oversight |     |    |     |    |                                       | 47605 (g) 47613.7 |
| 126   | 13. Agreement between the charter school and sponsoring agency detailing funding and services for special education students                                                                     |     |    |     |    |                                       | 47612 (a) (2)     |
| AP. D | 14. Agreement between the charter school and sponsoring agency detailing operational funding levels                                                                                               |     |    |     |    |                                       | 47613.5 (a)       |
| 97    | 15. Agreement between the charter school and sponsoring agency detailing processes for responding to inquiries                                                                               |     |    |     |    |                                       | 47604.3           |</p>
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<td>41-43</td>
<td>1. Description of the educational program of the school <em>(Element 1)</em></td>
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<td>- an identification of those whom the school is attempting to educate</td>
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<td>- description of what it means to be an educated person in the 21st century</td>
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<td>- how learning best occurs</td>
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<td>- goals of the program</td>
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<td>- how the objective of enabling pupils to become self-motivated,</td>
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<td>competent, life-long learners will be met by the school</td>
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<td>47-50</td>
<td>- instructional framework which includes instructional approaches,</td>
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<td>scope and sequence, addressing state standards, and evidence</td>
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<td>(research-based) that instructional program has been successful</td>
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<td>with similar student population.</td>
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<td>70-72</td>
<td>- specific goals for providing and ensuring equal access to academic</td>
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<td>ly low achieving students, gifted, low SES, ELLs, special</td>
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<td>education, and a goal for reclassification of ELLs.</td>
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<td>- attendance requirements including length of school day and year</td>
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<td>- instructional materials and the process by which curriculum,</td>
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<td>materials and instructional activities are to be selected</td>
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<td>- reference to NCLB as it relates to student achievement and</td>
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<td>credentialing</td>
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<td>- instructional strategies</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>- teacher recruitment</td>
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<td>78-80</td>
<td>- professional development</td>
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<td>82</td>
<td>- school calendar</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>- daily schedule</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>- mission/vision</td>
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<td>- demographics/academic achievement of surrounding schools</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>- implementation plan</td>
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<td>- High School only</td>
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<td>- meet A-G requirements</td>
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<td>- transferability</td>
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<td>2. Measurable student outcomes to be achieved by students <em>(Element 2)</em></td>
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<td>• extent to which all pupils demonstrate that they have attained skills, knowledge and attitudes specified as goals</td>
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<td>• when and how often pupil outcomes will be assessed including any assessments of innovative components</td>
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<td>• specific quantitative outcomes which students must demonstrate proficiency in and/or progress toward and time frame for progress</td>
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<td>• identification of who will be accountable for student progress as it relates to student achievement</td>
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<td>• graduation rate (HS only)</td>
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<td>3. Method by which pupil progress in meeting pupil outcomes is measured <em>(Element 3)</em></td>
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<td>• use of standardized test scores in measuring pupil progress</td>
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<td>• use of variety of assessment tools</td>
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<td>• use of longitudinal, survey and other data in measuring pupil progress (in-house assessments)</td>
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<td>• methods to ensure that all statewide standards are met and pupil assessments conducted</td>
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<td>87</td>
<td></td>
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<td>• process school will use to ensure that students meet the statewide performance standards and evidence of improved pupil learning</td>
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<td>• process for conducting pupil assessments pursuant to EC § 60602.5</td>
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<td>87</td>
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<td>• description of all assessment tools including in house assessments</td>
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<td>86</td>
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<td>• identification of the grading policy</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• district required language for testing</td>
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<td>94-96</td>
<td>4. Governance structure of the school including the process which is to be followed to ensure parent involvement <em>(Element 4)</em></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (D) 47605 (c)(2)</td>
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<td>96</td>
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<td>93-94</td>
<td></td>
<td>process which ensures staff, students and other stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (D) 47605 (c)(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-91</td>
<td></td>
<td>methods by which schools consult with parents and teachers regarding school's educational programs</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (D) 47605 (c)(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td>decision-making process, organizational chart, and relevant site committees</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (D) 47605 (c)(2)</td>
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<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td>assurances that school will comply with all laws relating to public agencies in general, all federal laws and regulations and state codes, such as the Ralph M. , Brown Act</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (D) 47605 (c)(2)</td>
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<td>93</td>
<td></td>
<td>what, if any, relationships district/county will maintain with the charter school and how it will be accomplished</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (D) 47605 (c)(2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>AP. A</td>
<td></td>
<td>process for amendments to charter articles of incorporations and bylaws of nonprofit corporation</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (D) 47605 (c)(2)</td>
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<td>91</td>
<td></td>
<td>selection process of board members and governance committees</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (D) 47605 (c)(2)</td>
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<td>97</td>
<td></td>
<td>audit and inspection of records</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (D) 47605 (c)(2)</td>
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<td>96-97</td>
<td></td>
<td>district required language for governance</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (D) 47605 (c)(2)</td>
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<td>99-101</td>
<td>5. Qualifications to be met by individuals to be employed by the school <em>(Element 5)</em></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (E) 47605 (1)</td>
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<td>101-08</td>
<td></td>
<td>process for staff selection</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (E) 47605 (1)</td>
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<td>101-08</td>
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<td>job descriptions for positions</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (E) 47605 (1)</td>
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<td>109</td>
<td></td>
<td>credentials, requirements and qualifications of staff</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (E) 47605 (1)</td>
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<td>101-08</td>
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<td>employee compensation-general description</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<td>108</td>
<td></td>
<td>identification of the roles and functions of staff members</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (E) 47605 (1)</td>
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<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td>measures of assessment of performance</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<td>99-101</td>
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<td>procedure to be used for adequate background checks</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td>process for recruiting teachers</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (E) 47605 (1)</td>
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<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td>procedure for monitoring credentials</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (E) 47605 (1)</td>
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<td>111</td>
<td>6. Procedures that the school will follow to ensure the health and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>safety of pupils and staff (Element 6)</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<td>• school will meet the requirement that each employee of the school</td>
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<td>furnish a criminal record summary as required in EC §44237</td>
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<td>• how the school will ensure that its facilities are safe</td>
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<td>• how the school will ensure that its auxiliary services are safe</td>
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<td>(food services, transportation, custodial services, hazardous</td>
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<td>materials)</td>
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<td>112</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<td>• role of staff as mandated or non-mandated child abuse reporters</td>
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<td>111-12</td>
<td>• TB requirements</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<td>111-12</td>
<td>• employee fingerprints</td>
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<td>111-12</td>
<td>• student immunization requirement</td>
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<td>115</td>
<td>• address of the facilities to be used by the charter school</td>
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<td>111</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<td>114</td>
<td>• compliance with state building code, federal ADA requirements</td>
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<td>• assurance of Certificate of Occupancy prior to school opening</td>
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<td>• contains District required language regarding health and safety</td>
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<td></td>
<td>procedures</td>
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<td>116-17</td>
<td>7. Means by which school will achieve racial and ethnic balance</td>
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<td>among its pupils that reflects the general population residing</td>
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<td>within the district/county jurisdiction (Element 7)</td>
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<td>• geographic areas that will be targeted in the outreach effort</td>
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<td>• state languages to be utilized in the outreach</td>
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<td>• district required language for this element</td>
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<td>121</td>
<td>admission requirements, if any <em>(Element 8)</em></td>
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<td>47605 (b) (5)</td>
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<td>122-24</td>
<td>admission assurances preferences</td>
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<td>(H)</td>
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<td>124</td>
<td>lottery assurance and procedures</td>
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<td>122</td>
<td>waiting list</td>
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<td>120</td>
<td>preference (if applicable)</td>
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<td>120-21</td>
<td>states the charter school will admit all pupils who wish to attend</td>
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<td>125</td>
<td>efforts the school will employ to recruit academically low-achieving</td>
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<td>students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students</td>
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<td>125</td>
<td>manner in which an annual independent financial audit will be</td>
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<td>47605 (b) (5)</td>
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<td>conducted and exceptions/deficiencies resolved <em>(Element 9)</em></td>
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<td>128</td>
<td>procedures by which students can be suspended or expelled <em>(Element 10)</em></td>
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<td>128</td>
<td>procedure for involving parents, students and staff in designing and</td>
<td></td>
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<td>(J)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>implementing a discipline policy</td>
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<td>due process for students</td>
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<td>appeals of disciplinary action</td>
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<td>128</td>
<td>procedures for ensuring rights of students</td>
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<td>131-32</td>
<td>list of suspension and expulsion offenses</td>
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<td>131-38</td>
<td>suspension and expulsion procedure</td>
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<td>128</td>
<td>general discipline approach</td>
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<td>procedures for rehabilitation</td>
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<td>readmission and interim placement</td>
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<td>district required language regarding special education students</td>
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</table>
| 142  | 11. Procedures for dealing with staff issues *(Element 11)*  
- relationship between the teachers and the district/county bargaining unit  
- process by which salaries, benefits working conditions and items, i.e., calendars, holidays, vacations, work day and year will be determined  
- labor procedures which will be applied to employees  
- process for resolving complaints/grievances  
- process for ensuring due process  
- manner by which staff members will be covered by STRS, PERS, Social Security or Medicare  
- process for staff recruitment, selection, evaluation and termination  
- Procedure for processing and monitoring credentials  
- Reporting PERS/STRS contributions | YES | NO | YES | NO | 47605 (b) (5) (K) 47605 (1) |
| 140  | AP. E | 47605 (b) (5) (L) |
| 140  | AP. E | 47605 (b) (5) (L) |
| AP. E | 140 | | | | |
| AP. E | 140 | | | | |
| 99   | 140 | | | | |
| 141  | 12. Public school attendance alternatives for pupils residing within the district/county who choose not to attend the charter school *(Element 12)*  
- inform parents or guardians of each pupil enrolled in the charter that pupil has no right to admission in a non-charter District school as a consequence of charter school enrollment  
- not require any child to attend a charter school nor any employee to work at a charter school  
- District required language regarding attendance alternatives | | | | | 47605 (b) (5) (L) |
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<td>142</td>
<td>13. Description of the rights of any employee of the district/county upon leaving the district/county to work in a charter and rights of return to the district/county after employment in a charter school <em>(Element 13)</em></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
<td>47605 (b) (5) (M)</td>
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- what the employment status relative to the district/county of charter school employees is and what it will be in the event the charter school ceases or in the event employees seek employment in the district/county

| 143-44 | 14. Procedures to resolve disputes relating to provisions of the charter *(Element 14)* See LAUSD “District Required” Language | | | | 47605 (b)(5) (N) |

- District required language regarding the dispute resolution procedures

| 145  | 15. Declaration of Exclusive Public School Employer *(Element 15)* | | | | 47605 (b)(5) (O) |

| 146-51 | 16. Description of charter school closure procedures. The procedures shall ensure a final audit of the school to determine the disposition of all assets and liabilities of the charter school, including plans for disposing of any net assets and for the maintenance and transfer of pupil records *(Element 16)* | | | | 47605(6) A (ii) O |

- District required language regarding charter school renewal, revocation, and closing procedures

| 108  | Other Items: 17. Description of the manner in which administrative services of the school are to be provided | | | | 47605 (g) |

- responsibility for evaluating employees
- criteria and procedures used in evaluation
- how hiring decisions are made
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| NA   | 18. Budget for the financial operation which is consistent with the requirements of any school district budget  
   • proposed first year operational budget (including start-up costs)  
   • financial projections for first three years  
   • process for investment procedures and deposit of funds  
   • procedure for ensuring adequate cash flow | | | | 47605(g) |
| AP. D | 125 | | | | |
| 125 | 19. Liability of district/county to handle payments if charter school defaults  
   • for schools organized pursuant to Non-Profit Benefit Corporation Law  
   • for schools not covered by Non-Profit Benefit Corporation Law  
   • AB 1994  
   • general assurances “District Required” language | | | | 47604 |
| 149 | 20. Court-ordered Integration Language  
   • action Plan for 70:30 or 30:70 | | | | |
| 117 | | | | | |

* PAGE: Petitioner to identify page(s) in petition in which items are located
SELF-REFLECTION

Introduction

Synergy Charter Academy Defeats the Achievement Gap

In the Fall of 2004, Synergy Charter Academy ("Synergy" or "Charter School") (grades K-5) opened in one of the lowest-performing areas of inner-city South Los Angeles with a single purpose in mind – to eliminate the staggering achievement gap that has persisted for generations among educationally disadvantaged students.

In 2007, in just its third year of operation, Synergy Charter Academy achieved that purpose and reached a historic milestone by becoming the first school in South Los Angeles to successfully defeat the achievement gap among Hispanic/Latino and African American students compared to their Caucasian peers statewide. Synergy Academies’ elementary campus accomplished this by posting an Academic Performance Index (API) score of 846, which was unprecedented in South Los Angeles and which was higher than the API score of 840 earned by Caucasian elementary school students statewide. By 2011, Synergy Charter Academy had reached an Academic Performance Index (API) score of 887, well above any of the surrounding traditional public schools, and proving that the School can maintain high levels of academic achievement in addition to outperforming the average Caucasian student statewide for five years in a row (see graph below).

These remarkable accomplishments have earned Synergy Academies’ elementary campus, Synergy Charter Academy, a 2010 National Blue Ribbon award. Synergy Charter Academy is the first elementary school in South Los Angeles to ever win the National Blue Ribbon Award. This gives great hope to the ideal of educational equity, and Synergy Charter Academy’s elementary school students are living proof that the vision of Defeating the Achievement GapSM need not remain a mere fantasy, but can indeed become a reality.

In 2006, just two short years after Synergy opened its doors, Synergy helped to show that things can change quickly and that all students, regardless of their backgrounds, can achieve. With the majority of the students coming from its surrounding neighborhood and the 90011 zip code, Synergy currently serves students who are 88% socio-economically disadvantaged, 99% minority
(Latino and African-American), 53% English Language Learners and 8% receive Special Education services. Synergy students have reached the following notable milestones:

- For the last 6 years, Synergy has achieved an API of over 800, the first and only school in its zip code (90011) to achieve this; in 2011 its API was 887
- According to the 2011 CSTs, Synergy students are performing in the top 11% in English Language Arts and in the top 2% in Math in all of LAUSD
- In 2010, Synergy obtained an API rank of 9, putting Synergy students in the top 20% in the state
- In 2010, Synergy obtained a similar schools rank of 10
- Has been recognized with a number of awards by various organizations including:
  - 2010 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education
  - 2009 Title I Achievement Award by the CA Department of Education
  - 2008 CA Distinguished School by the CA Department of Education
  - 2007 CA Charter School of the Year by California Charter Schools Association

Synergy Charter Academy is especially proud of its students for their achievements, especially since they performed well academically and exceeded the state API goal of 800 despite having personal backgrounds that have historically been associated with low-performance. Synergy’s students have been able to break free of the vicious cycle of low performance that has haunted their neighborhood for generations.

**Mission and Vision**

The **Mission** of Synergy Charter Academy schools is to eliminate the achievement gap that has persisted for generations among educationally disadvantaged students. Our **Vision** for our students is that they will meet or exceed the California Content Standards and take college-preparatory classes in high school so that they can eventually attend the four-year university of their choice. Our **Vision** for our schools is that they will become professional development schools that serve as national models of how to eliminate the achievement gap. We will do this by training educators nationwide on how to strengthen both new and existing schools’ overall operations and instructional practices.

**A New Model of Collaboration**

In the fall of 2010, Synergy Charter Academy and the Los Angeles Unified School District (―LAUSD‖ or ―District‖) pioneered a new model of collaboration between charter public schools and traditional public schools, as Synergy Charter Academy and Quincy Jones Elementary School chose to co-locate and co-operate on the same campus. For 2010-11 this intentional partnership focused on primarily on the procedural aspects of running a school. School leaders focused on issues such as the bell schedule, recess and lunch procedures, and safety procedures, as well as developing the culture of the school as a whole, and between the students, teachers, and families of both schools as they intermingled. The two schools also collaborated on joint campus activities including a joint field trip where both Synergy students and Quincy Jones students attended “I’m Going to College” hosted by UCLA and attended a UCLA football game at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena. Students from both schools also enjoyed “Live Arts Day” where professionals came on campus and the students participated in hands on activities to teach them about careers in the film
industry. Students also had an opportunity to meet players from the LA Sparks who came to campus and gave an assembly on the importance of staying in school and working hard. A partnership with the Music Centre gave students from both schools an opportunity to learn about dance and visual arts. This coming year we plan to add a partnership with “Growing Green” and students will have an opportunity to grow their own fruits and vegetables and learn about the benefits of living a healthy lifestyle.

At the end of 2010-11, Synergy and Quincy Jones ES held a joint staff meeting to reflect on the year and discuss the challenges and successes. A “Campus Council” was established with representatives from both schools to determine further avenues for collaboration that would continue to focus on the schools’ culture and procedures, but would address areas that could greater influence academic achievement. The figure below represents the outcome of the meetings between the Campus Council and the schools’ leaders, as well as what Synergy can contribute to the collaboration. Over the summer, Quincy Jones Elementary School’s leaders and many of the teachers of attended Synergy Academies 2 day new teacher training academy in August to get a better understanding of the key instructional strategies Synergy implements. The schools’ leaders will use that training as the basis for our collaboration efforts this year.

**Together We Are Better**

Synergy attributes much of this success to the “sense of synergy” that we have tried to create on our campus. As one of our student’s parents once described, “synergy” occurs when we work together for a better outcome. Synergy believes that only by working together more effectively can we eliminate the achievement gap and create educational equity for all students. The achievement gap is too immense of a problem for any single party to try to solve on its own.
Instead, there needs to be a “sense of synergy” among all stakeholders because simply put, “Together we are better.”

A 15-Minute Drive Separates the Highest from the Lowest

If the achievement gap is hard for one to visualize, one only needs to see what it would look like if there were no Synergy Charter Academy. Without Synergy in the picture, the achievement gap becomes clear. As the graphic below illustrates, there is a 262-point API differential between the lowest conventional public school in the 90011 zip code (School A) and the highest public school in South Pasadena (Marengo Elementary), just 15 minutes north on the 110 Freeway.

Why is Synergy Needed?

Synergy has been providing students and their families with educational opportunities that were not previously available to them. Synergy’s Vision is that our students will meet or exceed the California Content Standards and be prepared to take college-preparatory classes in secondary school so that they can eventually attend the four-year university of their choice. Synergy believes so whole-heartedly in this vision that it has even taken its K-5 students and their parents on college
campus tours. For many families, they had never even stepped foot on a college campus before. Now, college is within the realm of their imagination and within their reach academically.

Synergy Charter Academy can say with confidence that this approach works because its students are not only meeting and exceeding the standards of achievement set by the State of California, they are exceeding the limitations of the past.

**Analysis of the School's CST/Star Scores, API, and AYP Scores and CELDT test**

Overall CST/Star SCORES and API and AYP

Since 2006, the Synergy students have met the state-wide API goal of 800 and have exceeded the state API for Caucasian students since 2007. In 2010-11, we were given the extraordinary opportunity to move onto a new LAUSD facility and collaborate with Quincy Jones Elementary School. With this opportunity, Synergy was able to double its student population from 155 to 312 and enrolled 200 new students and hired six additional teachers. Even with these additions and changes, Synergy was able to maintain a high level of success dropping only 10 points in its API from an 897 to an 887.

This drop in API came mostly from a 4-point drop in the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in English Language Arts (73% to 69%). Synergy students maintained a 90% proficient or advanced status in Math.

The following table illustrates Synergy scores as compared with elementary schools in LAUSD as a whole, Local District 5, and the LAUSD schools in the 90011 zip code, where Synergy is located.
When looking at the performance of all LAUSD schools, Synergy’s percent proficient or advanced in English Language Arts is in the top 11% and its percent proficient or advanced in Math is in the top 2%. Synergy also met its school-wide AYP target for 2011.

CST/Star SCORES, API, and AYP for Numerically Significant Subgroups

The following table illustrates the 2011 API scores for Synergy’s subgroups that are numerically significant: Latino students (188 tested), Socio-economically disadvantaged (181 tested), and English Language Learners (90 tested). The table also compares those scores with the same subgroups for the state and for LAUSD.

All three subgroups met the state-wide API goal of 800. Synergy Charter Academy met 16 out of 17 AYP goals. The following breaks down the AYP goals for percent proficient or advanced in English Language Arts and Math for the same subgroups in 2011:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>ELA Percent Pro/Adv</th>
<th>Met target (67%)</th>
<th>Math Percent Pro/Adv</th>
<th>Met target (72%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SED</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Synergy’s numerically significant subgroups met AYP in 5 of the 6 areas noted above, however, we fell short of meeting the AYP goal for our English Language Learners with 62% being proficient or advanced in ELA, 5% short of the state goal. The following outlines our plan for increasing the number of English Language Learners scoring proficient or advanced on the 2012 CSTs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hire Intervention teacher (1/2 time) to pull out small groups</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Teacher was hired over the summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review STAR data with staff, including subgroups</td>
<td>Principal/Teachers</td>
<td>August 24, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and the Scholastic Phonics Inventory (SPI) – initial benchmark administration</td>
<td>Principal/Teachers</td>
<td>September 9, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin after school intervention for English Language Learner (ELL) students not scoring Proficient on 2011 CSTs</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>September 8, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze SRI and SPI data to create individual student goals for 1st grading period</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>September 13, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create in school intervention groups and plan instruction for those groups based on goals/begin pull out</td>
<td>Intervention Teacher/Principal</td>
<td>September 16, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD to focus on Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) and Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) strategies</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>September 20, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe classroom teachers and intervention teacher, with special focus on ELL instruction</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze effectiveness of language arts materials used to instruct and support ELL</td>
<td>ELAC and School Operations Committee</td>
<td>September 30, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct SST meetings with the parents of all ELLs who did not score Proficient on the 2011 CSTs</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>October 30, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and the Scholastic Phonics Inventory (SPI) – 2nd administration</td>
<td>Principal/Teachers</td>
<td>November 11, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze SRI and SPI data to create individual student goals for 2nd grading period</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>November 15, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create in school intervention groups and plan</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>November 18, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Responsible Party</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher/Principal PD to focus on SIOP and SDAIE strategies</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>November 22, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe classroom teachers and intervention teacher, with special focus on ELL instruction</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and the Scholastic Phonics Inventory (SPI) – 3rd administration</td>
<td>Principal/Teachers</td>
<td>March 2, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze SRI and SPI data to create individual student goals for 3rd grading period</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>March 6, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create in school intervention groups and plan instruction for those groups based on goals/continue pull out</td>
<td>Intervention Teacher/Principal</td>
<td>March 9, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD to focus on SIOP and SDAIE strategies</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>March 13, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe classroom teachers and intervention teacher, with special focus on ELL instruction</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and the Scholastic Phonics Inventory (SPI) – 4th administration</td>
<td>Principal/Teachers</td>
<td>June 8, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze SRI and SPI data to create individual student goals for summer school</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>June 12, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create summer school intervention groups and plan instruction for those groups based on goals/teach summer school</td>
<td>Intervention Teacher/Principal</td>
<td>June 15, 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CST/Star SCORES, API, and AYP for Non-Numerically Significant Subgroups

While the CDE and the federal government recognizes that the low number of students in any certain sub-group may deem that group not to be numerically significant because the numbers can be easily skewed, Synergy believes in looking at all of our sub-groups to determine whether or not we are meeting their needs. The following table illustrates the 2011 API scores for Synergy’s subgroups that are not numerically significant: African American/Black students (14 tested) and Students with Disabilities (20 tested). The table also compares those scores with the same subgroups for the state and for LAUSD.

![2011 API for Non-Numerically Significant Subgroups](image)

It is important to note that the CDE is currently reporting that the API for our African American/Black sub group is 770. Upon analysis, Synergy’s administration realized that two
African American/Black students were being reported as Hispanic/Latino. These two students scored Advanced in both English Language Arts and Math. Synergy is currently working with ETS to have the demographics of these students changed and to have the API recalculated. Even though we believe that this subgroup will meet the state wide goal of 800, we feel that the needs of this subgroup need to be addressed as the API is not as high as other subgroups.

The following outlines our plan for increasing the number of African American students scoring proficient or advanced on the 2012 CSTs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hire Intervention teacher (1/2 time) to pull out small groups</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Teacher was hired over the summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review STAR data with staff, including subgroups</td>
<td>Principal/Teachers</td>
<td>August 24, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and the Scholastic Phonics Inventory (SPI) – initial benchmark administration</td>
<td>Principal/Teachers</td>
<td>September 9, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin after school intervention for SEL students not scoring Proficient on 2011 CSTs</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>September 8, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze SRI and SPI data to create individual student goals for 1st grading period</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>September 13, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create in school intervention groups and plan instruction for those groups based on goals/begin pull out</td>
<td>Intervention Teacher/Principal</td>
<td>September 16, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD to focus on Academic English Mastery Program (AEMP) and Standard English Learner (SEL) strategies</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>September 20, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe classroom teachers and intervention teacher, with special focus on AEMP and SEL instruction</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze effectiveness of language arts materials used to instruct and support SEL students</td>
<td>ELAC and School Operations Committee</td>
<td>September 30, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct SST meetings with the parents of all students who did not score Proficient on the 2011 CSTs</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>October 30, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and the Scholastic Phonics Inventory (SPI) – 2nd administration</td>
<td>Principal/Teachers</td>
<td>November 11, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze SRI and SPI data to create individual student goals for 2nd grading period</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>November 15, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create in school intervention groups and plan instruction for those groups based on goals/continue pull out</td>
<td>Intervention Teacher/Principal</td>
<td>November 18, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD to focus on AEMP and SEL strategies</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>November 22, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe classroom teachers and intervention teacher, with special focus on AEMP and SEL</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Person Responsible</td>
<td>Deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and the Scholastic Phonics Inventory (SPI) – 3rd administration</td>
<td>Principal/Teachers</td>
<td>March 2, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze SRI and SPI data to create individual student goals for 3rd grading period</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>March 6, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create in school intervention groups and plan instruction for those groups based on goals/continue pull out</td>
<td>Intervention Teacher/Principal</td>
<td>March 9, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD to focus on AEMP and SEL strategies</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>March 13, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe classroom teachers and intervention teacher, with special focus on AEMP and SEL instruction</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and the Scholastic Phonics Inventory (SPI) – 4th administration</td>
<td>Principal/Teachers</td>
<td>June 8, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze SRI and SPI data to create individual student goals for summer school</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>June 12, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create summer school groups and plan instruction for those groups based on goals/teach summer school</td>
<td>Intervention Teacher/Principal</td>
<td>June 15, 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following outlines our plan for increasing the number of Special Education students scoring proficient or advanced on the 2012 CSTs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hire additional RSP teacher (1/2 time) to create more personalized instruction for SPED students</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Teacher was hired over the summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review STAR data with staff, including subgroups</td>
<td>Principal/Teachers</td>
<td>August 24, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review IEP goals and classroom accommodations with general education teachers</td>
<td>Principal/RSP teachers/Gen. Ed. Teachers</td>
<td>August 24, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and the Scholastic Phonics Inventory (SPI) – initial benchmark administration</td>
<td>Principal/Teachers</td>
<td>September 9, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin after school intervention for SPED students not scoring Proficient on 2011 CSTs</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>September 8, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe classroom teachers and RSP teachers, with special focus on differentiation and accommodations</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze effectiveness of SPED materials used to instruct and support SPED students</td>
<td>Modified Consent Review Team</td>
<td>September 30, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and the Scholastic Phonics Inventory (SPI) – 2nd, 3rd, and 4th administrations</td>
<td>Principal/Teachers</td>
<td>November 11, 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26
Analyze SRI and SPI data to create individual student goals for summer school

Create in summer school groups and plan instruction for those groups based on goals/teach summer school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyze SRI and SPI data to create individual student goals for summer school</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>June 12, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create in summer school groups and plan instruction for those groups based on goals/teach summer school</td>
<td>Intervention Teacher/Principal</td>
<td>June 15, 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of CELDT Test

All students who are classified as English Language Learners take the annual CELDT test at the beginning of the school year. Students new to school, such as Kindergarteners and those attending public school in California for the first time, take the initial CELDT, depending on their home language survey, to determine their English language proficiency. The following graphs tracks 4 classes’ performance on the CELDT as they progress throughout the grade levels. Further explanation will follow the graphs.

**CELDT Progression 2008-2010**

Rather than analyze overall CELDT scores from year to year, we want to track each grade level to see the progression specifically. For example, if you look at the first graph labeled Kinder-2nd Grade, the purple line shows how those students performed in Kindergarten, the red line shows how those same students did in first grade, and the yellow line shows how those same students performed in 2nd grade. The majority of the students had an English language proficiency of beginning to intermediate in Kindergarten, however by 2nd grade the majority of those students where in the intermediate to early advanced range. We want to ensure that the students are progressing toward the early advanced/advanced and that we are meeting the needs of our English Language Learners. Synergy’s RFEP rate for 2010-11 was 15%, compared with LAUSD’s RFEP rate of 16% and LD 5’s RFEP rate of 17%. While the difference is small, Synergy’s lower RFEP rate could be due to the difference in its reclassification policy. As part of LAUSD’s
reclassification policy, a student in grades 3-5 needs to score **Basic** or higher on the ELA portion of the CSTs (other requirements must be met as well). Synergy adheres to the same policy with the exception that a student must score **Proficient** or higher on the ELA portion of the CSTs. Not all 5th graders leave Synergy as RFEP’s.

**How were other periodic assessments used to modify instructional practices?**

Synergy is a data driven school and administrators and teachers consistently use data to modify instruction. Teachers use both publisher and teacher created materials to formally assess students in Language Arts and Math on a weekly basis (science and social studies are assessed approximately every other week). In addition to the weekly assessments, students in grades 1-5 take 6-week periodic assessments in fluency and comprehension and unit tests in Math. Three times a year, students in grades 2-5 are administered the Scholastic Reading Inventory and the Scholastic Math Inventory. Struggling readers are administered the Scholastic Phonics Inventory to target needs and create goals and track progress toward meeting those goals.

Teachers and Administrators use the results of these tests to determine what concepts were mastered and what needs to be revisited, either to the whole class or in individual/small group instruction. Results of these assessments are communicated to the parents on either a weekly or monthly basis to the parents (depending on the teacher/grade level), at Parent-Teacher Conferences held twice a year and through report grades given three times a year. Students who are consistently not meeting grade level standards according to these assessments can also be referred for a Student Success Team meeting where the team can determine further interventions and accommodations to help the student be successful in class. Assessment results are also used to determine which students need additional help by attending after-school intervention or summer school.

Synergy recently added an RSP/Intervention teacher who will spend half of their time servicing special education students and the other half pulling small groups to work students struggling in Language Arts or Math. The school’s Director/Principal also reallocated her time so that 20% of it will be spent instructing students in small groups. These assessments will be used to create these groups and determine what standards need to be addressed, as well as progress toward mastery of the standards. Additionally, these results will be used to guide professional development.

**In Seat Attendance**

Synergy has consistently maintained a high in-seat attendance rate. We attribute this to educating the parents on how poor attendance can impact their child’s education and how it can also affect the financial stability of the school. Synergy’s attendance rate has been above 98.5% for the past 5 years as the following graph illustrates.
**How has program met the needs of all subgroups? (include RFEP rate)**

As previously mentioned, all three numerically significant subgroups met the state-wide API goal of 800 and Synergy Charter Academy met 16 out of 17 AYP goals. Although Synergy’s RFEP rate of 15% is close to LAUSD’s RFEP rate of 16%, our CST scores for English Language Arts for English Language Learners fell short of meeting AYP by 5%. While not considered numerically significant, our African American/Black students and our Special Education students are not performing as well as the school as a whole, but both subgroups are outperforming their peers at the state and district level.

![2011 API by Subgroup](image)

As previously explained, Synergy has developed a plan to better serve our three lowest performing subgroups including hiring additional staff members, re-evaluating materials used, and dedicating staff development time to discussing strategies that should help these students be more successful. We will continue to monitor the progress of all of our students to ensure that they are meeting or exceeding the state standards and adjust our instructional program as needed.

**Successes and Challenges from the Last Charter Term**

Describe Successes  

**To what do we attribute our success?**

Synergy attributes its success to many factors. One factor is the consistent implementation of a [rigorous, standards-based curriculum](#). Synergy’s curriculum is based on research of effective teaching practices that increase student achievement, especially for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. For example, Synergy’s reading program, Open Court Reading, was selected because it addresses the five research-based factors that most influence reading success, namely:
• Phonemic Awareness Instruction
• Phonics Instruction
• Fluency Instruction
• Vocabulary Instruction and
• Reading Comprehension Instruction

These five research-based factors were described by the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA).

Another factor of our success is the “sense of synergy” that we try to create on our campus. Synergy occurs when the combined action of two or more agents is greater than the sum of their individual effects. At Synergy, we understand that the problem of the “achievement gap” is too large for any single party to try to solve on its own. This is why at our school, we foster a culture in which all stakeholders – including teachers, students, staff, parents, administrators, and community members – are involved and work together towards a shared vision.

One way we facilitate parent involvement is through parent communication. We help our parents better understand the issues facing urban education so that they can better understand reforms we implement at Synergy and so that they can better support those reforms on their end. For example, if we only impress the importance of good attendance upon our students, but we do not impress the importance of good attendance upon the parents that actually bring the students to school, the energy we spent talking to our students is wasted when the person who actually controls the car keys doesn’t understand the importance of coming to school on time every day.

A third factor that we have at our school is high expectations, which continue to rise as a direct result of the previous two factors. When a rigorous instructional program is implemented and when all parties are working together and actually start to see results, the school as a whole can’t help but keep raising their expectations. When much is expected of students, much is accomplished as the students rise to meet those expectations. We have communicated with our entire school community that we are proud of what our school has accomplished so far. We also explain to the entire school community that we are encouraged, but not satisfied. A vital part of raising expectations is helping people see a wider perspective. Therefore, we explain to our families that while our accomplishments are extraordinary for our area, they are still ordinary compared to our potential. What keeps us moving forward is the knowledge that this is the best our neighborhood has ever seen, but it’s not yet the best that we can ever be.

**How will we build on our successes?**

Synergy will continue to build upon the momentum created by the factors that have led to our success. As with parenting, a key to success is consistency. We will continue to implement a rigorous, standards-based curriculum that is based on research of effective teaching practices. For example, any new reading materials we use must be in line with the five research-based factors that most influence reading success. We will continue to open communication to foster a culture in which our stakeholders are working effectively together. The more parents understand the education system, the more influential a player they become. We will continue to have high expectations for student achievement and we will celebrate when students meet those expectations. What is encouraging to Synergy is the fact that when you are heading in the right direction, it’s easy to continue going that way.

As previously explained, Synergy’s vision for our schools is that they will become professional development schools that serve as national models of how to eliminate the achievement gap. We will do this by training educators nationwide on how to strengthen both new and existing
What challenges did we experience?

