Montague Charter Academy:

**Evaluation of Charter Implementation
and Impact, 1996-1997 to 2000-2001**

Los Angeles Unified School District

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Research conducted by:

Michael Butler
Marisela Perez
Van Villanueva

Public Works, Inc.
90 N. Daisy Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91101
(626) 564-9890
(626) 564-0657 fax

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1. Executive Summary

Charter School Legislation and Evaluation Context

In September 1992, California signed into law Senate Bill 1448 establishing a procedure for forming new or transforming existing public schools into charter schools that would be exempt from the state education code governing school districts. Updated through Assembly Bill 544 in 1998, the charter school legislation allows parents and educators to establish and maintain schools that operate independently from existing school districts structures as a method of improving student achievement and encouraging the use of different and innovative teaching methods. In exchange for flexibility and a degree of autonomy, charter schools are accountable for complying with the provisions of their charters, a five-year plan for improving student achievement, renewable upon approval every five years.

Charter Organization and Goals

In July 1996, Montague Charter Academy began operation as a public charter school. As outlined in Montague's original charter petition, the vision for change included the development of a "Community of Learners" committed to improving student learning through a) increased student access to a rigorous educational program; b) extended time for expanded student learning opportunities; c) the creation of school-developed curriculum and innovative educational programs; d) increased stakeholder voice and involvement in school decisions; and, e) bonding of the school and community. In this vision for change, Montague explicitly envisioned student improvements in terms of the following: student mastery of basic skills in context, appreciation of self and one's heritage, exposure to an enriched curriculum, opportunities to learn a second language, development of cooperative social skills, and exposure to career and postsecondary opportunities.

Evaluation Overview

In March 2001, LAUSD contracted with Public Works, Inc., a non-profit educational consulting firm specializing in program evaluation, to design and conduct an evaluation of Montague Charter Academy as part of the Charter renewal process. Specifically, the evaluation of Montague was focused on addressing four key research questions:

1. To what extent have student achievement and school performance improved since becoming a charter school?
2. How does Montague compare to similar (nearby) schools in terms of these student and school-level indicators?
3. What contextual, programmatic or implementation factors might be associated with the student outcomes observed at Montague?
4. To what extent were these programs and activities linked to adoption of the charter? Put another way, what was the school able to do that it could not have done without the charter?

Summary of Charter Implementation Findings

To explain and illuminate the student outcomes, Public Works, Inc. collected and analyzed data linked to the programmatic implementation of Montague's charter. Efforts centered on identifying possible explanatory factors associated with student outcomes. Qualitative data collection (e.g., document review, on-site focus groups and interviews, and classroom observations) focused on four broad areas associated with Charter implementation: Professional Development, Intervention Strategies, School Organization and Decision-Making, and Parent/Community Involvement. In addition, Public Works administered a survey of staff and parents designed to assess the impact of the charter in these and other areas.

School Strengths

Professional Development

Since becoming a charter school, Montague has increased staff access to professional development. The process for designing school-wide professional development is inclusionary and ensures that training topics are closely linked to the school's instructional program. To reinforce on-going professional development, structured grade level meetings provide focused articulation forums that regularly involve teachers in common planning and curricular pacing. In addition, Montague has developed its own new teacher induction and support program based on a 40-hour curriculum designed and taught by veteran staff. Although not directly linked to charter implementation, the school's emphasis on training in standards integration and standards-based instruction is clearly evident in daily classroom practices.

Student Intervention Programs

Using the flexibility provided by the charter, Montague has developed a wide array of intervention programs and services designed to meet the needs of the student population served by Montague. These intervention options include before and after school programs, Saturday academies, intersession intervention, intermediate classes, and a One-to-One Reading Center. As such, there are multiple avenues for struggling students to receive additional assistance and support. Throughout the school, there is an awareness of the importance of early intervention and there are well-developed systems for referring students to intervention programs and services.

School Organization and Governance

Montague has developed a governance model based on seven working councils who report to an overarching Collaborative Council. During the last five years, school governance has become increasingly oriented toward shaping school decisions to meet local staff and student needs. School governance under the charter is student-centered in the sense that decision-making is explicitly linked to curriculum and instruction. Montague has used the budgetary flexibility provided by the charter to fund innovative programs for students such as the array of intervention options described above. Moreover, the inclusionary school governance model at Montague encourages staff participation in school decision-making.

Through local decision-making bodies, Montague has enjoyed enhanced local control over staff selection and training. As a result, Montague has been able to develop a school culture which rests on a foundation of a shared set of core beliefs about teaching and learning.

Parent and Community Involvement

In terms of parent involvement, Montague's major accomplishment as a charter school has been to change the community's perception of the school. Parents view Montague as a safer, more welcoming place which has blossomed in the midst of a low-income community. The school's Parent Center is actively involved in providing parent education and conducting outreach to parents. The results of these efforts are apparent in the fact that parent involvement at Montague is quite visible, especially through the presence of parent employees as well as expanded parent volunteer options. In addition, Montague has shown a remarkable ability to link parents to health and human services through a strong Healthy Start program which continues to operate four years after the end of State grant funding.

Areas in Need of Improvement

Professional Development

Although professional development is closely linked to Montague's instructional program, school-wide training is not always based on the examination of student achievement results. In this respect, Montague would likely benefit from the integration of student assessment results into the design and planning of school-wide professional development. Examination of student assessment data would also provide more focus for grade-level articulation forums. Another area for refinement hinges on professional development follow-up. Currently, there is not a formal way to determine whether professional development is being implemented in the classroom. While some follow-up probably occurs within grade level articulation meetings, more could be done to monitor the impact of professional development on classroom teaching practices. Lastly, Montague should consider increasing the involvement of teaching assistants in school-wide professional development. Based on conversations with school leaders, Montague is planning to develop a career ladder program for paraprofessionals based on increased mentoring and professional development.

Assessment and Accountability

A key weakness of Montague's charter implementation has been the lack of attention accorded to on-going data collection and analysis. Despite the use of multiple measures of student achievement, the systematic collection and analysis of student assessment data has not occurred. In lieu of this data, it is unsurprising that there is limited evidence that assessment data (other than Stanford 9 data) are used to shape school planning and to guide instruction at Montague. School leaders at Montague acknowledge that the use of assessment data is an area where the school could markedly improve. During the next year, assessment is likely to assume a more prominent place in school-wide professional development and decision-making forums.

Student Intervention Programs

The provision of a wide array of intervention options at Montague is one of the most noteworthy by-products of the school's charter implementation. Nonetheless, Montague staff admit that they are at the beginning stages of operating the newly developed intervention programs and services. For example, the intervention process would be well served by the development of a formal set of entry/exit criteria governing student involvement in intervention programs. More importantly, now that intervention options are widely available, the school should take care not to become overly reliant on intervention as an instructional strategy. For example, some staff expressed concerns that student referrals to intervention may occur without careful review of classroom teaching practices, simply because the programs and services exist. In addition, there is some indication that parents associate the school with instructional intervention. Rather than an example of educational innovation, the number of intervention programs may be viewed by some parents as evidence that classroom instruction is inadequate and needs to be remedied via intervention. Therefore, school efforts to communicate the purpose and outcomes associated with intervention should be prioritized.

School Organization and Governance

The school governance model which has evolved at Montague displays many noteworthy characteristics. Nonetheless, there are two key areas where school decision-making might be improved. First, Montague is struggling with the notion of representation. Put simply, it is sometimes difficult for representatives to accurately represent their constituents as opposed to articulating their own opinions. As such, representative democracy at Montague is a work in progress. A second area hinges on the authority of the various working councils in operation at Montague. While the emergence of the Curriculum and Instruction Council as a major decision-making forum indicates that school governance is linked to teaching and learning, this committee has, on occasion functioned as the school's *de facto* governance body, exercising jurisdiction over much of the school's policy-making. As such, this committee assumed a role of "first among equals" in Montague's governance model. At this time, Montague may want to consider clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the working councils as well as their relationship to the school's umbrella governance body, the Collaborative Council.

Parent/Community Involvement

Parent outreach and involvement in school programs and activities have increased since becoming a charter school. Due to the increased attention public education has received as well as the school's outreach and education efforts, there is a desire among parents to deepen home-school connections. In particular, there is a need to move parent education at Montague toward a more instructional focus. Parents want to know more about the school's curricular offerings as well as assessment practices and intervention options. There is also room for improvement in terms of providing more parents with an understanding of the school's charter goals and objectives as well as making it easier for parents to participate in school decision-making through proactive scheduling and altering meeting times.

Significantly, parents expressed a desire for faculty to become more aware of and connected to the school community. While the presence of parents at Montague is not longer rare,

school staff have not become more visible in the surrounding community. Parents expressed a desire for staff to conduct home visits or walks through the community in order to become more familiar with the daily lives of the students they teach. Montague might also benefit from a higher profile among those who are not parents but who work in the surrounding community. While some business and government agency partnerships have been established, a more aggressive outreach and publicity campaign could yield unforeseen benefits for the school.

Charter Impact on Student Performance

To assess the impact of the Charter on student achievement, Public Works collected and analyzed student achievement data provided by the Information and Technology Division (ITD) for the three-year period 1997-98 to 1999-00. These data were chosen because comparable Stanford 9 data was available for each of these years. Throughout, Montague's performance was compared to that of seven matched schools with similar pupil enrollment, ethnic composition, proportion of ELLs, and percentage of students eligible for the Free/Reduced Meal program. Student achievement data were examined in disaggregated fashion in order to evaluate success for all relevant subgroups of students (e.g., by gender, ethnicity, English language proficiency, and socio-economic status). School-level performance data such as ELL redesignation and pupil attendance rates were also collected and analyzed for trends.

Summary of Student Achievement Findings

Stanford 9

Montague has shown across the board improvements on grade 1-5 Stanford 9 (Reading, Math, and Language) during last three years. Reading improved 8.4 NCEs in Reading, 8.2 in Math, and 5.4 in Language. Compared alongside the matched comparison schools, this growth in student achievement placed Montague 1st in Reading, and 3rd in both Math and Language. However, after controlling for demographics, Montague's performance is more modest. Regression analysis conducted as part of this study show that Montague tended to do consistently better than three schools, not as well as three others, and the same in relation to one of the comparison schools.

We also examined Montague's performance with student "stayers" (i.e., those students who stay at the school over time). In terms of this measure, the *rate of growth* in terms of mean (average) Stanford 9 score among Montague students was significantly higher compared to all schools in the comparison group in Reading (ranked 1st). For Math, Montague's rate of growth was higher than four schools (ranked 4th). In Language, Montague's rate of growth was higher than five schools, and equal to one (tied for 2nd rank). We also looked at student "stayers" in terms of the *percentage of students at or above the 50th percentile*. In terms of rank, Montague was 5th in Reading (6% growth), 1st in Math (12% growth), and 3rd in Language (16% growth).

ELL Redesignation

Montague has experienced a consistently high rate of ELL redesignation. Average rates of ELL redesignation were well in excess of that seen at comparison schools over the last five years. Moreover, the fact that Stanford 9 scores rose at the same time as Montague increased ELL redesignations suggests a proper application of criteria of redesignation.

Student Attendance

Montague had most improved student attendance rates over the last five years. Moreover, Montague was one of only two schools in the sample to meet the District's 95% attendance rate performance benchmark.

2. Introduction and Study Methods

Context for Evaluation

In September 1992, California signed into law Senate Bill 1448 establishing a procedure for forming new or transforming existing public schools into charter schools that would be exempt from the state education code governing school districts. Updated through Assembly Bill 544 in 1998, the charter school legislation allows parents and educators to establish and maintain schools that operate independently from existing school districts structures as a method of improving student achievement and encouraging the use of different and innovative teaching methods.