The biggest challenge that we had as a school is not having a campus to call our own for the first 6 years of our operation. Synergy leased its facilities from an existing community organization in a joint-use arrangement. This meant that every Friday, our teachers pack up their classrooms and put everything away so that our lessor could use the building on the weekend. The teachers then unpacked their classrooms and rearranged everything again on Monday. This is a burden that Synergy endured every week and a regular public school would never be subjected to. Additionally, it limited the ability to form partnerships with organizations that could offer more resources and programs to our students and families.

Academically speaking, Synergy’s biggest challenge is making sure all of its students are reaching the level of academic proficiency required by the State. Of course, this is the challenge for all California public schools and not just for Synergy. The challenge is especially great for Synergy, though, because of the area that we chose to serve. As mentioned earlier, most schools surrounding Synergy are in the bottom 10% of schools statewide. Since Synergy recruits students locally and holds a public random drawing in which students are drawn by a neutral third party, Synergy’s student body is representative of the surrounding community. As such, students who enter Synergy are more likely than not to be performing below grade level. This challenge was most significant as we entered the last school year, 2010-11, as we enrolled 200 new students making 1/3 of the students new to Synergy.

What did we do to address these challenges?

As previously mentioned, Synergy has recently entered into a collaboration with LAUSD Local District 5. We are both fortunate and thankful that this collaboration included moving onto a brand new LAUSD facility, which we share with Quincy Jones Elementary School, a traditional LAUSD public school (a more in-depth description of this collaboration was previously detailed). In addition to collaborating with QJES, the facility has also offered us the ability to create the partnerships needed to better serve our students and our families. For example, this past year students received instruction in dance and the visual arts from the Music Centre, participated in hands on activities during “Live Arts Day”, and met players from the LA Sparks. Students and their families also had the opportunity to participate in “Family Science Nights” offered by Iridescent who offered lessons and hands on activities so that the students and their families could learn more about space exploration. This year, “Growing Green” will begin a program where students will grow their own fruits and vegetables and learn about the benefits of living a healthy lifestyle. None of this would have been possible without a real school facility.

The best way to meet our students’ needs academically is to continue implementing a sound instructional program. Our past results show that Synergy’s instructional program, which is based on research on effective teaching practices, has had a positive impact on student achievement. Synergy has also found that improving reading achievement is an excellent way to improve overall achievement. This is true because once students learn to read, they can then read to learn. Learning to read is the most important skill that Synergy gives its students because it helps lead to greater achievement overall.

If it is determined that a student who is new to the school is performing below grade level, Synergy informs the parents and gets them involved right away. During past Student Success Team meetings, parents have often said that they were never aware that there was a problem or that they
never realized how severe the problem was. It has been helpful to make sure that the school and the parents are on the same page in regards to students’ academic achievement.

**What plans are in our renewal petition to address similar challenges during our renewal term?**

In its charter petition, Synergy describes how it tries to foster a collaborative community and create a “sense of synergy.” Synergy will continue to build on the positive relationships it has built with all stakeholders, especially Quincy Jones Elementary School. Leaders from both schools hope that as we move forward, we will continue to grow and learn from each other.

Academically, Synergy will continue to carry out its instructional program because it has proven to be effective at eliminating the achievement gap of educationally disadvantaged students. It will continue to look at how it is serving the needs of all its students and that all subgroups continue to improve. Additionally, Synergy is constantly on the lookout for additional materials or strategies that can help students reach a higher level of academic achievement. As is mentioned in Synergy’s charter petition, any new materials that are purchased are selected on the basis of their alignment to the standards and on the basis of their impact on student achievement. Also, Synergy will continue to foster positive connections between home and school to make sure students receive academic support from multiple fronts.

**The Extent to Which Synergy Has Achieved Its Mission Set Forth in the Original Charter Petition**

In its simplest terms, Synergy’s “charter” is a performance contract between the school and the Los Angeles Unified School District. Upon examining the goals set forth in the original charter petition and comparing them with actual results, it is clear to see that Synergy has certainly achieved its goals.

Synergy’s mission was to contribute to educational reform by eliminating the achievement gap of educationally disadvantaged students. To determine if Synergy faithfully pursued this mission, we need to answer two questions:

- Did Synergy serve the educationally disadvantaged students that it promised to serve?
- Did Synergy help to eliminate their achievement gap?

The answer to both of these questions is, “Yes.”

As it promised in its charter petition, Synergy served educationally disadvantaged students by opening in the 90011 zip code of South Los Angeles in one of LAUSD’s most disadvantaged areas. Synergy is located two blocks from Jefferson High School. As of the most recent API rankings (2010), there were 15 elementary schools in the 90011 zip code. Of the 12 LAUSD schools, 6 received an API rank of 1, 4 received an API rank of 2, and 2 received an API rank of 3. There are also 3 charter schools in the same zip code and they ranked 3, 4, and 7. Synergy conducted local outreach, and as a result, its student population is a reflection of the surrounding community. In 2010, approximately 93% of its students were Hispanic, 7% were African American. 88% of its students qualified for free or reduced price lunch and its English Learner population was 43%. Synergy posted an API rank of 9 in 2010.

It is clear that Synergy is helping to eliminate the achievement gap of students in the area. Despite having personal backgrounds historically associated with low performance, in 2011
Synergy met the statewide API goal of 800 by posting a score of 887. This performance placed Synergy in the top 20% of schools statewide.

In accordance with AB 1137, Synergy must meet one of five conditions for renewal. The first two of the conditions apply in Synergy’s case.

1. **Attain Its API Growth Target** – Synergy attained its growth target since all numerically significant subgroups met the state goal of an API of 800 or higher.

2. **Attain a Ranking of “4” or Higher on the Statewide API** – Synergy met this goal in 2010 with a Statewide API Ranking of 9. Although the API Rankings for 2011 have not yet been released by the CDE, we are hopeful it will remain the same.

Curriculum Framework and Implementation of the Program

Synergy achieved these results while remaining true to the curriculum framework outlined in its charter petition. In its charter petition, Synergy said that it would use the same reading and math programs (Open Court Reading and Harcourt Math) as LAUSD because Synergy wanted to serve as a model school whose practices could be replicated at other schools. Since that time, Synergy has adopted Saxon as its main Math program, and LAUSD has adopted different language arts program (for example, Quincy Jones Elementary school uses “Treasures”). While the schools may use different publishers and programs, we still believe that is possible to replicate best practices. It is important to note that the curriculum itself does not ensure success, it is the implementation of the program. The charter petition also said that Synergy would implement other instructional approaches such as the use of technology and the use of algebraic thinking to make existing resources even better.

Innovative Program

Since the beginning, Synergy’s goal has been to **make its educational program replicable**. For that reason, Synergy chose not to extend its school day or school year. This makes Synergy unique since many other urban charter schools have chosen to operate with longer school days and longer school years. Following nearly the same schedule as its LAUSD neighboring schools, Synergy’s elementary and middle schools have become experts in catapulting student achievement without a longer school day or school year.

Synergy uses much of the same curriculum that LAUSD schools use. Teachers use the parts of state-adopted programs, including Open Court Reading and Saxon Math, that best meet the needs of their students, and they gather supplementary materials to fill in any gaps. While effective reading and math instruction is at the heart of Synergy’s educational program, Synergy’s schools also teach a well-rounded curriculum, incorporating science, history, and the arts into the regular schedule.

Synergy attributes its success to a common sense approach that focuses on teaching the fundamentals in the context of a well-rounded curriculum. The teaching methods implemented in Synergy classrooms focus on four key strategies: fluency, academic language, schemas, and time on task. **Fluency** is essential to reading comprehension. Synergy teachers invest time to teach the fundamentals of reading, including phonics and phrasing, to ensure their students are fluent readers and able to access grade-level texts. We also apply fluency to math, ensuring that our students are fluent in basic math facts, which will allow them to pursue higher-level math as they advance in their educational careers. Synergy teachers imbue students with rich **academic language** through consistent exposure and practice in order to give students the vocabulary to complete academically
demanding tasks. Synergy teachers use schemas, or concrete conceptual patterns, to help students make sense of the world around them and access a rigorous curriculum. Time is a precious and limited resource at every school. Synergy’s teachers aim to make efficient use of their classroom time. Synergy’s idea of time on task is that students have ample time for hands-on learning and practice. At Synergy, time on task means that students are always mentally engaged, lessons are well-paced and instructionally efficient, and idle time and transition time are minimized.

WASC Candidacy
Synergy Charter Academy received a six-year accreditation from WASC in 2009.

Description of Best Practices
• synERgy: An Emergency Response Approach
  Teachers and administrators at Synergy are serious about improving education for all students. They continuously use students’ assessment data to know if students are at grade level, and they help students who are performing below grade level with an urgency that is similar to crisis response. At Synergy, we feel that every student is capable of achieving at grade level or beyond. Every student deserves an education that will help him or her succeed at this level. We hold ourselves responsible for our students’ success. When a student enters one of our schools performing below grade level in reading and/or math, we view this as an emergency situation, and we intervene immediately. Interventions include targeted one-on-one or small group instruction using differentiation strategies during class, as well as holding small class sessions after school and during breaks in the school year.

**synERgy’s Emergency Response in Action**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All new students are assessed in reading and math.</th>
<th>Data is shared with the students, parents, teachers, and administrators.</th>
<th>An intervention plan is put in place.</th>
<th>Regular, continuous assessments show students’ growth and areas of need.</th>
<th>Achievable Goal: At least 95% proficient or advanced.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are grouped based on areas/levels of need.</td>
<td>• Isolate With Teacher (IWT) • Differentiation • After School • Intersession • Summer School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

• Efficiency Experts
Synergy Academies attributes its success to highly efficient practices within its classrooms and organization at large. These efficiencies can be broken down into organizational efficiencies and instructional efficiencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Efficiency</th>
<th>Instructional Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School-wide procedures are documented and consistently implemented.</td>
<td>Synergy classrooms use consistent procedures to reinforce scholarly work and behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student play before school and during recesses consists of organized activities that are closely supervised.</td>
<td>Synergy teachers focus on maximizing students’ time on task, increasing mental engagement and practice.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations for students, families, teachers and other staff are documented, communicated, and consistently enforced.</td>
<td>Synergy intervenes when students need extra help to catch up to grade level with IWT (Isolate With Teacher) in class, and after-school and summer intervention classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synergy uses an Intervention model that involves teachers and administrators in the timely gathering and analyzing of data.</td>
<td>Synergy teachers focus on teaching fundamental skills, including syllabication and phrasing to increase reading comprehension in all subjects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**• Unique Organizational Culture**

Synergy attributes much of its success to a “sense of synergy” that has been created on its campuses. As a Synergy parent once described, “synergy” occurs when we **work together for a better outcome**. Synergy believes that only by working together more effectively can we eliminate the achievement gap and create **educational equity for all students**. The achievement gap is too immense of a problem for any single party to try to solve on its own. Instead, there needs to be a “sense of synergy” among all stakeholders because simply put, **“together we are better.”**

Synergy has identified the following organizational **values** that highlight the culture of Synergy Academies. These are the values that have led to greater student achievement and success. They are the values that continue to guide the organization’s instructional practices and new initiatives.

“At Synergy, we’re all in this together because together we are better. We bring out the best in each other and in ourselves every day in every way.”

- **Value Each Individual** *(this is the centerpiece of what we do)*  
  We believe in giving everyone an equal opportunity to learn and grow.

- **Teamwork**  
  We work as a team and support each other as a family.

- **Integrity**  
  We are transparent, honest, and believe in the importance of building and maintaining trust.

- **Hard Work**  
  We have a strong work ethic, are good stewards of our resources, take initiative, hold each other accountable, and focus on continual improvement.

- **Commitment**  
  We are dedicated to upholding our mission, and we have the passion and courage to persevere through challenges that may come our way.

- **Professionalism**  
  We show respect for ourselves and for others by being present and dependable, as well as by representing our organization well through our words and actions.

- **Encouragement**  
  We help each other be the best that we can be by listening, supporting, motivating, and communicating in a positive manner with each other.

- **Accomplishment**
We constantly measure our performance to achieve the best results possible in everything we do.

**Data Analysis and PD used to inform teachers and parents and improve instruction**

Synergy is a data-driven school that uses assessment data to understand and improve student and school performance. The assessment data (diagnostic, formative, and summative) helps Synergy continuously plan, monitor, and improve academic programs. For example, during our summer Teacher Training Academy, the staff reviews the previous spring’s state testing results to evaluate the school’s academic program and to chart a course for the new year based on students’ needs. In addition to state testing, other assessments include Open Court Reading assessments, student work samples, and the Scholastic Reading Inventory. Assessments are used to:

- Identify students’ progress toward achieving standards.
- Identify students who need additional instruction or intervention.
- Prescribe a re-teaching or intervention focus for individual students.
- Identify professional development needs and target school resources.

Throughout the year, Synergy uses periodic assessments to measure academic progress and identify students in need of differentiated instruction or intervention. Assessments also break down skills in order to focus intervention and pinpoint areas of need. For example, if students score low in fluency, teachers make immediate adjustments to provide more instruction in phonics and fluency. If a student had a high fluency score but had a low comprehension score, it may indicate that the student can read words quickly but is having trouble extracting meaning from a passage. Consequently, the student may receive more instruction in reading comprehension rather than in phonics instruction.

Synergy’s professional development plan has played a vital role in helping Synergy respond to student and teacher needs and achieve unprecedented success in South Los Angeles. Each summer, Synergy holds a Teacher Training Academy to provide professional development that assesses students’ needs in relation to the content standards and charts a course for helping all students meet grade-level standards. This ensures that the entire staff is on the same page instructionally and helps to build instructional coherence. Data is used not only to identify student needs, but also to identify professional development needs. This way, teachers are better equipped to respond to specific student needs. The professional development plan is then adjusted in a responsive manner. For example, during a session based on student comprehension scores, a presentation was given on how fluency impacts reading comprehension. This resulted in all teachers making sure that they included strong fluency instruction in their reading curriculum. Teachers have received outside training in areas such as classroom management, science instruction, differentiated instruction for gifted students, and language instruction for English Learners.

Teachers collaborate regularly (both during weekly meetings and informally as well), and Synergy’s small size allows for the unique opportunity for much greater cross grade-level collaboration and support than would normally occur on larger campuses. For example, since fourth grade students are responsible for mastering more writing genres than any of the previous grade levels, teachers in grades K-3 decided that they need to go above and beyond their own grade-level standards in order for their students to be successful once they reach the fourth grade.

Teachers also have opportunities to observe one another in each other’s classrooms. Due to Synergy’s collaborative nature, teachers have grown professionally by sharing best practices with each other. Synergy’s administrators are experienced former teachers who are instructional leaders.
and provide ongoing support for all teachers. New teachers are assigned a formal mentor that they work with throughout the year and observe how veteran teachers handle instruction, classroom management, and school-wide procedures. Providing support to new teachers gives them the confidence and skills they need to be successful.

Synergy realizes that its vision of college admissions for its elementary students is more powerful if it is a shared vision and if everyone is on the same page. Consequently, Synergy communicates academic performance results and expectations to all stakeholders on a regular basis in various ways. Before each school year begins, parents and students attend an orientation in which we use multimedia presentations to educate the community on statewide testing and what it means for their community. Many parents with children that have been in other schools for several years have informed us that nobody ever taught them how to understand this information. The second goal of the meeting is to review the school’s vision, analyze students’ past statewide testing performance, and establish the goals for the year.

During the year, Synergy holds Family/Community meetings every other month. On a weekly basis, teachers send reports to parents that inform them about their children’s performance. Student-led parent conferences occur twice a year, and report cards are sent home three times a year. The school newsletter recognizes students who are performing well, and staff learns about student performance during weekly staff meetings. Other communication tools include award ceremonies, fliers, brochures, family and student handbooks, staff handbooks, the school web site, and our school-wide Message Tuesday Envelope.

Synergy’s entire school community has bought into the importance of creating a “sense of synergy” among all stakeholders, and everyone knows that they play an important role in helping students achieve. As evidence of this, parent meetings always attract a full house, typically with an 85% attendance rate from families. Also, teachers typically have every single one of their students’ parents show up for parent conferences. These examples show that informed parents are willing to sacrifice their time to learn how to better help their children.

**How has the governing board’s decision making affected the success of the school?**

Synergy Academies is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that operates charter public schools in South Los Angeles. The organization is governed by Synergy Academies’ Board of Directors in accordance with non-profit and charter school law. The Board of Directors seeks the input of all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, administrators, and staff in order to maintain a focus on academic achievement. It does so through groups such as Synergy’s schools’ Parent Council and School Operations Committees. The Board of Directors upholds the positive reputation that has been developed of Synergy Academies, and it bases its decisions on what is best for students and the organization’s mission to eliminate the achievement gap.

The Board of Directors has full fiduciary responsibility and is responsible for the overall direction of the organization. The Board is responsible for setting policy and may delegate day-to-day operational decision making to the Central Office Staff and School Site Directors with the assistance of their staff. The Central Office staff is responsible for creating procedures for carrying out the policies and directives of the Board of Directors. The Board’s decision making regarding its fiduciary responsibility and overall direction of Synergy has the school kept both fiscally healthy and successful academically.
How has the district benefited from Synergy’s existence?

Through Synergy’s existence, the District has gained a successful, model school that has shown that the achievement gap can indeed be eliminated. The value added to the District includes the following:

- LAUSD has a school in the Jefferson High School complex with an API score of 887
- LAUSD has one of the only intentional “co-operative campus” collaborations between a traditional public school and a charter school in the entire nation
- For the first time ever, South Los Angeles has an elementary school that is a National Blue Ribbon School
- Synergy has helped to relieve overcrowding and has provided seats in its neighborhood. Almost all of the schools in the area now operate on a traditional calendar rather than a year-round calendar due to overcrowding.
- Synergy has helped to raise the expectations for neighborhood schools. By helping students reach a high level of achievement, Synergy is serving as a catalyst for other schools and providing an example to follow of how change can come about quickly in a positive manner.

What has the community gained from Synergy that it did not have before it was there?

As in the District’s case, the community has gained a model school where students are experiencing success at unprecedented rates. The community has also gained a school that is helping parents become more influential players in their children’s education. Synergy gives parents meaningful information and educates them about the macro, big-picture issues concerning challenges that America’s education system faces. Consequently, Synergy’s parents have begun to better understand not only the achievement gap that exists in American schools, but also the severity of the achievement gap. After one parent meeting about the achievement gap, many parents expressed that they knew some schools were better than others, but they did not fully realize how substantial and overwhelming the differences were.

As a result, parents have become much more supportive of the academically demanding curriculum that Synergy offers, and they have begun playing a more influential role in their children’s education. For example, not only does the school hold children accountable for completing their homework, parents have also done a better job of holding their children accountable for their homework responsibilities. When children see that both their school and home environments communicate the same message, they are more likely to take school seriously and perform well. It is much more effective for parents and the school to work synergistically together this way instead of each party working independently, or worse, each party working against each other.

Synergy has also strived to be a center of the community that brings community resources together in order to make them more effective. Through Synergy, for example, many parents have learned for the first time about services in their community that they never knew existed. Synergy has referred parents to community organizations that provide various services at little or no cost, including after school care, family counseling, tutoring, medical care, sports activities, and enrichment activities. In this way, Synergy serves as a proud center of the community that creates a “sense of synergy” among the various players who are working hard to make a difference in the neighborhood.
How are the students better off in Synergy than they would have been in their home schools had Synergy not been there?

Synergy’s students are better off because they have experienced levels of success that they may not have had the opportunity to experience in the past. They attend a school that knows them personally and expects much of them. They have risen to the occasion and have made encouraging gains in their achievement. They take pride in their school because they know that by breaking the API Barrier, they set the precedent that students from their personal backgrounds need not settle for substandard results.

Synergy students have had experiences not commonly seen in their home schools. For example, Synergy K-5 students and their families have been able to take personal guided tours of a prestigious university that many had never stepped foot on before. They have gone on numerous field trips to experience life outside of the inner city. On one field trip, students took a boat tour at the Port of Los Angeles. For many students, including ten-year-old fifth grade students, it was their first time ever being on a boat. Through Synergy’s field trips, students have even experienced cultures other than their own by visiting places such as the Japanese American National Museum and the Skirball Cultural Center (to learn about the Jewish culture).

Synergy has aggressively altered the trajectory of the inner city students that it serves. The downward trajectory for many inner city students is that when they do poorly in elementary school, they will do poorly in middle school, and they will do poorly in high school. However, since Synergy is helping students perform well in elementary school, they have a different trajectory and will have a greater chance performing well in both middle school and high school. Synergy believes in investing in students early because it will pay long-term dividends well into the future.

Affirmations and Assurances

Synergy Charter Academy hereby certifies that the information submitted in this application for a charter for the California public charter school named Synergy Charter Academy is located within the boundaries of the Los Angeles Unified School District (“LAUSD” or “the District”) is true to the best of our knowledge and belief; we also certify that this application does not constitute the conversion of a private school to the status of a public charter school; and further, we affirm that if awarded a charter, Synergy Charter Academy:

- Shall be non-sectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations. [Ref. Education Code Section 47605(d)(1)]
- Shall not charge tuition. [Ref. Education Code Section 47605(d)(1)]
- Shall not discriminate against any student on the basis of disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code.
- Admit all students who wish to attend the school [Ref. Education Code Section 47605(d)(2)(a)]
- Shall determine admission by a public random drawing, if the number of pupils who wish to attend the Charter School exceeds the school capacity, and preference shall be
extended to pupils who currently attend the Synergy Charter Academy and pupils who reside in the District [Ref. Education Code Section 47605(d)(2)(B)]

- Not enroll pupils over 19 years of age unless continuously enrolled in public school and making satisfactory progress toward high school diploma requirements

- Shall not require any child to attend Synergy Charter Academy nor any employee to work at Synergy Charter Academy.

- In accordance with Education Code Section 47605(d)(3), if a pupil is expelled or leaves Synergy Charter Academy without graduating or completing the school year for any reason, Synergy Charter Academy shall notify the superintendent of the school district of the pupil’s last known address within 30 days (if Synergy Charter Academy does not use the school district’s student information system), and shall, upon request, provide that school district with a copy of the cumulative record of the pupil, including a transcript of grades or report card and health information.
ELEMENT 1 – THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

“A description of the educational program of the school, designed, among other things, to identify those whom the school is attempting to educate, what it means to be an “educated person” in the 21st century, and how learning best occurs. The goals identified in that program shall include the objective of enabling pupils to become self-motivated, competent, and lifelong learners.” -- California Education Code Section 47605(b)(5)(A)

The site address of Synergy Charter Academy is 900 E 33rd Street, Los Angeles, CA 90011. The mailing address of Synergy Charter Academy is P.O. Box 78999, Los Angeles, CA 90016. The phone number of Synergy Charter Academy is 323-235-7960. The contact person for Synergy Charter Academy is Jennifer Epps, and her cell phone number is 323-605-8589.

The term of this charter shall be from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2017. The grade configuration is grades K-5. The number of students currently served is 312 students. The admission requirements include: Synergy Charter Academy does not have any admission requirements since Synergy Charter Academy accepts all students in accordance with the affirmations and assurances described above.

The operational capacity will be between 260 and a maximum of 360 students. The instructional calendar will be a traditional calendar with 180 instructional days. The bell schedule for Synergy Charter Academy will be 8:00 a.m. to 2:25 p.m. Monday through Friday. If space is available, traveling students will have the option to attend in accordance with Synergy Charter Academy’s admission policies in the same manner as any other student applicant.

Synergy Charter Academy teaches a complete, rigorous, standards-based, curriculum with an emphasis on technology and early algebraic thinking. In particular, Synergy Charter Academy’s instructional program will implement four key strategies (which will be described in detail later in this section):

1. Focus on Fluency
2. Focus on Academic Language
3. Focus on Schemas
4. Focus on Time on Task

Synergy Charter Academy is a data-driven school that focuses on making sure all students are provided with the appropriate support they need to meet the School’s high expectations and to meet or exceed the California Content Standards. The School has developed a data-driven culture so that all school stakeholders (teachers, administrators, parents, students, counselors, classified staff, community members, and board members) have learned to use data to establish, evaluate, and improve the education program and the School’s policies in order to create, support, and sustain a high quality school. Additionally, teachers use a variety of instructional methods, including both traditional and innovative methods, to meet the diverse needs of its students.
Synergy Charter Academy is currently sharing an LAUSD campus with Quincy Jones Elementary School, a traditional LAUSD school. This collaborative partnership was created by the leaders of both Synergy Academies and Local District 5, with the support of the LAUSD Board of Education. The term of this agreement is dependent upon Synergy Charter Academy charter renewal. The school currently serves 312 students in grades K-5.

**Whom the School is Attempting to Educate**

Synergy Charter Academy welcomes any student who applies to the School but targets students within the boundaries of South Los Angeles and more specifically, the Southeast Los Angeles portion of South Los Angeles, an area of approximately 15 square miles according to the U.S. Census. Even more specifically, Synergy Charter’s Academy’s recruitment efforts focus around the 90011 zip code where the school is currently located.

![Synergy Charter Academy’s Target Neighborhood (90011 Zip Code)](image)

**Demographics of the Southeast Los Angeles portion of South Los Angeles**

According to the 2000 Census, the total population of the Southeast Los Angeles portion of South Los Angeles was 254,976. The reported number of households was 59,975. The size of the average household was 4.22. The total number of families was 48,759 with an average family size of 4.56. The number of married heads of household was 26,598 (54.5%), single parent households headed by females was 16,579 (34%), and single parent households headed by males was 5,582 (11.4%). The median income for the area was $21,332 compared to $21,511 in South Los Angeles and $28,957 in West Adams-Baldwin Hills, the two adjoining neighborhoods that along with Southeast Los Angeles make up what is known as South Los Angeles. Of all households in the Southeast Los Angeles portion of the South Los Angeles area, 38.8% were below the federal poverty line.
Based on the 2000 Census, the unemployment rate in the area for those 16 years old and above is high: 16.3%. Using the population of those 24 years and older as a baseline for determining educational attainment, from a population of 121,082, 15,246 (12.59%) received no schooling, 27,977 (23.11%) received an elementary education, 8,328 (6.88%) received a middle school education, 30,293 (25.02%) attended high school, 20,528 (16.95%) received a high school diploma, 12,471 (10.30%) attended college, 3,109 (2.57%) received an AA degree, 2,687 (2.22%) received a BA/BS degree, 620 (0.51%) received a MA/MS degree, 447 (0.37%) received a professional degree, and 147 (0.12%) received a doctorate. In all areas, the population of the Southeast Los Angeles portion of South Los Angeles received less schooling and attained fewer degrees than their counterparts in South Los Angeles and the West Adams-Baldwin Hills neighborhood. A higher percentage of females attended college than males (11.3% vs. 9.2%), however, a slightly higher percentage of males received doctorates than females (0.1% vs. .05%). This is important to note, as the majority of single head of households are females.

Demographics of the Target 90011 Neighborhood

The demographics of Synergy Charter Academy’s target 90011 zip code (the Santee Education Complex and Jefferson High School neighborhoods) consists of a majority of the schools enrolling 99% Hispanic and African American students in grades K-12. Additionally, the School’s target neighborhood has a high rate of low-income families with the majority of the schools consisting of 70-90% of the students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch.

According to a July 6, 2005 Los Angeles Times article about Synergy Charter Academy’s neighborhood’s Jefferson High School, “Jefferson's students come from neighborhoods with some of the city's highest rates of crime, homelessness and teenage pregnancy. There are few jobs and even fewer recreation outlets... Among Los Angeles Unified's 49 high schools, Jefferson had the second highest number of major crimes in its attendance area — 94 homicides, more than 2,700 robberies, and about the same number of aggravated assaults from 2002 through mid-2004, according to a Times analysis of LAPD data for that period.”

Therefore, as demonstrated by the demographic and academic performance information in Tables 2-3, Synergy Charter Academy has purposefully targeted one of the lowest performing and most economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Educational Options

Including Synergy, there are currently 20 K-5 public elementary schools in the 90011 zip code. Four of those schools are charter schools (including Synergy) and 16 are traditional LAUSD schools. The following table provides the performance data for those schools.
It is important to note that some schools in the 90011 zip code met AYP on the alternative method of Safe Harbor. By the CDE definition Safe Harbor means the school, LEA, or subgroup met the criteria for safe harbor, which is an alternate method of meeting the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) if a school, an LEA, or a subgroup shows progress in moving students from scoring at the below proficient level to the proficient level. For example, 49th Street Elementary School met all its AYP targets by Safe Harbor, but only 29% of its ELL students were proficient or advanced. It did not have to meet the actual AYP target of 67% proficient or advanced. In contrast, because Synergy did not meet AYP because one subgroup, ELL, was only 62% proficient or advanced in ELA, 5 percentage points below the AYP target of 67%, but 38% higher than 49th Street Elementary.

**What It Means to Be an Educated Person in the 21st Century**

In the 21st century, we live in a time of ever-increasing complexity. However, it is becoming easier to see that people can increase their ability to compete in society as well as to contribute to it by furthering their education. Synergy Charter Academy’s educational goals for its students are to become educated persons who have:

1. **A well-rounded education**—Students need the basic literacy skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They must have basic math skills, think algebraically, and engage in problem solving. They should have a solid foundation in the four core curricular areas of language arts, mathematics, history-social science, and science.

2. **The ability to work independently and as part of a team**—Educated persons are self-motivated, self-directed, and self-reliant individuals who can pursue an area of inquiry on their own. They also have the social, collaboration, and communication skills necessary to work with others as part of a team.
3. **The ability to be developers and creators and not just users and consumers** – We live in an information age and students need the ability to use information from various sources, ranging from the Internet to living and breathing people. However, leaders don’t just use and consume, but can also develop and create. For example, students need the ability to read a book, but they also need to know how to author their own works.

4. **The opportunity to attend a four-year university or to pursue whatever educational path they choose** – Educated persons are lifelong learners and should possess the skills and traits necessary to further their education by attending the four-year university of their choice. Although educated persons should have that choice, they may or may not exercise their option and should be free to pursue whatever educational path they choose.

**How Learning Best Occurs**

Learning best occurs:

1. When effective teaching occurs.
2. In safe environments that encourage risk-taking and learning from mistakes. This builds students’ self-confidence and self-reliance and encourages them to try new approaches.
3. When instructional time is maximized and idle time is minimized.
4. When learning is scaffolded. Students can actually learn concepts that are quite complex as long as they have a solid framework and foundation to build upon.
5. When parents are actively involved. Parents are first and foremost their children’s teacher at home and they must be actively involved in their children’s learning.

**Overall Program Goals**

Synergy Charter Academy’s overall program goals are as follows:

- To teach a stimulating and academically rigorous K through 5th grade standards-based and research-based curriculum that prepares them to successfully complete Middle School and beyond.
- To raise student achievement by enabling students to become self-motivated, competent, and lifelong learners.
- To develop critical thinkers and problem solvers.
- To empower families to take an active role in their children’s education.
- To serve as a model school that leads the charge towards eliminating the achievement gap.

All of these goals combined enable all students, including academically low-achieving students, to become self-motivated, competent, and lifelong learners because they provide a solid foundation in academic content knowledge from which the students can build upon by continuing their education through college and beyond. They provide critical thinking and problem solving strategies so that students feel competent in solving different problems they may encounter throughout their lives. They empower students’ families with tools to help their children continue their learning outside of Synergy Charter Academy, and they motivate students to continue learning because the students will have a real-life, tangible, model school that will prove that all students can achieve and compete academically. All students, including low-achieving students, will have equal access to all of Synergy Charter Academy’s programs because Synergy Charter Academy’s goal is
to eliminate the achievement gap of educationally disadvantaged students. The reason Synergy Charter Academy will exist is to serve the needs of educationally disadvantaged students and to prove that these students can pursue the high standards set by No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

A Typical Day at Synergy Charter Academy

On a typical day at Synergy Charter Academy, visitors will see students eager to learn, on-task, and engaged in rigorous, standards-based instruction in a rich, connected curriculum that teaches multiple subjects. Teachers will be seen implementing a variety of teaching methodologies while administrators and support staff will be visibly present and involved in the day-to-day operations of the school.

The school gates open at 7:30 in the morning, and parents and students make a concerted effort to arrive before the school day officially begins at 8:00 a.m. Students say, “Good morning,” and shake hands with the school staff supervising the yard.

The school day starts with the Morning Assembly for both Synergy Charter Academy and QJES when the first bell rings at 7:52. One student from each school leads the entire school community in The Pledge of Allegiance. The students are dismissed and upon entering their class the recite The Learner’s Creed (by Ernestine Mitchell) and The Synergy Creed (by Randy Palisoc):

The Learner’s Creed
I believe in myself and my ability to do my best at all times.
I am responsible for my life and for all my actions.
I will listen, I will see,
I will speak, I will feel,
I will think, I will reason,
I will read, I will write . . .
I will do all of these things
With one purpose in mind . . .
To do my best and to not waste this day
For this day will not come again.

The Synergy Creed
At Synergy, we're all in this together
because together we are better.
We bring out the best in each other
and in ourselves
every day in every way.

Students are then ready to learn when instruction promptly starts when the second bell rings at 8:00 a.m.

A typical classroom day starts off with instruction in language arts. Synergy Charter Academy firmly believes that becoming proficient readers is the most important outcome for elementary school students. For this reason, a substantial portion of the school day is dedicated to language arts instruction. Teachers deliver direct instruction of a rigorous language arts curriculum (currently Open Court Reading), and there is also guided practice and independent practice. When appropriate students also have the opportunity to work collaboratively with their peers.

Math instruction is also an important part of the school day. Again, a rigorous, standards-aligned curriculum is delivered using multiple teaching strategies. For example, math instruction
may include the use of a textbook as well as the use of math manipulatives that provide an opportunity for hands-on learning.

In addition to the school’s emphasis on language arts and math, Synergy also believes that the key to improving students’ academic achievement is to teach a well-rounded, standards-based curriculum that also includes science, history-social science, the arts, and physical education. On a typical day, visitors will see that Synergy’s students are engaged in multiple learning opportunities and are provided opportunities to access an academically stimulating curriculum to meet different students’ learning styles and interests.

Synergy operates on a 180-day school year calendar. Synergy Charter Academy’s bell schedule is below. Synergy Charter Academy will meet the required minimum instructional minutes required of charter schools. California Education Code section 47612.5 specifies 36,000 minutes for kindergarten, 50,400 minutes for grades 1-3, and 54,000 for grades 4-5. The proposed bell schedule exceeds that amount with a total of 55,980 minutes for all grades. This already accounts for two weeks of parent conferences (one week in the fall and one week in the spring) in which students are dismissed at 1:25 p.m. every day of the week).

2011-2012 Daily Bell Schedule

Regular Day Bell Schedule

Grades K-5 Instruction Begins: 8:00 a.m.
Grades K-2 Recess: 9:40 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.
Grades 3-5 Recess: 10:05 a.m. to 10:25 a.m.
Grades K-1 Lunch/Recess: 11:20 a.m. to 12:05 p.m.
Grades 2-3 Lunch/Recess: 11:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Grades 4-5 Lunch/Recess: 12:10 p.m. to 12:55 p.m.
Grades K-5 Dismissal: 2:25 p.m.