In exchange for flexibility and a higher degree of autonomy, charter schools are accountable for complying with the provisions of their charters, a five-year plan for improving student achievement, renewable upon approval every five years. While the specifics of the evaluation are left to the discretion of the district, the legislation authorizing the creation of charter schools envisioned changes in a number of areas including:

1. **Improvements to student learning** – providing documented evidence of improved student achievement linked to measurable outcomes.
2. **Increasing learning opportunities for students** – expanding learning experiences for students who are academically low achieving.
3. **Encouraging the use of different and innovative teaching methods** – changing classroom teaching practices.
4. **Creating new professional opportunities for teachers** – cultivating teacher professionalism and leadership.
5. **Providing parents and students with expanded choices** – increasing learning opportunities through programs, education/training, and other avenues of student and community support.
6. **Holding schools accountable for measurable student outcomes** – moving schools from rule-based to performance-based accountability
7. **Providing vigorous competition within the public school system** – initiating competition as a means to stimulate improvements in all public schools.

In looking at the revised charter petition submitted by a given school, sponsoring districts have the mandate to review the school's record of achievement in terms of pupil outcomes as well as the school's overall educational program. The guidelines for the State-wide evaluation of charter schools provide some indication as to the direction of the intended scope of district evaluation and oversight. In particular, the legislation mentions a number of measures to consider including pre/post comparisons of test scores, levels of parent satisfaction, an evaluation of educational innovation and creativity, and evidence of increased focus on low-achieving and gifted pupils.

It is against this backdrop that the Los Angeles Unified School District contracted with Public Works, Inc., a non-profit educational consulting firm specializing in program evaluation, to evaluate the Montague Charter Academy as part of the charter renewal process.

Overview of Study Methods

Research Questions

Public Works, Inc., designed an evaluation intended to provide the District and Board of Education with evidence on the impact of Montague's implementation of its charter during the five-year period from 1996-97 to 2000-01. Specifically, the evaluation of the Montague Charter Academy was focused on addressing four key research questions:

1. To what extent have student achievement and school performance improved since becoming a charter school?
2. How does Montague compare to similar (nearby) schools in terms of these student and school-level indicators?
3. What contextual, programmatic or implementation factors might be associated with the student outcomes observed at Montague?
4. To what extent were these programs and activities linked to adoption of the charter? Put another way, what was the school able to do that it could not have done without the charter?

Data Collection and Analysis

As part of the evaluation, Public Works, Inc. employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. These are described below.

Quantitative Analysis of Student Achievement Data.

To evaluate the progress of Montague under the charter, Public Works, Inc. collected longitudinal student-level data from LAUSD and a sample of several similar "control group" schools (Research Questions 1 and 2). The matched schools selected for the control group had a similar school enrollment, ethnic composition, proportion of ELLs, and percentage of students eligible for the Free/Reduced Meal program (see **Appendix E** for data on the matched comparison schools).

The LAUSD Information and Technology Division (ITD) provided student-level data for the three-year period 1997-98 to 1999-00. These data were chosen because comparable Stanford 9 data was available for each of these years. Student achievement data were examined in disaggregated fashion in order to evaluate success for all relevant subgroups of students (e.g., by gender, ethnicity, English language proficiency, and socio-economic status). School-level performance data

such as ELL redesignation and pupil attendance rates were also collected and analyzed for trends. Both descriptive statistics and more in-depth statistical analyses intended to isolate the impact of different variables on student achievement are included in **Section 6** of this report. Complete statistical data on Montague and the seven comparison schools may be found in **Appendices E-H**.

Qualitative Data Sources

Document Review. Public Works reviewed the original charter petition for Montague as well as draft of its revised charter petition. Additional school documents reviewed during the evaluation included minutes from selected school governance forums including Collaborative Council, Curriculum and Instruction Council, and Title I Advisory Council. Public Works also reviewed outlines of the 40-week new teacher curriculum. In addition, representatives from Public Works, Inc. attended several on-site council meetings.

Focus Group, Interviews, and Observations. To explain and illuminate the student outcomes, Public Works, Inc. collected and analyzed data linked to the programmatic implementation of Montague's charter (Research Questions 3 and 4). Efforts centered on identifying possible explanatory factors associated with student outcomes. Qualitative data collection (e.g., focus groups, interviews, classroom observations) focused on four broad areas associated with Charter implementation: Professional Development, Intervention Strategies, School Organization and Decision-Making, and Parent/Community Involvement (see **Section 4** for qualitative findings).[1] Representatives of all stakeholder groups were interviewed over a two-day period in May 2001. Copies of the site visit interview guides may be found in **Appendix A**. In addition, representatives from Public Works, Inc. attended several grade level articulation meetings and visited a sample of classrooms representing all grade levels. Copies of the observational protocol may be found in **Appendix B**.

Survey Administration. To collect data related to charter implementation (Research Questions 3 and 4), Public Works designed and administered a survey for staff and parents. This survey asked respondents to rate the impact of the charter in a number of areas including professional development, intervention, school organization and decision-making, parent/community involvement, and curricular and instructional support.   An overview of the survey findings as well is presented in **Section 5** of this report. Complete survey results including copies of the staff and parent survey instruments may be found in **Appendices C and D**.

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[1] Note that the scope of this evaluation report did not extend to either Personnel or Fiscal Management issues.

Report Organization

This evaluation report is organized as follows:

- **Section 1** is an executive summary intended to briefly describe the purpose of the evaluation and its key findings.
- **Section 2** presents and introduction of the context for the evaluation including a description of the quantitative and qualitative methods used to address the study's key research questions.
- **Section 3** presents a descriptive overview of Montague Charter Academy including information on student and staff characteristics as well as background information on school organization and the core educational program at Montague.
- **Section 4** presents qualitative findings linked to charter implementation at Montague. This section provides an assessment of the impact of the charter on Professional Development, Intervention, School Organization and Decision-making and Parent/Community Involvement.
- **Section 5** presents data from the staff and parent surveys administered to measure perceptions of the charter's impact.
- **Section 6** contains quantitative student achievement and school performance data. Both descriptive data and regression analyses compare Montague's performance to that of the seven matched comparison schools.
- **Section 7** contains all appendices and supplemental data associated with this evaluation report.

3. Overview of Montague Charter Academy

Student and School Characteristics

Montague Charter Academy is a year-round California Public Charter School with more than 1,100 pre-K through 5th grade students. Montague is located in Pacoima, a low-income community in the northeast portion of the San Fernando Valley which, unfortunately, has a disproportionate share of youth violence. Staff note that students tend to stay indoors in often overcrowded residences each day starting at dusk. The community has limited access to recreational and social or cultural activities such as parks, public libraries and cultural events. As such, the community that Montague serves is one of significant social and cultural isolation.

Although enrollment declined slightly at the start of the Charter in 1996-97, enrollment has steadily increased to 1,115 in 2000-01 (**Table 3.1**). Table 3.1 also details the ethnic composition of the school's population that has remained constant over the last six years. Currently the student population is 96.8% Hispanic, 1.1% White, 0.8% Filipino, 0.6% African-American, 0.4% Asian and 0.4% American Indian/Alaskan.

While 63% percent of Montague's students are identified as English Language Learners (ELL), the number of ELL students as a percent of the total student population has decreased since the inception of the charter from 73% to 63%. This relates to the fact that the percent of students redesignated as Fluent-English Proficient (FEP) has increased from 8.4% to 19.0% over the same time period.

Table 3.1: Student Characteristics

	1995-96*	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
Enrollment	1,288	1,061	1,087	1,040	1,088	1,115
Student Ethnicity:						
American Indian/Alaskan	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.4%
African-American	1.2%	0.9%	1.0%	1.2%	0.6%	0.6%
Asian	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%
Filipino	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%	0.8%
Hispanic/Latino	94.6%	95.4%	95.8%	95.6%	97.1%	96.8%
White (not Hispanic)	2.8%	2.6%	2.2%	2.3%	1.5%	1.1%
% ELL	68.0%	73.0%	74.1%	69.9%	63.0%	**
% Students Redesignated FEP	7.1%	8.4%	2.7%	9.9%	12.7%	19.0%***
% CalWORKS (formerly AFDC)	**	**	18.9%	15.9%	15.1%	**
% Free/Reduced Price Meals	**	**	91.1%	81.5%	81.8%	**

*Pre-charter.
**Data not available at time of printing.
***Source: Montague Charter Academy.
Source: California Dept. of Education, Educational Demographics Unit – CBEDS.[2]

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[2] Note: some of the data reported on the CBEDS website is at odds with other data listed on the California Department of Education School Profile data. In particular, Montague's Free/Reduced Meal Eligibility data are in conflict. Despite the contradictory nature of the data, this report uses CBEDS data throughout in the interest of consistency.

Table 3.1 also shows the percent of students identified as CalWORKS (formerly known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children) and the percentage of students from families eligible for the Federal Free/Reduced Meal Program. Although these numbers have decreased, the overwhelming majority of Montague's students are economically disadvantaged and Montague is a school-wide Title I school.

Leadership and Staffing

Certificated Staff
In addition to the 2 administrators (Principal and Assistant Principal), Montague employs 72 teachers in the following positions[3]

- 55 K through 5th grade Teachers
- 2 pre-K (SRLDP) Teachers
- 7 Special Education Teachers
- 1 Literacy Coach
- 1 Math Coordinator
- 1 Reading/Intervention Coordinator

- 1 Music and Theater Teacher
- 1 Library Media Teacher
- 1 Resource Specialist Teacher
- 1 Technology Coordinator
- 1 Compliance Coordinator

As **Tables 3.2** and **3.3** below illustrate, 63% of Montague's teachers are fully credentialed and almost half (47%) have 5 years or less teaching experience. In addition, 68% have obtained B/CLAD certification.

Table 3.2: Teacher Years of Experience – 2000-01

Years of Experience	Percent of Teachers
0-2	21%
3-5	26%
6-10	14%
11-20	13%
20+	26%

Table 3.3: Teacher Credentialing Status – 2000-01[4]

Credential Type	Percent of Teachers
Full	63%
University Intern	2%
Pre-Intern	18%
Emergency	5%
Waiver	2%

Classified Staff
Montague employs 73 Teaching Assistants (TAs). Each classroom at Montague has a TA for three hours daily. TAs also assist with the school's Bilingual and Title I programs. More than three-fourths (77%) of these TAs work at Montague full-time

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[3] Source: Montague Charter Academy – 2000-01.

[4] Source: California Dept. of Education, Educational Demographics Unit – CBEDS. Note: Teacher credential data may not have been submitted or a teacher may hold one or more types of credential. As a result, percentages may not add up to 100%.

(6 hours), shared morning and afternoon by two teachers. The school also employs 6 office, 4 facilities and 10 cafeteria staff. There is also a classified staff member that works with the library and one that works in the computer lab.

School Organization and Educational Program

Prior Involvement in School Reform

Prior to becoming a charter school, Montague was involved in other site-based reforms. For example, Montague became a School Based Management (SBM) site in 1991. This District school governance reform laid the groundwork for shared decision-making and collaborative leadership at Montague.

Montague was also a recipient of SB 1274 funds**,** a State school restructuring grant that Montague used to reorganize the school into seven "Thematic Academies" designed to encourage a more personalized educational environment beginning in 1992. Through the SB 1274 grant, Montague began developing many of the curricular innovations that would later become embedded in the charter – extended learning (intervention) programs, a focus on English language development, and improved access to a rigorous math, science, and technology curriculum.