Early Dismissal Bell Schedule
The daily schedule is the same except that all grades K-5 are dismissed at 1:25 p.m. for Student-Led Parent Conferences during the following dates:
Monday-Friday, November 14-18, 2011 (5 days)
Monday-Friday, March 5-9, 2012 (5 days)

Minimum Day Bell Schedule
The daily schedule is the same except that all grades K-5 are dismissed at 11:40 a.m. The only day that we utilize this minimum day schedule is on the last day of school. The last day of school for the 2011-2012 school year is Wednesday, June 20, 2012.

Instructional Methodology
Synergy’s stimulating and academically rigorous standards-based K-5 instructional program is **site-based with a high degree of student-teacher interaction.** The school operates during a traditional school year of 180 days that runs from 8:00 a.m. to 2:25 p.m. for grades K-5. Each classroom is self-contained and all core subjects in each grade are taught by a highly-qualified teacher as mandated by No Child Left Behind. Teachers use a variety of whole group instruction, small group instruction, individual instruction, and independent practice.

An important aspect of Synergy’s instructional methodology is the direct instruction model as described by Jeanne S. Chall in the book *The Academic Achievement Challenge.* In the direct instruction model, a structured and sequenced curriculum is delivered and there is an emphasis on knowledge and skills. The direct instruction model is important because the vast majority of students reach higher levels of achievement under this model, especially when the students come from low socio-economic backgrounds. Bruce Joyce, Marsha Weil, and Emily Calhoun also describe a direct instruction model in the book *Models of Teaching.* It describes the phases of a direct instruction lesson as consisting of 1) Orientation, 2) Presentation, 3) Highly Structured Practice, 4) Guided Practice, and 5) Independent Practice.

While Synergy’s instructional practices do not subscribe to any single school of thought, we do focus our efforts on bringing together the best of all available pedagogy for our students’ needs. Furthermore, learning is not limited to the classroom as students also go on field trips to gain first-hand experience of concepts in such areas as science, history-social science, and the arts. The specific programs, resources, and materials that are used to teach the above mentioned subject areas will be further detailed under the *Curriculum and Its Alignment to State Standards* section starting on page 28.

**Instructional Framework**

Synergy Charter Academy will teach a complete, standards-based curriculum that promotes two foundational instructional approaches:

1. Power Over Words and
2. Power Over Numbers.

These approaches will help Synergy’s students develop a strong foundation in reading and math so that they can engage in higher level critical thinking and grade-level content standards in all subject areas.

Synergy Charter Academy promotes these foundational instructional approaches by implementing four key strategies:

1. Focus on Fluency
2. Focus on Academic Language
3. Focus on Schemas
4. Focus on Time on Task
Together, Synergy’s foundational approaches and key strategies will help Synergy’s students achieve three main goals of becoming:

1. College-Educated
2. STEM Leaders
3. Lifelong Learners

Synergy’s Mission, Foundational Approaches, Goals, and Key Strategies

---

**ONE**

Mission

To Eliminate the Achievement Gap

---

**TWO**

Foundational Approaches

Power Over Words  
Power Over Numbers

---

**THREE**

Student Goals

College-Educated  
STEM Leaders  
Lifelong Learners

---

**FOUR**

Key Strategies

Focus on Fluency  
Focus on Academic Language  
Focus on Schemas  
Focus on Time on Task

---

Figure 2  Synergy Academies’ Mission, Foundational Approaches, Goals, and Key Strategies

Synergy Charter Academy will use four key strategies to teach a stimulating and academically rigorous K through 5th grade standards-based curriculum:

1. **Focus on Fluency** – Synergy believes that focusing on fluency is a key component to improving comprehension, and there is much research evidence supporting this assertion. For example, according to the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA), “Fluency is important because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension.” It allows readers to focus on meaning because they do not have to concentrate on decoding words.

2. **Focus on Academic Language** – In order to help students gain confidence on academically demanding tasks, they must have a high degree of comfort with the academic language that
these tasks require. This comes through consistent exposure and practice using academic language, both written and verbal. It is thus the teacher’s responsibility to use lessons and practice sessions to imbue students with rich, academic language so that they can perform well on academically demanding tasks. An example of having all students focus on academic language, including English Learners, is Synergy’s approach of using cognates to teach higher-level vocabulary that students may encounter in their high school courses. Cognates are words in two languages that share a common linguistic origin. Many cognates in English and Spanish are quite obvious. Some of these obvious English and Spanish cognates are adult and adulto, captain and capitán, and class and clase. Additionally, Synergy teaches cognates that are not as obvious. For example, the academic word “terrestrial,” which means, “of, on, or relating to the earth,” may be very intimidating to an English Learner who is more comfortable speaking Spanish. However, teaching cognates, which builds upon English Learners’ prior knowledge, can help students realize that the English word “terrestrial” has a linguistic connection to the Spanish word “tierra,” which means, “land or earth.” In this way, English Learners will see that their knowledge of their primary language is to be valued because it helps them learn academic language in English.

3. **Focus on Schemas** – Schemas are useful because they are concrete conceptual patterns that students already have in their minds that help them make sense of the world around them. Teachers in all subjects will tie the rigorous curriculum to students’ prior knowledge (schemas) in order to make the content standards more accessible.

4. **Focus on Time on Task** – Since “time” is a valuable but limited resource, we must make very efficient use of it. Time on Task, according to Synergy’s founders, necessitates that students have time for hands-on learning and practice. It is analogous to a piano student who becomes accomplished by spending substantial time practicing and actually playing the piano keyboard. It is also akin to John Dewey’s Learning by Doing theory. Time on Task is applicable in all curricular areas and it also necessitates that students are always mentally engaged in either a lesson or in practice. Lessons and practice sessions should be well paced and instructionally efficient. Also, idle time and transition time should be minimized. A unique aspect of Synergy’s schools is that they do not rely on a longer school year or on a significantly longer school day in order to obtain high academic outcomes. These results are attributable to Synergy’s focus on Time on Task in which teachers and students learn how to make more efficient use of instructional time.

As mentioned earlier, Synergy Charter Academy’s instructional methodology and philosophy will bring together the best of different pedagogies. Synergy Charter Academy believes in setting high expectations for all students and in using multiple teaching strategies and scaffolded standards-based lessons to educate diverse learners. Additionally, the different aspects of Synergy’s foundational approaches provide opportunities to educationally disadvantaged students that were not previously available to them. They also contribute to educational reform for all students in general (not only within the charter school community), as the foundational approaches and key strategies build upon the existing educational infrastructure, are transferable to other schools, and have a high degree of replicability.

**Rationale for Instructional Methodology**

Research and empirical evidence by a wide variety of sources support Synergy Charter
Academy’s stimulating and academically rigorous educational program. One important aspect of Synergy Charter Academy’s instructional methodology is the direct instruction model as described by Jeanne S. Chall in the book, *The Academic Achievement Challenge*. In the direct instruction model, a structured and sequenced curriculum is delivered and there is an emphasis on knowledge and skills. The direct instruction model is important because the vast majority of students reach higher levels of achievement under this model, especially when the students come from low socio-economic backgrounds. Bruce Joyce, Marsha Weil, and Emily Calhoun also describe a direct instruction model in the book, *Models of Teaching*. It describes the phases of a direct instruction lesson as consisting of 1) Orientation, 2) Presentation, 3) Highly Structured Practice, 4) Guided Practice, and 5) Independent Practice.

Fortunately, Synergy Academies has long ago realized the importance of strong reading skills, and it has much experience in helping its students achieve higher levels of literacy. For the past several years, Synergy has followed the recommendations outlined in both the Reading First and the Reading Next initiatives. Reading First, a U.S. Department of Education initiative, emphasizes the five research-based factors that most influence reading success. The five research-based factors emphasized by Reading First are shown in the table below and are described in detail by the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) in the publication, *Put Reading First*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading First</th>
<th>Reading Next</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional Improvements</strong></td>
<td><strong>Infrastructure Improvements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Phonemic awareness</td>
<td>10. Extended time for literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Phonics</td>
<td>11. Professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Fluency</td>
<td>12. Ongoing summative assessment of students and programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Vocabulary</td>
<td>13. Teacher teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Comprehension strategies</td>
<td>14. Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. A comprehensive and coordinated literacy program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Synergy Charter Academy’s writing activities are supported by the National Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges (established by the College Board), who published a report entitled *The Neglected “R”*: The Need for a Writing Revolution. The commission developed a research-based philosophy that, “American education will never realize its potential as an engine of opportunity and economic growth until a writing revolution puts language and communication in their proper place in the classroom.”

In the research article, *Learning to Read and Write: A Longitudinal Study of 54 Children from First Through Fourth Grades*, Connie Juel (Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Texas at Austin, 1988) described the Simple Views of Reading and Writing and described the close interrelationships between reading and writing (i.e., good readers with more frequent reading experiences had better story ideas for their writing and had better story structures and vocabulary to express those ideas). This support’s Synergy’s foundational approach of Building Literacy in order to strengthen students’ abilities in all subject areas, including writing across the curriculum.
Furthermore, Doug Lemov’s book, *Teach Like a Champion: 49 Techniques that Put Students on the Path to College*, will serve as Synergy’s main source for concrete, effective teaching strategies that support both Synergy’s foundational instructional approaches and its key strategies. For instance, the book describes the importance of teaching foundational skills such as “how to use a chisel” in order to eventually teach students how to create a masterpiece (using higher level skills) with the “chisel” such as Michelangelo’s Statue of David. The book also describes 49 specific instructional techniques that are mainly focused on how to effectively teach.

**Evidence That the Instructional Program is Successful With the School’s Targeted Student Population**

In addition to the previously described research that supports Synergy’s instructional methodologies, Synergy also has real-life evidence of the success of its instructional program with educationally disadvantaged students. In 2011, Synergy Charter Academy’s API score stands at 887, making it the highest-performing fully-implemented K-5 school in South Los Angeles for the past six years in a row (2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011). In 2010, Synergy Charter Academy was named a 2010 National Blue Ribbon award winner by the United States Department of Education in Washington, D.C. The National Blue Ribbon is the highest honor that an American public school can receive. Nationwide, only 304 schools received this award, and Synergy Charter Academy is one of them. Synergy expanded its enrollment in 2010-11 from 155 to 312, adding 200 new students and 6 teachers. Even with this expansion, Synergy was still the highest performing school in the 90011 zip code according to state testing, with an API of 887. Synergy students are performing in the top 11% in English Language Arts and in the top 2% in Math of all LAUSD schools.

**Social Justice**

Synergy Charter Academy will utilize the social justice framework used by the Principal Leadership Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) when seeking to contribute to educational reform. Social justice is a mindset and framework for thinking about achieving equality in education and in society in general.

According to Dr. Neil Schmidt and Dr. Robert Cooper at the Principal Leadership Institute at UCLA, reform efforts may overlook the fact that “issues confronting urban public schools are inextricably connected to the historical, social, economic, and political conditions of the urban environments in which they are embedded.” Consequently, they argue that educational innovations often fail because macro level issues are not taken into consideration. Invoking a social justice framework enables the examination of the injustices that have occurred in our urban public school systems. Invoking a social justice framework also allows the envisioning of schools as POSITIVE Agents of Change that mitigate social injustice.

Individuals included in the research base for social justice include Jeanie Oakes, Kevin Welner, Susan Yonezawa, and Ricky Lee Allen, whose research article, *Norms and Politics of Equity-Minded Change: Researching the “Zone of Mediation”*, describes how neutral strategies that only attempt to change practices but that do not attempt to change beliefs end up falling short. They assert that it is important to not only change practices but to also attempt to shape people’s beliefs and expectations. Thus, Synergy Charter Academy hopes to not only help change instructional
practices but to also help shape people’s beliefs and to raise people’s expectations of educationally disadvantaged students.

One way Synergy Charter Academy will do this is by taking families on a tour of a college campus. During its second year of operation, Synergy Charter Academy took its students and their families on a college tour of the USC campus because the School’s vision is for its students to eventually attend the four-year university of their choice. While picnicking in Alumni Park during that tour, many parents stated that they had never been on a college campus before, even though USC is a mile and a half away from our School. One parent even said that she thought college campuses were off-limits to the general public and that you needed special permission from the university in order to visit.

This was disheartening because if parents think college is physically off-limits for their children, it will be mentally off-limits to them as well, and they will have a harder time imagining college as having a place in their children’s futures. In essence, college may be a part of the School’s vision for its students, but it may not be a part of the parents’ vision for their children. Consequently, parents may not fully grasp what the School is trying to accomplish with its instructional program. Taking students and their families on a college tour is an example of how Synergy Charter Academy will not only change instructional practices, but raise beliefs and expectations as well.

Synergy Charter Academy seeks to be an Institutional Agent in the community. In a Harvard Educational Review article entitled, A Social Capital Framework for Understanding the Socialization of Racial Minority Children and Youth, Ricardo D. Stanton-Salazar described those who work in schools (teachers, administrators, etc.) as Institutional Agents who have the resources and capacity to build up the social capital of others. For example, in the article, Transforming Urban Schools Through Investments in Social Capital, Pedro Noguera described how urban schools can be transformed through investments in social capital and discussed how schools can help build the social capital of parents by giving them a meaningful voice in governance, thus helping to change the misconceptions that parents are incapable of decision-making.

By invoking a social justice framework, Synergy Charter Academy will not only help to transform instruction, but it will seek to make the School a center of the community as described by Belinda Williams in the book, Closing the Achievement Gap: A Vision for Changing Beliefs and Practice. In that book, Williams described how researchers Wang and Kovach provide support for making schools the center of the community. They point out, “Narrowly conceived plans and commitments that focus only on schools will not solve the growing problems that must be addressed to ensure the success of the many children and youth who have not fared well under the current system of service delivery.”

Synergy Charter Academy will help to serve as a center of the community by forming relationships with other educational stakeholders in the community (parents, non-profit organizations, businesses, etc.), thereby pooling and leveraging resources and addressing the community’s needs together. In particular, since many of Synergy’s students’ parents work until the early evening hours, Synergy Academies has formed partnerships with A Place Called Home and After-School All-Stars to provide after school programs for its current schools. Additionally, in order to bring the arts into its school, Synergy Academies developed a partnership with The Music Centre and with the Los Angeles Philharmonic where students have the opportunity to engage in instruction in music, dance, theatre, and visual arts. Additionally, Synergy Academies formed a partnership with Iridescent to provide hands-on Family Science Nights Synergy’s elementary families during the evening.
Synergy Charter Academy believes that social justice can be implemented in a POSITIVE manner within a standards-based curriculum. For example, students can:

- write a persuasive essay, and/or
- deliver a formal presentation in the form of a speech

that states a clear position in support of a proposal related to addressing a current matter of injustice, supports their position with relevant evidence, follows a simple organizational plan, and addresses readers’ and/or audience members’ concerns.

By taking this POSITIVE approach, social justice can be used as a vehicle for applying classroom skills in a real-life situation, and it gives students an opportunity to be agents of meaningful change who contribute to society.

Again, Synergy Charter Academy will invoke a social justice framework because research has shown that neutral strategies that focus only on changing practices but that do not attempt to change beliefs end up falling short (Oakes, et al.).

**Curriculum and Its Alignment to State Standards**

Synergy Charter Academy teaches a stimulating and academically rigorous K-5 curriculum that is aligned to state standards while focusing on the innovative instructional approaches identified earlier in this element. Synergy selects curriculum on the basis of being aligned to state standards and on the program’s ability to help students meet or exceed the Content Standards for California Public Schools. Additionally, the materials and programs are evaluated periodically and may be changed or augmented as deemed necessary, so long as the replacement materials or supplementary materials are also aligned to state standards and contribute meaningfully to students’ pursuit of meeting or exceeding those standards.

Synergy’s innovative approaches and key strategies are aligned to the following content standards as adopted by the California State Board of Education and as posted by the California Department of Education.

- **Reading/Language Arts Content Standards** for California Public Schools
- **Mathematics Content Standards** for California Public Schools
- **History-Social Science Content Standards** for California Public Schools
- **Science Content Standards** for California Public Schools
- **Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards** for California Public Schools
- **Physical Education Challenge Standards for Student Success**
- **Health Education Challenge Standards for Student Success**

Following is an overview of those content standards in each of the curricular areas and more importantly, descriptions of how Synergy’s implementation of those standards is unique and innovative and how they fit in to Synergy’s mission of transforming instruction.
Synergy uses **Open Court Reading in grades K through 3** (which is state-adopted and standards-based) for its main reading program because it addresses the **five research-based factors** that most influence **reading success**—1) phonemic awareness, 2) phonics, 3) vocabulary, 4) fluency, and 5) comprehension strategies. In grades 4 and 5, the same research based factors are applied to literacy units that are based on “classic” novels both old and new. These same principles of reading success are also implemented in Synergy’s writing lessons. Both programs are augmented by Synergy’s use of technology in order to accomplish the goals of the English Language Arts curriculum, which are to develop:

1. fluent readers,
2. skilled writers,
3. confident speakers, and
4. thoughtful listeners.

In line with the California State Board of Education, the standards are not altered for English Learners because doing so would deny them the opportunity to achieve them. Instead, support is given to them so that they may meet the standards. For example, teachers use SDAIE (Specifically Designed Academic Instruction in English) to help make content more comprehensible. Teachers use heterogeneous grouping and peer-to-peer tutoring, use realia, scaffold lessons, break down assignments into more manageable parts, and use graphic organizers, among other strategies. Also, reading, writing, listening, and speaking are taught in the context of a rich, substantive core curriculum. Following is an overview of the categories that the English Language Arts standards fall under for kindergarten through grade five.

**Reading**
1.0 Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development
2.0 Reading Comprehension
3.0 Literary Response and Analysis

**Writing**
1.0 Writing Strategies
2.0 Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

**Written and Oral Language Conventions**
1.0 Written and Oral Language Conventions

**Listening and Speaking**
1.0 Listening and Speaking Strategies
2.0 Speaking Applications (Genres and Their Applications)

Students will learn how to write narrative, expository, descriptive, and persuasive paragraphs that include vivid descriptions, sensory details, dialogue and figurative language. They will leverage their **speaking** skills (which come naturally in humans) in order to develop their
writing skills (which do not come naturally). They will continuously use their reading and listening skills to double-check their writing to ensure that their writing actually makes sense. Much work has been done in elementary instruction in the area of reading fluency, and there is a trend to teach writing fluency as well.

These activities use reading and writing in a mutually supportive system that includes phonemic awareness instruction, systematic and explicit phonics instruction, fluency instruction, vocabulary instruction, and text comprehension instruction. For example, during systematic and explicit phonics instruction in Open Court Reading, students are taught sound-symbol relationships and the alphabetic principle. This knowledge of sound-symbol relationships not only helps them to decode both familiar and new words that they are reading, but to also encode familiar and new words that they are writing as part of written assignments in the classroom. The same store of phonological knowledge is used in both reading and writing.

As early as the first grade, students already introduced to writing essays that are well-structured and show that they can organize thoughts and ideas in a logical manner.\(^1\) They also write narrative stories\(^2\) from personal experiences. They learn how to write and revise\(^3\) poetry, which helps them develop their reading skills. For example, they draft poems and are then explicitly taught how to revise the poem by adding prepositional phrases and figurative language. This way, they learn how to make their writing more interesting. At the same time, it helps them to better comprehend reading passages that use these literary devices and helps them see that language has phrasal structure. While the students write their essays, they continuously re-read their writing out loud to make sure that it makes sense, thus helping students refine not only their writing skills, but also their fluency, reading comprehension, and oral language development skills.

In the early grades, Synergy focuses on early literacy. Phonemic awareness has been shown through research to be the number one predictor of reading success. Thus, as mentioned before, Synergy uses Open Court Reading’s phonemic awareness and phonics instruction materials for grades K-5 to ensure that students have strong phonemic awareness skills. Students who do not have strong phonemic awareness skills or lack other literacy skills receive differentiated instruction to help close the achievement gap. Synergy uses various resources to address students who are behind, such as Open Court Reading Intervention Guides.

Explicit, systematic phonics instruction has also been shown to significantly improve word recognition and spelling, with phoneme manipulation being a key strategy. Two types of phoneme manipulation are:

- blending and
- segmentation.

One of the reasons Synergy chose to use Open Court Reading is that it has a very strong phoneme blending component as part of its curriculum. Synergy also complements the phoneme blending in Open Court Reading with phoneme segmentation because they are both important forms of phoneme manipulation. To do this, Synergy uses the phonics activity Making Words (by Patricia M. Cunningham, et al.) as an additional resource to teach students to notice, think about, and segment the individual sounds in words (phoneme segmentation) and to derive the spellings of unfamiliar words.

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\(^1\) English Language Arts Content Standards – Grade 1, Writing 1.0, p. 8
\(^2\) English Language Arts Content Standards – Grade 1, Writing 2.1, p. 8
\(^3\) English Language Arts Content Standards – Grade 1, Writing 1.0, p. 8
Phonemic awareness instruction and phonics instruction alone do not constitute a complete language arts curriculum. This is why Synergy uses Open Court Reading and other materials to teach fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension in various ways. Additionally, Synergy’s Co-Founder and Chief Achievement Officer, Randy Palisoc, as well as Synergy Charter Academy’s Founding Teacher and Director/Principal, Jennifer Epps, created strategic lessons, resources, and instructional strategies that can be used with any reading program as well as with any subject matter to teach students how to have Power Over Words.

In future years, reading materials are reevaluated in order to provide feedback for future reading instruction materials.

Technology in English Language Arts

Synergy uses technology to supplement its English Language Arts Curriculum. All grades K-5 use the computers for 30 minutes a day on specific programs that support what the students are learning classes. Kindergarten and first grade students use a computer program called Study Dog. Closely aligned with Synergy’s belief in explicit, systematic phonics instruction, an example of Study Dog lessons are letter sound correspondence, how to segment and blend words, rhyming, and sight word recognition. Grades 2-5 use the Scholastic Reading Counts program to support the development of understanding fiction. Students choose a book at their independent reading level and take a quiz on the computer when they have finished reading it. The quiz holds the student accountable for his or her independent reading. Grades 4 and 5 also access Scholastic Read About program, which also helps develop comprehension skills but with non-fiction text. iPads and iPods are also used to help students who have struggled to learn their foundational skills and to challenge students who have mastered the basic skills.
**Mathematics**

CORE

Synergy uses **Saxon Math** (which is aligned to the Mathematics Content Standards for California Public Schools) and augments the program by Promoting Early Algebraic Thinking, which is an instructional approach that is used to make existing materials even more effective.

Although Synergy promotes algebraic thinking and notation, this does not mean that students *only* learn the algebra and functions strand. On the contrary, mathematics instruction in all grades includes **all** of the following strands:

1. Number Sense
2. Algebra and Functions
3. Measurement and Geometry
4. Statistics, Data Analysis, and Probability
5. Mathematical Reasoning

One of the goals of mathematics education listed in the Mathematics Content Standards for California Public Schools states that students will:

*Communicate* precisely about quantities, logical relationships, and unknown values through the use of signs, symbols, models, graphs, and mathematical terms.

In order for one to communicate, one needs to have a **language**. Since algebra is the **language** of mathematics, Synergy Charter Academy strongly believes in promoting algebraic thinking and notation even in young elementary school students.

Synergy believes that some textbooks do not go far enough and do not take advantage of using true algebraic thinking and notation to help students understand ALL strands of mathematics (not just the algebra and functions strand). Even though there has been a recent push to include more algebraic thinking in elementary school, content is sometimes overly watered-down. When some people think of “algebra,” they conjure up frightening images of struggling with obscure, incomprehensible formulas that they had to memorize in middle school and high school. This makes it difficult for some people to understand that research shows that elementary school students can and should be taught to reason algebraically. Children are often sheltered and “protected” from thinking algebraically until they are much older and are not even given an opportunity to use algebraic reasoning as a means of truly understanding mathematical concepts in general.

The challenge then is, “How do we teach even very young students to think algebraically?” Synergy teaches algebraic concepts starting in kindergarten as prescribed in the content standards. By developing algebraic reasoning (something that some consider too difficult for young children), Synergy paradoxically makes it easier for students to understand mathematics in general. Algebraic thinking will NOT be taught the way textbooks traditionally teach these concepts. What matters is that students start to think algebraically and can use basic algebraic notation. As Levi and Carpenter described best, Synergy helps students understand true algebraic thinking by giving them “powerful schemes for thinking about mathematics in the early grades.”

In keeping with the spirit of charter schools as being a source of innovation for our public education system and to build these powerful schemes, Synergy uses its third key strategy –
Building Schemas – to nurture early algebraic thinking in order to deepen mathematical understanding in all math strands. A schema is a conceptual pattern that students already have in their minds that helps them think about abstract concepts. Therefore, the Schema Approach is a method that makes it easier for students to understand the more abstract language of algebra by leveraging the prior concrete understandings, or schema, that they already have in their minds.

Building upon the Schema Approach, Synergy’s Co-Founder and Chief Achievement Officer, Randy Palisoc, as well as Synergy Charter Academy’s Founding Teacher and Director/Principal, Jennifer Epps, created strategic lessons, resources, and instructional strategies that can be used with any math curriculum to teach students how to have Power Over Numbers. For example, many years ago, one would not normally have thought of teaching a first grade student that $3n + 4n = 7n$ because they are still struggling with $3 + 4 = 7$ and they do not even know what the algebraic term “$n$” means. However, they do know what an “apple” is and a first grade student will be able to tell you that $3$ apples $+ 4$ apples $= 7$ apples because they have “apples” in their conceptual understanding and they know how to put “apples” together to arrive at a sum. The same first grade student will also be able to tell you that $3$ birds $+ 4$ birds $= 7$ birds because they have “birds” in their conceptual understanding and they know how to put “birds” together to arrive at a sum. They can also tell you that $3$ chairs $+ 4$ chairs $= 7$ chairs for the same reasons. Since children have these schema in their minds, the Schema Approach leverages these understandings and helps students see that $3n + 4n = 7n$ because if it makes sense that:

$$3 \text{ apples} + 4 \text{ apples} = 7 \text{ apples}$$

and

$$3 \text{ birds} + 4 \text{ birds} = 7 \text{ birds}$$

and

$$3 \text{ chairs} + 4 \text{ chairs} = 7 \text{ chairs}$$

then it also makes sense that

$$3n + 4n = 7n.$$ 

Students use their prior understandings to see that $3n + 4n = 7n$, just like $3$ apples $+ 4$ apples $= 7$ apples. By building schemas, students are more easily equipped with algebraic thinking and notation. Algebra is no longer intimidating and children do not experience the “algebraic anxiety” that our society has endured in the past. This is just one small part of a much bigger sample lesson that shows how building schemas leverages the concrete understandings that children already have in their minds and helps students more easily and naturally understand algebraic thinking and the language of algebraic notation, without the fears that society has historically imposed upon the term “algebra.”

By taking advantage of children’s schemas, students more easily gain algebraic thinking and notation skills. This way, when students come across word problems, they can take an algebraic approach instead of resorting to guessing. Many times, when students are presented with a word problem, they don’t know whether to add, subtract, multiply, or divide the numbers in the question because they don’t understand the relationships between the numbers. Understanding algebra solves this dilemma, as algebra is all about numerical relationships.
When it comes to students for whom thinking algebraically does not come intuitively, guessing on word problems is a rampant problem that hinders true understanding and leads to frustration and a dislike of mathematics. When students are using typical math books, they may encounter a word problem such as:

Sarah and Nancy have twelve dollars. Nancy has eight dollars. How much money does Sarah have?

Many textbooks expect students to \textit{intuitively} know that “twelve minus eight” will give you the correct answer of four dollars. However, even though thinking about this problem algebraically does not come intuitively for many students, textbooks often do not explicitly teach students how or why to think this way. By building schemas, on the other hand, it \textbf{explicitly} teaches students how and why to think algebraically.

A student without the ability to reason algebraically about the above problem may resort to guessing strategies and may use “twelve plus eight” to arrive at an answer, which would be incorrect and would show that the student does not even realize that a simple yet powerful relationship exists in the problem. When students cannot think algebraically and resort to wild guesses, they don’t have an avenue for true understanding, which leads to frustration and a dislike of mathematics.

In the above example, students who have schemas will be equipped with strategies (algebraic thinking and notation) for understanding the problem. They will be able to look at the problem and see that a very simple yet powerful algebraic relationship exists that shows that Sarah’s dollars plus Nancy’s dollars total twelve dollars:

\begin{equation}
    s + n = 12
\end{equation}

where

\begin{align*}
    s &= \text{Sarah’s dollars} \\
    n &= \text{Nancy’s dollars} = 8 \text{ dollars (given in the word problem)}
\end{align*}

Equipped and empowered with algebraic thinking and notation, students would then solve this problem logically and \textit{algebraically} instead of resorting to guessing about whether to add, subtract, multiply, or divide:

\begin{align*}
    s + n &= 12 \\
    s + 8 &= 12 \\
    -8 &= -8 \\
    s + 0 &= 4 \\
    s &= 4
\end{align*}

Sarah has 4 dollars.

Students will use their understandings of the concepts of substitution, balance of equations, and isolating the variable (which they would have learned beforehand in previous lessons, as \textit{this understanding does not occur magically overnight but requires systematic and explicit instruction}), to understand that if you want to find out how many dollars Sarah has, you need to
isolate the variable \( s \). In order to do that and to maintain a balance in the equation, you need to \textit{subtract 8} from \textit{both} sides of the equation.

\[
\begin{align*}
  s + 8 &= 12 \\
  -8 &\quad -8 \\
  s + 0 &= 4
\end{align*}
\]

Seeing this done in \textit{true} algebraic notation (which some think elementary school students are incapable of learning) explains \textit{why} and makes it \textbf{clear and explicit} that “twelve minus eight” will \textit{indeed} give you the correct answer of four (“12 - 8 = 4” is circled below in red), and it is no longer just a nebulous, unverified hunch floating around in a student’s mind.

\[
\begin{align*}
  s + 8 &= 12 \\
  -8 &\quad -8 \\
  s + 0 &= 4
\end{align*}
\]

By learning the language of algebra, knowing how to go about solving the problem becomes \textbf{CLEAR} and \textbf{EXPLICIT} instead of being left a mystery that students are expected to intuitively figure out. By teaching what some consider a difficult subject (algebra), we have given students a powerful scheme for thinking about mathematics (as Levi and Carpenter explained) and have paradoxically made it \textit{easier} for students to understand mathematics.

Being able to think algebraically is not only useful in the algebra and functions strand, but also in the other strands of mathematics as well. For example, if students are learning about statistics, data analysis, and probability in the third grade,\textsuperscript{5} they may use “spinners,” an example of which is illustrated below:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{From a probability standpoint, the probability of the spinner landing on red is } &\frac{1}{3} \text{ and the probability of the spinner landing on blue is } \frac{1}{3}. \text{ If asked, “What is the probability of the spinner landing on red or blue?” students should know that the probability is } \frac{2}{3}. \text{ However, it would deepen students’ understanding of this problem if instead of expecting students to } \textit{intuitively} \text{ know how to answer this question, it was made } \textbf{explicit} \text{ to students that this problem can be thought of and notated algebraically:}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{probability of red or blue} &= \text{probability of red} + \text{probability of blue} \\
&= \frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{3} \\
&= \frac{2}{3}
\end{align*}
\]

Even though this is a very simple algebraic example, it makes the logic behind the answer

\text{Mathematics Content Standards – Grade 3, Statistics, Data Analysis, and Probability 1.0, p. 14}
clear and helps students to see that algebra permeates all strands of mathematics (in this case, statistics, data analysis, and probability), and it should not just be isolated to the algebra and functions strand. Also, since it is the language of mathematics, using algebraic notation helps students to “communicate precisely about quantities, logical relationships, and unknown values through the use of signs, symbols, and mathematical terms,” which directly addresses one of the goals of the mathematics curriculum that was described in the Mathematics Content Standards.

These examples show the importance and power of building schemas to teach true algebraic thinking and notation, even in the primary grades, so that children have powerful schemes for thinking about mathematics.

Currently, Synergy uses the Saxon Math series. In addition to these materials, students engage in hands-on activities when appropriate by using manipulatives such as base-ten blocks, fraction circles and bars, unifix (linking) cubes, tangrams, colored tiles, pattern blocks, and geoboards. These hands-on activities are important as they provide students Touch Time with concrete, hands-on experiences that facilitate understanding of abstract concepts and they are appropriate for tactile learners (Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences).

**Use of Technology in Mathematics Classes**

Just as Technology is integrated into English classes as described earlier, Technology is also integrated into Mathematics. Students in grades 2-5 use the ST Math Program, “Jiji” for 90 minutes a week. ST Math consists of courseware that employs the learners’ spatial temporal reasoning abilities to explain, understand, and solve multi-step math problems. Its unique visual approach ensures that students memorize their basic addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts while gaining a solid conceptual understanding of the operations.

Laptops, iPads, or other devices can be also used to help students who have struggled to learn their foundational skills. These devices can help to efficiently provide students with the substantial practice they need to master their basic skills.
**Science CORE**

The goal of the science curriculum is to provide essential skills and knowledge necessary for students to become scientifically literate citizens, as described in the Science Content Standards for California Public Schools. Following is an overview of the four strands that the standards fall under for kindergarten through grade five:

- Physical Sciences
- Life Sciences
- Earth Sciences
- Investigation and Experimentation

Synergy employs the key strategies of Touch Time and a Connected Curriculum in its science program. Students engage in hands-on, standards-based activities through the use of FOSS (Full Option Science System) Kits developed by the University of California, Berkeley. The kits provide hands-on learning and experimentation that is scaffolded and builds upon what was learned in previous lessons. The kits cover a variety of topics such as Solids and Liquids, New Plants, and Air and Weather. Each kit also makes use of the Investigation and Experimentation strand.

The lessons start off by building a solid foundation with simple experiments and exercises and end with a culminating task. For example, when fourth grade students learn about electricity and magnetism, they first learn about regular magnets. Next, they learn about how to create a closed circuit using a battery, wire, and light bulb. Then they learn about how to open and close a circuit using a switch. Further, they learn how to create a temporary electromagnet by using an iron rod and a closed circuit. Finally, the culminating activity in the electricity and magnetism kit allows students to demonstrate their understandings by having them combine all these concepts and create their own electromagnetic telegraphs that use electromagnets, circuits, and switches.

Throughout the lessons, the students are also engaged in language arts and math because they read and write about what they are learning, and many experiments afford the opportunity to apply measurement skills and other basic mathematical skills.

These materials can also be connected with other subject areas such as language arts. For example, the Grade 1 FOSS kit on Air and Weather connects directly with the Grade 1 Open Court Reading unit on Weather. The hands-on science lessons enhance students’ abilities to comprehend the vocabulary in their Open Court Reading lessons.

Synergy also uses the Harcourt science textbook series to complement the hands-on learning that is taking place. Students gain greater comprehension when they read from their science textbooks as they will have greater prior knowledge of and hands-on experience with the concepts. Furthermore, maximizing Touch Time with scientific concepts helps to build a solid foundation of prior knowledge and allows students to draw connections between different concepts.

**Technology in Science**

Teachers can access Safari Montage video server, which holds over 3000 videos and 13,700 images. These videos are especially helpful in providing background knowledge and vocabulary and comprehension support, which many of students need. Videos can be shown in segments so that teachers need not show an entire video, but be selective to what they are studying in class.
example, rather than showing a 30-minute video on plants, a teacher can select 5-minute portion of that video that explains photosynthesis. iPads and iPods can also be used to help explain certain concepts, such as the Periodic Table of Elements.
History-Social Science

CORE

Synergy uses the Harcourt textbook series for its history-social science curriculum. The goal of the history-social science curriculum is for students to acquire core knowledge in history and social science and to develop critical thinking skills to study the past and its relationship to the present. The themes for each grade level are listed below.

- K – Living and Working Now and Long Ago
- 1 – A Child’s Place in Time and Space
- 2 – People Who Make a Difference
- 3 – Continuity and Change
- 4 – California: A Changing State
- 5 – United States History and Geography: Making a New Nation

Once again, Synergy applies the key strategies of Touch Time and a Connected Curriculum. For example, in History-Social Science, students do not just hear and read about various topics such as how other cultures met their basic needs to ensure their survival, but teachers bring realia into the classroom, including examples of clothing and tools that different people used to meet their basic needs. Students also participate in field trips and experience the history-social science concepts they are learning about. For example, when fourth grade students read about the California gold rush, they also visited the Museum of the American West and actually panned for gold. This provided an opportunity for learning both inside and outside of the classroom.

A sample first grade project demonstrates how Synergy uses technology to make connections between history-social science and language arts. Students wrote an essay explaining why three different jobs at our school were important. Students wrote an introduction, three supporting paragraphs that supported their claim, and a conclusion. While students completed the project in the computer lab, they simultaneously worked on their history-social science skills as well as their language arts skills, and technology ran transparently in the background. There were logical connections between these topics, and learning in history-social science, language arts, and technology occurred at the same time.

As another example, students in the third grade may write an essay about how the different Native American groups depended on their natural resources to meet their basic needs. While doing this project, students apply critical thinking skills as they learn how to write logically organized essays. These projects can be presented in a variety of formats including both written and verbal formats. In these examples, students use technology to further their literacy skills as they study a history-social science topic.

Other subject areas such as visual arts can also be integrated with history-social science. For example, third grade students studying the history of Los Angeles can paint a timeline mural (on butcher paper) that shows how Los Angeles has changed over time from the past to the present and the future (students artistically depiction their predictions of what Los Angeles will look like in the future). Upper grade students can also create artistic postcards that describe different geographical regions or different states they studied. Meanwhile, to integrate theatre with history-social science, students can re-enact significant historical events in class or at a special school assembly.
Technology in Social Science

Again teachers can access Safari Montage video server, which holds over 3000 videos and 13,700 images. These videos are especially helpful in providing background knowledge and vocabulary and comprehension support, which many of students need. Videos can be shown in segments so that teachers need not show an entire video, but be selective to what they are studying in class. For example, rather than showing a 30-minute video on the California Missions, a teacher can select 5-minute portion of that video that explains the effects the missions had on Native Americans.
Visual and Performing Arts

CORE

The visual and performing arts play an important role in making sure Synergy’s overall instructional program is well rounded. Synergy uses a variety of resources and follows the Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards as described by the California State Board of Education regarding the four disciplines of:

- Dance
- Music
- Theatre
- Visual Arts

Since all of Synergy’s classrooms are taught by highly-qualified teachers as defined by No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the regular classroom teacher delivers direct instruction in visual and performing arts in addition to direct instruction in the four core curricular areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and history-social science.

Using its key strategy of a Connected Curriculum, Synergy infuses the visual and performing arts into other curricular areas, including language arts and math. For example, music is used to promote **oral language development**. When an entire class is learning how to sing a song together, it is a **safe, non-threatening environment** because an individual student is not being put on the spot – everyone is producing the language together in a fun way. Learning to sing songs **involves reading** as well, as students read song lyrics from charts and music sheets. As children use hand motions and other forms of **Total Physical Response (TPR)** to learn new songs, this builds connections in the mind and supports learning. Musical Intelligence and Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence are both supported by **Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences**. Learning music also incorporates many **math concepts**, including counting, patterning and understanding fractions.

Theatre also supports the language arts skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In order to perform their parts, students need to **read their parts** and **speak with confidence, fluency, and expression**. Dance movements build the same kinds of motor skills that are promoted during Physical Education. Additionally, dance is connected to mathematics as it involves moving in time with musical rhythms and following **patterns**. Many visual arts lessons are also connected to mathematics since they teach the use of geometric shapes, symmetry, and patterns. The visual arts curriculum allows for Touch Time as students experiment with different mediums such as clay and paint to create tangible works of art.
Synergy will continue to require its physical education and health education teachers to be credentialed in accordance with federal and state law.

**Physical Education**

Synergy Charter Academy follows the **Physical Education** Challenge Standards for Student Success as described by the California Department of Education. An overview of the standards for kindergarten through grade five is presented below:

1. The student will be competent in many movement activities.
2. The student will understand how and why one moves in a variety of situations and will use this information to enhance his or her skills.
3. The student will achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical fitness.
4. The student will exhibit a physically active lifestyle and will understand that physical activity provides opportunities for enjoyment, challenge, and self-expression.
5. The student will demonstrate responsible personal behavior while participating in movement activities.
6. The student will demonstrate responsible social behavior while participating in movement activities. The student will understand the importance of respect for all others.
7. The student will understand the interrelationship between history and culture and games, sports, play, and dance.

Instruction in Physical Education is delivered during the regular school day by highly-qualified teachers as defined by No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Students learn basic transferable skills that are essential for participation in many sports. These transferable skills include running, jumping, throwing, catching, kicking, and ball control. **Touch Time** is absolutely critical in physical education and Synergy ensures that there is one ball for every four students (instead of one ball for every thirty students as in many classrooms). Students also apply their listening skills as they follow instructions. Students develop motor skills by actively engaging in activities that are taught **systematically** and **explicitly**.

**Health Education**

Synergy Charter Academy follows the **Health Education** Challenge Standards for Student Success as described by the California Department of Education. An overview of the standards for kindergarten through grade five is presented below:
Acceptance of Personal Responsibility for Lifelong Health

1. The student understands and demonstrates ways in which his or her health and well-being can be enhanced and maintained
2. The student understands and demonstrates behaviors that prevent disease and speed recovery from illness
3. The student will understand and demonstrate behaviors that reduce the risk of becoming involved in potentially dangerous situations and know how to react to situations in ways that help to protect his or her health.

Respect for and Promotion of the Health of Others

4. The student will understand and demonstrate how to play a positive, active role in promoting the health of his or her family.
5. The student will understand and demonstrate how to promote positive health practices within the school and community, including how to cultivate positive relationships with peers.

An Understanding of the Process of Growth and Development

6. The student will understand the variety of physical, mental, emotional, and social changes that occur throughout life.
7. The student will understand individual differences in growth and development.

Informed Use of Health-Related Information, Products, and Services

8. The student will identify products, services, and information that may be helpful or harmful to his or her health.

One of Synergy’s key strategies is having a Connected Curriculum, and health education is connected with other subjects in order to leverage various curricular areas. For example, in kindergarten, students are expected to understand and demonstrate ways in which they can enhance and maintain their health such as by recognizing good personal hygiene. Students can demonstrate their mastery of this standard by using their speaking skills and delivering brief recitations or oral presentations in front of the class, in a group of peers, with a partner, or individually with the teacher (depending on their comfort level).

Synergy Charter Academy engages the entire school community as it promotes health literacy among its students. Synergy does this because the health standards involve “Respect and Promotion of the Health of Others.” This gives parents an opportunity to become involved in their children’s education. It shows parents how they can extend their children’s learning beyond the walls of the school and help them to apply academic knowledge in real-life situations.

Another example is encouraging the participation of health organizations in the community to hold activities such as health fairs. In the past, Synergy has hosted dental screenings provided by the University of Southern California School of Dentistry, and has arranged for optometrists to hold workshops for parents about the importance of good vision and healthy eyes. This gives students...
exposure to various careers in the health care field such as doctors, nurses, dentists, optometrists, lab technicians, and pharmacists.

Students with Special Needs

English Learners and Standard English Learners

Synergy Charter Academy serves a high proportion of English Learners and Standard English Learners and is dedicated to serving their needs. English Learners and Standard English Learners are supported through a combination of modified instruction, a supportive school culture, and additional academic support as needed. As mentioned earlier, Synergy uses technology to promote literacy, and it has a focus on building fluency. Synergy’s research-based Open Court Reading program also has supplementary materials for English Learners.

Synergy uses QuickReads, which builds fluency by delivering science and social studies content through the use of comprehensible text. Additionally, Synergy uses Singlish, a music series focused on oral language development, and Rosetta Stone, which promotes oral language development. The Write Connection provides instruction and practice in sentence structure, punctuation, and grammar and Step Up to Writing provides systematic instruction how to to develop paragraphs and essays. Worldy Wise provides systematic vocabulary instruction in all grades. When appropriate, Synergy also utilizes the English Language Development resources that are provided by the textbook publishers that Synergy uses for the four core curricular areas of language arts, mathematics, history-social science, and science. Teacher-created lessons based on the Academic English Master Program (AEMP) are additional resources provided to our students. For example, students engage in contrastive analysis lessons that empower students to “code switch” between Nonstandard Languages and Standard American English/Mainstream American English.

Synergy actively recruits teachers who are qualified to work with English Learners, such as those with a BCLAD, CLAD, or SB 69 designation. Teachers receive professional development and are familiar with appropriate methods for teaching English Learners and Standard English Learners, such as providing sheltered instruction using Specifically Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) and AEMP strategies, respectively. Other methods include after school tutoring programs and peer mentoring. Many activities are hands-on rather than text based, thereby diminishing the reliance on reading and listening as the only learning modalities. For example, the school makes use of FOSS Kits developed by the University of California, Berkeley to provide a hands-on science curriculum that is connected with language arts and math.

Synergy Charter Academy administers a home language survey to identify incoming students who may be English Learners uses the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) in accordance with SB 638 to identify English Learners, to monitor their progress in learning English, and to reclassify them when they become proficient in English. Synergy’s goal is to maintain a reclassification rate equal to or higher than its neighboring schools. New enrollees are tested within thirty (30) days of enrollment. Students’ progress toward reclassification is monitored throughout the year using quarterly assessments, benchmark assessments, and chapter and unit assessments. Teachers use ELD portfolios that are based on California Standards for English
Language Learners to assist in monitoring their progress. Students reclassify based on the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades 1 and 2</th>
<th>Grades 3 – 5/6</th>
<th>Grades 6 – 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual CELDT Scores</strong></td>
<td><strong>Annual CELDT Scores</strong></td>
<td><strong>Annual CELDT Scores</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall performance of 4 or 5 with skill area scores of 3 or higher in Listening and Speaking</td>
<td>Overall performance of 4 or 5 with skill area scores of 3 or higher in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing</td>
<td>Overall performance of 4 or 5 with skill area scores of 3 or higher in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Evaluation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teacher Evaluation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teacher Evaluation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Appraisal Team judges the student will be successful in a Mainstream English Program based on a review of the following: Elementary Progress Report Marks of 3 or 4 in English Language Arts</td>
<td>Language Appraisal Team judges the student will be successful in a Mainstream English Program based on a review of the following: Elementary Progress Report Marks of 3 or 4 in English Language Arts</td>
<td>Teacher or Language Appraisal Team judges the student will be successful in a Mainstream English Program based on a review of the following: Secondary Grade Report A grade of C or better in English or ESL 3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance in Basic Grade-Level Skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>California Standards Test Results</strong> in English Language Arts at Basic, Proficient or Advanced level</td>
<td><strong>Performance in Basic Grade-Level Skills</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Appraisal Team judges the student will be successful in a Mainstream English Program based on a review of the following: Grade-Level Benchmarks Met benchmark goals on three consecutive English Language Arts periodic assessments Parent Consultation and Notification</td>
<td></td>
<td>California Standards Test Results in English Language Arts at Basic, Proficient or Advanced level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent Consultation and Notification</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Parent Consultation and Notification</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students**

Synergy’s main mission is to empower socioeconomically disadvantaged students and therefore, its instructional methodology and program were carefully created and chosen with this population in mind. As soon as Synergy opened its doors in 2004, it has shown that its instructional program is meeting the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Specifically, within its first year of operation, Synergy obtained an API of 709, making it the highest performing school and the only school to surpass a 700 API in its South Los Angeles zip code. One year later, Synergy’s API increased 104 points to 813, making Synergy the only school ever in its neighborhood (the same area as the LAUSD Jefferson High School complex) to surpass the State’s coveted 800 mark on the API. In 2011, 85% of Synergy students qualified for free and reduced lunch. The API for this sub group was 882, only 5 points lower than the school’s API score of 887. Therefore, Synergy is proving that socioeconomically disadvantaged students can compete academically.

**Academically Gifted Students**

Some students enter the school better prepared or naturally endowed to learn at a faster pace than the majority. Administrators and staff will identify these utilizing the following measures:
CST results, standards based report cards, other areas, such as, art portfolios, music, leadership and athletic talents, teacher observation and checklists and parent input when needed. Since Synergy Charter Academy has the responsibility of assuring that all students’ educational experiences are rigorous, teachers are prepared to provide additional challenges for these students even though Synergy’s innovative, yet research-based approach is already academically demanding. Heterogeneous grouping is also used to give students opportunities to work and learn from each other. Research shows that people deepen their understanding of various concepts through the process of working with and teaching others – one of the best ways to master something is to teach it to someone else. Additionally, one of Synergy’s key strategies is to imbue students with academic language in order to help students gain confidence on academically demanding tasks. This strategy works well with both academically gifted students and the general student population.

**Students Achieving Below Grade Level**

Synergy’s ongoing assessments help to identify students who are performing below grade level. The Pre-Referral Intervention Manual (PRIM) by Stephen B. McCarney is available to assist teachers in developing a comprehensive plan of pre-referral intervention strategies for students who are at-risk of not meeting grade-level standards. Students simply needing additional assistance in particular subjects or skill areas may obtain additional help from peers, staff, and/or tutors. A Student Success Team meeting is conducted with a student’s parent/guardian and school personnel if a student is still not achieving grade-level standards. More information about the Student Success Team can be found in the following section on Special Education Students. When additional interventions are needed, the staff is proactive in coordinating appropriate support services such as after school intervention programs, peer tutoring programs, and/or summer school. The school will monitor the progress of these students using quarterly assessments, benchmark assessments, and chapter and unit assessments.
Meeting the Needs of Other Special Populations

Schools such as Synergy Charter Academy that are located in Los Angeles have the unique opportunity to educate a diverse student population with diverse needs. Therefore, Synergy Charter Academy teaches its staff to be sensitive to students’ diverse and unique needs and differences and to use appropriate teaching strategies to meet different students’ needs. In addition to the different strategies previously described above regarding meeting the needs of specific student populations such as English Learners, Standard English Learners, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students, Academically Gifted Students, and Students Achieving Below Grade Level, the School also promotes culturally responsive teaching and a culturally responsive school environment by utilizing a variety of instructional materials from diverse backgrounds such as African American, Latino American, and Asian American authors, artists, and/or historians. The School also teaches its staff and students to be sensitive to not only cultural and ethnic differences, but also to gender, ability, and socioeconomic differences. Additionally, the School creates a safe and supportive school environment by having clear expectations of students’ behaviors and teaching students explicit prosocial behaviors.

Special Education Program

Special Education Program

All charter schools must adhere to all terms and conditions of the Chanda Smith Modified Consent Decree (“MCD”) and any other court orders and/or consent decrees imposed upon the LAUSD as they pertain to special education. Charter schools must ensure that no student otherwise eligible to enroll in their charter school will be denied enrollment due to a disability or to the charter school’s inability to provide necessary services. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure the recruitment, enrollment and retention of students with disabilities at charter schools.

Prior to Los Angeles Unified School District (“LAUSD” or “District”) Governing Board approval, Synergy Charter Academy will execute a Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) by and between LAUSD and Synergy Charter Academy regarding the provision and funding of special education services consistent with the requirements of the LAUSD Special Education Local Plan Area (“SELPA”) Local Plan for Special Education.

SELPA Reorganization

The Los Angeles Unified School District is approved to operate as a single-District SELPA under the provisions of Education Code § 56195.1(a) and intends to continue operating as a single-District SELPA as in the current structure but will now create two school sections (District-operated Programs and Charter-operated Programs) under the administration of one single Administrative Unit pursuant to a reorganization plan approved by the Board of Education on January 4, 2011 (149/10-11). The Charter-operated schools will not have a LEA status but will function in a similar role in that each charter school will be responsible for all special education issues including services, placement, due process, related services, special education classes, and special education supports. Charter schools may apply for membership in the Charter-operated Program section of the SELPA. These schools will receive support from a Special Education Director for the Charter-operated Programs.
Compliance with Child Find Activities for Conversion Schools

Charter-operated conversion charter schools must conduct Child Find activities for students residing in its pre-charter attendance areas (including private school students), so that students who have or are suspected of having a disability and needing special education and related services are appropriately identified and, if necessary, referred for evaluation in accordance with state and federal law. Conversion charter schools must distribute the District’s brochure, “Are you Puzzled by Your Child’s Special Needs,” prominently display the Parent Resource Network poster and use other District materials to address the search and serve requirement of the law, (e.g., “The IEP and You”).

Modified Consent Decree Requirements

All charter schools chartered by LAUSD Board of Education are bound by and must adhere to the terms, conditions and requirements of the Chanda Smith Modified Consent Decree (“MCD”) and other court orders imposed upon District pertaining to special education. The MCD is a consent decree entered in a federal court class action lawsuit initially brought on behalf of students with disabilities in LAUSD. It is an agreement of the parties approved by the federal court and monitored by a court-appointed independent monitor. The MCD includes eighteen statistically measureable outcomes and facilities obligations that the District has to achieve to disengage from the MCD and federal court oversight. All charter schools are required to use the District’s Special Education Policies and Procedures Manual and Welligent, the District-wide web-based software system used for online Individualized Education Programs (“IEPs”) and tracking of related services provided to students during the course of their education.

As part of fulfilling the District’s obligations under the Modified Consent Decree, data requests from charter schools that are not connected to the District’s current Student Information Systems (“SIS”) are made on a regular basis. The requested data must be submitted in the Office of the Independent Monitor’s required format and are as follows:

# The Independent Charter School Suspension/Expulsion Report, due monthly throughout the school year.

# Paper SESAC Report and Welligent Student Listing Verification, due monthly throughout the school year.

# CBEDS, which is due at the end of October of Each School Year.

# All Students Enrolled December 1 of Each School Year, due at the end of December every school year.

# Graduation Status of 12th Grade Students Enrolled on December 1, due at the end of June every school year.
The District is currently in the process of developing an Integrated Student Information System ("ISIS") as required by the MCD. Although most charter schools are not currently utilizing the District’s current SIS, the MCD requires all charter schools to implement the use of ISIS once it is developed.
The Implementation Plan

How the School Will Recruit Highly-Qualified Teachers to Carry Out the Instructional Program Described

The strength and distinctiveness of Synergy Charter Academy lies in its high expectations and noble vision of creating a rigorous instructional program that will allow its students to eventually attend the four-year university of their choice. Thus, it is critical that the experiences, knowledge, and philosophies of personnel reflect this vision. In addition to being highly-qualified as defined by No Child Left Behind, teachers must demonstrate a high degree of content knowledge (what to teach) and instructional ability (how to teach). They must hold the appropriate teaching credential as determined by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Additionally, they must be collaborative, be willing to learn and implement effective instructional approaches, and possess strong classroom management skills.

Synergy Charter Academy has been recruiting and hiring its own teachers. Teachers are recruited in the following manner:

- Announce/advertise openings in a variety of ways, including placing ads in education/teacher recruiting websites, posting information on the school website, attending career fairs, sending information to university and college education programs, and word of mouth.
- Accept applications, including résumés, references, and letters of recommendation.
- Conduct interviews and contact references.

The administrators are the instructional and organizational leaders and must demonstrate competency in instructional design and school operations. Synergy Charter Academy’s administrators consist of a combination of individuals who demonstrate instructional and organizational leadership. The four main leaders have a wealth of knowledge and experience among them.

Jennifer Epps joined the Synergy Charter Academy staff as a second grade teacher when the school opened in 2004. During that time, she was named California Charter School Teacher of the year by the California Charter Schools Association (CCSA), and awarded the Charter Schools Development Center (CSDC) Educational Leadership Award. She came out of the classroom in 2008 to Co-Direct the school. In 2009, Jennifer became Director/Principal. Before joining Synergy, she taught at an LAUSD elementary school in Watts and has previous experience in the business sector. Her key qualifications include:

- Founding Teacher, Synergy Charter Academy
- Co-Director, Director/Principal, Synergy Charter Academy
- Master’s Degree in Educational Leadership, CSUN
- BA in Public and Mass Communication, The College of New Jersey
- Professional Clear Multiple Subject Teaching Credential with CLAD Certificate
- Former teacher at 92nd Street Elementary School (Academic English Mastery Program (AEMP) Leader, Grade-level Leader, Teacher Representative to School Site Council)

Academies’ Chief Achievement Officer. Previously, Randy was a classroom teacher and Title III Director (formerly Title VII) program at 24th Street Elementary School. Randy has a diverse background and his key qualifications include:

- Co-Founder and Chief Achievement Officer of Synergy Academies
- Co-Founder of Synergy Quantum Academy
- Co-Founder and Former Director of Synergy Kinetic Academy
- Co-Founder and Former Co-Director of Synergy Charter Academy
- Tier II Administrative Services Credential
- Professional Clear Multiple Subject Teaching Credential with CLAD Certificate
- M.Ed. from UCLA (Graduate School of Education & Information Sciences – Principal Leadership Institute)
- B.S. in Business Administration from USC
- Former classroom teacher and Title III Director at 24th Street Elementary School

Meg Palisoc also helped to found Synergy Charter Academy in 2004, Synergy Kinetic Academy in 2008, and Synergy Quantum Academy in 2011. Meg is currently the Chief Executive Officer of Synergy Academies. Prior to working at Synergy, Meg was a Golden Apple Award recipient from LAUSD’s District Intern Program. She previously taught first and third grade at 66th Street Elementary School, co-taught social justice lessons to 6th grade students at Foshay Learning Center, and taught college-level classes at the University of Southern California (USC). Meg also has a diverse background and her key qualifications include:

- Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Synergy Academies
- Co-Founder of Synergy Quantum Academy
- Co-Founder and Former Co-Director of Synergy Kinetic Academy
- Co-Founder and Former Co-Director of Synergy Charter Academy
- Tier II Administrative Services Credential
- Professional Clear Multiple Subject Teaching Credential with CLAD Certificate
- Prior experience includes:
  o Former Teacher, Writing Coach, Academic English Mastery Program (AEMP) Grade-level Standards Achievement Team (GSAT) Teacher, and Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) Co-Chair, LAUSD
  o Director of Engineering Career Services, USC Engineering Student Affairs
  o Engineering Mentoring Program Coordinator, USC Engineering Student Affairs
- B.A. in Psychology from USC
- M.Ed. in College Student Personnel Services from USC
- In 1995, assisted Dr. Carmen Marcy with the expansion of Circle Rock Preparatory School into a K-8 school in inner-city Chicago.
- Cluster Facilitator for The LeaderShape Institute, a nationwide program designed to help people “lead with integrity.”

Erika Chua joined the Synergy Academies staff as the Director of Operations in 2008. She helps oversee Synergy Charter Academy’s back-office services with CharterWorks and ensures the School is fiscally and operationally responsible with its resources. Erika joins the leadership team from the University of Southern California’s Viterbi School of Engineering where she helped
oversee special programs such as the Engineering Honors Program, the Engineering Overseas Program, the Merit Research Program, and Parents’ Weekend Activities. As part of her previous position’s responsibilities, Erika helped oversee the payroll, paperwork, and fiscal responsibilities of the USC Engineering Student Affairs Division. Additionally, Erika has previous experience working directly with middle school students as the Former Director of L.A. Bridges at Foshay Learning Center. Erika’s diverse background and key qualifications include:

- Director of Operations, Synergy Academies
- Former Program Specialist, USC Viterbi School of Engineering
- Former Director, LA Bridges at Foshay Learning Center (a gang prevention program for middle school students)
- B.S. in Business Administration from USC
- M.P.A. from USC

Professional Development

Synergy Charter Academy uses an on-going program of professional development that engages in capacity building to ensure that teachers have the skills to deliver the School’s instructional program. The year will begin with teachers coming together to discuss student data. This is critical to developing protocol for facilitating data-driven dialogue. Throughout the year, we will continue to look at different data sets as a means of marking our areas of successes and areas where more work is needed. A reference that will be made available to teachers is *Data-Driven Dialogue: A Facilitator’s Guide to Collaborative Inquiry* by Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman. This will be followed by a discussion on supporting English Language Learners using Sheltered Instruction and Scaffolding Instruction. These two areas are critical in order to effectively use SIOP and/or SDAIE strategies in every content area and it is necessary to revisit before the school year gets underway. In their article, “What Teachers Need to Know About Language,” Lily Wong Fillmore and Catherine E. Snow provide a rationale for why current and prospective teachers need to know more about language than was thought necessary before. The authors provide a checklist emphasizing courses that inservice teachers need to take to prepare them for the multilingual, multicultural classrooms of today. This checklist can be used as a source for readings and follow-up conversations for our professional development time on Tuesday afternoons.

Teachers will be actively involved in curriculum development and receive training prior to the start of each school year. Summer reading may include *Seven Highly Effective Instructional Strategies* by Robert Marzano and *Teach Like a Champion* by Doug Lemov. These books will, in part, help teachers implement effective teaching and classroom management strategies that will allow Synergy students to continue to be successful.

Weekly meetings are held to implement an on-going professional development plan and create an atmosphere of professional dialogue about various issues. Synergy Charter Academy arranges for training from a variety of professional development providers in addition to using in-house expertise. Outside providers have lead staff development on a variety of issues including Bully Prevention, Vision Therapy, and Language Development. One of Synergy Charter Academy’s founders, Meg Palisoc, has been trained in LAUSD’s special education administrator training program for Assistant Principals, Elementary Instructional Specialists (AP-EIS). Thus, Meg Palisoc or one of Synergy’s Resource Specialist Teachers provide professional development in special education, including understanding the IEP process. Experienced teachers and the administrators also lead professional development based on their personal teaching experiences,
research, and observations. New teachers are assigned a mentor and are provided with additional support and/or training as needed.

Additional details of the School’s professional development plan and specific professional development providers are determined throughout the year by the students’ and teachers’ needs. Thus, the School prioritizes its professional development plan and makes changes as necessary based on teachers’ and students’ needs. Below is a sample professional development schedule for the 2012-13 school year.

### 2011-12 Professional Development Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30-Aug</td>
<td>Staff Lead</td>
<td>Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Sep</td>
<td>Marzano</td>
<td>Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Sep</td>
<td><strong>Staff Lead</strong></td>
<td>Procedures: Contreras, Suh, Roberson, Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Sep</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>ELD, SIOP, AEMP, SELL strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-Sep</td>
<td>PLC's</td>
<td>Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Oct</td>
<td>Teach Like A Champion</td>
<td>#1 No Opt Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Oct</td>
<td>Marzano</td>
<td>Cooperative Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-Oct</td>
<td><strong>Staff Lead</strong></td>
<td>IWT: Scannell, Miklos, Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-Oct</td>
<td>PLC's</td>
<td>Share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-Nov</td>
<td>PLC's</td>
<td>Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-Nov</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Prep for conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Nov</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Parent Conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-Nov</td>
<td>Teach Like A Champion</td>
<td>ELD, SIOP, AEMP, SELL strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-Nov</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>ELD, SIOP, AEMP, SELL strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Dec</td>
<td><strong>Staff Lead</strong></td>
<td>Thinking Maps: Hotaling, Contreras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Dec</td>
<td>PLC's</td>
<td>Share/Check in Writing Portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Dec</td>
<td>PLC's</td>
<td>Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-Jan</td>
<td>Teach Like A Champion</td>
<td>#25 Wait Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-Jan</td>
<td>Marzano</td>
<td>Nonlinguistic Representations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-Jan</td>
<td><strong>Staff Lead</strong></td>
<td>Measuring Up: Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-Jan</td>
<td><strong>Randy Palisoc</strong></td>
<td>Test Taking Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Feb</td>
<td>PLC's</td>
<td>Plan for After School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-Feb</td>
<td>Teach Like A Champion</td>
<td>#35 PROPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-Feb</td>
<td>Marzano</td>
<td>Reinforcing Effort and Positive Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-Feb</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Prep for conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Mar</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Parent Conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Mar</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>ELD, SIOP, AEMP, SELL strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Mar</td>
<td>PLC's</td>
<td>Share/Check in Writing Portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-Mar</td>
<td>PLC's</td>
<td>Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-Apr</td>
<td>Teach Like A Champion</td>
<td>#43 Positive Framing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-Apr</td>
<td>Marzano</td>
<td>Identifying Similarities and Differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-May</td>
<td>Event Plan</td>
<td>CST training/Scheduling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-May</td>
<td>ELD</td>
<td>Portfolios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-May</td>
<td>PLC's</td>
<td>Check in Writing Portfolio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Accreditation

Synergy Charter Academy received its WASC Accreditation in 2010. The term of the accreditation is 6 years.

Selection of Instructional Materials

Synergy uses textbooks and materials that are aligned with state standards and with the school’s vision. The processes by which curriculum materials are selected include the involvement of teachers and administrators and the School Operations Committee and English Language Advisory Council who will evaluate materials used at the school. Also, pursuant to one of Synergy’s five key strategies of creating a Connected Curriculum, any materials that are selected will be implemented as part of a comprehensive solution. Synergy ensures that connections are drawn between different curricular areas. For example, as social studies materials are selected, connections will be drawn to the writing curriculum. A sample assignment may be to use the information in the fourth grade social studies book and write a persuasive essay arguing the point that the first Californians depended on their natural resources for their way of life.

Currently, Synergy uses the following instructional materials:

- Reading/Language Arts – Open Court Reading, Novels, Megawords, Read About, Reading Counts, and Study Dog
- Writing – Step Up to Writing, Thinking Maps, Open Court, and The Write Connection
- Mathematics – Saxon Math
- Science – FOSS Kits and Harcourt
- Social Studies – Harcourt
- Music – Singlish and various other materials
- English Language Development – Wordly Wise, QuickReads, Singlish, and Rosetta Stone

Again, any program that Synergy purchases is selected on the basis of being aligned to state standards and on the program’s ability to help students meet or exceed the Content Standards for California Public Schools. The materials and programs that Synergy purchases are evaluated periodically and may be changed or augmented as deemed necessary, so long as the replacement materials or supplementary materials are also aligned to state standards and contribute meaningfully to students’ pursuit of meeting or exceeding those standards.

Implementation Plan

Synergy has already been implementing the aspects of its instructional plan described above since it opened in August 2004.
Use of Instructional Time

Synergy operates on a single-track, modified traditional calendar of 180 days of instruction. Classes begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 2:25 p.m. for all grades K-5. This schedule exceeds the minimum number of instructional minutes for all grade levels as prescribed by Education Code §47612.5. All classes are a part of the regular instructional day, including English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, History-Social Science, Visual and Performing Arts, Health, and Physical Education, and all subjects are taught by a highly-qualified teacher as defined by No Child Left Behind.

Following is a sample daily schedule for 2nd and 5th grade. The rationale for the allocation of instructional time to different subject matter areas was based on a typical schedule in a LAUSD elementary school classroom so that Synergy’s instructional program could be replicated at other LAUSD schools. Language Arts (reading, writing, listening, speaking) are allocated the most number of minutes during each instructional day because these are the most important skills that elementary school students must learn. Additionally, math instruction occurs every day because it is critical that students have solid math skills in elementary school.

This daily schedule is subject to change based on different grade-levels and different classroom needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Kindergarten-2nd Grade</th>
<th>3rd-5th Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00-8:15</td>
<td>Homework Correction</td>
<td>Homework Correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15-8:20</td>
<td>QuickReads (Language Arts/ELD)</td>
<td>Megawords (Language Arts/ELD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:20-8:35</td>
<td>Phrasing (Language Arts)</td>
<td>Phrasing/QuickReads (Language Arts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:35-8:50</td>
<td>Write Connection (Language Arts)</td>
<td>Write Connection (Language Arts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:50-9:05</td>
<td>Wordly Wise (Language Arts/ELD)</td>
<td>Wordly Wise (Language Arts/ELD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:05-9:20</td>
<td>OCR Phonics/Megawords (Language Arts)</td>
<td>OCR Phonics/Megawords (Language Arts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:20-10:05</td>
<td>OCR Reading Comprehension (Language Arts)</td>
<td>OCR Reading Comprehension (Language Arts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:05-10:25</td>
<td>Recess</td>
<td>Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:25-11:15</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:15-11:45</td>
<td>IWT (Language Arts/ELD/Math)</td>
<td>Literary Units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45-12:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Social Science/Art/Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30-1:00</td>
<td>Jiji (ST Math Lab)/Art/Music</td>
<td>Jiji (ST Math Lab)/Art/Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00-1:50</td>
<td>Social Science/Science</td>
<td>Social Science/Art/Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:50-2:25</td>
<td>Computer Lab (Reading Counts/Rosetta Stone)</td>
<td>Computer Lab (Reading Counts/Rosetta Stone)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2012-2013 Daily Bell Schedule

Regular Day Bell Schedule – 320 Instructional Minutes

Grades K-5 Instruction Begins: 8:00 a.m.
Grades K-2 Recess: 9:40 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.
Grades 3-5 Recess: 10:05 a.m. to 10:25 a.m.
Grades K-1 Lunch/Recess: 11:20 a.m. to 12:05 p.m.
Grades 2-3 Lunch/Recess: 11:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Grades 4-5 Lunch/Recess: 12:10 p.m. to 12:55 p.m.
Grades K-5 Dismissal: 2:25 p.m.

Minimum Day Bell Schedule – 250 Instructional Minutes

Grades K-5 Instruction Begins: 8:00 a.m.
Grades K-2 Recess: 9:40 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.
Grades 3-5 Recess: 10:05 a.m. to 10:25 a.m.
Grades K-1 Lunch/Recess: 11:20 a.m. to 12:05 p.m.
Grades 2-3 Lunch/Recess: 11:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Grades 4-5 Lunch/Recess: 12:10 p.m. to 12:55 p.m.
Grades K-5 Dismissal: 1:15 p.m.

Shortened Day Bell Schedule – 205 Instructional Minutes

Grades K-5 Instruction Begins: 8:00 a.m.
Grades K-5 Dismissal: 11:25 p.m.