Another charter precursor was the school's selection as a Healthy Start site in 1993. This State grant emphasized the school's role as a provider and broker of health and human services for the community. In particular, the Healthy Start grant redefined the school as a multi-purpose facility for community meetings, parent education and school linked services.

Beginning in 1999-2000, Montague Charter Academy began implementing reform under the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program. CSRD is a federal grant that provides funding for three years to schools implementing a research-based model reform program. As a CSRD school, Montague selected Core Knowledge its model reform provider.

Development of the Charter

Against this background of prior involvement in site-based reforms, Montague's stakeholders began meeting in Fall 1995 to discuss the possibility of becoming a charter school. In October, an open meeting was held for all interested school staff and community members. To solicit more input and to explain the potential impact of the charter, meetings were held with different groups of stakeholders (e.g. faculty, paraprofessionals, office staff, cafeteria staff, parents, etc.).

In January 1996, a Charter Writing Committee was formed to draft the required components of the school's charter petition. From January-March, drafts of the charter petition were presented to the various stakeholder groups and discussed at length. Following a review of the petition by a legal representative from United

Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) in April 1996, the final charter petition was presented to all stakeholders at the end of that month.

The development of the charter school petition was the result of the collaborative efforts of faculty, staff, parents and community members at Montague. The Board of Education approved Montague's Charter in July 1996 and Montague Charter Academy was established. During the first year of the charter, Montague functioned as a "dependent charter" and continued to receive many services from LAUSD. In July 1997, Montague Charter Academy assumed financial independence for all aspects of the school except seven special education classrooms. Although the special education department is still funded through the District, the school ensures that the needs of the teachers and students in this department are included in school-wide decision-making and professional development.

Governance and School Organization

Montague Charter Academy is governed by a collective group of stakeholders that includes administrators, teachers, other school staff, parents and community members. The primary decision-making forum at the school is the Collaborative Governance Council. However, much of the day-to-day decisions take place within seven working councils:

- Budget
- Community Relations
- Curriculum & Instruction
- Facilities & Safety
- Personnel
- Special Programs
- Student Affairs

Each working council also selects a chairperson who is a voting member on the Collaborative Governance Council. The Collaborative Governance Council acts as a facilitator of communication and team-building in addition to serving in the role of a mediator on disagreements among and/or within the working councils, each of which is described in more detail below.

Budget

The Budget Council is responsible for monitoring the school's expenditures and designates the fiscal officers who negotiate contracts with the school's vendors. In addition to planning and signing the yearly budget, the Budget Council also oversees the selection and hire of an outside auditor to conduct an annual audit. Other responsibilities include the allocation of funds for investment, salary negotiations, and outside grant procurement.

Community Relations

The Community Relations Council oversees the relationship and linkages between the school and its community. Through monthly meetings, the Council is responsible for designing the home-school contract that delineates the roles and responsibilities of students and families vis-à-vis the school. The Council is also involved in coordinating parent education and activities in collaboration with the Parent Center. The Council and the Parent Center also work together to coordinate the recruitment and training of school volunteers.

The Community Relations Council has a role in coordinating community and health services on-site through the implementation and monitoring of the Healthy Start program. The Council is also involved in ensuring that families in the community have counseling available to them and for coordinating a gang intervention program. Lastly, the Council is responsible for coordinating public relations activities and developing corporate sponsorship.

Curriculum & Instruction

The Curriculum & Instruction Council meets weekly to discuss matters related to curriculum and instruction at Montague. All grade levels are represented on this body involved in designing the instructional program at the school. In addition, the Council seeks to promote extended classroom programs such as the Library/Media program, technology, physical education, etc. The Council also oversees Title I, Bilingual programs and Special Education.

According to a review of meeting minutes, during 1999-2000 the Curriculum Council has primarily focused on issues related to assessment, intervention, the school's staff development calendar, English Language Learners, and school report cards, grading policies, and retention/social promotion. More recently, there has been a slight shift in the Curriculum Council's emphasis with more attention devoted to CSRD implementation, off-site professional development, assessment (API, Stanford 9), and the school's intervention offerings.

Apart from work related to the instructional program and professional development, the Curriculum and Instruction Council is involved in matters related to accountability and assessment. For instance, the Council is responsible for overseeing the school's progress towards charter goals (e.g. student outcomes) and coordinating other accountability processes such as the Program Quality Review (PQR) and a self-evaluation that includes classroom observations three times per year. The Council is responsible for selecting and developing assessment tools (e.g. portfolios, rubrics, etc.) as well as scheduling appropriate professional development linked to assessment policies. The Council also coordinates peer coaching for newer teachers who are assigned a veteran mentor teacher. The Council has also been involved in developing an evaluation system for teachers and Teaching Assistants.

Facilities & Safety

The Facilities & Safety Council meets bimonthly and is responsible for determining the maintenance schedule and monitoring the school's ongoing maintenance needs. The Council also monitors the utilization of the school's facilities and is involved in

the beautification of the school campus and exploring options for future site expansion. In order to fund these efforts, the Council also solicits private and corporate donations. In addition to overall school facility needs, the Council also established and maintains school-site security that includes a "school watch."

Personnel

The Personnel Council meets bimonthly and is responsible for personnel and human resource issues related to all school staff. The Council coordinates the recruitment, selection and placement (track/grade) of personnel. In addition, the Personnel Council develops employee contracts that include school policies related to staff attendance, release days and approved leave as well as collaborating with the Budget Council to devise the salary schedule. For applicable personnel, the Council monitors the clearance of teacher emergency credentials and other waiver commitments and monitors the school's substitute teacher roster. The Council is also involved in developing a collaborative evaluation procedure for teaching and non-teaching staff.

Special Programs

The Special Programs Council serves to ensure that the health, safety and special education services at Montague are in compliance with federal regulations. In reference to health services, the Council monitors the school nurse's duties and any health education provided by the school and the cafeteria program. The Council coordinates and oversees the school's emergency plans. For Special Education, the Council monitors student assessment and placement as well as the mainstreaming process for students.

Student Affairs

The Student Affairs Council meets monthly to discuss issues related to students apart from instruction. The Council is responsible for coordinating student activities such as culmination, leadership activities, field trips and assemblies. The Council also handles student discipline, suspension and expulsion issues and promotes a non-violent school climate built upon mutual respect.

Educational Program

Montague Charter Academy's core curriculum consists of the following four components:

1. Open Court Reading
2. Saxon Mathematics
3. Core Knowledge – Science and Social Studies
4. Visual and Performing Arts

Montague's instructional program is based on State content standards and informed by District standards and Core Knowledge content standards. Curriculum is

delivered in a "spiraling" approach whereby information is taught and then revisited in more depth at a later time during the student's elementary experience. This instructional approach is aimed at ensuring that there are no gaps or unnecessary redundancy in the student's learning process. The instructional program is also enhanced with instruction from specialists in technology, physical education and library research skills.

Montague's curricular program exhibits a strong desire to balance "scripted" skills-based learning in the core academic areas of language arts and mathematics with a more hands-on and experiential approach to learning in the arts, social science and science. In this way, Montague's educational program allows for grade level consistency (important given the proportion of newer faculty) while providing time for more creative teaching approaches and interdisciplinary learning.

According to staff interviewed, the development of grade level pacing plans has helped cultivate greater understanding of what to teach and when (while also building staff "ownership" and purposeful collaboration experiences). In addition, the school has benefited from curricular stability as programs adopted by the school are allowed to develop over time and are refined based on the school's experiences.

In the section below, we present a more detailed description of the core components of Montague's instructional program.

Open Court Reading

Adopted by Montague in 1998-99, Open Court Reading (OCR) is a research-based language arts program aligned to State standards used in grades K-5. OCR focuses on explicit phonics and comprehension skills instruction. The format for each OCR lesson is structured and emphasizes reading fluency, comprehension, writing, research and inquiry. Instruction in these skills is balanced with reading of both decodable texts and quality literature. Each lesson also provides an opportunity for small group instruction (Independent Work Time) to meet the differing needs of students. Lessons are grouped into six to eight-week units and student progress is monitored and assessed on a weekly and unit basis. Based on its experience with OCR several years prior to District adoption, Montague Charter Academy was designated an OCR demonstration school in March 2000 by LAUSD.[5]

Saxon Math

Saxon Math is a mathematics program which Montague began implementing in grades 1-5 during 1999-2000.[6] The program, which was recommended to Montague by the Core Knowledge Foundation (see below), is designed to develop mastery of mathematical skills through the teaching of incremental skill lessons that spiral throughout the entire program. Students rehearse "fact practice" skills daily while exercising their ability to perform math and apply critical thinking to "real-world" problems. Manipulatives and additional practice problems are used to demonstrate skills visually that assist lower achieving students, while a tutorial style introduction is provided with each lesson to allow gifted students to work at their own pace ahead of the regular class. The program also stresses the development of a mathematics vocabulary. Saxon Math provides for regular monitoring of progress and achievement (typically weekly) following the completion of five lessons with mastery defined as an 80% assessment score. Saxon Math also provides a software program that generates practice problems and mock-exams to reinforce math skills learned in class.

Core Knowledge

As a recipient of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) grant, Montague selected Core Knowledge as its research-based outside model reform provider. Since 1999-2000, Montague has been implementing this content-based curriculum program based on a sequenced body of knowledge based on E.D. Hirsch's notion of "cultural literacy" (i.e., what students should know in order to participate as informed U.S. citizens). Core Knowledge is a content-based instructional approach that supplements core reading and math skills programs through the promotion of interdisciplinary learning and classroom projects, particularly in history, geography, science, and the performing and visual arts. The Core Knowledge curriculum is intended to provide schools with content that

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[5] It is important to note that Montague is using an earlier version (1995) of OCR than other LAUSD schools. The school will switch over to the 2000 version used in other LAUSD schools beginning in 2001-2002.
[6] Currently, kindergarten does not utilize Saxon Math but instead uses Silver Burdett Ginn mathematics. There are plans to being Kindergarten implementation of Saxon Math next year.

encourages research skills and critical thinking among students of all grade levels. To coordinate delivery of the Core Knowledge curricular sequence, all grade levels at Montague have met to develop pacing plans, design appropriate assessments, and ensure linkage to State content standards.

Visual and Performing Arts

Montague's educational program includes a commitment to providing all students (including Special Education) with exposure to the visual and performing arts. Arts are integrated into most areas of the curriculum and Montague was designated an Arts Prototype school by LAUSD in April 1999. Through participation in this program, Montague receives arts education coaching. The program enables teachers to learn strategies for presenting and integrating drama, dance and visual arts lessons into standards-based curricula. Trained teachers are then encouraged to share their training with other teachers through lesson modeling and coaching. In order to provide this curriculum, Montague has made efforts to train and hire staff who support the belief that the arts are an integral part of each student's education and who have had personal experiences in art. In addition to one full-time visual arts teacher and one full-time performing arts teacher, Montague currently has 21 teachers from all grades levels involved in active arts integration.

Teachers regularly receive professional development to strengthen the integration of arts into curriculum. For example, Montague provided a 12-week rotation of arts specialists that visited classrooms to provide teachers with training in arts education and integrating arts into specific content areas. Similar training on arts integration was provided through the District Arts Prototype Schools Program. Montague has also purchased visual and performing art textbooks as well as additional instructional resources available to teachers in a general resource room.
One of Montague's goals related to this area is the creation of a community arts center to compensate for the lack of cultural resources in the school's immediate community. Currently, after-school and Saturday programs in the visual and performing arts include dance (ballet folklórico, tap dance), music (percussion classes) and art (oil painting). Linkages to the community at large are also being developed as shown in the variety of field trip opportunities available to students and parents to attend professional art performances. Professional art groups have also visited the school to showcase their work.