The following is the 2012-2013 School Calendar.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, August 27, 2012</td>
<td>First Day of School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, September 3, 2012</td>
<td>Labor Day – No School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, September 18, 2012</td>
<td>Patriotic Assembly, Back to School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, October 15, 2012</td>
<td>Unsat Notices Sent Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, November 19, 2012</td>
<td>Veterans Day – No School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon-Fri, November 12-16, 2012</td>
<td>Student-Led Parent Conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early Dismissal at 1:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs-Fri, November 22-23, 2012</td>
<td>Thanksgiving – No School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, December 12, 2012</td>
<td>Winter Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 21, 2012 -Jan 2, 2013</td>
<td>Office Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, January 14, 2013</td>
<td>MLK – No School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, January 25, 2013</td>
<td>Math Counts Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, February 4, 2013</td>
<td>Unsat Notices Sent Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, February 18, 2013</td>
<td>Presidents’ Day – No School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon-Fri, March 4-8, 2013</td>
<td>Student-Led Parent Conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early Dismissal at 1:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, March 29, 2013</td>
<td>Cesar Chavez Day – No School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1 – April 12, 2013</td>
<td>Spring Break – No School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 6-17, 2013</td>
<td>STAR Testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 13, 2013</td>
<td>Unsat Notices Sent Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, May 27, 2013</td>
<td>Memorial Day – No School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, June 14, 2013</td>
<td>Disneyland Trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, June 19, 2013</td>
<td>Last Day of School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5th Grade Commencement/Awards Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early Dismissal 11:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, June 20, 2013</td>
<td>Pupil Free Day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Element 2 – Measurable Student Outcomes**

“The measurable student outcomes identified for use by the charter school. ‘Pupil outcomes,’ for purposes of this part, means the extent to which all pupils of the school demonstrate that they have attained the skills, knowledge, and attitudes specified as goals in the school’s educational program.” Ed. Code §47605(b)(5)(B)

Using data to create, support, and sustain a high-quality school is essential to Synergy Charter Academy’s mission of eliminating the achievement gap among educationally disadvantaged students. Synergy Charter Academy not only evaluates its own school’s data but it also evaluates the target neighborhood schools’ data in order to establish a baseline of where its students are coming from before target goals can be made and achieved.

As will be explained in Element 3 (Method by Which Student Outcomes will be Measured), Synergy Charter Academy will use a variety of assessment tools to measure student outcomes. These include standardized tests, program assessments from textbook publishers, teacher observations, core assessments, homework, and/or class work. The School will assign number grades to assignments and assessments (i.e., 4, 3, 2, and 1). Also, assessments may be used to provide intervention such as after school intervention to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken for students who are struggling in order to prevent the need for retention. All school stakeholders (i.e., administrators, teachers, parents, and students) will work together and be accountable for student progress.

The following table summarizes student outcomes, measurement tools, and preliminary benchmarks by subject area. The benchmarks will be adjusted as necessary based on actual student data.

**Table 4 Measurable Student Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Outcomes/Goals (Meeting the Standards)</th>
<th>Measurement Tools</th>
<th>Benchmarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| English Language Arts        | * Students will demonstrate the ability to read fluently and comprehend a variety of grade-level texts in both literature and other academic disciplines.  
* Students will be able to read and respond to grade-level text both orally and in written format.  
* Students will be able to write grade-level papers.  
* Students will be active speakers and listeners.  
* Students will be able to communicate clearly and effectively using appropriate vocabulary, both verbally and in writing. | Standardized Tests (i.e., CST, CELDT, etc.), where applicable Teacher Created and/or Publisher Created Tests given at the end of every chapter or unit every one to two weeks Teacher Observation Quarterly Assessments | * The number of students receiving a score of proficient or above based on fulfillment of the California grade-level standards will increase by 3-5% annually. This will be measured by a variety of tools that are listed under “Measurement Tools” (in the column directly to the left) since no single measurement can fully describe a student’s ability in this area.  
* EL Students will move up at least one proficiency level from year to year as indicated from CELDT testing results  
* 75% of all students (including high and low |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Standardized Tests (i.e., CST, CELDT, etc.), where applicable Teacher Created and/or Publisher Created Tests given at the end of every chapter or unit every one to two weeks Teacher Observation Quarterly Assessments</th>
<th>* 75% of the students who are proficient or advanced will remain in the proficient or advanced category each year based on the CST, even as they progress to the next grade level’s more challenging standards.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will be fluent in basic computational skills, will be algebraic thinkers, and will be problem solvers. * Students will understand and solve problems related to number sense; algebra and functions; measurement and geometry; statistics, data analysis, and probability; and mathematical reasoning. * Students will demonstrate the ability to reason logically and to implement a variety of problem-solving strategies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Periodic Assessments Teacher Observation Standardized Tests (CST), where applicable</td>
<td>The number of students receiving a score of proficient or above based on fulfillment of the standards will increase by 3-5% annually. This will be measured by a variety of tools that are listed under “Measurement Tools” (in the column directly to the left) since no single measurement can fully describe a student’s ability in this area. * 75% of all students (including high and low achievers, special education students, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and English Learners) will move up at least one proficiency band per year on the CST Math tests until they reach the proficient level. * 75% of the students who are proficient or advanced will remain in the proficient or advanced category each year based on the CST, even as they progress to the next grade level’s more challenging standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Students have the essential skills and knowledge necessary to become scientifically literate citizens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History-Social Science</td>
<td>Standardized Tests (i.e., CST, CELDT, etc.), where applicable</td>
<td>* The number of students receiving a score of proficient or above based on fulfillment of the standards will increase by 5% annually.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Students will have core knowledge in grade-level history and social science and</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
have the critical thinking skills necessary to study the past and its relationship to the present.  
* Students will interpret and summarize information from maps, charts, and graphs.  
* Students will be able to use historical research to ask and answer questions about the past and the present, and to make predictions about the future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Physical Fitness</strong></th>
<th><strong>Teacher Created and/or Publisher Created Tests</strong></th>
<th><strong>the standards will increase by 3-5% annually. This will be measured by a variety of tools that are listed under “Measurement Tools” (in the column directly to the left)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Students will maintain healthy physical lifestyles.</td>
<td>Quarterly Assessments</td>
<td>The number of students passing all elements on the CA State Fifth Grade Physical Fitness Test will increase by 3-5% annually.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Visual and Performing Arts</strong></th>
<th><strong>CA State Fifth Grade Physical Fitness Test</strong></th>
<th><strong>All enrolled students (including high and low achievers, special education students, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and English Learners) will participate fully in the visual and performing arts program. This will be measured by a variety of tools that are listed under “Measurement Tools” (in the column directly to the left) since no single measurement can fully describe a student’s ability in this area.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| * Students will understand, appreciate, and be able to interpret the arts.  
* Students will possess skills, knowledge, and abilities in music.  
* Students will participate in artistic activities and events.  
* Students will understand the role that the arts has played in history as well as its relationship to other academic disciplines. | Teacher Observation  | Benchmark performance goals and exit outcomes will be adjusted, over time, as necessary. Synergy will pursue Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) in accordance with No Child Left Behind and will pursue its Academic Performance Index (API) growth target (maintain an API above 800), both school-wide and within reportable subgroups.  
After Synergy Charter Academy has been in operation for 13 years, it will meet any one of the five conditions listed in Education Code Section 47607(b) to qualify for the renewal of its charter:  
1. Attained its Academic Performance Index (API) growth target in the prior year or in two of the last three years, or in the aggregate for the prior three years.  
2. Ranked in deciles 4 to 10, inclusive, on the API in the prior year or in two of the last three years.  
3. Ranked in deciles 4 to 10, inclusive, on the API for a demographically comparable school in the prior year or in two of the last three years.  
4. The entity that granted the charter determines that the academic performance of the charter school is at least equal to the academic performance of the public schools that the charter school pupils would otherwise have been required to attend, as well as the academic performance of the schools in the school district in which the charter school is located, taking into account the composition of the pupil population that is served at the charter school.  

Quarterly Assessments  | Student Performances | Teacher Observation |
**Element 3 – Method by Which Student Outcomes Will Be Measured**

“The method by which pupil progress in meeting those pupil outcomes is to be measured.”

Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(C)

Synergy Charter Academy’s outcome measurement process will continue to use a variety of resources to ensure that assessment guides instruction and that major outcomes are met. The process consists of a series of assessment tools, including:

- Entry Level Assessments
- Monitoring Assessments
- Summative Assessments

The assessments used to measure student outcomes include state-mandated assessments such as the California Standards Test (CST), the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), and the California Physical Fitness Test. Synergy Charter Academy will also participate in assessments mandated by No Child Left Behind. It will follow the data collection procedures that are provided by each corresponding agency. Results will be presented in a format that allows for the disaggregation of assessment data.

Synergy Charter Academy will also use other assessments in addition to assessments mandated by the State as well by No Child Left Behind. These include publisher-designed and school-designed assessments, homework, class work, teacher observation, and/or core assessments. To keep track of data and to make data useful, Synergy Charter Academy uses Illuminate Education and LAUSD’s student information system.

These different data, assessment, and accountability tools make information more easily accessible for program evaluation in order to drive instruction and to redirect resources to ensure that all students are meeting grade-level standards. Student and school performance data are analyzed on an ongoing basis when information is made available to the School. Information is communicated to students, parents, and teachers on a regular basis via parent meetings, staff meetings, school newsletters, and/or other written communication.

The review of assessment data occurs during staff meetings in order to use achievement information to drive instruction and to inform professional development needs. Students’ report cards will help parents understand whether their children are meeting grade-level standards based on number grades (i.e., 4, 3, 2, or 1).

Achievement data is collected and saved over time in order to track the long-term progress of students. This longitudinal data will be kept on file at the School, and when appropriate, will be made public in aggregate. For example, achievement data will be graphed and displayed visually on posters, in newsletters, and/or on the school website. This information allows administrators, teachers, and instructional leaders to evaluate the progress students have made during their entire middle school career, helping to ensure that the academic goals of the school as well as of No Child Left Behind are met. Students’ achievement data is also be used by the school community to help establish, evaluate, and improve the School’s education programs and policies as well as to monitor the School’s progress toward meeting the benchmarks and the identified student outcomes described in Element 2.
**Entry Level Assessments**

Synergy Charter Academy takes a proactive approach and assess all students at the beginning of the school year (or upon admission if they enter after the School year has begun). Students will be tested using publisher-designed and/or school-designed tests and/or core assessments in order to measure basic literacy (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension) and math skills. These entry level assessments are necessary to plan for early intervention opportunities for students who may be at-risk of not performing at grade level, as well as planning for enrichment activities for students who are proficient or advanced.

**Monitoring Assessments**

Throughout the school year, teachers engage in regular, on-going assessment of students using a variety of measures in order to ensure that assessment guides instruction. For instance, they administer publisher-created and/or teacher-created language arts and math chapter and/or unit tests. Benchmark assessments are also conducted at regular intervals and core assessments may be administered to track student progress throughout the year. Assessments may be administered weekly, monthly, and/or quarterly depending on the grade-level and subject matter. For example, Synergy Charter Academy plans to use the Scholastic Reading Counts program to assess students’ reading comprehension on an on-going basis. Teachers may keep track of students’ homework, class work, and assessments using grade books and/or computer software. Students may also participate in self-evaluation during student-led parent conferences in order to help them assume more responsibility for their learning.

This information is used to guide instruction and to make sure that major outcomes are met. If during the course of the year, students are at-risk of not meeting exit outcomes and promotion requirements, appropriate intervention is administered. This information is also communicated to parents/guardians during regularly scheduled student-led parent conferences.

**Summative Assessments**

Summative assessments include the California Standards Tests and end of the year publisher-designed and/or school-designed assessments. Students take tests at the end of the year to see how well they met exit outcomes. Teachers compare students’ core assessments at the beginning of the year versus the end of the year. This shows student growth over time. Since assessment occurs throughout the year, there should be no surprises at this point. Overall school performance is measured using the Academic Performance Index (API), which is available in the fall.

**State-Mandated Testing**

Synergy Charter Academy administers state-mandated tests with the Los Angeles Unified School District. However, it will notify LAUSD whether it will test independently or with the District. In accordance with Education Code Section 47605(c)(1), Synergy Charter Academy shall meet all statewide standards and shall conduct the pupil assessments required pursuant to Sections 60605 and 60851 and any other statewide standards authorized in statute or pupil assessments applicable to pupils in noncharter public schools.
The Charter School agrees to comply with and adhere to the State requirements for participation and administration of all state mandated tests. If the Charter School does not test (i.e., STAR, CELDT, CAHSEE) with the District, the Charter School hereby grants authority to the state of California to provide a copy of all test results directly to the District as well as the Charter School.

**Rationale for These Methods**

The above-mentioned methods were selected to provide a variety of measures that describe student achievement without having to rely on a single measure. The information involves both quantitative and qualitative measures that include standardized tests, publisher-designed and school-designed assessments, core assessments, and teacher observation. No single measure can paint a complete picture of student achievement by itself, and that is why a variety of measures are used.

Since Synergy Charter Academy’s instructional program will be based on the Content Standards for California Public Schools, and since Synergy Charter Academy will assess students on how well they met the standards, Synergy Charter Academy’s assessment measures will be consistent with the School’s instructional program. For example, the Content Standards for English Language Arts specify Reading Comprehension skills for each grade level. Consequently, Synergy Charter Academy uses the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) as one of its “in house” benchmark assessments four times a year to measure how well students comprehend grade-level-appropriate material.

The School’s administration coordinates the collection, analysis, and reporting of pupil achievement data to school staff and to pupil’s parents and guardians in order to utilize the data continuously to monitor and improve Synergy Charter Academy’s educational program. For example, at the beginning of each school year, Synergy Charter Academy holds a parent meeting to explain the school’s results from the previous year’s administration of state standardized tests (CST). This information is also explained in the School’s newsletter. Sharing this information helps parents understand the School’s educational focus for the upcoming year so that they can better support the School’s efforts (i.e., making sure their children read at home every day). Additionally, before each school year begins, Synergy Charter Academy includes an analysis of test scores as part of its Teacher Training Academy. Again, this helps the School set its curricular focus and professional development focus for the upcoming year, and it helps to ensure that there is instructional coherence throughout the School during the entire school year.

The different assessment methods selected ensure that the assessments guide instruction and that there are no surprises at the end of the year. For instance, since assessment occurs throughout the year, teachers are able to immediately implement new strategies or re-teach lessons based on their students’ current assessment data. Additionally, students may be recommended for intervention programs (i.e., after school intervention, Saturday school, and/or summer school) based on the results of on-going assessment data.

Throughout the school year, parents are informed of their child’s academic progress via report cards three a year and Notices of Unsatisfactory Performance approximately three times a year. Student Success Team meetings are also held throughout the school year with parents if their children are having difficulty meeting grade-level standards. Parents are invited to call teachers for private conferences whenever they have a concern about their child’s progress.

As a result of Synergy Charter Academy’s on-going assessments, teachers, parents/guardians, administrators, and students should always know how well students are performing at any given point in time. They should not need to wait until the end of the year to find out how well students are performing. The entry level assessments will show how Synergy Charter
Academy’s proactive approach ensures that intervention does not come only when it is too late to do anything about it. Assessment data is also used throughout the year to help determine professional development needs so that teachers can obtain the help and support they need in order to assist their students in a timely manner. For example, if periodic assessment of students’ reading fluency scores reveal that students are not yet reading at the benchmark reading fluency rate, professional development will be planned that addresses effective teaching practices that improve students’ reading fluency.

Collecting longitudinal data allows the School to track the long-term progress of students over a period of time. This allows responsible parties to ensure that the academic goals of the School as well as of No Child Left Behind or other federal and state programs are met.
**ELEMENT 4 – GOVERNANCE**

“The governance structure of the school, including, but not limited to, the process to be followed by the school to ensure parental involvement.” Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(D)

**What Relationships District/County Will Maintain With Synergy Charter Academy**

Synergy Academies looks forward to continuing its positive and mutually respectful partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE). Synergy Charter Academy is a directly funded, independent charter school that operates independently from LAUSD. LAUSD will serve as Synergy Charter Academy’s authorizing agency and will provide the oversight that is required by law. LACOE will provide pass-through services to Synergy Charter Academy for Synergy Charter Academy’s apportionment, unless otherwise determined by Synergy Charter Academy’s business contract with LACOE, and Synergy Charter Academy will continue to submit STRS and PERS reports via LACOE.

**Public Laws**

Synergy Charter Academy will be a directly funded, independent charter school operated by Synergy Academies, which is incorporated in the State of California as a non-profit public benefit corporation, and has been designated by the Internal Revenue Services as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

Synergy Charter Academy and/or its non-profit corporation is a separate legal entity and will be solely responsible for the debts and obligations of Synergy Charter Academy.

Synergy Academies is a non-profit corporation that operates three schools including Synergy Charter Academy. In addition to Synergy Kinetic Academy (an middle school) and Synergy Quantum Academy (a high school), Synergy Academies plans to continue to operate Synergy Charter Academy as an elementary school. It will operate according to its established set of Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, adhere to all federal and state rules and regulations as they pertain to charter schools, and comply with all laws relating to public agencies in general, including federal laws and regulations and state codes as applied to charter schools. Synergy Academies will provide the Charter Schools Office of LAUSD with a copy of the certificate issued by the Secretary of State with the "Articles of Incorporation" attached and a copy of its bylaws. Synergy Charter Academy will adhere to the provisions of Education Code §47604.

*Synergy Charter Academy will comply with the Brown Act. Synergy Academies’ corporate office will be located in the geographic area of the Los Angeles Unified School District, and all Board meetings will be held within the same area.*
*Members of Synergy Charter Academy’s executive board, any administrators, managers or employees, and any other committees of Synergy Charter Academy shall comply with federal and state laws, non-profit integrity standards and LAUSD’s Charter School policies and regulations regarding ethics and conflicts of interest.

Process for Posting Board Meeting Notices, Distributing Agendas, and Recording Board Actions

Synergy Academies will post board meeting agendas at least seventy-two (72) hours in advance of a regular board meeting. Board meeting agendas will be posted at a minimum at each of the Synergy Academies school sites and at the board meeting location if different from a school site. The location of each Synergy Academies Board meeting is within the geographic area served by the Los Angeles Unified School District. Since many inner-city families have either no or limited access to the Internet, notices regarding upcoming board meetings will be distributed to the school community via printed newsletters that are sent home with the students. Notices regarding upcoming board meetings will also be posted at each of the Synergy Academies school sites and at the board meeting location if different from the school site. The Board Secretary will be responsible for recording board actions in written board meeting minutes, which are kept on file and are available to the public upon request.

Board Membership, Terms of Office, and Process for Selecting Board Members

Synergy Academies’ Board of Directors (“Board of Directors” or “Board”) consists of nine (9) to thirteen (13) voting members as described in Synergy Academies’ Bylaws (see Appendix A). These members are selected to represent a diversity of backgrounds and are dedicated to the success of the School. Since charter schools deal with a spectrum of issues, Synergy Academies seeks Board of Director members with a wide range of backgrounds, expertise, and experiences. These include knowledge in the fields of education, finance and accounting, law, business, outreach, fundraising, and marketing.

The specific process for selecting governing board members is detailed in Synergy Academies’ Bylaws in Appendix A. All board members shall be designated by the existing Board of Directors, except that the following seat will be reserved:

*The District reserves the right to appoint a single representative to Synergy Charter Academy’s board pursuant to Education Code section 47604(b).

The terms of the establishing Board of Directors shall be staggering as drawn by lot, with four (4) to six (6) of the seats serving a one (1) year term and five (5) to seven (7) seats serving a two (2) year term. Except for the establishing Board of Directors and the representative designated by the granting school district(s), each board member shall hold office for up to three (3) consecutive two (2) year terms. The term for the representative designated by the granting school district(s) shall always be two (2) years. After a board member has served for three (3) consecutive two (2) year terms, there must be a break of at least one (1) year before the board member can serve on the Board again. All terms shall be for two (2) consecutive years and terms shall commence on a date specified by the Board and shall expire exactly two (2) years from that date. At the end of each two (2) year term, renewal of a board member’s term will require a majority vote of the Board. The
Board will have the discretion by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board to determine whether to allow a board member to remain on the Board beyond six (6) consecutive years.

Synergy Charter Academy, the elementary school, the middle school (Synergy Kinetic Academy), and the high school (Synergy Quantum Academy), operated as Synergy Academies, will each have a School Operations Committee (i.e., School Site Council) made up of a minimum of four members. The School Operations Committees will serve in an advisory capacity to Synergy Academies’ Board of Directors and each School’s committee may send a representative to give the committee’s report during the board meetings.

**The Board of Directors** currently include the following individuals who have a variety of knowledge and success in organizational leadership and public education, including professional experience relevant to the focus and mission of the educational program of the School:

- **Masako Carpenter** (Interim Treasurer), Former Audit Partner – KPMG, LLP. Masako brings experience as a former auditor and a certified public accountant. She helps provide oversight to Synergy’s staff to ensure that our organization and schools are fiscally responsible.
- **Christopher Chandler**, Former Development Associate – Outward Bound Adventures. Chris has experience with fundraising and development as well as with working directly with under-resourced youth.
- **Brian Holman**, Partner, Musick Peeler – Brian is an attorney who advises and represents charter schools in financing transactions and general corporate matters. He was formally on the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles County Bar Foundation and is a former member of the City of Pasadena’s Utility Advisory Commission.
- **JoAnn Koplin**, Principal, Educational Planning – TFO Architecture. JoAnn has extensive knowledge about charter school facilities and she also has experience serving as the former President of the Beverly Hills Board of Education.
- **Eric Medina**, Program Officer – LA84 Foundation. Eric has previous experience with charter school operations when he worked for ExED, a back office service provider for charter schools. He also has experience assisting non-profits via Community Partners.
- **Jenny Peña** (President), Senior Regional Human Resources Manager – ARINC. Jenny has extensive knowledge in human resources management and has assisted Synergy with evaluating the feasibility of our school and personnel expansion plans.
- **Tiffany Sanders**, Assistant Vice President, Investment Specialist – Nuveen Investments. Tiffany is a successful African American woman who used to volunteer to work with middle school students at John Adams Middle School in Synergy Academies target neighborhood, which gives her a hands-on perspective of the community and its needs. Tiffany also served as Synergy’s Board President for multiple years.
- **Jared Sopko** (Secretary), Project Manager – Global Inheritance. Jared was a former job captain for Osborn Architects and has experience working on both traditional school and charter school facilities projects in LAUSD.
- **Ana Teresa Dahan**, Principal Strategist – Student Focused Solutions. Ana has extensive public school education experience as both a former Special Assistant of Strategic Initiatives for the LAUSD Office of the Superintendent, former staff member of the California Charter Schools Association, and a graduate from LAUSD’s Belmont High School.
• **Ashwin Vasavada**, Deputy Project Scientist – NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Ashwin has a background in science and engineering which is an asset to Synergy’s secondary schools’ focus on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

• **David Woollard**, Former Senior Software Engineer – NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory. David has a background in computer science and engineering, and is committed to assisting Synergy with its efforts to strengthen inner-city schools’ instruction in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

When Synergy Academies’ elementary school campus went before LAUSD for renewal in 2007, LAUSD informed Synergy Academies that it could no longer have employees on its Board of Directors. Therefore, Synergy Academies no longer has staff members, including teachers and administrators, on its Board of Directors. This has helped to make sure that the governance structure is free from conflicts of interest, has clear lines of authority, and that board members and staff members have differentiated roles and responsibilities. No Board member will receive compensation for his or her term on the Board of Directors, or for any other reason. Board members’ responsibilities are described below. Staff members’ responsibilities are described under Element 5, which begins on page 98.

**Organizational Charts Showing the Relationship of the Board of Directors to the School’s Leadership**

Below are Synergy Academies’ Governance Chart and the organizational chart for Synergy Charter Academy. The organizational charts below may be modified from time to time subject to the District’s charter petition amendment process.

Various committees and task forces both for the Board and/or for the school sites may be created and meet as needed or when required. Current committees are:

- **Board Committees**
  - Human Resources and Compensation Committee
  - Governance Committee
  - Audit Committee

All Board Committees are established by formal action of the Board and their meetings are compliant with the Brown Act. Each committee has a minimum of two board members and follows the areas of responsibility outlined by the full Board of Directors. Currently, the Governance Committee meets approximately monthly and the other two committees meet on an as-needed basis.
School-Site Committees

- Safety Committee – composed of teachers, administrators, and classified staff and held jointly with the staff and faculty of Quincy Jones Elementary School.
- English Language Advisory Committee – composed of teachers, administrators, classified staff, and parents.
- School Operations Committee -- composed of teachers, administrators, classified staff, and parents; subject to the Brown Act.

Each of these school-site committees meets approximately once a quarter.

Decision-Making Process and Responsibilities of the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors will have full fiduciary responsibility and will be responsible for the overall direction of the School. They will be responsible for setting policy and may delegate day-to-day operational decision making to the school Directors with the assistance of their staff. The Directors are then responsible for creating procedures for carrying out the policies and directives of the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will meet at least four (4) times a year.

Specific responsibilities for the Board of Directors include:

- Making major policy decisions.
- Developing a long-term strategic plan for fundraising, facilities, and other issues.
- Monitoring the School’s compliance with applicable laws, the School’s fiscal health (i.e., making sure the School is within budget and in compliance with submitting any required fiscal reports such as the annual audit requirement), and the School’s progress toward achieving its mission and goals.
- Supervising key administrators including the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Achievement Officer.
- Making decisions affecting the School including, but not limited to, educational programs (i.e., review and authorization of the content of Synergy Charter Academy’s petition prior to submission for approval, LEA plan, technology plan, participation in class size reduction, Consolidated Application), contracts, budgeting and financial management, and health and safety.
- Adherence to federal and state laws, the Articles of Incorporation, and adopted Bylaws.
- Employee relations including employment and discharge, performance evaluation, and compensation of teachers, administrators, and staff.

The Board may initiate and carry out any program or activity that is not in conflict with or inconsistent with any law and which is not in conflict with the purposes for which charter schools are established. The Board may execute any powers delegated to it by law, and shall discharge any duty imposed by law upon it and may delegate to an employee of the School any of those duties. The Board, however, retains ultimate responsibility over the performance of those powers or duties so delegated.

In order to maintain active and effective oversight of the School, the Board of Directors conducts regular meetings and may call meetings as the need arises. The Directors typically meet 9
times a year, with additional meetings if needed. A majority of the Directors then in office shall constitute a quorum. A quorum must be present in order for the Board of Directors to conduct any formal business. The Board regularly reviews the School’s financial statements in order to effectively provide oversight of the School’s finances. As an added layer of internal fiscal controls, purchases made by staff members are reviewed by designated Board members to ensure that purchases are legitimate, reasonable, and further the mission of the School.

The Board of Directors may authorize a committee to make recommendations on specific issues and may also form advisory committees. The Board shall adopt policies and procedures regarding self-dealing and conflicts of interest. Please see Appendix C for a copy of Synergy Academies’ Conflict of Interest Code. Since Synergy Academies focuses on being a data-driven organization in both its individual schools’ operations and as an organization as a whole, data on school finances and student achievement will be presented on a regular basis during board meetings in order to drive decision-making. Both the Board and the school administration will also use data to establish, evaluate, and improve the education program and school policies.

**Process Which Ensures Parent, Staff, Student, and Other Stakeholder Involvement**

Since Synergy Academies invokes a social justice framework when seeking to contribute to educational reform, it ensures parent/guardian, staff, student, and other stakeholder participation in decision-making by having open Board of Director meetings, which anyone may attend. All Board meetings are held with the geographical area of the Los Angeles Unified School District. The parents/guardians of children attending the School will also elect Synergy Charter Academy parents/guardians to serve on the School’s Parent Council. The Parent Council will serve as the main voice of the parents and will work collaboratively with the school staff to uphold the School’s mission and charter petition. The Parent Council will also work with school staff to plan and lead Family/Community meetings and workshops based on parents’ interests and needs.

Each Synergy Academies school, including Synergy Charter Academy, shall have a School Operations Committee (i.e., School Site Council). The School Operations Committee (“committee”) shall at a minimum include one Director of Synergy Charter Academy, one faculty member, one classified staff member, and one parent representative. Other stakeholders such as community members can also serve on a School Operations Committee. The Committee will aid the Directors in the execution of the School’s mission, the formulation and execution of its education program, and the configuration and maintenance of its facilities. The Committee will meet on a regular basis and focus its work on:

- Upholding the mission and vision of the School;
- Oversee the implementation of the Charter;
- Create external or sub-committees as needed;
- Monitor the school budget and the School’s fiscal practices by providing advice to the Governing Board of Synergy Academies regarding recommended use of funds to meet students’ needs; and
- Assess and monitor the instruction programs and materials

Since Synergy Charter Academy believes in the importance of everyone working together, the Board of Directors with input from the School Operations Committee will create and maintain policies and procedures that are likely to promote effective communication between parents and teachers, administrators, and counselors. Synergy Charter Academy believes that all staff members
are valuable, including teachers, counselors, specialists, and classified staff. Thus, Synergy Charter Academy will continue to hold regular staff meetings to obtain staff feedback and input regarding the School’s planning, programs, and curriculum. Additionally, all Synergy Charter Academy parents/guardians are invited to share their views on various issues by attending parent meetings (Family/Community Meetings), attending Parent Council meetings, attending Board of Directors meetings, or completing parent surveys.

Synergy Charter Academy ensures parent/guardian participation through other means as well. Parents/guardians participate in student-led parent conferences, where the progress of their children is communicated to them regularly. Synergy Charter Academy also uses various methods of communicating with parents/guardians, including newsletters, flyers, brochures, the school website, and parent meetings. Materials that are sent home are translated into English and Spanish, the two main languages of the School’s families. Additionally, parents/guardians are invited to participate in Back to School Day, student showcases, performances, and award ceremonies.

Parent education is of vital importance to the success of the School and workshops are held on a regular basis. Workshops cover various topics such as the health and nutrition of their children, parenting skills, how to help students with homework, and planning family activities. These workshops are intended to help parents/guardians to be their children’s main “teacher” outside of the classroom, thereby providing a comprehensive educational plan that includes both the School and home. The workshops are also intended to help parents/guardians understand Synergy Charter Academy’s instructional approaches and high-expectations, enabling them to better reinforce these concepts at home.

Synergy Charter Academy does not require volunteer hours, but instead asks parents and guardians to be actively involved in their children’s education. Involvement may occur in many forms, including attending parent meetings, student-led parent conferences, field trips, school events, and school performances. Parents are given multiple opportunities to be involved, including during the school day and outside of school hours, as well as during the weekdays and weekends.

Synergy Charter Academy involves students and empower them to be responsible for their own learning via its Student Ambassadors. The Student Ambassadors are the voice of the student body and consist of representatives elected from each grade 4-5. They discuss issues that are salient to them and are encouraged to help find solutions to different real-life problems. They also learn public speaking skills and represent the School at special events.

Synergy Charter Academy also involves the community in the School by informing the community about how the School is serving as a center of change for the betterment of the community. Synergy Charter Academy has sent school representatives to speak at and/or participate in meetings and events sponsored by other community organizations. Community members may also participate in school events such as serving as science fair judges or serving as the fifth grade commencement speaker. Additionally, Synergy Charter Academy plans to work with organizations such as after school programs and health organizations to provide services to our students/families and conduct parent workshops.

Methods By Which the School Consults With Parents and Teachers Regarding the School’s Educational Programs

Synergy Charter Academy consults with parents and teachers throughout the year regarding its educational programs via staff meetings, parent meetings, and/or written communication (i.e., newsletters, handbooks, e-mail, and/or the School’s website). Parents and teachers also have the opportunity to participate in various committees including the School Operations Committee.
**Grievance Procedure for Parents and Students**
Charter School will designate at least one employee to coordinate its efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) including any investigation of any complaint filed with Charter School alleging its noncompliance with these laws or alleging any actions which would be prohibited by these laws. Charter School will notify all its students and employees of the name, office address, and telephone number of the designated employee or employees.

Charter School will adopt and publish grievance procedures providing for prompt and equitable resolution of student and employee complaints alleging any action, which would be prohibited by Title IX, or Section 504.

Charter School will implement specific and continuing steps to notify applicants for admission and employment, students and parents of elementary and secondary school students, employees, sources of referral of applicants for admission and employment, and all unions or professional organizations holding collective bargaining or professional agreements with the recipient, that it does not discriminate on the basis of sex or mental or physical disability in the educational program or activity which it operates, and that it is required by Title IX and Section 504 not to discriminate in such a manner.

**LAUSD Charter Policy**
Synergy Charter Academy will comply with the District policy related to Charter Schools, as it may be changed from time to time after notice and reasonable opportunity for input from the Charter School Collaborative.

**Responding to Inquiries**
Synergy Charter Academy shall promptly respond to all inquiries, including but not limited to, inquiries regarding financial records, from the District and shall consult with the District regarding any inquiries. Synergy Charter Academy acknowledges that it is subject to audit by LAUSD including, without limitation, audit by the District Office of the Inspector General. If an allegation of waste, fraud or abuse related to Synergy Charter Academy’s operations is received by the District, Synergy Charter Academy shall be expected to cooperate with any investigation undertaken by the District and/or the Office of the Inspector General, Investigations Unit.

**Notifications**
Notification is to be made to the Innovation and Charter Schools Division in writing of any notices of workplace hazards, investigations by outside regulatory agencies, lawsuits, or other formal complaints, within one week of receipt of such notices by Synergy Charter Academy.
ELEMENT 5 – EMPLOYEE QUALIFICATIONS

“The qualifications to be met by individuals to be employed by the school.” Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(E)

The strength and distinctiveness of Synergy Charter Academy lies in its high expectations and noble vision of creating a rigorous instructional program that will allow its students to eventually attend the four-year university of their choice. Thus, it is critical that the experiences, knowledge, and philosophies of personnel reflect this vision. In addition to being highly-qualified as defined by No Child Left Behind, teachers must demonstrate a high degree of content knowledge (what to teach) and instructional ability (how to teach). They must hold the appropriate teaching credential as determined by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Additionally, they must be collaborative, be willing to learn and implement effective instructional approaches, and possess strong classroom management skills. Any staff who will be shared among the Synergy Academies schools may have their compensation prorated based on the amount of work performed at each school. This policy may be determined and changed from time to time by the Synergy Academies Board of Directors to meet the needs of the schools.

Non-Discrimination Statement
Synergy Charter Academy believes that all persons are entitled to equal employment opportunity. Synergy Charter Academy shall not discriminate against qualified applicants or employees on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, age, marital status, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition, or any other characteristic protected by California or federal law. Equal employment opportunity shall be extended to all aspects of the employer-employee relationship, including recruitment, hiring, upgrading, training, promotion, transfer, discipline, layoff, recall, and dismissal from employment.

Employees who work for Synergy Academies are there by choice and will not be required to work at Synergy Charter Academy.

Labor Procedures Which Will be Applied to Employees

Interested candidates for positions available at Synergy Charter Academy will be required to complete and submit a job application and resume. The hiring process may include telephone and/or in-person interviews and a review of references. Teacher candidates may also be asked to deliver a sample lesson.