Technology

Montague is committed to integrating technology into instruction. Montague has a full-time credentialed teacher who functions as the school's Technology Coordinator. The school has equipped the Library/Media Center with 5 computers that allow students to conduct research utilizing various multimedia software programs and locate book titles in the library. There is also a Computer Lab consisting of 20 computers with access to the Internet. In addition to developing basic computer skills, teachers bring students to work on research projects and culminating exit presentations that are enhanced by the use of technology.

Teachers also bring students to the Computer Lab to assess student reading and math skill levels utilizing the STAR/Accelerated Reading and STAR/Accelerated Math programs, norm-referenced computerized assessments. Montague also utilizes technology related to assessment with the Computer Curriculum Corporation (CCC) Success Maker software. This software program measures grade-level reading equivalency and progress for low-achieving students in the One-to-One Reading Center (see Intervention Programs and Strategies in Section 4).

Charter Goals, Assessment, and Accountability

Charter Goals and Vision

As outlined in Montague's original charter petition, the vision for change included the development of a "Community of Learners" committed to improving student learning through a) increased student access to a rigorous educational program; b) extended time for expanded student learning opportunities; c) the creation of school-developed curriculum and innovative educational programs; d) increased stakeholder voice and involvement in school decisions; and, e) bonding of the school and community. In this vision for change, Montague explicitly envisioned student improvements in terms of the following:

* Mastery of basic skills in context
* Appreciation of self and one's heritage
* Exposure to an enriched curriculum
* Opportunities to learn a second language
* Development of cooperative social skills
* Exposure to career and postsecondary opportunities

Assessing School Performance

To measure pupil outcomes and overall school performance, Montague's original charter petition cited the following:

* Norm-referenced tests (CTBS U and Aprenda)
* SOLOM and CARE tests for English Language Learners
* School pupil attendance rate
* 3rd grade literacy rate (not defined)
* Teacher-developed tests (language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics)
* Pre- and post-publisher's tests in language arts and mathematics
* Teacher observations to evaluate students' use of critical thinking
* Student portfolios
* Student projects, performances, and demonstrations
* Examination of student work through the protocol inquiry process.

In the period since Montague's approval as a charter school, the State- and District-wide emphasis on school accountability and assessment has meant a rather large

departure from the school's original intentions. Many of the plans for school to self-develop assessments have been replaced by an emphasis on more rigorous and reliable (outside) assessments including the Stanford 9 test as the standardized assessment mandated by the State. In addition to the Stanford 9, the current "battery" of major assessments used at Montague includes the following:

- Standardized Test for Assessment of Reading (STAR) – assessment published by Reading Renaissance and administered three times annually to assess vocabulary growth.
- STAR Reading and STAR Math – nationally norm-referenced computerized assessments that measure student ability in reading and math (grade level equivalent scores)
- Basic Essential Skills Test (BEST) – administered annually to determine grade level skills in the language arts and math.
- Core Knowledge Test – criterion-referenced exam for grades K-5 linked to Core Knowledge (curricular) Sequence
- California English Language Development Test (CELDT)
- Spanish Assessment of Basic Education (SABE) -- Spanish-language norm-referenced standardized test
- CCC Success Maker – software program that measures grade-level equivalency and progress used in the One-to-One Reading Center for students below the 20th percentile on Stanford 9 Reading.
- Curricular unit tests (linked to OCR and Saxon Math)
- Rubric-assessed student portfolios compiled throughout the year.

Although Montague's first school-wide examinations of assessment data occurred during the school's involvement in the SB 1274 grant, a school culture based on the examination of data linked to student progress has not yet emerged in a mature fashion. Indeed, school staff interviewed during the evaluation acknowledged that the school is in a "developmental" stage in terms of using assessment to guide instruction. At present, assessment data is primarily used for diagnostic purposes. For example, staff reported using assessment data on incoming ELLs to reorganize instructional programs and support services to help students with language development needs.

More recently, Stanford 9 data have begun to assume greater prominence in school planning efforts. For example, teachers noted that poor student performance on the Spelling portion of the Stanford 9 exam led to the redesign of spelling units. Similarly, participation in CSRD has solidified the need to measure school performance to specified Stanford 9 benchmarks. Nonetheless, the biggest shift in accountability has been the school's "ownership" for student and school performance. No longer able to blame anyone for poor results, a culture of "no excuses" has emerged at Montague.

The missing elements of the school's accountability and assessment component are evident, however, in the lack of systematic student-level data collection linked to curricular programs in use at the school. For example, despite school-wide use of

Saxon Math, the numbers of students for whom assessment data was available decreased steadily over the 2000-2001 school year. In other words, there appears to be a great deal of *de facto* teacher discretion in terms of administering assessments and/or data record keeping. As a result, this evaluation was unable to present reliable data on student progress linked to this and other school programs. At the risk of oversimplification, Montague's implementation of the charter would benefit from more oversight (perhaps by the Curriculum and Instruction Council) linked to the student assessments that the school has committed to use.

4. Charter Implementation Findings

Professional Development

Selection of Professional Development

The coordination of professional development at Montague lies with the Curriculum & Instruction Council. With assistance from the Principal and Assistant Principal, this Council meets weekly to prioritize, develop and schedule professional development. The Principal and Assistant Principal oversee and provide input into this process, dividing and focusing their efforts on pre-K through 2nd grade and 3rd through 5th grade in addition to special education, respectively.

A needs assessment process coordinated through the Curriculum and Instruction Council is used to develop the professional development calendar for each school year. Staff members rank professional development choices. During 2000-2001, this information was used in conjunction with data from the parent and staff surveys administered as a part of Montague's participation in the LAUSD evaluation of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program which evaluates Core Knowledge implementation at Montague.

Staff at Montague come to consensus on the professional development calendar during a school-wide meeting devoted to this purpose. Held on a Saturday this year, the meeting provided an open forum for all staff to discuss the school's professional development priorities. Lacking District mandates on what to schedule and how much time to devote to particular topics, Montague is able to plan a more systematic, school-based approach to training.

Linkages to the School's Instructional Program

Overall, the school has focused professional development on the four components of their educational program: Open Court Reading, Saxon Math, Core Knowledge, and Visual and Performing Arts. K-2 teachers at Montague have participated in an intensive three-day training session in addition to the five-day Governor's Reading Training for OCR. The on-site Literacy Coach has provided formal training for teachers in all grades throughout the school year. In addition, the Literacy Coach conducts informal coaching visits, demonstration lessons and arranges for release time for teachers to view best practices related to OCR implementation. The Math

Coordinator has provided similar types of coaching on the Saxon Math curriculum both school-wide and on an individualized basis.

As a part of the school's CSRD implementation, the Core Knowledge Foundation provided a two-day training for staff and parents. This training session included assistance with the development of a school-wide implementation plan based on the integration of Core Knowledge content standards with State and District standards. In addition, some staff and parents also elected to participate in the National Core Knowledge Conference for the last three years. According to those interviewed, participation at this conference has allowed Montague to learn from other schools involved in implementing the Core Knowledge model. Two Core Knowledge coordinators have also provided on-going coaching in the form of mentoring and demonstration lessons.

As an Arts Prototype school, Montague has provided staff development focused on the cross-curricular integration of the arts. Much of this training involved the rotation of arts specialists visiting classrooms to provide teachers with training in arts education and integration of arts into core academic content areas. Montague has also participated in a four-day Music Center Summer Institute, a three-day Saturday Music Center series and a four-day Getty Museum training.

In addition to the Core Knowledge Conference, staff and parents also attended California Charter Conference. Montague actively recruited teachers that are new to the school to attend this conference as the conference provided them with a better understanding of "what being a charter really means." Montague also actively encourages school coordinators to attend relevant conferences as these school leaders inform decisions regarding curriculum and assessment.

Articulation

Weekly grade-level meetings are considered to be an important form of professional development at Montague. One coordinator and/or an administrator participates in these meetings with teachers every week. Initiated during the school's participation in the SB 1274 school restructuring grant, Montague "banks time" to allow for the common planning meetings at each grade level. During the grade level meetings, two team leaders serve as facilitators responsible for focusing meetings on instructional topics such as refining curriculum, comparing lesson plans, studying samples of student work, reviewing student assessment data, etc.

In discussing and reflecting on teaching practices, these forums also serve a role in peer coaching and mentoring, particularly between new and veteran teachers. According to the LAUSD CSRD evaluation survey, 80% of staff reported that grade level teams meet regularly and are well attended. The same proportion of survey respondents said that grade level meetings allow planning and reflection related to effective teaching strategies.

Support for New Teachers and Paraprofessionals

With the high number of new teachers hired every year, Montague has instituted a teacher induction program. The 40-hour program meets once a week to provide a general orientation and a manual that includes information on the school's status as a charter, instructional program, intervention model, assessment, etc. A school-developed manual functions as the curriculum for new teachers and includes information designed to orient teachers on who to go to for supplies/resource materials, payroll, etc. as well as written material on classroom management and effective teaching strategies. The teacher induction program also provides new teachers with a mentor who provides coaching and support for approximately 20 hours per month throughout the school year.

Teaching Assistants also receive access to on-going professional development at Montague. TAs participate in an orientation in-service, that is similar to the induction program for new teachers described above albeit for a shorter period of time usually structured as 4-5 meetings during the course of the school year. TAs also receive training linked to the four components of the school's instruction and assessment program. Those involved in the school's One-to-One Reading Intervention program (see description in Intervention section below) have received more in-depth training.

Professional Development and Articulation Challenges

Although Montague has taken advantage of its charter status to design workable professional development and articulation forums, there are a number of areas in need of improvement. These are summarized below.

- **Use of assessment data during articulation meetings**. While the use of student assessment data appears to be common practice at grade-level meetings (see Articulation section below), these data did not appear to play a significant role in the selection of school-wide professional development. Results from the pre/post LAUSD CSRD Evaluation Survey indicate that within one school year the satisfaction among staff regarding the selection of professional development has slightly decreased. Indeed, nearly 20% of those responding to the survey reported that professional development is not addressing major areas of need identified by student performance data.

- **Follow-up of professional development application in the classroom**. There are not any formal mechanisms in place at Montague to conduct follow-up on the use of teaching practices taught during professional development.

- **Pairing TAs with teachers for common planning and training**. While access to training has helped TAs assist instruction in a meaningful way, without a formal meeting time to meet to coordinate and plan instruction, teachers and TAs are not always "on the same page" with teachers in terms of providing targeted instructional support in the classroom.

Intervention Programs and Services

Student Referral Process

For those students that need extra support to meet grade-level standards, Montague provides a variety of intervention services and program offerings. The process of referral to intervention usually begins after a student's case has been discussed with other grade-level teachers. Through peer discussions (often in grade level meetings), teachers receive guidance intended to help them meet the student's needs.

Some students exhibit learning difficulties which warrant referral to the Student Study Team (SST). The SST meets once a week and its membership includes teachers, Literacy Coach, School Psychologist, Principal, Assistant Principal and parents. During the SST, participants discuss the student's achievement record, classroom interactions, previous instructional modifications, home environment, etc. All of this information is used to determine whether a student is in need of intervention and which type of intervention would be most effective. To strengthen the referral process, a recently formed Intervention team is working on defining specific entry (and exit) criteria for students.

One-to-One Reading Center

The One-to-One Reading Center is a major component of the school's intervention program. Funded through carryover funds generated by the school, the Center is housed in a set of new bungalows stocked with instructional materials and technology. The overriding aim of the Center is to provide another option for struggling students (most of whom are ELLs) who might otherwise be tracked into Special Education. The Center provides students with 30 minutes of one-on-one lessons taught by TAs trained in the Lindamood Bell methods of reading instruction. These instructional techniques center on using Socratic questioning to teach students phonemic awareness, symbol imagery and concept imagery. Students also learn during 20-minute individual technology-based reading and math skills enhancement using the Computer Curriculum Corporation's (CCC) Successmaker software program. According to those interviewed, the program is especially beneficial to ELL students as it gives these students a chance to practice reading aloud in a setting that is more comfortable than the classroom. The Center currently enrolls approximately 180 students with priority given to 4th and 5th grade students.

Intermediate and Newcomer Classes

Another intervention option is the Intermediate class available in all but 2nd grade where the District's Intensive Academic Support (IAS) classes are used. Intermediate classes are intended for students who have not demonstrated mastery to matriculate to the next level but for whom grade retention may be an excessive recommendation. Intermediate classes group students of similar ability and then accelerate them through curriculum in order to move the students to grade level standards. Typically, the instructional program in these classes is more hands-on

and tailored to individual needs through lower class size (usually no more than 15:1). Based on the success of the Intermediate class model, Montague plans to discontinue the IAS model in 2nd grade and pilot a Intermediate class at this grade level during 2001-2002. Teachers at Montague noted that the IAS program did not provide sufficient instructional guidance and tended to leave teachers isolated.

Montague also has created Newcomer classes for ELL students who have been in the United States less than 12 months. The Newcomers' Class provides students with basic language and reading skills utilizing the "Let's Go" curriculum. Students are later mainstreamed into regular classes when their skill level permits. Due to strong demand, Montague plans to have two Newcomers' classes next year instead of only one. The two classes will serve grades 1-2 and 3-5.

Extended Day/Year Offerings

Proceeding from a strong belief in early intervention, Montague has instituted an extended day program for Kindergarten classes. Offered prior to the start of each school day, the "Doing Words" program involves parents directly in support of their child's education. With the Kindergarten teacher present in the room, parents move among different learning centers supporting early literacy efforts. Parents (particularly fathers) have been able to participate as the early hour of the program(7:15-7:45 a.m.) means it can be worked into the morning commute. In addition to before school offerings, Montague provides after-school tutoring 2-3 days a week and a Saturday ESL Academy that provides addition instruction to 80-120 ELL students and 7 special education classes. Furthermore, Montague provides intersession classes for children in grades 1-5, targeting students who are having difficulty with reading. Intersession classes are offered for three hours daily over a period of 2-3 weeks. Students have the opportunity to attend these intensive classes in reading each time they are off track. The curriculum used in intersession is the Open Court Intervention Program.

Intervention Challenges

The extensive network of intervention options is a strength of the educational program offered at Montague. However, there is some evidence suggesting that the coordination challenges of so many intervention options may be detracting from firmer linkages to the regular core curricular program. For instance, the lack of firmer entry and exit criteria indicates room for improving these linkages. More importantly, the widespread availability of intervention options may preclude in-class intervention strategies. Despite overwhelming satisfaction with intervention practices by staff, there is a degree of concern among staff that too much emphasis and reliance is being placed on the intervention programs. The major concern is that teachers may become careless with their teaching practices and refer students directly to intervention rather than attempting different strategies. Furthermore, some teachers expressed concerns that the school may be sending the wrong message to the community. Rather than appearing as an innovative school, the number of intervention programs may be viewed by parents as evidence that classroom instruction is inadequate and needs to be remedied via intervention.

School Governance and Organization

Description of School Decision-making

Montague Charter Academy had previously been involved in the District's site-based management program (SBM) and the State's restructuring program under SB 1274. During this five-year reform process which began in 1991, Montague began to reorganize its governance structure, emphasizing the development of a collaborative school culture based on shared decision-making in key areas such as instruction, professional development, parent involvement, etc.

The governance structure arrived at during the development of the charter reflected a desire to integrate the work of school groups representing different stakeholders at the school as well as parents in the community. The Collaborative Council established through the charter was designed to function as the place for school-wide coordination to occur. The central component of this governance structure is the council system. All stakeholders – administrators, teachers, other school staff, parents and community members – are eligible to participate in any of the seven working councils with decision-making power. As these councils meet on-site, any stakeholder group can attend these meetings (although only members have voting privileges) to inform themselves of and discuss decisions that will impact the school. In order to ensure complete staff participation, all teachers, excluding new teachers during their first year, are required to join one council.

To coordinate the work of the councils, a central Collaborative Governance Council acts as a facilitator of communication and team-building in addition to serving in the role of a mediator on disagreements among and/or within the working councils. For example, issues that arise in one council but require school-wide participation and involvement in decision-making are discussed at the Collaborative Council, such as safety, social promotion, school calendar, etc.

Impact and Benefits of Charter School Governance

According to those interviewed at the school, curricular decisions assumed a greater prominence at the school after the adoption of the charter. This shift in focus was attributed to the growing sense of "ownership" for school decisions and their impact on students. Empowered through the charter development process, stakeholders at Montague set about using site-based governance to shape programs and services based on the specific needs of the student population served by Montague. For example, with a large ELL student population, Montague was able to design and select intervention services and materials best suited for this subgroup. Particularly after Montague became fiscally independent in July 1997, the school was able to design and fund programs in a more flexible fashion suited to the school's needs.

When asked about governance prior to adoption of the charter, staff noted that they felt removed from District-level decisions, as they were not involved in the decision-making process. On the other hand, although staff and other stakeholder groups do

not always agree with all or even many of the decisions that are currently made, they appreciated the inclusionary aspects of the school's council structure. This mixed feeling among staff was apparent on staff response of the Charter Impact Survey. Whereas the majority (80%) of primary grade teachers felt that staff relationships and communication have improved since adoption of the charter, upper grade teachers were the least satisfied and unwilling to attribute any positive changes in this area related to becoming a charter school.

The impact of site-based governance is keenly felt in the area of budgetary decisions. In addition to involving many more stakeholders in decisions related to school budgetary allocations, the charter allowed Montague to consolidate funding from a variety of sources. As such, the school is able to focus resources on a given area without the added burden of integrating piecemeal (and often delayed) fiscal allocations from the District.

Site-based governance also streamlined the implementation of programs selected by the school. As decision-making power rests with the on-site councils, decisions can be made and implemented relatively quicker rather than having to get approval from off-site District personnel unfamiliar with the day-to-day realities that the school faces. Unable to "blame" the District for programmatic decisions, school governance forums began to take on greater importance. The fact that all staff members at the school were required to participate in at least one of the councils also served to boost the profile of school governance. According to the Charter Impact Survey, the majority of staff (75%) agreed that all stakeholders participate in school decision-making. However, one-fourth of staff reported that there has been very little change in terms of the inclusionary nature of decision-making practices since becoming a Charter.

Another area that has been impacted a great deal from site-based governance is personnel recruitment and selection. Montague has taken advantage of the flexibility afforded by the charter to engage potential teachers in an extensive screening process. Montague's goal is to recruit ethnically diverse, credentialed teachers who are also bilingual. Teacher applicants are interviewed by Personnel Council representatives who place an emphasis on the applicant's potential in terms of collaboration and openness to pedagogical innovations. Teachers that are selected for interviews are asked to do a demonstration lesson at the grade level they would like to be hired at and are also required to attend a council and team (grade level) meeting. This allows staff at Montague as well as the potential employee to not only determine whether the individual can teach but also emphasizes the importance of governance in the day-to-day reality of the charter school. Staff noted that this recruitment process ensures a higher likelihood that the teachers selected are a good "match" for the school.

In addition, charter status has provided Montague with the flexibility to hire and place personnel in positions that the District would probably not pay for. Montague has funded positions for coordinators, teachers, intervention staff, parent center staff, office and facilities personnel that would not be covered if the school had remained a District school. For example, Montague is able to pay for a full-time position to coordinate the One-to-One Reading Center and full-time TAs to staff

the program. While the District has policies that limit the number of hours parents can be paid for while working at a school, Montague is able to fund positions in the Parent Center at its own discretion.

Montague's charter status has also had an impact on school facilities staffing and the overall school environments. Staff noted that the District allows its facilities staff limited time to adequately clean schools. Before becoming a charter school, Montague staff noted that District facilities staff tended not to express a commitment to the Montague community. Often there was not enough time allocated to custodians to adequately clean the school. Staff also noted that with the District there was quite a bit of paperwork associated with facility-related requests and that these requests were routinely not handled in a timely manner. Since adoption of the charter, Montague has hired staff from the local community who display more of a sense of ownership for campus. In addition, Montague has benefited from parent volunteers who often assist with campus beautification and cleanliness.

Governance Challenges

Two areas of school governance at Montague have presented difficulties during the last five years and, therefore, deserve mention. First, there are some concerns about the degree to which staff serving on the various councils are truly representatives. In particular, it has been challenging for some governance representatives to adequately "represent" their constituents as opposed to expressing their own personal opinions. Representation is a two-way street, which involves both soliciting from and communicating information to constituents. The time demands of such a task sometimes overwhelm those serving as representatives. Second, the division of responsibilities among the working councils has not always satisfied staff or parents. In particular, the Curriculum and Instruction Council has assumed a larger profile than others, even at the expense of the Collaborative Council as a whole. As a result, some of those interviewed at Montague believe that a clearer delineation of responsibilities among the working councils and between the working councils and the Collaborative Council is needed.

Parent and Community Involvement

Overall Impact on Parent Involvement and Satisfaction

According to parents interviewed during this evaluation, the most significant impact of the charter on parent involvement has been the creation of a "sense of community" for those parents who become involved in school activities. Parents appreciate the fact that the charter has allowed a safe, well-run school to flourish in the middle of a low income community. According to school staff and parents, parent attendance at meetings, activities, events and other programs has increased since the school achieved charter status. A prime example of this is the "Doing Words" program, an one-half hour language development program in Kindergarten that involves parents in the child's instruction. Staff note that over 80% of the parents of students in Kindergarten participate in this program. In addition, parent involvement has increased due to the parent-teacher compact which requires parents to volunteer three hours a month. Although not strictly enforced, this aspect of the charter has raised the level of parental presence at the school.

Parent Outreach and Communication

Montague's Parent Center aims to create a "comfort zone where parents can come together and interact." The Parent Center is housed in multi-purpose facility that serves as a center for community and staff meetings, a classroom for parent education and after-school classes. Parent Center staff include the Parent Center Director, a Community Outreach Worker, and a number of parent and AmeriCORPs volunteers. The Community Outreach Worker funded through Title I provides assistance in the form of organizing parent volunteers, telephoning parents about meetings and events, compiling parent education packages and supervising the lunch area. Two VISTA volunteers, funded with federal money through the AmeriCORPs program, who serve as Community Relation representatives responsible for coordinating campus volunteers, telephoning parents regarding attendance and discipline problems. The VISTA volunteers also maintain the Parent Library and oversee the Governor's Reading Program, an incentive program that awards schools up to $5,000 based on the amount of pages read by students.

In order to inform parents about what Montague is offering in the way of parent-related services, communication to parents occurs throughout during the school year. The Community Relations calendar is sent home with each student monthly with a list of programs, activities, events and meetings relevant to parents. The calendar is mailed home for parents with children that are off-track. In addition, there is a monthly newsletter sent home to parents monthly focused exclusively on news and events related to Core Knowledge, the school's model reform funded through the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) grant. Montague also utilizes phone banking to remind parents about upcoming meeting and activities. In the event that parents are on-campus, flyers and banners are also posted on campus bulletin boards announcing meetings and activities throughout

the school campus. Parent meetings also provide a forum for school staff to update parents on any relevant activities, events and programs for parents.