Synergy Charter Academy will adhere to California laws, including fingerprinting and prohibitions regarding the employment of any person who has been convicted of a violent or serious felony. All employees must furnish or be able to provide:

• Proof of negative tuberculosis (TB) testing or negative chest x-ray for TB
• Fingerprinting for a criminal record check. Synergy Charter Academy will process all background checks as required by Education Code Section 44237.
• Documents establishing legal employment status
**Fingerprinting and Criminal Background Check**

Prior to employment and within thirty (30) days of hiring, each employee will submit to a criminal background check as required by Education Code §44237. Synergy Academies will adhere to California laws including fingerprinting and prohibitions regarding the employment of persons who have been convicted of a violent or serious felony. For a detailed description of the fingerprinting process, please see the Health and Safety section on page 111.

**Compliance with the Commission on Teacher Credentialing Requirements and No Child Left Behind**

In accordance with Education Code Section 47605(l), Synergy Academies will conform to the legal requirements that all Charter School teachers shall hold a Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) certificate, permit, or other document equivalent to that which a teacher in other public schools would be required to hold. The School will maintain current copies of all teacher credentials and/or proof of credential clearances (since starting on January 1, 2006, the CTC no longer issues paper certificates of clearance, but instead it posts such information on its website). Appropriate record keeping of credentials held by teachers as well as other documentation will be monitored and maintained on file by the Director or administrative designees. Credentials will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that teachers carry the necessary certifications, as required by law. Teachers’ credential information will be readily available for inspection by the School’s charter authorizer with the understanding that the charter authorizer agrees to uphold the confidentiality of the teachers’ information in the same manner that the School is required to maintain the confidentiality of personnel records by law. Employees will be responsible for monitoring and updating the status of their own credentials. Employees will also be responsible for their own fees related to their credentials.

Synergy Academies will comply with the provisions of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act as they apply to certificated personnel. All teachers will be highly-qualified as defined by No Child Left Behind. Prior to employment, each employee must furnish proof of tuberculosis (TB) testing, as well as documents establishing legal employment status. The Directors and/or administrative designees will be responsible for monitoring and maintaining documentation of medical and criminal investigation clearances, as required by California and federal laws.

**Hiring Process**

Synergy Academies plans to recruit and hire its own staff. Staff members may be recruited in the following manner:

- Announce/advertise openings in a variety of ways, including placing ads in education/teacher recruiting websites such as EdJoin, posting information on the school website, attending career fairs, sending information to university and college education programs, and word of mouth.
- Accept applications, including résumés, references, and/or letters of recommendation.
- Conduct interviews and contact references.
Selection of Certificated Administrators

The key certificated administrator at Synergy Charter Academy is the Director. The detailed job description is described under Job Descriptions and Qualifications of Staff. Vacancies in the Director positions shall be filled through a recruitment process conducted by Synergy Academies’ Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chief Achievement Officer (CAO).

Selection of Teachers and Plan to Retain Highly-Qualified Teachers

Teaching position vacancies shall be filled through a recruitment process conducted by the Director/school administrator, with significant input from teacher representatives. The Director will notify the Board of Directors as to the final hiring decision. Synergy Academies may also contract with reputable teacher hiring agencies such as Teach California Charters or organizations such as Teach For America that have a rigorous selection process to ensure that teachers are highly-qualified according to NCLB.

The school’s plan to retain highly-qualified teachers is to provide a stimulating and rewarding work environment, competitive salaries and benefits, and incentives such as monetary bonuses. Teachers will be treated professionally, will be provided with support as needed such as being assigned a mentor, and will be empowered to help create and review the School’s policies, procedures, programs, and/or instructional curriculum. School administration will also regularly meet with teachers to keep lines of communication open and to discern whether changes need to be made in order to meet teachers’ needs.

If necessary, the School will minimize the use of teachers holding emergency permits in hard to staff areas by engaging in the following:

- Conduct an extensive recruitment effort in order to obtain as many highly-qualified teacher candidates as possible so that the likelihood of hiring someone on an emergency permit in hard to staff areas is minimized.
- Engage in the activities described above in order to retain as many highly-qualified teachers as possible and thus minimize the number of new teachers that the School needs to hire each year.
- Develop partnerships with teacher credentialing programs such as CalStateTEACH or other university credentialing programs so that if a teacher with an emergency permit is hired in hard to staff areas, the teacher’s employment may be contingent on having to enroll in a certified credentialing program that the CTC considers sufficient in order to obtain an intern permit.

A detailed job description for teachers is listed under Job Descriptions and Qualifications of Staff.

Key teaching positions are teachers who also serve as either Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Support (BTSA) Providers and/or Mentor Teachers. Their additional job responsibilities are described below:

1. BTSA Support Provider: Serve as a BTSA Support Provider (Mentor) for 1 or more teachers who are participating in a BTSA Program and complete all required BTSA Support Provider duties. BTSA Support Providers must commit for 2 years and complete the School’s designated BTSA Support Provider 2-year training program. At a minimum, BTSA Support Providers must possess a Clear Multiple-Subject or Single-Subject Teaching Credential and have a minimum of three years of full-time teaching experience. Teachers must first obtain approval from a Director in order to serve as a BTSA Support Provider.
2. Mentor Teacher: Serve as a Mentor for newly hired teachers. At a minimum, Mentor Teachers must possess a Clear Multiple-Subject or Single-Subject Teaching Credential, have a minimum of three years of full-time teaching experience, and have at least one year of teaching experience at Synergy (unless it is the first year of operation). Teachers must first obtain approval from a Director in order to serve as a Mentor Teacher.

A detailed job description for BTSA Support Providers/Mentor Teachers is listed under Job Descriptions and Qualifications of Staff.

Selection of Non-Certificated Staff

Non-certificated staff positions at Synergy Charter Academy may include an Operations Coordinator and Campus Assistants. A key non-certificated staff member will be the Director of Operations who is shared among the Synergy Academies schools and thus this position’s compensation may be prorated based on the amount of work performed at each school. The Operations Coordinator, Campus Assistants, and any other non-certificated site-based specific position vacancies shall be filled through a recruitment process conducted by the Directors and may include basic skills tests and interviews. Vacancies in the Director of Operations position shall be filled through a recruitment process conducted by the Board of Directors. Detailed job descriptions for the non-certificated staff positions are described under Job Descriptions and Qualifications of Staff.

Selection of Day-to-Day Substitutes

Synergy Academies currently contracts substitute teacher services through DirectEd Solutions and Kelly Educational Staffing. Both companies ensure that the substitute teachers assigned to a Synergy Academies school meet the state requirements for substitute teachers in California public schools. Synergy Academies will ensure that any future vendors and/or individuals it may contract services with are aware that substitute teachers must meet the state requirements for substitute teachers in California public schools.

Job Descriptions and Qualifications of Staff

The qualifications for Synergy Charter Academy’s employees shall be sufficient to ensure the health and safety of the School’s faculty, staff, and pupils. Following are job descriptions and qualifications of recommended personnel at Synergy Charter Academy:

Director

Job Duties:

- Manage the day-to-day operations of the School in accordance with school policies.
- Work with the Director of Operations to manage the financial health of the School, including budgeting, financial reporting, procurement, payroll, and fundraising.
- Work with the Director of Operations to manage human resources, including hiring and dismissal of employees in accordance to school policies and preparing employee manuals. Maintain records of credentials held by teachers in accordance with No Child Left Behind.
- Report directly to the CEO and CAO, and serve as the primary liaison between the Board of Directors and the School.
Serve as the instructional leader of the School, assume primary responsibility for curriculum development, coordinate staff development, and design systems of instructional support for teachers.

Maintain student information system with the assistance of the Operations Coordinator.

Collaborate with classroom teachers in order to track student’s academic progress to ensure that the academic goals of the School and of No Child Left Behind are met.

Provide for a safe campus by preparing and maintaining safety procedures, providing for emergency supplies, conducting emergency drills, and ensuring campus security.

Establish a culture of learning and maintain standards of student discipline.

Maintain positive relationships with parents, community members, and other organizations.

Ensure that the School is in compliance with all applicable laws.

**Qualifications**

- Experience with multiple aspects of managing an organization, including but not limited to the management of:
  1. human resources (including employees and volunteers),
  2. financial resources, and
  3. material resources (including furniture, equipment, textbooks, school supplies, etc.).
- Familiar with budgeting, accounting, and fiscal management of an organization.
- Experience with team leadership, supervision, and staff development.
- Strong interpersonal skills, including the ability to interact effectively with staff members, parents, district personnel, vendors, and other external parties.
- At least three years experience in program development or administration, preferably in an educational setting (experience in teacher leadership positions may be acceptable).
- Prior experience with program evaluation.
- Proficient in the use of computers, including but not limited to word processing, spreadsheets, multimedia presentations, e-mail, the Internet, and digital media.
- Experience in curriculum development.
- Possess an advanced degree, preferably in education, i.e., a Master of Education degree and/or an administrative credential.
- At least three years teaching experience in more than one grade.
- Possess a valid Commission on Teacher Credentialing certificate, permit, or other document equivalent to that which a teacher in other public schools would be required to hold.
- Prior experience serving on and/or reporting to a Board of Directors.
- In-depth understanding of and commitment to the School’s mission and vision.
- Able to lift heavy objects up to 30 lbs.

**Teacher**

**Job Duties**

- Demonstrate knowledge and support of Synergy Charter Academy’s mission, vision, policies and procedures, and charter petition.
- Adhere to the California Standards for the Teaching Profession.
- Deliver instruction in order to carry out the instructional vision of the School.
- Plan lessons and implement classroom activities in accordance with the California State Content Standards.
• Conduct periodic assessments of student academic progress in order to guide instruction and to ensure that the academic goals of the students, the School, and of No Child Left Behind are met.
• Provide intervention and enrichment as necessary to address students’ specific needs.
• Regularly track and report students’ progress to the Directors (via report cards, periodic assessments in language arts and mathematics, etc.).
• Provide students and their families with regular and timely information on classroom activities and student progress; find ways to involve parents/guardians in their students’ education.
• Actively participate in staff development and weekly meetings.
• Maintain a professional manner when working with students, staff, and parents/families via both oral and written communication.
• Collaborate with other teachers, staff members, and/or outside service providers to share best practices and to improve one’s own and others’ instructional practices.
• Provide a safe learning environment for students.
• Maintain high standards of student conduct, including implementing Synergy Charter Academy’s school-wide discipline plan.
• Establish a culture of high expectations that include college preparation for all students.
• Effectively manage student behavior and organize classroom systems/procedures to ensure all students are fully engaged in learning.
• Maintain accurate student records, including attendance, in accordance with Synergy Charter Academy’s procedures.
• Perform other related duties as required and assigned.

Qualifications
• Have at least one year of prior teaching experience as a full-time or part-time teacher, substitute teacher, teacher intern, student teacher, and/or teacher assistant.
• Hold at least a Bachelor’s degree.
• Be highly-qualified as defined by No Child Left Behind.
• Possess a valid Commission on Teacher Credentialing certificate, permit, or other document equivalent to that which a teacher in other public schools would be required to hold.
• Possess positive communication and relationship building skills.
• Proficient in the use of computers, including but not limited to word processing, spreadsheets, multimedia presentation, e-mail, the Internet, and/or digital media.
• Demonstrate strong classroom management skills.
• Be familiar with the California State Content Standards.
• Possess an in-depth understanding of and commitment to the School’s mission and vision.
• Able to lift heavy objects up to 30 lbs.
**BTSA Support Provider/Mentor Teacher**

**Job Duties**
- Assist beginning and/or new teachers to the School with a variety of teaching responsibilities such as understanding school procedures, classroom management, lesson planning, teaching strategies, intervention strategies, assessments, etc.
- For BTSA Support Provider: Assist beginning new teachers in a Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Program with program components in order to successfully obtain a Clear Teaching Credential.
- Complete any required paperwork and/or documentation related to the position and/or to the new teacher’s BTSA program, if applicable.
- Other duties may be assigned as needed.

**Qualifications**
- Possession of a Clear Multiple-Subject or Single-Subject Teaching Credential
- A minimum of three years of full-time teaching experience
- Previous school leadership experience (i.e., grade-level chair, School Site Council and/or committee member)
- Positive, friendly demeanor

**Operations Coordinator**

**Job Duties**
- Demonstrate knowledge and support of Synergy’s mission, vision, policies and procedures.
- Supervise Campus Assistant staff who are carrying out the day-to-day administrative operations of the School.
- Provide training for Campus Assistant staff on the management of the day-to-day operations of the School, including clerical and administrative procedures such as student enrollment, record keeping, and student attendance.
- Supervise the maintenance and organization of school/student records, files, and other information.
- Verify that attendance recording and tracking procedures are properly implemented by all staff members.
- Complete monthly and semiannual attendance reports for LAUSD.
- Complete other compliance reports as needed.
- Manage online student data systems, including internal systems (such as Powerschool or Illuminate) and external systems (such as CalPADS and LAUSD’s Student Information System).
- Maintain positive interactions with parents/guardians and others conducting business with the School, including face-to-face, telephone, and e-mail interactions.
- Manage confidential information appropriately.
- Assist with recess and/or lunch duty when needed.
- Help to maintain the health and safety of all students.
- Supervise students before and after school (during the student drop-off and pick-up times) and help enforce school policies and procedures, including the school-wide discipline plan.
- Help orally translate (in Spanish and English) between staff members and parents or other non-staff members as needed.
• Translate written documents from English to Spanish and vice versa as needed.
• Coordinate written communication with parents, including Message Envelopes.
• Oversee school fundraisers such as snack sales, catalogue sales, and See’s Candies sales.
• Able to multi-task and prioritize workload.
• Perform other related duties as required and assigned.

Qualifications
• High school diploma or equivalent required; some college preferred.
• Proficient in the use of computers, including but not limited to word processing, spreadsheets, multimedia presentations, e-mail, the Internet, and digital media.
• Ability to type 40-60 wpm.
• Able to lift heavy objects up to 50 lbs., unless prohibited by a physical disability.
• Strong command of English and Spanish, both written and oral.
• Supervisory experience strongly recommended.
• Demonstrates a positive attitude, works as a team player, takes initiative as a leader, and is willing to do “whatever it takes” to help students, staff, and parents succeed.
• Works with attention to detail.
• Communicates well using both written and oral communication means.
• Possesses strong interpersonal skills, including the ability to interact effectively with staff members, parents, district personnel, vendors, and other external parties.

Campus Assistant

Job Duties
• Prepare the breakfast and/or lunch area before each breakfast/lunch period
• Supervise students and help enforce school policies and procedures, including the school-wide discipline plan, in the breakfast/lunch area and/or during breaks and passing periods
• Supervise students before school and/or during dismissal at the end of the school day
• Supervise students as needed
• Other duties as needed

Qualifications
• High school diploma or equivalent recommended, but not required
• Bilingual in English and Spanish
• Positive, friendly demeanor
• Able to lift heavy objects up to 30 lbs.

Chief Achievement Officer

Job Duties
• Ensure that a high degree of instructional coherence and program quality occurs throughout each of the Synergy Academies campuses.
• Research and refine best practices and promote their implementation in the classroom.
• Plan and implement ongoing professional development to improve teacher quality, including overseeing the summer teacher training academy.
• Plan and implement ongoing professional development to improve school leader quality, including assisting with the summer leadership training academy.
• Provide institutional support and memory for organizational effectiveness.
• Supervise and evaluate School Directors as well as provide them with support in regards to instructional programming, establishing organizational operations, and culture building.
• As a member of the senior leadership team, make key decisions related to Synergy Academies’ strategic plan.
• Plan for the growth of Synergy Academies K-12.
  o Provide support while planning curriculum for new and expanding schools.
  o Provide on-site support of new and expanding schools and help to establish culture and procedures to maintain continuity between the academies.
• Determine how individual schools’ and the overall organization’s academic performance will be assessed.
• Select appropriate assessments and software tools for collecting and analyzing assessment data.
• Be aware of applicable education policies and oversee the schools’ compliance with these policies.
• Assist with the recruitment and selection of staff.
• Assist with content for charter and grant applications.
• Represent Synergy Academies to the broader education, business, and non-profit community.
• Establish relationships with businesses, foundations, and community organizations and leaders.
• Assist with other duties as needed.

Qualifications
• Experience with multiple aspects of managing an organization, including but not limited to the management of:
  4. human resources (including employees and volunteers),
  5. financial resources, and
  6. material resources (including furniture, equipment, textbooks, school supplies, etc.).
• Strong teaching background with a track record of assisting educationally disadvantaged students in obtaining high levels of academic achievement.
• Familiar with budgeting, accounting, and fiscal management of an organization.
• Experience with team leadership, supervision, and staff development.
• Strong interpersonal skills, including the ability to interact effectively with staff members, parents, district personnel, vendors, and other external parties.
• Strong oral and written communication skills, including experience writing and obtaining grants and experience speaking in public.
• At least three years experience in program development or administration, preferably in an educational setting (experience in teacher leadership positions may be acceptable).
• Prior experience with program evaluation.
• Proficient in the use of computers, including but not limited to word processing, spreadsheets, multimedia presentations, e-mail, the Internet, and digital media.
• Experience in curriculum development.
• Possess an advanced degree, preferably in education, i.e., a Master of Education degree and/or an administrative credential.
• At least three years teaching experience in more than one grade.
• Possess a valid Commission on Teacher Credentialing certificate, permit, or other document equivalent to that which a teacher in other public schools would be required to hold.
• Prior experience serving on and/or reporting to a Board of Directors.
• In-depth understanding of and commitment to the school’s mission and vision.
• Able to lift heavy objects up to 30 lbs.

**Chief Executive Officer**

**Job Duties**

- Provide institutional support and memory for organizational effectiveness.
- Supervise the Director of Operations.
- Work closely with the Director of Operations to ensure that Synergy is meeting its compliance paperwork and reporting obligations, as well as its fiscal responsibilities.
- Oversee the organization’s fundraising/development, marketing, and public relations efforts.
- Oversee facilities development.
  - Find facilities for all Synergy campuses for both short-term and long-term solutions.
  - Coordinate the five main areas needed for facilities development:
    1. Architect
    2. Construction management
    3. Financing
    4. Legal
    5. Political support (i.e., City Council, LAUSD, etc.) and Consultants
- Work with the Chief Achievement Officer to plan and implement ongoing professional development to improve school leader quality, including assisting with the summer leadership training academy.
- As a member of the senior leadership team, make key decisions related to Synergy Academies’ strategic plan.
- Negotiate contracts and agreements with vendors and other organizations.
- Attend Synergy Academies’ Governing Board of Directors meetings and serve as the main liaison between Synergy Academies’ staff and Synergy’s Governing Board of Directors.
- Work with Synergy Academies’ Governing Board of Directors and senior leadership team to set organizational priorities and determine how the organization’s overall performance will be assessed.
- Assist with the recruitment and selection of staff.
- Assist with content for charter and grant applications.
- Represent Synergy Academies to the broader education, business, and non-profit community.
- Establish relationships with businesses, foundations, and community organizations and leaders.
- Assist with other duties as needed.

**Qualifications**

- Experience with multiple aspects of managing an organization, including but not limited to the management of:
  1. human resources (including employees and volunteers),
  2. financial resources,
3. material resources (including furniture, equipment, textbooks, school supplies, etc.).

- Familiar with budgeting, accounting, and fiscal management of an organization.
- Experience with team leadership, supervision, and staff development.
- Strong interpersonal skills, including the ability to interact effectively with staff members, parents, district personnel, vendors, and other external parties.
- Strong oral and written communication skills, including experience writing and obtaining grants and experience speaking in public.
- At least three years experience in education administration, business, or non-profit management.
- Prior experience with program evaluation.
- Proficient in the use of computers, including but not limited to word processing, spreadsheets, multimedia presentations, e-mail, the Internet, and digital media.
- Possess an advanced degree, preferably in business, public administration, or education, i.e., an MBA, an MPA, or a Master of Education degree.
- Prior experience serving on and/or reporting to a Board of Directors.
- In-depth understanding of and commitment to the School’s mission and vision.
- Able to lift heavy objects up to 30 lbs.

Job titles, staff positions, job duties, and qualifications are subject to change as the School grows and changes.

**Staff Performance**

The Board of Directors will regularly evaluate the CEO and CAO. The CEO and CAO will in turn regularly evaluate the School Directors and the Director of Operations. The Board of Directors will use criteria for the performance evaluation based on the job description and will take into consideration formal and informal evaluations. It will also consider how well the School’s goals have been met, self-evaluations, and/or the overall organizational and fiscal health of the School.

The School Director will evaluate new teachers (teachers with three or less years of experience at Synergy Charter Academy) at least once a year. Teachers who have taught at the School for four of more years will be evaluated based on an evaluation system developed by the Directors and teachers. Teachers’ performance evaluation will be based on the job description and the California standards for the teaching profession and will take into consideration observations of teachers’ instructional delivery, self-evaluation, and/or student outcomes. A significant portion of teacher evaluations will also consist of student performance based on a combination of school-wide periodic student assessments, teacher portfolios of student growth that may include teacher-created assessments and student work samples, and state standardized tests. The exact formula and details for how student performance will be incorporating into teacher evaluations will be determined after obtaining feedback from all stakeholders, including teachers.

The Director will also regularly evaluate the non-certificated staff. Performance will be evaluated based on the non-certificated staff members’ job descriptions and the Employee Handbook.

Staff evaluation criteria and procedures are subject to change as the School grows and changes.
Salaries and Benefits

Employee salaries are determined on an individual basis by the Synergy Academies Board based on education, experience, knowledge, and skills. The Board reviews the salaries and benefits annually to ensure that they are fair, reasonable, and within the School’s budget.

Synergy Academies will offer the following benefits as applicable to qualifying full-time employees:

1. Workers’ Compensation Insurance
2. Unemployment Insurance
3. Medicare
4. Retirement Benefits
5. Life Insurance
6. Health Benefits
   - Medical
   - Dental
   - Vision

Synergy Academies has an Employee Handbook that includes policies regarding:

- Illness days and personal days
- Bereavement days
- Vacation policy for non-teaching staff
- Leaves of absences (including leaves as they pertain to the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), California Family Rights Act (CFRA), or Labor Code 233).
- Process for resolving complaints/grievances
- Process for ensuring due process

Definition of a full-time employee:

- a teacher or administrator who works a full instructional day on the academic calendar which includes instructional days, staff development days, and pupil-free days, or
- a classified staff member who works eight hours per day, five days per week on a year-round basis.

Internal Complaint Review Policy

The purpose of this “Internal Complaint Review Policy” is to afford all employees of Synergy Academies the opportunity to seek internal resolution of their work-related concerns, including challenges to a negative evaluation. All employees have free access to their immediate supervisors or to other School supervisors of their choice to informally express their work-related concerns.
Filing of Complaint

If complaints cannot be resolved informally, employees may file a written complaint with the Director of Operations as soon as possible after the event(s) that give rise to the employee’s work-related concerns. If an employee has a complaint against the Director of Operations, he/she may file a written complaint with the Board of Directors as soon as possible after the event(s) that give rise to the employee’s work-related concerns. In either case, the written complaint should set forth in detail the basis for the employee’s complaint.

Investigation

An objective and timely investigation of all complaints, which cannot be resolved informally, will be undertaken. This includes meeting separately with the employee and with others who either are named in the complaint or who may have knowledge of the facts set forth in the complaint.

Synergy Academies will conduct a confidential investigation of any internal complaints. All parties involved in the investigation – including the complainant – will be reminded of Synergy Academies’ policy against retaliation.

Upon completion of the investigation, the Director of Operations shall report the finding(s) to the employee in writing. The Director of Operations will conduct the investigation unless the complaint is against the Director of Operations, the Chief Executive Officer, or the Chief Achievement Officer, in which case the Board of Directors will conduct the investigation and report the findings to the employee in writing.

Non-Retaliation

If an employee has filed a complaint in good faith, the employee will not be disciplined or otherwise penalized for logging the complaint. If an employee believes that he or she is being retaliated against for logging a complaint, the employee should immediately notify the Director of Operations or Board of Directors.

Process for Ensuring Due Process

All staff members will have due process rights that include the right to appeal directly to the Board of Directors regarding any termination decision made by the CEO, CAO, Director of Operations, School Director, or President. Upon receiving written notice of such a termination decision, an employee must appeal in writing to the Board within ten calendar days. The Board will schedule a hearing within thirty days of the receipt of such an Appeal Notice and notify the appellant immediately. The decision of the Board of Directors will be final.
ELEMENT 6 – HEALTH AND SAFETY

“The procedures that the school will follow to ensure the health and safety of pupils and staff. These procedures shall include the requirement that each employee of the school furnish the school with a criminal record summary as described in § 44237.” Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(F)

Address of School Facility:
900 E 33rd St.
Los Angeles, CA 90011

Maintaining a Safe Facility

Synergy Charter Academy’s facilities will comply with applicable city and/or state building codes, federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access requirements, and other applicable fire, health, and structural safety requirements, and will maintain on file readily accessible records documenting such compliance.

Synergy Charter Academy, under the supervision of the Director, will provide for the maintenance and upkeep of its facilities. Issues related to maintenance of facilities will be handled on an as needed basis by the Director. Issues directly impacting the health, welfare, and safety of students, parents, and employees of the School will be addressed immediately. Synergy Charter Academy will contract services for major and minor facility repairs, landscaping, and/or pest control, if needed.

In order to maintain a safe facility, Synergy Charter Academy has developed a school safety plan with Quincy Jones Elementary School prior that is kept on file for review and school staff members will be trained on the safety procedures outlined in the plan. A copy of this plan will be available on campus. Synergy Charter Academy will also ensure that its auxiliary services such as transportation, food preparation and service, custodial services, and hazardous materials are safe to the extent applicable by law and in accordance with the school safety plan. The School Safety Committee (combined of both Synergy and Quincy Jones staff) will help review and revise the School’s safety and emergency plans as needed. This committee will also monitor that the School’s auxiliary services are safe and it will report any problems to the School’s administration and/or to the Synergy Academies Board of Directors. Additionally, Synergy Charter Academy will maintain campus safety of students and employees by providing families with information about the administration of medication on campus and TB test requirements in the parent/student handbook, ensuring that all hired staff meet the TB test requirements, ensuring that earthquake and fire drills are conducted on campus, and training staff on how to handle terrorist threats.

Fingerprinting and TB Test

Prior to employment and within thirty (30) days of hiring, each employee will submit to a criminal background check as required by Education Code §44237 and 45125.1. Synergy Charter Academy will adhere to California laws including fingerprinting and prohibitions regarding the employment of persons who have been convicted of a violent or serious felony. Fingerprint clearance for new employees will be acquired through submitting the employee's fingerprints to the California Department of Justice. Employees may be fingerprinted at any local police station or at a site where "Live Scan" is utilized.
No employee will be permitted to commence employment at Synergy Charter Academy until that employee has been cleared by the Department of Justice. This will ensure that employees with prior criminal histories do not commence employment with Synergy Charter Academy.

Synergy Charter Academy affirms that it will require its employees to be examined for tuberculosis in the manner described in Education Code Section 49406. Thus, no person shall be employed by Synergy Charter Academy unless the employee has submitted proof of an examination that the employee is free of active Mantoux Tuberculosis (TB) within sixty (60) days prior to employment. This examination shall consist of an X-ray of the lungs or an approved intradermal tuberculin test, which if positive, shall be followed by an X-ray of the lungs.

**Child Abuse Reporting Procedures**

Synergy Charter Academy shall comply with the Child Abuse Reporting Laws set forth in the California Penal Code. In accordance with state law, all Synergy Charter Academy teachers and staff shall be mandated to report any suspected child abuse. The report will be filed with either the Police Department Child Abuse Unit or the Department of Children and Family Services. The mandated individual will meet with the appropriate authorities accordingly. Teachers and staff receive in-service training and sign documentation verifying notification and understanding regarding this responsibility. This training is provided on an annual basis to all continuing employees.

**Insurance Requirements**

No coverage shall be provided to the Charter School by the District under any of the District’s self-insured programs or commercial insurance policies. The Charter School shall secure and maintain, at a minimum, insurance as set forth below with insurance companies acceptable to the District [A.M. Best A-, VII or better] to protect the Charter School from claims which may arise from its operations. Each Charter School location shall meet the below insurance requirements individually.

It shall be the Charter School’s responsibility, not the District’s, to monitor its vendors, contractors, partners or sponsors for compliance with the insurance requirements.

The following insurance policies are required:

1. **Commercial General Liability**, including Fire Legal Liability, coverage of $5,000,000 per occurrence and in the Aggregate. The policy shall be endorsed to name the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Board of Education of the City of Los Angeles (“Board of Education”) as named additional insured and shall provide specifically that any insurance carried by the District which may be applicable to any claims or loss shall be deemed excess and the Charter School's insurance shall be primary despite any conflicting provisions in the Charter School's policy. Coverage shall be maintained with no Self-Insured Retention above $15,000 without the prior written approval of the Office of Risk Management for the LAUSD.

2. **Workers' Compensation Insurance** in accordance with provisions of the California Labor Code adequate to protect the Charter School from claims that may arise from its operations pursuant to the Workers' Compensation Act (Statutory Coverage). The Workers’ Compensation Insurance coverage must also include Employers Liability coverage with limits of $1,000,000/$1,000,000/$1,000,000.
3. Commercial Auto Liability, including Owned, Leased, Hired, and Non-owned, coverage with limits of $1,000,000 Combined Single Limit per Occurrence if the Charter School does not operate a student bus service. If the Charter School provides student bus services, the required coverage limit is $5,000,000 Combined Single Limit per Occurrence.

4. Fidelity Bond coverage shall be maintained by the Charter School to cover all Charter School employees who handle, process or otherwise have responsibility for Charter School funds, supplies, equipment or other assets. Minimum amount of coverage shall be $50,000 per occurrence, with no self-insured retention.

5. Professional Educators Errors and Omissions liability coverage with minimum limits of $3,000,000 per occurrence and $3,000,000 general aggregate.

6. Sexual Molestation and Abuse coverage with minimum limits of $3,000,000 per occurrence and $3,000,000 general aggregate. Coverage may be held as a separate policy or included by endorsement in the Commercial General Liability or the Errors and Omissions Policy.

7. Employment Practices Legal Liability coverage with limits of $3,000,000 per occurrence and $3,000,000 general aggregate.

8. Excess/umbrella insurance with limits of not less than $10,000,000 is required of all high schools and any other school that participates in competitive interscholastic or intramural sports programs.

*Coverages and limits of insurance may be accomplished through individual primary policies or through a combination of primary and excess policies. The policy shall be endorsed to name the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Board of Education of the City of Los Angeles as named additional insureds and shall provide specifically that any insurance carried by the District which may be applicable to any claims or loss shall be deemed excess and the Charter School's insurance shall be primary despite any conflicting provisions in the Charter School's policy.

Evidence of Insurance
The Charter School shall furnish to the District’s Office of Risk Management and Insurance Services located at 333 S. Beaudry Ave., 28th Floor, Los Angeles CA 90017 within 30 days of all new policies inceptions, renewals or changes, certificates or such insurance signed by authorized representatives of the insurance carrier. Certificates shall be endorsed as follows:

“The insurance afforded by this policy shall not be suspended, cancelled, reduced in coverage or limits or non-renewed except after thirty (30) days prior written notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, has been given to the District.”

Facsimile or reproduced signatures may be acceptable upon review by the Office of Risk Management and Insurance Services. However, the District reserves the right to require certified copies of any required insurance policies.
Should the Charter School deem it prudent and/or desirable to have insurance coverage for damage or theft to school, employee or student property, for student accident, or any other type of insurance coverage not listed above, such insurance shall not be provided by the District and its purchase shall be the responsibility of the Charter School.

**Hold Harmless/Indemnification Provision**

To the fullest extent permitted by law, the Charter School does hereby agree, at its own expense, to indemnify, defend and hold harmless the LAUSD and the Board of Education and their members, officers, directors, agents, representatives, employees and volunteers from and against any and all claims, damages, losses and expenses including but not limited to attorney’s fees, brought by any person or entity whatsoever, arising out of, or relating to this charter agreement. The Charter School further agrees to the fullest extent permitted by law, at its own expense, to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the LAUSD and the Board of Education and their members, officers, directors, agents, representatives, employees and volunteers from and against any and all claims, damages, losses and expenses including but not limited to attorney’s fees, brought by any person or entity whatsoever for claims, damages, losses and expenses arising from or relating to acts or omission of acts committed by the Charter School, and their officers, directors, employees or volunteers. Moreover, the Charter School agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the District for any contractual liability resulting from third party contracts with its vendors, contractors, partners or sponsors.

Synergy Charter Academy will have a Health, Safety and Emergency Plan in place prior to beginning the operation of the School. Synergy Charter Academy will ensure that staff has been trained in health, safety, and emergency procedures and will maintain a calendar and conduct emergency response drills for students and staff.

Synergy Charter Academy, its employees and officers will comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) at all times.

Synergy Charter Academy shall require all employees of Synergy Charter Academy, and all volunteers who will be performing services that are not under the direct supervision of a Synergy Charter Academy employee, and any onsite vendors having unsupervised contact with students to submit to criminal background checks and fingerprinting. Synergy Charter Academy will maintain on file and available for inspection evidence that Synergy Charter Academy has performed criminal background checks for all employees and documentation that vendors have conducted required criminal background checks for their employees prior to any unsupervised contact with students. Synergy Charter Academy shall also ensure that it receives subsequent arrest notifications from the Department of Justice to ensure the ongoing safety of its students.
**Immunizations**

Synergy Charter Academy will require all enrolling students to provide documentation of immunizations for polio, diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella, and Hepatitis B as described in California’s Department of Health Services Document IMM-231. The immunization requirements of pupils as a condition of enrollment will be applied to the same extent that it would be applied if the pupils attended a non-charter public school.

**Vision, Hearing, and Scoliosis Screening**

Students will be screened for vision, hearing, and scoliosis to the extent as would be required if the pupils attended a non-charter public school. The Charter School will adhere to Education Code Section 49450, et seq., as applicable to the grade levels served by the School.

**Drug Free/Alcohol Free/Smoke Free Environment**

Synergy Charter Academy shall function as a drug, alcohol, and tobacco free workplace.
ELEMENT 7 – RACIAL AND ETHNIC BALANCE

“The means by which the school will achieve a racial and ethnic balance among its pupils that is reflective of the general population residing within the territorial jurisdiction of the school district to which the charter petition is submitted.” Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(G)

As stated in its mission, Synergy Academies’ schools seek to bring about fundamental changes in public school instruction that narrow the achievement gap among educationally disadvantaged students. This is done regardless of students’ racial and ethnic backgrounds. As such, Synergy Charter Academy will continue to maintain a racial and ethnic balance of its students that is reflective of the general population residing within the Los Angeles Unified School District’s territorial jurisdiction. In order to accomplish this, Synergy Charter Academy conducts the following recruitment efforts, outreach programs, and activities:

- Maintain student demographic data to ensure accurate accounting of racial and ethnic balance of students enrolled in the School.
- Develop and distribute flyers or brochures, applications, and other recruitment materials that reflect the diversity of the community and that are in English and Spanish (the languages of the families in the surrounding neighborhood).
- Use various distribution channels to enable public relations efforts to reach a wide audience, including community presentations, flyers, the school website, and/or sending out press releases to the local media.
- Since Synergy Charter Academy is located in South Los Angeles and recruits and works with educationally disadvantaged students, outreach efforts (i.e., distribution of physical flyers, brochures, and recruitment materials) will be targeted at the South Los Angeles geographic area, especially the 90011 zip code and the Southeast Los Angeles portion of South Los Angeles. This will ensure that Synergy Charter Academy’s racial and ethnic balance is reflective of the District schools nearby since only this population will physically receive printed outreach materials and information about the School.

Synergy Charter Academy conducts extensive outreach in its target zip code (90011) and the surrounding Southeast Los Angeles neighborhoods as described in Element 1. This outreach familiarizes local organizations and leaders with Synergy Charter Academy, and notifies families of how they can enroll their students in the School.

Synergy Charter Academy delivers information about the School to parents of Synergy Kinetic Academy, Synergy Quantum Academy, as well as other local area schools. Also, we deliver flyers to the following community centers, gathering places, and key organizations within the community:

- Councilwoman Jan Perry’s Office, Council District 9
- A Place Called Home, a community center serving students grades 3-12
- 28th Street YMCA
- South Los Angeles Youth and Community Center, a Salvation Army facility serving youth and families
- South Park Recreation Center, a City of Los Angeles Dept of Recreation and Parks facility
- Expo Recreation Center, a City of Los Angeles Dept. of Recreation and Parks facility
• Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic, a local mental health facility
• Kedren Community Health Center, a local mental health facility
• South Central Family Health Center, a local health facility
• Los Angeles Urban League, local Head Start Preschool (families may have older siblings to enroll in Synergy Quantum Academy)
• Dunbar Economic Development Corporation, an organization striving to revitalize the Vernon-Central corridor
• Concerned Citizens of South Central L.A., an organization dedicated to issues of social justice and economic and environmental change

These prominent organizations serve a variety of needs in the community, and enable Synergy Charter Academy to reach out to numerous families in the target area.

**Court-ordered Integration**
The Charter School shall comply with all requirements of the Crawford v. Board of Education, City of Los Angeles court order and the LAUSD Integration Policy adopted and maintained pursuant to the Crawford court order, by the Office of Student Integration Services (collectively the “Court-ordered Integration Program”). The Court-ordered Integration Program applies to all schools within or chartered through LAUSD. The School will provide a written plan in the charter petition and upon further request by the District outlining how it would achieve and maintain the LAUSD’s ethnic goal of 70:30 or 30:70 ratio.

The District receives neither average daily attendance allocations nor Court-ordered Integration Program cost reimbursements for Charter School students. Instead, the District now receives the Targeted Instruction Improvement Grant (TIIG) for its Court-ordered Integration Program. The District retains sole discretion over the allocation of TIIG funding, where available, and cannot guarantee the availability of this Funding.

**No Child Left Behind—Public School Choice (NCLB-PSC) Traveling Students**
The District and Synergy Charter Academy are committed to providing all students with quality educational alternatives in compliance with all federal and state laws, including students who are enrolled in schools of the District identified by the California Department of Education as in need of Program Improvement. Public School Choice (“NCLB-PSC”) placement with charter schools is an alternative strongly encouraged by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (“NCLB”). Synergy Charter Academy agrees to discuss with the District the possibility of accepting for enrollment District students participating in the District’s NCLB-PSC program. The parties agree to memorialize separately any agreed-to number of NCLB-PSC placements of District students at the School.

As required under NCLB, all NCLB-PSC students attending Synergy Charter Academy shall have the right to continue attending Synergy Charter Academy until the highest grade level of the charter. However, the obligation of the District to provide transportation for a NCLB-PSC student to Synergy Charter Academy shall end in the event the NCLB-PSC student’s resident District school exits Program Improvement status.
Synergy Charter Academy will ensure that all of its NCLB-PSC students are treated in the same manner as other students attending the School. NCLB-PSC students are and will be eligible for all applicable instructional and extra-curricular activities at the School. Synergy Charter Academy will make reasonable efforts to invite and encourage the participation of the parents of NCLB-PSC students in the activities and meetings at the Charter School.

Determination of student eligibility for this NCLB-PSC option, including the grade level of eligibility, will be made solely by the District, based on the District’s NCLB-PSC process, guidelines, policies and the requirements of NCLB. In the event demand for places at Synergy Charter Academy under the NCLB-PSC program increases in subsequent years, Synergy Charter Academy agrees to discuss with the District the possibility of increasing the number of NCLB-PSC places available at the School.

**Federal Compliance**
As a recipient of federal funds, including federal Title I, Part A funds, Synergy Charter Academy has agreed to meet all of the programmatic, fiscal and other regulatory requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and other applicable federal grant programs. Synergy Charter Academy understands that it is a local educational agency [LEA] for purposes of federal compliance and reporting purposes. Synergy Charter Academy agrees that it will keep and make available to the District any documentation necessary to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of NCLB and other applicable federal programs, including, but not limited to, documentation related to funding, required parental notifications, appropriate credentialing of teaching and paraprofessional staff, the implementation of Public School Choice and Supplemental Educational Services, where applicable, or any other mandated federal program requirement. The mandated requirements of NCLB, Title I, Part A include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Notify parents at the beginning of each school year of their “right to know” the professional qualifications of their child’s classroom teacher including a timely notice to each individual parent that the parent’s child has been assigned, or taught for four or more consecutive weeks by, a teacher who is not highly qualified
- Develop jointly with, and distribute to, parents of participating children, a school-parent compact
- Hold an annual Title I meeting for parents of participating Title I students
- Develop jointly with, agree on with, and distribute to, parents of participating children a written parent involvement policy
- Submit biannual Consolidated Application to California Department of Education (CDE) requesting federal funds
- Complete and submit Local Education Agency (LEA) Plan to CDE
- Complete reform planning process with stakeholders and submit to CDE all appropriate documents for Title I schoolwide status, if applicable; otherwise, identify and maintain roster of eligible students for the Title I Targeted Assistance School Program
- Maintain inventory of equipment purchased with categorical funds, where applicable; and
- Maintain appropriate time-reporting documentation, including semi-annual certification and personnel activity report, for staff funded with categorical resources, where applicable

Synergy Charter Academy also understands that as part of its oversight of the Charter School, the District may conduct program review of federal and state compliance issues.


Element 8 – Admission Requirements

“Admission Requirements, if applicable.” Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(H)

Synergy Charter Academy is a school of choice. Admission to Synergy Charter Academy is open to any California resident. Synergy Charter Academy does not charge tuition and it does not require any student to attend Synergy Charter Academy. Synergy Charter Academy’s admission requirements do not discriminate against any student on the basis of disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code. Synergy Charter Academy will adhere to all laws establishing minimum age requirements for public school attendance.

Programs, Policies, and Strategies for Recruiting, Enrolling, and Retaining an Enrollment Consisting of a Majority of Students Who Live in the Attendance Area of a Traditional Public School That is PL Yr 3, 4, or 5 and Has an API State Ranking of 1 or 2

In order to recruit academically low-achieving and economically disadvantaged students, Synergy Charter Academy’s recruitment efforts are targeted to the families in the School’s immediate community of South Los Angeles. In addition to being an academically low-achieving neighborhood, the majority of the students in the School’s neighborhood qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, which makes them economically disadvantaged as well.

According to a July 6, 2005 Los Angeles Times article about Synergy Charter Academy’s neighborhood’s Jefferson High School, “Jefferson's students come from neighborhoods with some of the city's highest rates of crime, homelessness and teenage pregnancy. There are few jobs and even fewer recreation outlets… Among Los Angeles Unified's 49 high schools, Jefferson had the second highest number of major crimes in its attendance area — 94 homicides, more than 2,700 robberies, and about the same number of aggravated assaults from 2002 through mid-2004, according to a Times analysis of LAPD data for that period.”

Therefore, Synergy Charter Academy purposefully targeted one of the lowest performing and most economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in the Los Angeles Unified School District. As a result, its recruitment efforts target students who live in the attendance area of a traditional public Title I school that is PL Year 3, 4, or 5 and has an API state ranking of 1 or 2 since the majority of the schools in Synergy Charter Academy’s target neighborhood already fall under these categories.

Outreach

Since Synergy is located in the inner-city, the entire community can be considered “hard-to-reach” because of the historical barriers to student achievement that have persisted in the community for generations. These demographic barriers, which were discussed earlier in this petition in Element 1, include high-poverty, low parent education levels, and language barriers.

Synergy Charter Academy recognizes these demographic barriers and recognizes that it must communicate with families, organizations, and local leaders in order to help them learn more about the School. Synergy Charter Academy will communicate with these stakeholders by both making marketing materials available (brochures, newsletters, etc.) and by making in-person contact whenever possible. It is important for school representatives to meet stakeholders in person
because it builds familiarity and trust, especially with groups and individuals who have not yet had an opportunity to learn about the School.

**Description of Our Student Outreach and Recruitment Plans and Policies, Especially How We Will Recruit and Retain a Representative Sample of the Geographic Area We Will Serve**

As stated in its mission, Synergy Academies’ schools seek to bring about fundamental changes in public school instruction that narrow the achievement gap among educationally disadvantaged students. This will be done regardless of students’ racial and ethnic backgrounds. As such, Synergy Charter Academy will strive to maintain a racial and ethnic balance of its students that is reflective of the general population residing within the Los Angeles Unified School District’s territorial jurisdiction.

Synergy Charter Academy will conduct outreach in its target zip code area and the surrounding neighborhoods, ensuring that the students recruited are representative of the local community. All outreach flyers, brochures, and other materials related to Synergy Charter Academy will be distributed in both English and Spanish, the two primary languages of the residents in the area Synergy Charter Academy seeks to serve. This outreach will familiarize local organizations and leaders with Synergy Charter Academy, and will notify families of how they can enroll their students in the School.

Since Synergy is located in South Los Angeles and its intentions are to recruit and work with (enroll) educationally disadvantaged students, academically low-achieving students, and students with disabilities, all of these outreach efforts will strive to ensure that Synergy’s racial and ethnic balance is reflective of the District schools nearby. Synergy has also had success with current Synergy parents sharing about their students’ success with other families, including families of students with disabilities who have shared that their children have improved significantly after attending a Synergy school.

In order to retain an enrollment consisting of a majority of students who live in the attendance area of a traditional public school that is PI Year 3, 4, or 5 and has an API state ranking of 1 or 2, Synergy Charter Academy has designed a curriculum program specifically targeted at traditionally low-achieving student populations in order to catapult their academic achievement at a higher rate than their neighboring schools. Synergy Charter Academy has already demonstrated academic success with this population. The School also emphasizes the importance of being a data-driven school that regularly reviews student data and constantly involves all school stakeholders in creating, monitoring, reviewing, and revising school policies and programs whenever needed to meet students’ needs. Therefore, it is embedded into the School’s culture that its focus is to work with and retain students from historically low-performing traditional public schools. Detailed descriptions of the School’s education program can be found in Element 1.

**Admission Process**

All students who are interested in enrolling at Synergy Charter Academy are required to complete an application for admission so the School has the student’s contact information on file. No specialized admission tests are required; however, tests may be administered to students once they are enrolled to determine their proper placement in the development of their personal learning plan.
Public Random Drawing

Pursuant to Education Code §47605(d)(2)(A), the School will admit all students who wish to attend, up to the enrollment limit of the School. Should the number of applications exceed the capacity of the School, attendance, except for existing pupils of the School, shall be determined by a public random drawing (lottery) in order to give applicants an equal opportunity to attend the School. The rules of the public random drawing will be available when families obtain an application from the School and/or will be posted on the school’s website.

Preferences in the case of a public random drawing shall be extended to the following groups in the order provided:

1) Students residing within LAUSD and existing (currently enrolled) students of the School,

2) Children who have siblings currently enrolled in a Synergy Academies school. If a child gains admission, any siblings who are also applying will automatically be given the next enrollment slot, if available for their grade, or they will move up to the top of the waitlist for their grade in the order that siblings are drawn during a public lottery or in the order that their siblings obtain a space in a Synergy Academies school, and

3) Children of Synergy Academies employees and board members (the total number of students in this category must be less than 10% of the total enrollment). The 10% will be filled on a first come first serve basis with priority given to employees first. If the number of application received during the open enrollment period exceeds 10%, a separate lottery will be held for these applications.

The School Director is responsible for overseeing the public random drawing process, including the following: If a public random drawing is necessary, families will be informed of the date, time, and place of the drawing via mail, telephone, and/or e-mail/Internet by the Operations Coordinator. In order to ensure that the most number of interested parties will be able to attend, the public random drawing will be held either on a Saturday or weekday evening. Synergy Charter Academy will continue to hold the public random drawing in a public location to ensure that the lottery is open to any interested parties to observe. For example, the public random drawing may be held in the School’s auditorium or public meeting room, in the community meeting room of a local police station or community organization center, or another publicly-accessible place.

Synergy Charter Academy will inform the public around February of each year that it is accepting applications for admission for the following school year. The public will be notified about this via the distribution of flyers, postcards, and/or the actual applications will be dropped off to individual households and/or local community locations as described under Element 7 – Racial and Ethnic Balance. Applications will also be posted on the School’s website. The open application period will last for approximately one month after the notification that applications are available has been distributed to the neighborhood and posted on the School’s website. For example, if the notification that applications are available is first distributed on February 1st, then the applications will be due March 1st. The application will include information about the last day applications can be submitted in order to be included in the public random drawing. Synergy Charter Academy’s admission policies and information about the public random drawing process, including the rules to be followed during the lottery process, will also be given to all interested parties when they obtain an application. The public random drawing will be scheduled for a date 3 weeks after the last day that applications can be submitted to be included in the public random
drawing. For example, if the applications are due on March 1st, then the public random drawing will occur during the week of March 21st. This will allow for enough time to input last minute applications into the School’s database and to contact families via mail to remind them about the public random drawing’s date, time, and location. To verify that the public random drawing procedures are fairly executed, students’ names will be drawn by a neutral third party in public and that person will sign a document that confirms that a neutral third party drew the students’ names for Synergy Charter Academy’s public random drawing. The School will keep this document on file as proof that the lottery procedures were fairly executed. The School will also keep on file the sign-in sheets of the parents who attended the public random drawing (however, families are not required to be present in order for their child’s name to be drawn in the lottery).

During the same public random drawing, once all available spaces are filled, a waitlist will be created for each grade level by drawing three times the number of names as the total enrollment capacity for each grade. For example, if the total enrollment capacity at the School for fifth grade is 60, then 180 names (3 x 60 total grade-level capacity) will be drawn during the public random drawing to create a waitlist for fifth grade. Students will be placed on the waitlist in the random order that their names were drawn during this part of the public random drawing. Any additional applications will be kept on file and if the point is reached where there are only 10 students left on the waitlist, another public random drawing will be held to repopulate the waitlist with the additional applications. This process will be implemented so that the public random lottery does not last for an extended amount of time if the School has an extremely high number of applications submitted for the lottery. Any applications received after the deadline to be included in the public random drawing will be placed at the end of the waiting list in the order received, after the applications that were received by the deadline.

Every year at the same time that the School’s application is made available, parents who applied the previous year and whose children are still on the waiting list will need to complete a form verifying their information to be eligible again for the public random drawing for the next school year. This form will be mailed to these families and the completed form must be returned to the School prior to the application deadline for the following school year in order to be included in the public random drawing for the following school year. These parents do not need to complete a new application. This process will be implemented to make sure that the School’s waitlist each year has current family contact information and consists of families who are still interested in having their children attend Synergy Charter Academy. Also, having everyone on the waitlist go through the public random drawing process every year allows for families who were near the end of the waiting list and for new families who may have recently moved into the neighborhood an equal chance of obtaining any available spaces at the School each year instead of creating only one long, on-going waiting list with the same families at the top of the list every year.

Notification of admission status will be mailed to all applicants. Enrollment packets will be sent to admitted students or they will be called to pick up enrollment packets from the School. Students not admitted will be informed that they are on the waiting list. If the enrollment forms are not returned within two weeks, then admission for that student may be forfeited, and an admission notice will be mailed to the next student on the waiting list. If vacancies occur during the school year, the vacancies will be filled according to the waiting list. When a space becomes available and a child is to be promoted off the waiting list, families will be notified by the Operations Coordinator via the phone numbers and certified mail to the address provided on the application. Families must within 5 school days in order to secure admission or else admission for that student is forfeited and the next student on the waiting list will be contacted. Once students are accepted to the Charter School, their parents/guardians will be required to complete enrollment documents, sign a
Parent/Guardian Agreement in the School’s Parent/Student Handbook that describes parents’ and students’ expectations, and attend an orientation on or before a child’s first day at the School.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the School may refine public random drawing policies and procedures in accordance with a written policy adopted by the governing authority of the School. A copy of the revised policy, designed to improve the School’s public random drawing efforts, shall be provided to the District within 45 calendar days of approval by the School’s governing authority and prior to the enrollment period of the year in which the revised lottery policy will be implemented.

**McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**
Synergy Charter Academy will adhere to the provisions of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children and youths. The Charter School will include specific information in their outreach materials, websites, at community meetings, open forums, and regional center meetings notifying parents that the school is open to enroll and provide services for all students which shall include a District standard contact number to access additional information regarding enrollment. A student’s IEP will never be required prior to participation in any attendance lottery or as a condition for enrollment.
ELEMENT 9 – FINANCIAL AUDITS

“The manner in which annual, independent, financial audits shall be conducted, which shall employ generally accepted accounting principles, and the manner in which audit exceptions and deficiencies shall be resolved to the satisfaction of the chartering authority.” Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(I)

Synergy Academies’ accounting system will continue to follow Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) as they pertain to non-profit corporations and will continue to use industry-standard, double-entry accounting software such as MIP. Synergy Academies has an accounting manual that details the School’s financial procedures and deposit of funds. Adequate cash flow will be ensured by maintaining a funds balance (reserve) of its expenditures as required by section 15450, Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations. Synergy Charter Academy will pay for a portion of Synergy Academies’ central staff’s salaries and fringe benefits, including the Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Achievement Officer, and the Director of Operations. The Director of Operations will regularly prepare financial reports, including balance sheets and cash flow statements that the Board of Directors will review during their board meetings. The Director of Operations together with the School’s Director and with CharterWorks or any other back office support provider that Synergy contracts services with will file and maintain financial documents and supporting documentation such as receipts, invoices, and credit card statements in a uniform and orderly fashion for easy accessibility by the auditor(s). The above-mentioned plans and systems will be used to provide information for an annual, independent, financial audit.

On an annual basis, the Board of Directors will be responsible for contracting services with an independent Certified Public Accountant who has been certified by the State of California Controller’s Office on its list of education auditors with education finance experience to audit the School’s financial statements in accordance with GAAP and in accordance with the provisions within the California Code of Regulations governing audits of charter schools as published in the State Controller’s Guide. The Director of Operations in collaboration with the School’s Directors will be responsible for overseeing the independent audit.

Any audit exceptions or deficiencies will be resolved prior to the end of the subsequent fiscal year in consultation with the auditing agency and members of the School’s administration and/or Board Members, and will be resolved to the satisfaction of the Los Angeles Unified School District. The Board of Directors will furnish the final audit results to the Los Angeles Unified School District, the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools, the California Department of Education, and the State Controller’s Office no later than December 15th.

The following Schedule of Reports to will be provided to LAUSD in a timely manner:

• Provisional Budget – Spring prior to the operating fiscal year
• Final Budget – July of the budget fiscal year
• First Interim Projections – November of operating fiscal year
• Second Interim Projections – February of operating fiscal year
• Unaudited Actuals – July following the end of the fiscal year
• Audited Actuals – November following the end of the fiscal year
• Classification Report – Monthly the Monday after close of the last day of the school month
• Statistical Report – Monthly the Friday after the last day of the school month
• P1 Report – First week in January
• P2 Report – First week in April
• Calendar and Bell Schedule – Annually by November
• Other reports as requested by the District

**District Oversight Costs**
The District may charge for the actual costs of supervisory oversight of Synergy Charter Academy not to exceed 1% of Synergy Charter Academy’s revenue or the District may charge for the actual costs of supervisory oversight of Synergy Charter Academy not to exceed 3% if Synergy Charter Academy is able to obtain substantially rent free facilities from the District. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the District may charge the maximum supervisory oversight fee allowed under the law as it may change from time to time. The supervisory oversight fee provided herein is separate and distinct from the charges arising under the charter school/facilities use agreements.

**Balance Reserves**
Additionally, Synergy Charter Academy will at all times maintain a funds balance (reserve) of its expenditures as required by section 15450, Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations.

**Special Education Revenue Adjustment/Payment for Services**
In the event that Synergy Charter Academy owes funds to the District for the provision of agreed upon or fee for service or special education services or as a result of the State’s adjustment to allocation of special education revenues from Synergy Charter Academy, Synergy Charter Academy authorizes the District to deduct any and all of the in lieu property taxes that Synergy Charter Academy otherwise would be eligible to receive under section 47635 of the Education Code to cover such owed amounts. Synergy Charter Academy further understands and agrees that the District shall make appropriate deductions from the in lieu property tax amounts otherwise owed to Synergy Charter Academy. Should this revenue stream be insufficient in any fiscal year to cover any such costs, Synergy Charter Academy agrees that it will reimburse the District for the additional costs within forty-five (45) business days of being notified of the amounts owed.

**Audit and Inspection of Records**
Synergy Charter Academy agrees to observe and abide by the following terms and conditions as a requirement for receiving and maintaining their charter authorization:

- Synergy Charter Academy is subject to District oversight.
- The District’s statutory oversight responsibility continues throughout the life of the Charter and requires that it, among other things, monitor the fiscal condition of Synergy Charter Academy.
- The District is authorized to revoke this Charter for, among other reasons, the failure of Synergy Charter Academy to meet generally accepted accounting principles or if it engages in fiscal mismanagement.
Accordingly, the District hereby reserves the right, pursuant to its oversight responsibility, to audit Synergy Charter Academy’s books, records, data, processes and procedures through the District Office of the Inspector General or other means. The audit may include, but is not limited to, the following areas:

- Compliance with terms and conditions prescribed in the Charter agreement,
- Internal controls, both financial and operational in nature,
- The accuracy, recording and/or reporting of the Charter School’s financial information,
- The Charter School’s debt structure,
- Governance policies, procedures and history,
- The recording and reporting of attendance data,
- The Charter School’s enrollment process,
- Compliance with safety plans and procedures, and
- Compliance with applicable grant requirements.

Synergy Charter Academy shall cooperate fully with such audits and shall make available any and all records necessary for the performance of the audit upon 30 days notice to Synergy Charter Academy. When 30 days notice may defeat the purpose of the audit, the District may conduct the audit upon 24 hours notice.

Synergy Charter Academy will develop and maintain internal fiscal control policies governing all financial activities.
ELEMENT 10 – SUSPENSIONS AND STUDENT EXPULSIONS

“The procedures by which pupils can be suspended or expelled.” Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(J)

General Discipline Policies in Place at the School

Synergy Charter Academy implements a school-wide discipline program. The School’s discipline policy is described in more detail in the School’s Parent/Student Handbook and it includes the School’s expectations regarding attendance, behavior, mutual respect, substance abuse, violence, safety, and work habits. Parents/guardians and students sign the Parent/Student Handbook Agreement Form to signify their understanding of and accountability towards Synergy Charter Academy’s discipline policy in addition to other school policies and procedures.

The School periodically obtains feedback regarding its discipline policy from parents, students, staff, and board members, and makes changes to the policy as needed. Feedback is solicited in various ways such as meetings with Parent Council and the School Operations Committee and Coffee with the Principal.

Students who do not adhere to the discipline policy and/or who violate school rules expect consequences and/or interventions for their behavior, including but not limited to the following:

- Warnings
- Loss of privileges
- Notices to parents/guardians by telephone or letter
- Request for parent conference
- Individualized Behavior Contract
- Instruction in pro-social behaviors
- Detention
- Suspension (including in-school suspension)
- Expulsion

If a student’s behavior does not improve, parents are asked to participate in the Student Success Team (SST) process. The Student Success Team, including a school administrator and/or teacher, works with the parent(s) to develop appropriate accommodations, modifications, and/or intervention strategies.

Charter School shall provide due process for all students, including adequate notice to parents/guardians and students regarding the grounds for suspension and expulsion and their due process rights regarding suspension and expulsion, including rights to appeal.

Charter School shall ensure that its policies and procedures regarding suspension and expulsion will be periodically reviewed, and modified as necessary, including, for example, any modification of the lists of offenses for which students are subject to suspension or expulsion.

Charter School shall ensure the appropriate interim placement of students during and pending the completion of the Charter School’s student expulsion process.
Charter School will implement operational and procedural guidelines ensuring federal and state laws and regulations regarding the discipline of students with disabilities are met. Charter School will also ensure staff is knowledgeable about and complies with the District’s Discipline Foundation Policy. If the student receives or is eligible for special education, the Charter School shall identify and provide special education programs and services at the appropriate interim educational placement, pending the completion of the expulsion process, to be coordinated with the LAUSD Support Unit, Division of Special Education.

Charter School shall utilize alternatives to suspension and expulsion with students who are truant, tardy, or otherwise absent from compulsory school activities.

If a student is expelled from the Charter School, the Charter School shall forward student records upon request of the receiving school district in a timely fashion. Charter School shall also submit an expulsion packet to the Innovation and Charter Schools Division immediately or as soon as practically possible, containing:

- pupil’s last known address
- a copy of the cumulative record
- transcript of grades or report card
- health information
- documentation of the expulsion proceeding, including specific facts supporting the expulsion
- student’s current educational placement
- copy of parental notice of expulsion
- copy of documentation of expulsion provided to parent stating reason for
- expulsion, term of expulsion, rehabilitation plan, reinstatement notice with eligibility date and instructions for providing proof of student’s compliance for reinstatement, appeal process and options for enrollment; and
- if the Student is eligible for Special Education, the Charter School must provide documentation related to expulsion pursuant to IDEA including conducting a manifestation determination IEP prior to expulsion. If the student is eligible for Section 504 Accommodations, the Charter School must provide evidence that it convened a Link Determination meeting to address two questions:  A) Was the misconduct caused by, or directly and substantially related to the student’s disability; B) Was the misconduct a direct result of the Charter School’s failure to implement 504 Plan?

Suspension and Expulsion Procedures

This Pupil Suspension and Expulsion Policy has been established in order to promote learning and protect the safety and well being of all students, staff, and visitors at Synergy Charter Academy. This policy serves as Synergy Charter Academy’s policy and procedures for student suspension and expulsion. Synergy’s rules and procedures for suspension and expulsion are consistent with state and federal laws, are similar to those found at non-charter public schools, and afford students their due process rights.

School staff enforces disciplinary rules and procedures fairly and consistently among all students. Synergy Charter Academy’s administration ensures that students and their parents/guardians are notified in writing upon enrollment of all discipline policies and procedures.
This Policy and its Procedures are printed and distributed as part of the Parent/Student Handbook and clearly describe discipline expectations.

Discipline includes but is not limited to advising and counseling students, conferring with parents/guardians, suspension (including in-school suspension), and expulsion. Corporal punishment is not used as a disciplinary measure against any student. Corporal punishment includes the willful infliction of or willfully causing the infliction of physical pain on a student. For purposes of the Policy, corporal punishment does not include an employee’s use of force that is reasonable and necessary to protect the employee, students, staff or other persons or to prevent damage to school property.

According to Education Code 48900(v), “A superintendent of the school district or principal may use his or her discretion to provide alternatives to suspension or expulsion, including, but not limited to, counseling and an anger management program, for a pupil subject to discipline under this section.” Therefore, school administration may determine whether suspended students may remain on campus in an In-School Suspension (i.e., for a less severe offense) or whether the suspended students shall be excluded from all school and school-related activities (i.e., for a more severe offense). Such discretion is needed since stealing a pen is not as severe as stealing a purse, however, both fall under the offense of “stole or attempted to steal school property or private property.” Expelled students shall be excluded from all school and school-related activities.

A. Grounds for Suspension and Expulsion of Students

A pupil shall not be suspended or expelled unless the act is related to school activity or school attendance occurring within a school under the jurisdiction of the superintendent of the school district or principal or occurring within any other school district. A student may be suspended or expelled for prohibited misconduct if the act is related to school activity or school attendance occurring at the School or at any other school or a School sponsored event at anytime including but not limited to: a) while on school grounds; b) while going to or coming from school; c) during the lunch period, whether on or off the school campus; d) during, going to, or coming from a school-sponsored activity. All school suspensions are discretionary and will be considered on a case by case basis.

B. Enumerated Offenses

A pupil shall not be suspended from school or recommended for expulsion, unless the superintendent or the principal of the School in which the pupil is enrolled determines that the pupil has committed an act as defined below:

1. Caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause physical injury to another person.

2. Willfully used force or violence upon the person of another, except in self-defense.

3. Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any firearm, knife, explosive, or other dangerous object unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with a Director’s or designee’s concurrence.
4. Unlawfully possessed, used, sold or otherwise furnished, or was under the influence of any controlled substance, as defined in Health and Safety Code 11053-11058, an alcoholic beverage, or an intoxicant of any kind.

5. Unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any controlled substance as defined in Health and Safety Code 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind, and then sold, delivered, or otherwise furnished to any person another liquid, substance, or material and represented same as a controlled substance, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant.

6. Committed or attempted to commit robbery or extortion.

7. Caused or attempted to cause damage to school property or private property.

8. Stole or attempted to steal school property or private property.

9. Possessed or used tobacco or any products containing tobacco or nicotine products, including but not limited to cigars, cigarettes, miniature cigars, clove cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew packets and betel.

10. Committed an obscene act or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity.

11. Unlawfully possessed or unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any drug paraphernalia, as defined in Health and Safety Code 11014.5.

12. Disrupted school activities or otherwise willfully defied the valid authority of supervisors, teachers, administrators, other school officials, or other school personnel engaged in the performance of their duties.

13. Knowingly received stolen school property or private property.

14. Possessed an imitation firearm, i.e.: a replica of a firearm that is so substantially similar in physical properties to an existing firearm as to lead a reasonable person to conclude that the replica is a firearm.

15. Committed or attempted to commit a sexual assault as defined in Penal Code 261, 266c, 286, 288, 288a or 289, or committed a sexual battery as defined in Penal Code 243.4.

16. Harassed, threatened, or intimidated a student who is a complaining witness or witness in a school disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of preventing that student from being a witness and/or retaliating against that student for being a witness.

17. Unlawfully offered, arranged to sell, negotiated to sell, or sold the prescription drug Soma.

18. Engaged in or attempted to engage in hazing of another.
19. Engaged in an act of bullying, including, but not limited to, bullying committed by means of an electronic act directed specifically toward a pupil or school personnel.

20. Aiding or abetting as defined in Section 31 of the Penal Code, the infliction or attempted infliction of physical injury to another person. (subject to suspension but not expulsion)

21. Made terrorist threats against school officials and/or school property. Making bomb threats is a federal crime for which parents/guardians can be made responsible for restitution.

22. Committed sexual harassment.

23. Caused, attempted to cause, threatened to cause, or participated in an act of hate violence.

24. Intentionally harassed, threatened or intimidated a student, group of students, or school personnel to the extent of having the actual and reasonably expected effect of materially disrupting class work, creating substantial disorder and invading student rights by creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment.

Alternatives to suspension or expulsion will first be attempted with students who are truant, tardy, or otherwise absent from assigned school activities. The School may consider in-school suspensions versus at-home suspensions, unless a student poses a clear and present danger to students, faculty, and/or staff.

C. Mandatory Expulsion

According to Education Code Section 48915(c), Synergy Charter Academy shall immediately suspend and shall recommend expulsion of any pupil who commits any of the following acts at school or at a school activity off school grounds:

1. Possessing, selling, or otherwise furnishing a firearm.

2. Brandishing a knife at another person.

3. Unlawfully selling a controlled substance.

4. Committing or attempting to commit a sexual assault or sexual battery.

5. Possession of an explosive.

D. Suspension Procedure

Suspensions shall be initiated according to the following procedures:
1. **Conference**

Suspension shall be preceded, if possible, by a conference conducted by a Director or a Director's designee with the student and his or her parent/guardian and, whenever practical, the teacher, supervisor or school employee who referred the student to the Director. The conference may be omitted if the Director or designee determines that an emergency situation exists. An "emergency situation" involves a clear and present danger to the lives, safety or health of students or school personnel. If a student is suspended without this conference, both the parent/guardian and student shall be notified of the student's right to return to school for the purpose of a conference.

At the conference, the pupil shall be informed of the reason for the disciplinary action and the evidence against him or her and shall be given the opportunity to present his or her version and evidence in his or her defense.

This conference shall be held within two school days, unless the pupil waives this right or is physically unable to attend for any reason including, but not limited to, incarceration or hospitalization.

No penalties may be imposed on a pupil for failure of the pupil's parent or guardian to attend a conference with school officials. Reinstatement of the suspended pupil shall not be contingent upon attendance by the pupil's parent or guardian at the conference.

2. **Notice to Parents/Guardians**

At the time of the suspension, an administrator or designee shall make a reasonable effort to contact the parent/guardian by telephone or in person. Whenever a student is suspended, the parent/guardian shall be notified in writing of the suspension and the date the student may return to school following the suspension. This notice shall state the specific offense committed by the student. If school officials wish to ask the parent/guardian to confer regarding matters pertinent to the suspension, the notice may request that the parent/guardian respond to such requests without delay.

3. **Suspension Time Limits/Recommendation for Placement/Expulsion**

Suspensions, when not including a recommendation for expulsion, shall not exceed five (5) consecutive school days per suspension. The maximum number of days is 20 days in a school year.

Upon a recommendation of Placement/Expulsion by the Director or Director’s designee, the pupil and the pupil's parent/guardian or representative will be invited to a conference to determine if the suspension for the pupil should be extended pending an expulsion hearing. This determination will be made by the Director or designee upon either of the following determinations: 1) the pupil's presence will be disruptive to the education process; or 2) the pupil poses a threat or danger to others. Upon
either determination, the pupil's suspension will be extended pending the results of an expulsion hearing.

4. Appeal of Suspension

The parent/guardian of a suspended student may appeal the suspension decision within five (5) working days directly to the Director or Director’s designee. The Director or Director’s designee will expeditiously review the case with the parent/guardian and student in question within five (5) working days of receipt of the appeal. If the Director or Director’s designee determines that the student has not violated one of the rules in the parent/student handbook as agreed to by the student and parent or believes that extenuating circumstances should mitigate the consequences of such an action, then the suspension decision may be reversed. This process may be amended as the administrative structure changes with the growth of the School and will be defined in the Parent/Student Handbook. Final appeals are to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the CEO’s decision will be final. The Board of Directors will not have any role in the appeals process with regards to suspensions.