Parents receive updates on school programs and activities through monthly newsletters. According to parent responses to the Charter Impact Survey, individual child progress is usually received during in-person parent-teacher conferences or through updates from the school such as progress reports or final report cards. A small percentage of parents (12%) find that Back to School Night and Open House are good venues for receiving child information. However, while most parents receive information on their child from classroom teachers, this process tends to be parent-initiated and teacher led.

Another aspect of Montague's outreach to parents has involved the employment of parents as workers in the cafeteria, main office, and Parent Center. In addition some parents also serve as facilities staff and Teacher Assistants. These school employees serve as liaisons to the community, informally exposing their neighbors and friends to the school's instructional program and informing parents about opportunities for parent involvement.

Parent Education and Social Service Linkages

In terms of parent education, Montague has and continues to provide a variety of parent training in the areas of health (prenatal training, nutrition, Alcoholics Anonymous, etc.), immigration and citizenship, and extracurricular areas of parent interest (e.g., Cooking, Sewing, Interior Decorating, etc.). Academic classes in math and science are also offered to parents that also work towards helping parents help their children with their education. Through the Parent Center, Montague has also provided classes for parent self-improvement including ESL and vocational education through training offered at Mission College. The Parent Center also provides support services to parents that include a Mother's Support Group, Drop-In Counseling service and the School/Community Crisis Team. In 1998, Montague received the Healthy Start grant and since then has been able to provide medical services to its student population and community. Through Health Start, students of low-income families receive medical, dental, vision, and mental services. This is considered an important school-home linkage.

Community Partnerships

Montague has made some strides in boosting the school's profile among those in the surrounding community. For example, business partnerships have been established with TARGET and Mervyns stores. These firms have donated funds for campus beautification. Community members are also beginning to participate in governance as evident by the recent membership of a representative from the Prudential Corporation on the school's Collaborative Governance Council. Partnerships have also been established with companies such as Kaiser Permanente to provide employment to community members and Washington Mutual plans to provide on-site banking at the school.

Parent Involvement Challenges

Although Montague has oriented itself towards parents and the surrounding community under the charter, there is more room for improving parent involvement. Some of these challenges are summarized below.

- **Improving parent awareness about charter implementation**. General parent awareness of Montague's charter status and involvement in reforms is low. Parents who are involved as employees, volunteers or active participants of the Parent Center have a good (albeit general) understanding of what it means to be a charter school. These individuals know about the organization of school decision-making and the importance of parents to effective charter school functioning. Other parents, however, are not particularly knowledgeable about the school's involvement in charter school reform. This situation persists despite the fact that the school has offered information about the charter at five annual Community Relations meetings. According to the more active parents interviewed as part of the evaluation, most parents would probably define the charter "as a program that has brought in several programs and added resources to the school." These parents believe that that the general parent population view Montague as a school with additional resources, particularly in art, music and technology.

- **Expanding parent education options**. Parent education linked to the school's instructional program has not been widely available. While the school is in the process of developing programs to better inform parents about the school's curriculum (e.g. Open Court Reading), parental awareness of instruction, assessment, and intervention is limited.

- **Improving parent-teacher interactions**. Although staff feel that their interactions with parents are warm and frequent, parents were less enthusiastic about their involvement with teachers. Those parents who were interviewed noted intimidation linked to linguistic, socioeconomic, and cultural barriers. Although the employment of parents has helped showcase the school's willingness to overcome these barriers, parents strongly expressed a need for teachers to receive professional development on how to "work with the community they are serving." Some parents noted that teachers might benefit from home visits and other direct physical exposure to the school's surrounding community.

- **Facilitating parent participation in school decision-making**. While staff and parents do find general parents meetings useful, both groups expressed a need to consolidate meetings. Parents would also like more long-term plans related to the schedule and focus of parent meetings held throughout the year. This would help parents, especially single parents, to make time for involvement in school affairs. Another suggestion voiced by parents hinged on combining parent meetings with school events that involve academics (e.g., Family Math or Science Night).

Summary of Charter Implementation Findings

School Strengths

Professional Development

Since becoming a charter school, Montague has increased staff access to professional development. The process for designing school-wide professional development is inclusionary and ensures that training topics are closely linked to the school's instructional program. To reinforce on-going professional development, structured grade level meetings provide focused articulation forums that regularly involve teachers in common planning and curricular pacing. In addition, Montague has developed its own new teacher induction and support program based on a 40-hour curriculum designed and taught by veteran staff. Although not directly linked to charter implementation, the school's emphasis on training in standards integration and standards-based instruction is clearly evident in daily classroom practices.

Student Intervention Programs

Using the flexibility provided by the charter, Montague has developed a wide array of intervention programs and services designed to meet the needs of the student population served by Montague. These intervention options include before and after school programs, Saturday academies, intersession intervention, intermediate classes, and a One-to-One Reading Center. As such, there are multiple avenues for struggling students to receive additional assistance and support. Throughout the school, there is an awareness of the importance of early intervention and there are well-developed systems for referring students to intervention programs and services.

School Organization and Governance

Montague has developed a governance model based on seven working councils who report to an overarching Collaborative Council. During the last five years, school governance has become increasingly oriented toward shaping school decisions to meet local staff and student needs. School governance under the charter is student-centered in the sense that decision-making is explicitly linked to curriculum and instruction. Montague has used the budgetary flexibility provided by the charter to fund innovative programs for students such as the array of intervention options described above. Moreover, the inclusionary school governance model at Montague encourages staff participation in school decision-making. Through local decision-making bodies, Montague has enjoyed enhanced local control over staff selection and training. As a result, Montague has been able to develop a school culture which rests on a foundation of a shared set of core beliefs about teaching and learning.

Parent and Community Involvement

In terms of parent involvement, Montague's major accomplishment as a charter school has been to change the community's perception of the school. Parents view Montague as a safer, more welcoming place which has blossomed in the midst of a

low-income community. The school's Parent Center is actively involved in providing parent education and conducting outreach to parents. The results of these efforts are apparent in the fact that parent involvement at Montague is quite visible, especially through the presence of parent employees as well as expanded parent volunteer options. In addition, Montague has shown a remarkable ability to link parents to health and human services through a strong Healthy Start program which continues to operate four years after the end of State grant funding.

Areas in Need of Improvement

Professional Development

Although professional development is closely linked to Montague's instructional program, school-wide training is not always based on the examination of student achievement results. In this respect, Montague would likely benefit from the integration of student assessment results into the design and planning of school-wide professional development. Examination of student assessment data would also provide more focus for grade-level articulation forums. Another area for refinement hinges on professional development follow-up. Currently, there is not a formal way to determine whether professional development is being implemented in the classroom. While some follow-up probably occurs within grade level articulation meetings, more could be done to monitor the impact of professional development on classroom teaching practices. Lastly, Montague should consider increasing the involvement of teaching assistants in school-wide professional development. Based on conversations with school leaders, Montague is planning to develop a career ladder program for paraprofessionals based on increased mentoring and professional development.

Assessment and Accountability

A key weakness of Montague's charter implementation has been the lack of attention accorded to on-going data collection and analysis. Despite the use of multiple measures of student achievement, the systematic collection and analysis of student assessment data has not occurred. In lieu of this data, it is unsurprising that there is limited evidence that assessment data (other than Stanford 9 data) are used to shape school planning and to guide instruction at Montague. School leaders at Montague acknowledge that the use of assessment data is an area where the school could markedly improve. During the next year, assessment is likely to assume a more prominent place in school-wide professional development and decision-making forums.

Student Intervention Programs

The provision of a wide array of intervention options at Montague is one of the most noteworthy by-products of the school's charter implementation. Nonetheless, Montague staff admit that they are at the beginning stages of operating the newly developed intervention programs and services. For example, the intervention process would be well served by the development of a formal set of entry/exit criteria governing student involvement in intervention programs. More importantly,

now that intervention options are widely available, the school should take care not to become overly reliant on intervention as an instructional strategy. For example, some staff expressed concerns that student referrals to intervention may occur without careful review of classroom teaching practices, simply because the programs and services exist. In addition, there is some indication that parents associate the school with instructional intervention. Rather than an example of educational innovation, the number of intervention programs may be viewed by some parents as evidence that classroom instruction is inadequate and needs to be remedied via intervention. Therefore, school efforts to communicate the purpose and outcomes associated with intervention should be prioritized.

School Organization and Governance

The school governance model which has evolved at Montague displays many noteworthy characteristics. Nonetheless, there are two key areas where school decision-making might be improved. First, Montague is struggling with the notion of representation. Put simply, it is sometimes difficult for representatives to accurately represent their constituents as opposed to articulating their own opinions. As such, representative democracy at Montague is a work in progress. A second area hinges on the authority of the various working councils in operation at Montague. While the emergence of the Curriculum and Instruction Council as a major decision-making forum indicates that school governance is linked to teaching and learning, this committee has, on occasion functioned as the school's *de facto* governance body, exercising jurisdiction over much of the school's policy-making. As such, this committee assumed a role of "first among equals" in Montague's governance model. At this time, Montague may want to consider clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the working councils as well as their relationship to the school's umbrella governance body, the Collaborative Council.

Parent/Community Involvement

Parent outreach and involvement in school programs and activities have increased since becoming a charter school. Due to the increased attention public education has received as well as the school's outreach and education efforts, there is a desire among parents to deepen home-school connections. In particular, there is a need to move parent education at Montague toward a more instructional focus. Parents want to know more about the school's curricular offerings as well as assessment practices and intervention options. There is also room for improvement in terms of providing more parents with an understanding of the school's charter goals and objectives as well as making it easier for parents to participate in school decision-making through proactive scheduling and altering meeting times. Significantly, parents expressed a desire for faculty to become more aware of and connected to the school community. While the presence of parents at Montague is not longer rare, school staff have not become more visible in the surrounding community. Parents expressed a desire for staff to conduct home visits or walks through the community in order to become more familiar with the daily lives of the students they teach. Montague might also benefit from a higher profile among those who are not parents but who work in the surrounding community. While some business and government

agency partnerships have been established, a more aggressive outreach and publicity campaign could yield unforeseen benefits for the school.

5. Charter Impact Survey Results

Survey Methodology

As part of the Montague Charter Evaluation, staff and parents were surveyed on the impact of the charter. The results of this survey indicate where staff and parents feel that the greatest charter impact has occurred. Both staff and parent respondents were asked to note agreement to statements based on a 5-point Likert Scale (0=Don't Know, 1=No Change, 2= Very Little Change, 3=Some Change, 4=Significant Change). Mean (average) scores were then computed for the different categories included on the survey and then ranked (to view the staff and parent survey instruments see **Appendix C** and **Appendix D**).

A total of 70 completed surveys were turned in following administration of the survey during a staff meeting held in May 2001. A parent version of the survey in both Spanish and English was mailed to all K-5 parents in May 2001. A total of 256 parent surveys were returned. Survey results linked to specific questions have been integrated throughout the evaluation report where appropriate to illustrate other findings. The section below, however, presents an overall examination of staff and parent responses.

Staff Survey Results

As shown in **Table 5.1**, staff respondents felt that the adoption of the charter exerted the greatest impact on the school's curriculum and instructional program. The mean (average) score for this area indicates that staff feel that "some" but not quite "significant" changes have occurred. In particular, staff responses to open-ended questions cited increased connectivity within the curriculum as well as a broader curricular focus linked to the arts. School intervention services and programs received the second highest rating in terms of charter impact. Indeed, the creation of the One-to-One Reading Center was cited as an example of something that the school could not have been accomplished without the charter. Staff respondents were also inclined to see the impact of the charter in terms of the development of school governance structures (see **Appendix C** for complete staff survey results).

Table 5.1: Staff Ratings of Charter Impact

Area	Mean	Rank
Curriculum and Instructional Support	3.22	1
Intervention	3.17	2
School Organization & Governance	3.05	3
Parent & Community Involvement	2.94	4
Professional Development	2.90	5

By contrast, staff survey respondents were less positive about the impact of the charter on parent/community involvement. In particular, staff responding to open-ended questions suggested that more could be done in terms of parent outreach and

expanding parent volunteer opportunities. Staff were least likely to link adoption of the charter to changes in professional development. Although this is where the Curriculum and Instruction Council has focused much of its efforts, staff respondents were less inclined to see the impact of the charter in this area.

The staff survey also asked respondents to rate the importance accorded to various aspects of the charter. However, respondents were asked to rate both their perception of the school's priority and their own personal priorities. **Table 5.2** below displays the percentage of staff indicating that the area in question is "Very Important." The results for this portion of the survey are presented separately for upper grade teachers, primary grade teachers, and teacher assistants.

Table 5.2: School vs. Staff Priorities under the Charter

Area	Primary Grade Teachers-		Upper Grade Teachers-		Teacher Assistant-	
	School	Staff	School	Staff	School	Staff
New Curricular Programs	56.3	50.0	46.7	60.0	50.0	66.7
Curricular Scope and Sequence	62.5	62.5	53.3	86.7	41.7	58.3
Student Grouping (classroom/track assignments)	62.5	56.3	13.3	40.0	50.0	63.6
New Teacher Support	56.3	31.3	40.0	73.3	66.7	66.7
Provision of Instructional Materials	50.0	62.5	60.0	93.3	66.7	75.0
Professional Development/Training	37.5	25.0	33.3	53.3	75.0	91.7
Teacher Articulation	25.0	37.5	20.0	33.3	54.5	58.3
Student Intervention Services	56.3	68.8	53.3	86.7	83.3	92.3
Special Education	31.3	12.5	33.3	46.7	66.7	61.5
Use of Student Assessment Data	43.8	18.8	33.3	60.0	75.0	61.5
Evaluation of School Reform Efforts	56.3	12.5	53.3	26.7	63.6	75.0
School Governance/Decision-Making	50.0	25.0	53.3	46.7	83.3	76.9
Selection of New (incoming) Staff	62.5	37.5	40.0	66.7	83.3	66.7
Site-based Budget Control	68.8	50.0	73.3	60.0	81.8	83.3
Staff Relationships	37.5	43.8	26.7	53.3	54.5	66.7
Campus Maintenance & Operations	50.0	50.0	33.3	26.7	63.6	66.7
Parent Involvement at School	37.5	50.0	20.0	46.7	75.0	75.0
Parental Support of Education at Home	31.3	62.5	26.7	46.7	82.3	81.8
Linking Parents to Health/Social Services	18.8	25.0	26.7	33.3	75.0	81.8
School Outreach to the Community	18.8	25.0	26.7	26.7	75.0	84.6

In examining the results displayed in **Table 5.2**, several findings emerge on the alignment between school and staff priorities. First, it is interesting to note that all groups reported that the school's number one priority has been control of site-based budgeting, a secondary or even tertiary concern to most staff members. While all groups indicated that the school had prioritized intervention services, survey results suggest that staff feel that intervention should have received even higher priority under the charter. Similarly, all groups indicated that the school has not given

enough priority to parent involvement both in terms of involvement at school and support of education at home. However, primary grade teachers were the most adamant about the need to revisit school priorities in this area. Teachers also noted that the school has not appropriately prioritized the provision of instructional materials.

Looking at differences among the different staff groups, upper grade teachers were more concerned about the provision of instructional materials and the use of assessment data. Upper grade teachers also indicated a need for prioritizing new teacher support and focusing on the selection of new (incoming staff). Teaching Assistants were the only group to express a need for more priority on professional development. TAs were also most likely to value parent outreach and linking parents to health/human services. Interestingly, TAs were the only group to prioritize the evaluation of school reform efforts.

Parent Survey Results

Unlike the survey administered to staff, the parent survey sought to gather information on home-school communication and participation in school programs and activities (see **Appendix D** to view the survey). When asked which school programs and activities they had attended in the last year, more than half of the parent respondents cited parent-teacher conferences, Back to School night, and school council or committee meetings (see **Table 5.3** below). It is interesting to note that Montague parents report that they are more likely to attend governance functions than student performances and holiday programs.

Table 5.3: Parent Participation in School Programs and Activities

Activity	Frequency	Rank
Parent-Teacher Conference	72%	1
Back to School	60%	2
School Council or Committee meetings	57%	3
Volunteer Program	37%	4
Open House	36%	5
Advisory Council (Title I, Bilingual)	31%	6
Student Performances	26%	7
Holiday Programs	24%	8
Meeting with Principal	9%	9
Other	5%	10

Like staff respondents, parents were asked to provide input on their perception of the where the school has experienced the most change compared to the importance this area has for their child(ren). As shown in **Table 5.4**, parents' assessment of school and child priority are in alignment for many of the areas covered by the survey. For example, approximately equal priority was accorded to student math skills and teaching quality. In other words, parents largely think that the school's emphasis has been appropriate.

There are a few areas, however, which indicate a large divide between parents' perceptions of school and parent priorities. For example, parents were more likely to place a higher premium on school safety and security. Parents were also more likely to feel that teacher selection and recruitment has greater importance for their child(ren) than the school has considered. However, the most serious "disconnect" involves parental perceptions of teacher training. According to the survey, parents feel that the school has placed the most importance on teacher training (93% said this is an area that has changed most under the charter). By and large, parent respondents felt that this emphasis is far out of proportion to its importance for their child(ren) (only 11% say it is very important).

Table 5.4: Parent Survey Results

	Most School Change	Importance to Child
Classroom Instruction & Student Achievement		
Student Reading Skills	70%	53%
Student Math Skills	41%	39%
Teaching quality	42%	43%
Student exposure to arts	23%	16%
Student interest in learning	48%	43%
Help for struggling students	46%	34%
School Environment		
Staff morale/attitude	15%	14%
School Cleanliness/appearance	23%	15%
School safety/security	36%	47%
Student discipline	20%	25%
Parent/Community Involvement		
Parent-teacher relationships	25%	27%
School outreach and communication to parents	21%	15%
Availability of parent education/workshops	18%	12%
Parent involvement in school decisions	23%	18%
Parent participation in school events and activities	19%	14%
Parent volunteerism	13%	15%
Other School Actions and Policies		
Teacher selection/recruitment	6%	13%
Links to social and health services	6%	5%
School decision-making	10%	8%
Student grouping (by teacher and track)	8%	4%
Teacher training	93%	11%
School spending (budget)	8%	9%

6. Impact of Charter on Student Outcomes

Data Sources and Sample Selection

This section of the report examines student achievement and school performance data for Montague. To facilitate comparisons of Montague's outcomes, the study includes data for a sample of comparison schools chosen to match the student composition at Montague during the 1997-98 school year.[7] We identified seven schools as the comparison for Montague based on school size (total student enrollment), percentage of English Language Learners (ELL previously known as Limited English Proficient or LEP students), percentage of students eligible for participation in the Free/Reduced Meal program, and the percentage of Hispanic students at the school. In addition, the comparison school sample is comprised entirely of year-round School-wide Program Title I schools. Lastly, strong efforts were made to include schools physically located in Pacoima and the nearby communities of San Fernando and Sylmar (see **Appendix E** for complete characteristics of comparison schools).

As can be seen in **Table 6.1** below, the comparison schools were remarkably similar to Montague in 1997-98. Compared to Montague, Student enrollments were +/- 150 students for all but School E. Two-thirds to three-fourths of the students at all schools are ELL and an overwhelming proportion of students at these schools qualify for the Free/Reduced Meal program. In addition, the schools show similar proportions of Hispanic students with the exception of School A which also has a significant African-American student population.

Table 6.1: Study Sample School Characteristics, 1997-98

School	Enrollment	% F/R Meal	% ELL	% Hispanic	% Black
Montague	1014	81.8	79.4	96.2	0.9
School A	1036	87.2	69.4	83.4	15.0
School B	1110	88.5	67.2	94.5	0.9
School C	1001	92.0	62.1	93.3	2.9
School D	1080	95.1	74.5	97.1	0.3
School E	1441	96.8	79.5	94.4	4.8
School F	896	94.5	68.3	97.7	0.3
School G	1144	94.2	77.8	97.3	0.7

In examining the achievement of students at these schools, the study relied upon student-level data provided by the LAUSD Information and Technology Division (ITD). The data available for the study consisted of student-level records for all students enrolled in grades 1-5 for the three-year time period from 1997-98 to 1999-00 at Montague and the seven comparison schools. The primary achievement variables examined as part of the study were Stanford 9 scores for the Total Reading, Total Mathematics, and Language section of the examination. In addition, the study

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[7] The 1997-98 school year was chosen as baseline because it was the first year that all schools administered the Stanford 9 exam to all grade 1-5 students.

drew on District performance indicator data related to each school's in-seat attendance rate and English Language Learner redesignation rate.

In looking at the Stanford 9 data, this study reports student achievement in terms of the **Normal Curve Equivalent** (NCE) score. NCE scores are "normalized" standardized scores designed to allow for comparisons of achievement among and across groups of scores. Before describing the results of Montague in relation to the seven comparison schools, it is important to clarify the difference between NCEs and the other widely used statistic used to represent standardized test scores, the National Percentile Rank (NPR).

When looking at data from norm-referenced, standardized tests like the Stanford 9, an assumption is made that student achievement resembles a normal ("bell") curve, with the majority of scores falling in the center and then spread equally on both sides of the average or "mean" score. In other words, student performance is judged in relationship to a representative sample of students (the "norm group") whose performance falls both above and below an average achievement statistic. Very often, standardized test scores are presented as percentile ranks which express the percentage of scores in the norm group that fall below a particular score of a student, grade level, or school.

Because most students fall close to the average score represented by the 50th percentile, the distance between percentile ranks differs depending on a given level of achievement. Put another way, the distance from the 45th to the 50th percentile is not the same difference as the distance between the 10th and the 15th percentile simply because there are many more students closer to the average score. NCE scores take these differences into account by "normalizing" standardized scores so that each NCE score is equidistant from the next. The chief advantage of NCEs is that scores can be directly compared to one another to ascertain "true" progress. In particular, NCEs allow scores to be aggregated and averaged. For these reasons, this report uses NCEs throughout.[8]

Analytic Methods

As part of the analysis of student data, we conducted both descriptive and regression analyses. Descriptive analysis, as its name suggests, describes the schools and students in terms of their characteristics. These data essentially describe the achievement trends apparent in the data. The results, however, can't be used to establish or to test whether one variable is related to the other and whether one has an impact on the other. Thus, descriptive data cannot explain whether poverty or English language proficiency has an impact on achievement; instead, descriptive statistics merely state what the characteristics of these poor or ELL students and their achievement in relation to their peers.

In order to isolate the impact of different variables on student achievement, this study utilized a statistical procedure known as Ordinary-least-square (OLS)

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[8] Note that it is always possible to convert NCEs into NPRs or vice versa. Please consult any reputable statistics or educational research text for further reference.

regression. For this study, this method provides regression coefficients that estimate the effect of different variables on Stanford 9 scores. In order to examine the factors that affected student achievement at Montague and the other comparison schools, we estimated the average student Stanford 9 score after controlling variables that are correlated with student achievement. Specifically, we "held constant" the demographic variables that exert an influence on student achievement: gender, ethnicity, English language proficiency, and family socio-economic status.