E. Authority to Expel

Students will be recommended for expulsion if the Director or Director’s designee finds that at least one of the following findings may be substantiated:

- That the student committed one of the acts listed under mandatory expulsions according to California law.
- That other means of correction are not feasible or have repeatedly failed to bring about proper conduct.
- That due to the nature of the violation, the presence of the student causes a continuing danger to the physical safety of the student or others.

A student may be expelled either by the Board following a hearing before it or by the Board upon the recommendation of an Administrative Panel to be assigned by the Board as needed. The Administrative Panel should consist of at least three members who are certificated and neither a teacher of the pupil or a Board member of the School’s governing board. The Administrative Panel may recommend expulsion of any student found to have committed an expellable offense.

F. Expulsion Procedures

Students recommended for expulsion are entitled to a hearing, if requested, to determine whether the student should be expelled. Unless postponed for good cause, the hearing shall be held within thirty (30) school days after the Director or designee determines that the Pupil has committed an expellable offense.

In the event an administrative panel hears the case, it will make a recommendation to the Board for a final decision whether to expel. The hearing shall be held in closed session.
unless the pupil makes a written request for a public hearing three (3) days prior to the hearing.

Written notice of the hearing shall be forwarded to the student and the student's parent/guardian at least ten (10) calendar days before the date of the hearing. Upon mailing the notice, it shall be deemed served upon the pupil. The notice shall include:

1. The date, time, and place of the expulsion hearing;

2. A statement of the specific facts, charges and offenses upon which the proposed expulsion is based;

3. A copy of the School's disciplinary rules which relate to the alleged violation;

4. Notification of the student's or parent/guardian's obligation to provide information about the student's status at the School to any other school district or school to which the student seeks enrollment;

5. The opportunity for the student or the student's parent/guardian to appear in person or to employ and be represented by counsel or a non-attorney advisor;

6. The opportunity to question all evidence presented and to present oral and documentary evidence on the student's behalf including witnesses.

G. Special Procedures for Expulsion Hearings Involving Sexual Assault or Battery Offenses

The Charter School may, upon a finding of good cause, determine that the disclosure of either the identity of the witness or the testimony of that witness at the hearing, or both, would subject the witness to an unreasonable risk of psychological or physical harm. Upon this determination, the testimony of the witness may be presented at the hearing in the form of sworn declarations that shall be examined only by the School or the hearing officer. Copies of these sworn declarations, edited to delete the name and identity of the witness, shall be made available to the pupil.

1. The complaining witness in any sexual assault or battery case must be provided with a copy of the applicable disciplinary rules and advised of his/her right to (a) receive five days notice of his/her scheduled testimony, (b) have up to two (2) adult support persons of his/her choosing present in the hearing at the time he/she testifies, which may include a parent, guardian, or legal counsel, and (c) elect to have the hearing closed while testifying.

2. The School must also provide the victim a room separate from the hearing room for the complaining witness' use prior to and during breaks in testimony.

3. At the discretion of the person or panel conducting the hearing, the complaining witness shall be allowed periods of relief from examination and cross-examination during which he or she may leave the hearing room.
4. The person conducting the expulsion hearing may also arrange the seating within the hearing room to facilitate a less intimidating environment for the complaining witness.

5. The person conducting the expulsion hearing may also limit time for taking the testimony of the complaining witness to the hours he/she is normally in school, if there is no good cause to take the testimony during other hours.

6. Prior to a complaining witness testifying, the support persons must be informed that the hearing is confidential. Nothing in the law precludes the person presiding over the hearing from removing a support person whom the presiding person finds is disrupting the hearing. The person conducting the hearing may permit any one of the support persons for the complaining witness to accompany him or her to the witness stand.

7. If one or both of the support persons is also a witness, the School must present evidence that the witness' presence is both desired by the witness and will be helpful to the School. The person presiding over the hearing shall permit the witness to stay unless it is established that there is a substantial risk that the testimony of the complaining witness would be influenced by the support person, in which case the presiding official shall admonish the support person or persons not to prompt, sway, or influence the witness in any way. Nothing shall preclude the presiding officer from exercising his or her discretion to remove a person from the hearing whom he or she believes is prompting, swaying, or influencing the witness.

8. The testimony of the support person shall be presented before the testimony of the complaining witness and the complaining witness shall be excluded from the courtroom during that testimony.

9. Especially for charges involving sexual assault or battery, if the hearing is to be conducted in the public at the request of the pupil being expelled, the complaining witness shall have the right to have his/her testimony heard in a closed session when testifying at a public meeting would threaten serious psychological harm to the complaining witness and there are no alternative procedures to avoid the threatened harm. The alternative procedures may include videotaped depositions or contemporaneous examination in another place communicated to the hearing room by means of closed-circuit television.

10. Evidence of specific instances of a complaining witness' prior sexual conduct is presumed inadmissable and shall not be heard absent a determination by the person conducting the hearing that extraordinary circumstances exist requiring the evidence be heard. Before such a determination regarding extraordinary circumstance can be made, the witness shall be provided notice and an opportunity to present opposition to the introduction of the evidence. In the hearing on the admissibility of the evidence, the complaining witness shall be entitled to be represented by a parent, legal counsel, or other support person. Reputation or opinion evidence regarding the sexual behavior of the complaining witness is not admissible for any purpose.
H. Record of Expulsion Hearing

A record of the hearing shall be made and may be maintained by any means, including electronic recording, as long as a reasonably accurate and complete written transcription of the proceedings can be made.

I. Presentation of Evidence

While technical rules of evidence do not apply to expulsion hearings, evidence may be admitted and used as proof only if it is the kind of evidence on which reasonable persons can rely in the conduct of serious affairs. A recommendation by the Administrative Panel to expel must be supported by substantial evidence that the student committed an expellable offense.

Findings of fact shall be based solely on the evidence at the hearing. While hearsay evidence is admissible, no decision to expel shall be based solely on hearsay and sworn declarations may be admitted as testimony from witnesses of whom the Board, Panel or designee determines that disclosure of their identity or testimony at the hearing may subject them to an unreasonable risk of physical or psychological harm.

If, due to a written request by the expelled pupil, the hearing is held at a public meeting, and the charge is committing or attempting to commit a sexual assault or committing a sexual battery as defined in Education Code Section 48900, a complaining witness shall have the right to have his or her testimony heard in a session closed to the public.

The decision of the Administrative Panel shall be in the form of written findings of fact and a written recommendation to the Board who will make a final determination regarding the expulsion. The final decision by the Board shall be made within ten (10) school days following the conclusion of the hearing.

If the expulsion hearing panel decides not to recommend expulsion, the pupil shall immediately be returned to his/her educational program.
J. Written Notice to Expel

The Director or designee following a decision of the Board to expel shall send written notice of the decision to expel, including the Board's adopted findings of fact, to the student or parent/guardian. This notice shall also include the following:

1. Notice of the specific offense committed by the student

2. Notice of the student's or parent/guardian's obligation to inform any new school or district in which the student seeks to enroll of the student's status with Synergy Charter Academy.

The Director or designee following a decision of the Board to expel shall also send written notice of the decision to expel to the student’s district of residence and the County Office of Education. This notice shall include the following:

1. Student’s name

2. Specific offense committed by the student.

K. Appeal of Expulsion

A request for appeal of expulsion must be received within five (5) working days after the written notice received by the parent/guardian. The student will be considered suspended until a meeting is convened. The appeal itself will occur within twenty (20) working days after the written notice received by the parent/guardian, and must be attended by parents(s)/guardian(s). In the case of expulsion, a fair and impartial Administrative Panel appointed by the Synergy Academies Board of Directors will hear the appeal, and its decision will be final.

L. Expelled Pupils/Alternative Education

In the event of a decision to expel a student from Synergy Charter Academy, the Directors will work with the District and/or county schools to assist with the appropriate educational placement of the student who has been expelled.

M. Outcome Data

Synergy Charter Academy shall maintain all data involving placement, tracking, and monitoring of student suspensions, expulsions, and reinstatements, and make such outcome data readily available to the District upon request.
N. Rehabilitation Plans
Pupils who are expelled from Synergy Charter Academy shall be given a rehabilitation plan upon expulsion as developed by Synergy Charter Academy’s governing board at the time of the expulsion order, which may include, but is not limited to, periodic review as well as assessment at the time of review for readmission. The rehabilitation plan should include a date not later than one (1) year from the date of expulsion when the pupil may reapply to Synergy Charter Academy for readmission.

O. Readmission
Synergy Charter Academy’s governing board shall adopt rules establishing a procedure for the filing and processing of requests for readmission and the process for the required review of all expelled pupils for readmission. Upon completion of the readmission process, Synergy Charter Academy’s governing board shall readmit the pupil, unless Synergy Charter Academy’s governing board makes a finding that the pupil has not met the conditions of the rehabilitation plan or continues to pose a danger to campus safety. A description of the procedure shall be made available to the pupil and the pupil’s parent or guardian at the time the expulsion order is entered. The Charter School is responsible for reinstating the student upon the conclusion of the expulsion period.

P. Special Education Students
In the case of a student who has an IEP, or a student who has a 504 Plan, the Charter will ensure that it follows the correct disciplinary procedures to comply with the mandates of state and federal laws, including IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Plan of 1973. As set forth in the MOU regarding special education between the District and the Charter School, an IEP team, including a district representative, will meet to conduct a manifestation determination and to discuss alternative placement utilizing the District’s Policies and Procedures Manual. Prior to recommending expulsion for a student with a 504 Plan, the charter administrator will convene a Link Determination meeting to ask the following two questions: A) Was the misconduct caused by, or directly and substantially related to the student’s disability? B) Was the misconduct a direct result of Synergy Charter Academy’s failure to implement 504?

Q. Gun Free Schools Act
Synergy Charter Academy shall comply with the federal Gun Free Schools Act.
ELEMENT 11 – RETIREMENT PROGRAMS

“The manner by which staff members of the charter schools will be covered by the State Teachers’ Retirement System, the Public Employees’ Retirement System, or federal social security.” Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(K)

Synergy Academies’ Board of Directors will determine salaries and benefits, working conditions, calendars, holidays, vacations, work days, and the work year. When appropriate, the Board may obtain feedback from the school community (i.e., administrators, teachers, parents) on these items.

Synergy Academies’ Director of Operations will be responsible for working with any applicable vendors (i.e., payroll companies, etc.), to ensure that the following retirement program data, paperwork, and payments are completed and submitted accordingly and that contributions are made on behalf of all eligible staff members.

State Teachers’ Retirement System (STRS)

Any full-time certificated employees who are eligible may elect to participate in the State Teachers’ Retirement System (STRS). Participating employees will contribute the required percentage (currently 8% of salary), and Synergy Academies will contribute the employer’s portion (currently 8.25%) required by STRS. Synergy Academies’ Director of Operations will oversee that retirement data will be reported and payments will be made via the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) in accordance with procedures established by STRS.

Public Employees’ Retirement System (PERS) or Federal Social Security

All eligible employees of Synergy Academies may elect to participate in the Public Employees’ Retirement System (PERS) if they meet the qualifications for participation set forth by LACOE and PERS or will participate in Federal Social Security if they do not meet the criteria for participation. Both eligible employees and Synergy Academies will contribute the required percentages for these programs.

Medicare

All employees will pay the required percentage of Medicare.
**ELEMENT 12 – ATTENDANCE ALTERNATIVES**

“The public school attendance alternatives for pupils residing within the school district who choose not to attend charter schools.” Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(L)

Synergy Charter Academy is a school of choice. No student is required to attend the Charter School and no employee is required to work at the Charter School.

Pupils who choose not to attend Synergy Charter Academy may choose to attend other public schools in their district of residence or pursue an interdistrict-transfer in accordance with existing enrollment and transfer policies of the District.
ELEMENT 13 – EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

“A description of the right of any employee of the school district upon leaving the employment of the school district to work in a charter school, and of any rights of return to the school district after employment at a charter school.” Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(M)

Synergy Academies does not require any employee to work for Synergy Charter Academy.

Leave and return rights for union-represented employees who accept employment with Synergy Charter Academy will be administered in accordance with applicable collective bargaining agreements between the employee’s union and the District and also in accordance with any applicable judicial rulings.
**ELEMENT 14 – DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

“The procedure to be followed by the charter school and the entity granting the charter to resolve disputes relating to provisions of the charter.” Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(N)

**Disputes Between LAUSD and Synergy Charter Academy**

**Mandatory Dispute Resolution**

The staff and governing board members of Synergy Charter Academy agree to resolve any claim, controversy or dispute in which money damages are claimed by either party, and which arises out of or relates to the Charter agreement between the District and Synergy Charter Academy, except any controversy or claim that is in any way related to revocation of this Charter, (“Dispute”), or which either party seeks injunctive relief, pursuant to the terms of this Element 14.

Any Dispute between the District and Synergy Charter Academy shall be resolved in accordance with the procedures set forth below:

1) Any Dispute shall be made in writing (“Written Notification”). The Written Notification must identify the nature of the Dispute and any supporting facts. The Written Notification shall be tendered to the other party by personal delivery, by facsimile, or by certified mail. The Written Notification shall be deemed received (a) if personally delivered, upon date of delivery to the address of the person to receive such notice if delivered by 5:00 PM or otherwise on the business day following personal delivery; (b) if by facsimile, upon electronic confirmation of receipt; or (c) if by mail, two (2) business days after deposit in the U.S. Mail. All Written Notifications shall be addressed as follows:

   To Charter School:  Synergy Charter Academy
                    c/o School Director
                    P.O. Box 78999
                    Los Angeles, CA 90016

   To Director of Charter Schools:  Director of Charter Schools
                                   Los Angeles Unified School District
                                   333 South Beaudry Avenue, 25th Floor
                                   Los Angeles, California 90017

2) A written response (“Written Response”) shall be tendered to the other party within twenty (20) business days from the date of receipt of the Written Notification. The parties agree to schedule a conference to discuss the Dispute identified in the Written Notice (“Issue Conference”). The Issue Conference shall take place within fifteen (15) business days from the date the Written Response is received by the other party. The Written Response may be tendered by personal delivery, by facsimile, or by certified mail. The Written Response shall be deemed received (a) if personally delivered, upon date of delivery to the address of the person to receive such notice if delivered by 5:00 p.m., or otherwise on the business day following personal delivery; (b) if by facsimile, upon electronic confirmation of receipt; or (c) if by mail, two (2) business days after deposit in the U.S. Mail.
3) If the Dispute cannot be resolved by mutual agreement at the Issue Conference, either party may then request that the Dispute be resolved by mediation. Each party shall bear its own attorney’s fees, costs and expenses associated with the mediation. The mediator’s fees and the administrative fees of the mediation shall be shared equally among the parties. Mediation proceedings shall commence within 120 days from the date of either party’s request for mediation following the Issue Conference. The parties shall mutually agree upon the selection of a mediator to resolve the Dispute. The mediator may be selected from the approved list of mediators prepared by the American Arbitration Association. Unless the parties mutually agree otherwise, mediation proceedings shall be administered in accordance with the commercial mediation procedures of the American Arbitration Association.

4) If the mediation is not successful, then the parties agree to resolve the Dispute by binding arbitration conducted by a single arbitrator. Unless the parties mutually agree otherwise, arbitration proceedings shall be administered in accordance with the commercial arbitration rules of the American Arbitration Association. The arbitrator must be an active member of the State Bar of California or a retired judge of the state or federal judiciary of California. Each party shall bear its own attorney’s fees, costs and expenses associated with the arbitration. The arbitrator’s fees and the administrative fees of the arbitration shall be shared equally among the parties. However, any party who fails or refuses to submit to arbitration as set forth herein shall bear all attorney’s fees, costs and expenses incurred by such other party in compelling arbitration of any controversy or claim.

**Internal Disputes**

Disputes arising from within Synergy Charter Academy, including all disputes among and between students, staff, parents, volunteers, advisors, vendors, and/or partner organizations will be resolved by the Synergy Academies Board of Directors and/or administrative staff.
**Element 15 – Employer Status and Collective Bargaining**

“A declaration whether or not the charter school shall be deemed the exclusive public school employer of the employees of the charter school for the purposes of the Educational Employment Relations Act (Chapter 10.7 (commencing with Section 3540) of Division 4 of Title 1 of the Government Code).” Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(O)

Synergy Academies is deemed the exclusive public school employer of the employees of Synergy Charter Academy for the purposes of the Educational Employment Relations Act (EERA).
ELEMENT 16 – PROCEDURES TO BE USED IF THE CHARTER SCHOOL CLOSES

“A description of the procedures to be used if the charter school closes. The procedures shall ensure a final audit of the school to determine the disposition of all assets and liabilities of the charter school, including plans for disposing of any net assets and for the maintenance and transfer of pupil records.” Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(P)

Revocation
The District may revoke the charter if Synergy Charter Academy commits a breach of any provision set forth in a policy related to Charter Schools adopted by the District Board of Education and/or any provisions set forth in the Charter School Act of 1992. The District may revoke the charter of Synergy Charter Academy if the District finds, through a showing of substantial evidence, that Synergy Charter Academy did any of the following:

- Synergy Charter Academy committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in the charter.
- Synergy Charter Academy failed to meet or pursue any of the pupil outcomes identified in the charter.
- Synergy Charter Academy failed to meet generally accepted accounting principles, or engaged in fiscal mismanagement.
- Synergy Charter Academy violated any provision of law.

Prior to revocation, and in accordance with Cal. Educ. Code section 47607(d) and State regulations, the LAUSD Board of Education will notify Synergy Charter Academy in writing of the specific violation, and give Synergy Charter Academy a reasonable opportunity to cure the violation, unless the LAUSD Board of Education determines, in writing, that the violation constitutes a severe and imminent threat to the health or safety of the pupils. Revocation proceedings are not subject to the dispute resolution clause set forth in this charter.

Closure Action
The decision to close the Charter School either by the Charter School governing Board or by the LAUSD Board of Education, will be documented in a Closure Action. The Closure Action shall have been deemed to have been automatically made when any of the following occur: the charter is revoked or non-renewed by the LAUSD Board of Education; the Charter School board votes to close the Charter School; or the Charter lapses.

Closure Procedures
The procedures for charter school closure are guided by California Education Code sections 47604.32, 47605, 47605.6, and 47607 as well as California Code of Regulations, Title 5 (5 CCR), sections 11962 and 11962.1. A closed charter school must designate a responsible entity to conduct closure activities and identify how these activities will be funded. The procedures outlined below are based on “Charter School Closure Requirements and Recommendations (Revised 08/2009)” as posted on the California Department of Education website. References to “Charter School” applies to the charter school’s nonprofit corporation and/or governing board.
Documentation of Closure Action

The revocation or non-renewal of a charter school must be documented by an official action of the authorizing entity. Notice of a charter school’s closure for any reason must be provided by the authorizing entity to the California Department of Education (CDE). In addition, the charter school must send notice of its closure to:

1. Parents or guardians of students. Written notification to parents/guardians/caregivers of the enrolled students of Synergy Charter Academy will be issued by Synergy Charter Academy within 72 hours after the determination of a Closure Action and the effective date of closure. A copy of the written notifications to parents is also to be sent to LAUSD within the same time frames.
2. The authorizing entity
3. The county office of education. Written notification to the Los Angeles County Office of Education of the Closure Action shall be made by Synergy Charter Academy by registered mail within 72 hours of the decision to Closure Action. Charter School shall provide a copy of this correspondence to the ICSD.
4. The special education local plan area in which the school participates. Written notification to the Special Education Local Planning Area (SELP A) in which the Charter School participates of the Closure Action shall be made by Synergy Charter Academy by registered mail within 72 hours of the decision to Closure Action. Charter School shall provide a copy of this correspondence to the ICSD.
5. The retirement systems in which the school’s employees participate. The Charter School will within fourteen (14) calendar days of closure action contact the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS), Public Employees Retirement System (PERS), and the Los Angeles County office of Education and follow their procedures for dissolving contracts and reporting. Charter School shall provide a copy of this correspondence to the ICSD.
6. The CDE. Written notification to the California Department of Education of the Closure Action shall be made by Synergy Charter Academy by registered mail within 72 hours of the decision to Closure Action. Charter School shall provide a copy of this correspondence to the ICSD.

Notice must be received by the CDE within ten calendar days of any official action taken by the chartering authority. Notification of all the parties above must include at least the following:

1. The effective date of the closure
2. The name(s) of and contact information for the person(s) handling inquiries regarding the closure
3. The students’ school districts of residence
4. How parents or guardians may obtain copies of student records, including specific information on completed courses and credits that meet graduation requirements

In addition to the four required items above, notification to the CDE must also include:

1. A description of the circumstances of the closure
2. The location of student and personnel records

In addition to the four required items above, notification to parents, guardians, and students should also include:

1. Information on how to transfer the student to an appropriate school
2. A certified packet of student information that includes closure notice, a copy of their child’s cumulative record which will include grade reports, discipline records, immunization records, completed coursework, credits that meet graduation requirements, a transcript, and State testing results.

3. Information on student completion of college entrance requirements for all high school students affected by the closure.

The Charter School shall announce the closure to any school districts that may be responsible for providing education services to the former students of the Charter School within 72 hours of the decision to Closure Action. This notice will include a list of returning students and their home schools. Charter school closures should occur at the end of an academic year if it is feasible to maintain a legally compliant program until then. If a conversion charter school is reverting to non-charter status, notification of this change should be made to all parties listed in this section.

School and Student Records Retention and Transfer
The Charter School shall observe the following in the transfer and maintenance of school and student records:

1. The Charter School will provide the District with original cumulative files pursuant to District policy and applicable handbook(s) regarding cumulative records for secondary and elementary schools for all students both active and inactive at the Charter School. Transfer of the complete and organized original student records to the District will occur within seven calendar days of the effective date of closure.

2. The process for transferring student records to the receiving schools shall be in accordance with LAUSD procedures for students moving from one school to another.

3. The Charter School will prepare an electronic master list of all students to the Innovation and Charter Schools Division. This list will include the student’s identification number, Statewide Student Identifier (SSID), birthdate, grade, full name, address, home school, enrollment date, exit code, exit date, parent/guardian name(s), and phone number(s). If the Charter School closure occurs before the end of the school year, the list should also indicate the name of the school that each student is transferring to, if known. This electronic master list will be delivered in the form of a CD.

4. The original cumulative files should be organized for delivery to the District in two categories: active students and inactive students. The ICSD will coordinate with the Charter School for the delivery and/or pickup of the student records.

5. The Charter School must update all student records in the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) prior to closing.

6. The Charter School will provide to the ICSD a copy of student attendance records, teacher gradebooks, school payroll records, and Title I records (if applicable). Submission of personnel records must include any employee records the charter school has. These include, but are not limited to, records related to performance and grievance.

7. All records are to be boxed and labeled by classification of documents and the required duration
After receiving notification of closure, the CDE will notify the charter school and the authorizing entity if it is aware of any liabilities the charter school owes the state. These may include overpayment of apportionments, unpaid revolving fund loans or grants, or other liabilities. The CDE may ask the county office of education to conduct an audit of the charter school if it has reason to believe that the school received state funding for which it was not eligible.

Synergy Charter Academy shall ensure completion of an independent final audit within six months after the closure of the school that includes:

1. An accounting of all financial assets. These may include cash and accounts receivable and an inventory of property, equipment, and other items of material value.

2. An accounting of all liabilities. These may include accounts payable or reduction in apportionments due to loans, unpaid staff compensation, audit findings, or other investigations.

3. An assessment of the disposition of any restricted funds received by or due to the charter school.

This audit may serve as the school’s annual audit.

The financial closeout audit of the Charter School will be paid for by the Charter School. This audit will be conducted by a neutral, independent licensed CPA who will employ generally accepted accounting principles. Any liability or debt incurred by Charter School will be the responsibility of the Charter School and not LAUSD. Charter School understands and acknowledges that Charter School will cover the outstanding debts or liabilities of Charter School. Any unused monies at the time of the audit will be returned to the appropriate funding source. The Charter School understands and acknowledges that only unrestricted funds will be used to pay creditors. Any unused AB 602 funds will be returned to the District SELPA or the SELPA in which the Charter School participates, and other categorical funds will be returned to the source of funds.

The Charter school shall ensure the completion and filing of any annual reports required. This includes:

1. Preliminary budgets
2. Interim financial reports
3. Second interim financial reports
4. Final unaudited reports

These reports must be submitted to the CDE and the authorizing entity in the form required. If the charter school chooses to submit this information before the forms and software are available for the fiscal year, alternative forms can be used if they are approved in advance by the CDE. These reports should be submitted as soon as possible after the closure action, but no later than the required deadline for reporting for the fiscal year.

For apportionment of categorical programs, the CDE will count the prior year average daily attendance (ADA) or enrollment data of the closed charter school with the data of the authorizing
entity. This practice will occur in the first year after the closure and will continue until CDE data collection processes reflect ADA or enrollment adjustments for all affected LEAs due to the charter closure.

Disposition of Liabilities and Assets
The closeout audit must determine the disposition of all liabilities of the charter school. Charter school closure procedures must also ensure disposal of any net assets remaining after all liabilities of the charter school have been paid or otherwise addressed. Such disposal includes, but is not limited to:

1. The return of any donated materials and property according to any conditions set when the donations were accepted.
2. The return of any grant and restricted categorical funds to their source according to the terms of the grant or state and federal law.
3. The submission of final expenditure reports for any entitlement grants and the filing of Final Expenditure Reports and Final Performance Reports, as appropriate.

Net assets of the charter school may be transferred to the authorizing entity. If the Charter School is operated by a nonprofit corporation, and if the corporation does not have any other functions than operation of the Charter School, the corporation will be dissolved according to its bylaws.

a. The corporation’s bylaws will address how assets are to be distributed at the closure of the corporation.
b. A copy of the corporations bylaws containing the information on how assets are to be distributed at the closure of the corporation, are to be provided to LAUSD prior to approval of this Charter.

For six (6) calendar months from the Closure Action or until budget allows, whichever comes first, sufficient staff as deemed appropriate by the Charter School Board, will maintain employment to take care of all necessary tasks and procedures required for a smooth closing of the school and student transfers.

The Charter School Board shall adopt a plan for wind-up of the school and, if necessary, the corporation, in accordance with the requirements of the Corporations Code.

The Charter School shall provide LAUSD within fourteen (14) calendar days of closure action prior written notice of any outstanding payments to staff and the method by which the school will make the payments.

Prior to final closure, the Charter School shall do all of the following on behalf of the school's employees, and anything else required by applicable law:

a. File all final federal, state, and local employer payroll tax returns and issue final W-2s and Form 1099s by the statutory deadlines.
b. File the Federal Notice of Discontinuance with the Department of Treasury (Treasury Form 63).
c. Make final federal tax payments (employee taxes, etc.)
d. File the final withholding tax return (Treasury Form 165).
e. File the final return with the IRS (Form 990 and Schedule).
This Element 16 shall survive the revocation, expiration, termination, cancellation of this charter or any other act or event that would end Synergy Charter Academy’s right to operate as a Charter School or cause Synergy Charter Academy to cease operation. Synergy Charter Academy and District agree that, due to the nature of the property and activities that are the subject of this petition, the District and public shall suffer irreparable harm should Charter School breach any obligation under this Element 16. The District, therefore, shall have the right to seek equitable relief to enforce any right arising under this Element 16 or any provision of this Element 16 or to prevent or cure any breach of any obligation undertaken, without in any way prejudicing any other legal remedy available to the District. Such legal relief shall include, without limitation, the seeking of a temporary or permanent injunction, restraining order, or order for specific performance, and may be sought in any appropriate court.

*Facilities*

☑️ Proposed Charter School Location: Synergy Charter Academy is currently co-located with Quincy Jones Elementary School at 900 E. 33rd St., Los Angeles, CA 90011

☑️ Names of District school sites near proposed location: The targeted areas for Synergy Charter Academy’s location are near Quincy Jones Elementary School, 20th Street Elementary School, 28th Street Elementary School, Carver Middle School, and Jefferson High School.

☑️ Proposed Charter School to be located within the boundaries of LAUSD.

**District-Owned Facilities**: If Synergy Charter Academy is using LAUSD facilities as of the date of the submittal of this charter petition or takes occupancy of LAUSD facilities prior to the approval of this charter petition, Synergy Charter Academy shall execute an agreement provided by LAUSD for the use of the LAUSD facilities as a condition of the approval of the charter petition. If at any time after the approval of this charter petition Synergy Charter Academy will occupy and use any LAUSD facilities, Synergy Charter Academy shall execute an agreement provided by LAUSD for the use of LAUSD facilities prior to occupancy and commencing use.

Synergy Charter Academy agrees that occupancy and use of LAUSD facilities shall be in compliance with applicable laws and LAUSD policies for the operation and maintenance of LAUSD facilities and furnishings and equipment. All LAUSD facilities (i.e. school) will remain subject to those laws applicable to public schools which LAUSD observes.

In the event of an emergency, all LAUSD facilities (i.e. schools) are available for use by the American Red Cross and public agencies as emergency locations, which may disrupt or prevent Charter School from conducting educational programs. If the Charter School will share the use of LAUSD facilities with other LAUSD user groups, the Charter School agrees it will participate in and observe all LAUSD safety policies (e.g. emergency chain of information, participate in safety drills).

The use agreements provided by LAUSD for LAUSD facilities shall contain terms and conditions addressing issues such as, but not limited to, the following:

- **Use**: Synergy Charter Academy will be restricted to using the LAUSD facilities for the operation of a public school providing educational instruction to public school students.
consistent with the terms of the charter petition and incidental related uses. LAUSD shall have the right to inspect LAUSD facilities upon reasonable notice to Synergy Charter Academy.

- **Furnishings and Equipment.** LAUSD shall retain ownership of any furnishings and equipment, including technology, (“F&E”) that it provides to Synergy Charter Academy for use. Synergy Charter Academy, at its sole cost and expense, shall provide maintenance and other services for the good and safe operation of the F&E.

- **Leasing; Licensing.** Use of the LAUSD facilities by any person or entity other than Synergy Charter Academy shall be administered by LAUSD. The parties may agree to an alternative arrangement in the use agreement.

- **Minimum Payments or Charges to be Paid to LAUSD Arising From the Facilities.**
  (i) Pro Rata Share. LAUSD shall collect and Synergy Charter Academy shall pay a Pro Rata Share for facilities costs as provided in the Charter School Act of 1992 and its regulations. The parties may agree to an alternative arrangement regarding facilities costs in the use agreement; and

  (ii) Taxes; Assessments. Generally, Synergy Charter Academy shall pay any assessment or fee imposed upon or levied on the LAUSD facilities that it is occupying or Synergy Charter Academy’s legal or equitable interest created by the use agreement.

- **Maintenance & Operations Services.** In the event LAUSD agrees to allow Synergy Charter Academy to perform any of the operation and maintenance services, LAUSD shall have the right to inspect the LAUSD facilities and the costs incurred in such inspection shall be paid by Synergy Charter Academy.

  (i) Co-Location. If Synergy Charter Academy is co-locating or sharing the LAUSD facilities with another user, LAUSD shall provide the operations and maintenance services for the LAUSD facilities and Synergy Charter Academy shall pay the Pro Rata Share. The parties may agree to an alternative arrangement regarding performance of the operations and maintenance services and payment for such in the use agreement.

  (ii) Sole Occupant. If Synergy Charter Academy is a sole occupant of LAUSD facilities, LAUSD shall allow Synergy Charter Academy, at its sole cost and expense, to provide some operations and maintenance services for the LAUSD facilities in accordance with applicable laws and LAUSD’s policies on operations and maintenance services for facilities and F&E. NOTWITHSTANDING THE FOREGOING, LAUSD shall provide all services for regulatory inspections, which as the owner of the real property is required to submit, and deferred maintenance and Synergy Charter Academy shall pay LAUSD for the cost and expense of providing those services. The parties may agree to an alternative arrangement regarding performance of the operations and maintenance services and payment for such services in the use agreement.

- **Real Property Insurance.** Prior to occupancy, Synergy Charter Academy shall satisfy those requirements to participate in LAUSD’s property insurance or, if Synergy Charter Academy
is the sole occupant of LAUSD facilities, obtain and maintain separate property insurance for the LAUSD facilities. Synergy Charter Academy shall not have the option of obtaining and maintaining separate property insurance for the LAUSD facility IF Synergy Charter Academy is co-locating or sharing the LAUSD facility with another user, unless the policy is approved by LAUSD.

**Facility status**: The charter petitioner must demonstrate control of a facility such as a commitment from the landlord, to ensure that the property is actually available to the charter developer, and that the facility is usable with or without conditions (such as a conditional code permit.) The Charter School facility shall comply with all applicable building codes, standards and regulations adopted by the city and/or county agencies responsible for building and safety standards for the city in which the Charter School is to be located, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Applicable codes and ADA requirements shall also apply to the construction, reconstruction, alteration of or addition to the proposed Charter School facility. Synergy Charter Academy cannot exempt itself from applicable building and zoning codes, ordinances, and ADA requirements. Charter schools are required to adhere to the program accessibility requirements of Federal law (Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504).

**Occupancy of the Site**: The charter petitioner or developer shall provide the District with a final Certificate of Occupancy issued by the applicable permitting agency, allowing the petitioner to use and occupy the site. Synergy Charter Academy may not open without providing a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy for the designated use of the facility. If Synergy Charter Academy moves or expands to another facility during the term of this charter, Synergy Charter Academy shall provide a Certificate of Occupancy to the District for each facility before the school is scheduled to open or operate in the facility or facilities. Notwithstanding any language to the contrary in this charter, the interpretation, application, and enforcement of this provision are not subject to the Dispute Resolution Process outlined in Element 14.

**Health & Safety**: Synergy Charter Academy will comply with the Healthy Schools Act, California Education Code Section 17608, which details pest management requirements for schools. Developers may find additional information at: [www.laschools.org/employee/mo/ipm](http://www.laschools.org/employee/mo/ipm)

**Asbestos Management**: Synergy Charter Academy will comply with the asbestos requirement as cited in the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), 40CFR part 763. AHERA requires that any building leased or acquired that is to be used as a school or administrative building shall maintain an asbestos management plan.
APPENDIX

Appendix A
By-Laws for the non-profit organization that is requesting the charter (signed by Board Secretary)

Appendix B
Articles of Incorporation for the non-profit organization with State Seal

Appendix C
Conflict of Interest Policy
Please note that Synergy Charter Academy will abide by LAUSD’s Conflict of Interest Policy.

Appendix D
Budget Projections for 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014, including cash flow of month to month for 3 years

Appendix E
Employee Handbook and Parent Handbook (please note Handbook is also provided in Spanish)

Appendix F
Resumes for Lead Petitioners and On-Site Financial Manager

Appendix G
Due Diligence Questionnaires for Lead Petitioners and On-Site Financial Manager

Appendix H
Resumes and Questionnaires for Board Members

Appendix I
Resolution from Board of Directors

Appendix J
Lottery Form (Pre-Lottery Student Application)

Appendix K
Enrollment Form (Post-Lottery Enrollment Packet)

Appendix L
Demographic Information for Surrounding Schools