Descriptive Analyses of Student Achievement

Stanford 9 Reading

Across grades 1-5, Montague has improved reading scores on the Stanford 9 during the last three years for which data are available. As shown in **Table 6.2**, Montague increased 8.4 NCEs between 1997-98 and 1999-00. This represents an increase of nearly 30%. Only two of the comparison schools (Schools D and F) experienced similar (albeit slightly lower) rates of growth in reading scores over the same time period. As shown in **Appendix F**, reading improvements varied by grade level. In the case of Montague, gains were most pronounced in grades 3 and 4 which showed increases of approximately 13 NCEs.

Table 6.2: Stanford 9, Total Reading Scores (NCEs), 1997-98 to 1999-00

School	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	Net Change
Montague	27.9	33.9	36.3	8.4
School A	25.5	27.2	29.6	4.1
School B	32.4	33.7	35.4	3.0
School C	30.2	32.4	35.0	4.8
School D	30.7	35.1	38.4	7.7
School E	23.2	25.2	28.8	5.6
School F	28.8	31.6	36.4	7.6
School G	28.1	28.5	30.6	2.5

Stanford 9 Mathematics

In mathematics, Montague students scored well in relation to comparison schools across the three-year period. As shown in **Table 6.3**, student scores grades 1-5 increased an average of 8.2 NCEs between 1997-98 and 1999-00. This rate of increase was bettered by only one comparison school (School D) and roughly equal to that of another (School F). Looking at grade level differences in achievement (see **Appendix F**), Montague witnessed the greatest gains in mathematics among grades 3 and 4 which improved approximately15 NCEs each.

Table 6.3: Stanford 9, Total Math Scores (NCEs), 1997-98 to 1999-00

School	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	Net Change
Montague	34.7	38.8	42.9	8.2
School A	28.3	30.0	31.3	3.0
School B	37.8	39.2	39.2	1.5
School C	32.3	35.2	38.3	5.9
School D	34.8	42.2	44.3	9.6
School E	30.0	32.1	34.9	4.9
School F	34.7	38.0	43.0	8.4
School G	32.7	33.5	36.2	3.5

Stanford 9 Language

As shown in **Table 6.4**, Montague's achievement growth on the language portion of the Stanford 9 was more modest compared to reading and mathematics. Student scores increased 5.4 NCEs across grades 1-5 between 1997-98 and 1999-00. This rate of improvement was exceeded by two comparison schools (Schools D and F). As in the case of other subject areas, Montague's students in grades 3 and 4 experienced the highest rates of improvement (averaging 9 NCEs).

Table 6.4: Stanford 9, Language Scores (NCEs), 1997-98 to 1999-00

School	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	Net Change
Montague	32.0	34.6	37.4	5.4
School A	27.5	29.4	30.5	3.0
School B	36.4	37.6	37.4	0.9
School C	33.2	34.6	36.5	3.3
School D	33.3	38.1	41.6	8.3
School E	27.5	27.7	29.9	2.4
School F	32.1	36.6	39.5	7.4
School G	30.9	31.0	34.4	3.5

Stanford 9 Index Composite Score

Beginning in 1999, the State of California began ranking public schools on the basis of the Academic Performance Index (API). Under the API, elementary schools receive a score between 200 and 1000 based on a formula that "weights" Stanford 9 scores according to the following formula: Reading 30%, Language 15%, Spelling 15%, and Mathematics 40%. Schools are required to improve 5 percent of the distance between their API score and the benchmark represented by 800. The chief advantage of the API is that it yields a single score that, in turn, facilitates comparisons among schools in terms of student achievement.

For this study, we wanted to use the API for its ability to summarize student achievement into a single statistic. We were unable, however, to use the State API data because no API was calculated for 1997-98. In addition, we needed to slightly modify the methods for calculating the API because LAUSD requires the testing of 1st graders with Stanford 9 and the State does not. Lastly, the index score that we computed needed to reflect a slightly different weighting formula since Spelling data had not been requested from LAUSD ITD. In lieu of Spelling data, the Stanford 9

"index" score computed below for Montague and all seven comparison schools (see Table 6.5) is weighted 30% in both Reading and Language and then 40% for Mathematics.

Table 6.5: Stanford 9 "Index" Score, 1997-98 to 1999-00

School	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	Net Change
Montague	402	458	505	103
School A	288	306	329	41
School B	453	470	479	26
School C	340	365	402	62
School D	358	426	455	97
School E	291	305	342	51
School F	413	452	514	101
School G	329	336	368	39

As shown in **Table 6.5**, Montague outperformed all comparison schools on this measure, improving 103 points. Two comparison schools (D and F) also experience a nearly 100-point increase on this indexed measure of achievement. Other schools were substantially lower in terms of improvement. Indeed, only 4 of the 8 schools (Montague and Schools C, D, and F) would have met their annual growth targets using this "modified API" for both 1998-99 and 1999-00. It should also be noted that from 1997-98 to 1999-00, Montague moved from 3rd to 2nd rank among the comparison schools.

ELL Redesignation Rates

Montague's ELL Redesignation rate improved 2.2% between 1995-96 and 1999-00 (see **Table 6.6** below). During this five-year period, 446 ELLs were redesignated. Although Montague did not show the highest rate of improvement (Montague ranked 5th) compared to the seven comparison schools, Montague consistently ranked in the top 3 in terms of the proportion of eligible ELLs redesignated to English only instruction. Indeed, Montague averaged an ELL redesignation rate of 11.6% over the five-year period under examination, by far the highest average rate among the comparison schools.

Table 6.6, ELL Redesignation Rates

School	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	Net Change	Average
Montague ES	14.4%	4.3%	9.9%	12.8%	16.6%	2.2%	11.6%
School A	4.0%	0.1%	1.4%	0.0%	6.4%	2.4%	2.4%
School B	7.8%	0.0%	10.2%	5.7%	8.8%	1.0%	6.5%
School C	3.3%	2.7%	8.7%	2.7%	1.0%	-2.3%	3.7%
School D	4.8%	2.1%	6.1%	7.5%	10.4%	5.6%	6.2%
School E	4.6%	4.7%	4.5%	3.4%	1.8%	-2.8%	3.8%
School F	8.4%	0.8%	5.9%	0.3%	11.4%	3.0%	5.4%
School G	5.5%	5.7%	1.9%	7.0%	8.2%	2.7%	5.7%

When looking at the last three years, the percentage of redesignated ELLs (RFEPs) at Montague increased 11%, from 10.8% of the student population to 21.8% (see

Appendix G). By contrast, the change in the proportion of RFEPs at comparison schools ranged from 7.5% (School D) to -5.6% (School C).[9]

School Attendance

During the last five years, Montague has witnessed an improvement in its in-seat pupil attendance rate. As shown in **Table 6.7**, Montague's attendance rate increased 2.2%, from 93.5% in 1995-96 (prior to the charter) to 95.8% in 1999-00. Montague experienced a higher rate of improvement compared to all comparison schools. Montague improved from 3rd to 1st rank in relation to comparison schools. Moreover, Montague was one of only two schools in the sample to meet the District's 95% attendance rate performance benchmark.

Table 6.7: In-Seat Attendance Rate

School	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	Net Change	Average
Montague ES	**93.5%**	**92.8%**	**93.2%**	**95.6%**	**95.8%**	**2.3%**	**94.2%**
School A	92.6%	92.7%	92.8%	93.4%	94.1%	1.5%	93.1%
School B	93.2%	93.3%	93.1%	93.7%	94.6%	1.4%	93.6%
School C	93.3%	93.6%	93.6%	94.3%	94.5%	1.2%	93.9%
School D	93.8%	93.6%	93.5%	94.2%	94.4%	0.6%	93.9%
School E	93.3%	92.6%	92.7%	94.0%	93.8%	0.5%	93.3%
School F	94.9%	93.9%	94.8%	95.5%	95.3%	0.4%	94.9%
School G	93.1%	93.1%	92.7%	93.3%	93.5%	0.4%	93.1%

Regression Analyses of Student Achievement

While the descriptive statistics presented above provide information about the achievement of Montague's students compared to their peers at seven comparison schools, they do not tell us whether certain characteristics are related to achievement. Nor do the descriptive statistics reveal whether the observed differences in achievement are statistically significant, or whether a certain characteristic stays significant when other characteristics are taken into account. In order to answer these questions, this study employed a multiple regression analysis procedure. This method is described below and then followed by findings.

Methodology

In order to isolate the impact of different variables on student achievement, this study utilized a statistical procedure known as Ordinary-least-square (OLS) regression. Regression analysis is a method of analyzing the variability of a dependent variable by resorting information available on one or more independent variables. It estimates the expected changes in the dependent variable as a result of changes in the independent variables. When there is more than one independent variable, the analysis is referred to as multiple regression. Multiple regression

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[9] Unfortunately, the study was unable to include an analysis of student movement through the ELD levels 1-5 as the percentage of "missing" data (i.e., students without an ELD level) varied from a low of 21% to a high of 51% among Montague and the seven comparison schools.

analysis is eminently suited for analyzing the collective and separate effects of two or more independent variables on a dependent variable.

This method provides regression coefficients that estimate the effect of different variables on the test scores. For this study, we use the regression procedure to estimate the charter school effect among students attending Montague Charter Academy in relation to the achievement of students at seven comparison schools after accounting for their differences on the other variables that are in the estimation model. Specifically, we want to estimate the Charter school effect on students' later achievement after adjusting for student differences related to ethnicity, gender, Free/Reduced Meal program eligibility, grade level, and English language proficiency level. The analysis included all grade 1-5 students for whom there was complete data for the variables under analysis during the three-year time period 1997-98, 1998-99, and 1999-2000. Before explaining the regression results, it is important to define a few of the terms used in the accompanying analysis.

Terms and Definitions

The **mean** is the same as the average. The **standard deviation** is a measure of spread or range of the data under examination. In other words, a large standard deviation indicates how much distance exists between high and low values. For the analyses below, the **constant** is a statistic generated by the computer that functions as a "base score" against which we are comparing the impact of the different variables in the model. The constant is the mean of the population when the values of all the independent variables are zero. For this study, the constant stands for the 1997-98 average score for a grade 1, White male student, who was non-LEP and not eligible for participation in the Free/Reduced Meal program. Set this way, the regression model allows us to compare the differential impact of the variable included in the model in relation to a "base" student.

The **regression coefficients** represent the "effect" of the variable under consideration. These coefficients, therefore, indicate how much impact each variable has on student achievement. For example, **Table 6.8** below models Montague's reading achievement. Looking at the row for School A, one can see that Montague students did better by 4.2 NCEs in 1998-99, a result that was statistically significant as show by a t-ratio greater than 1.96 (see explanation on statistical significance below). Likewise, being a RFEP student "added" 7.2 NCEs to your reading score in 1997-98.

Statistical significance is an inference, based on a statistical test, indicating that the results obtained for a research sample can be generalized to the population that the sample represents. Put another way, a value is statistically significant when its probability that a finding is not the result of a sampling error but reflects the characteristics of the population from which the sample was drawn. Statistical significance, therefore, means that the result is not random and that we would be likely to get the sample result a high percentage of the time if the same procedures were used. Typically, 95% is the threshold used to determine whether or not a result is statistically significant.

The **t-ratio** is another way to test whether a value is statistically significant. The t-ratio is used to test the significance of the regression coefficient and to see whether it is significantly different from zero. For the sample size here, anything larger than 1.96, with the significance level at 0.95, signals the coefficient is significant. Throughout this report, statistically significant t-ratios have been flagged with an asterisk (*).

R square is the coefficient of determination which indicates the proportion of variation in the dependent variable (the variable being described, caused, or explained) that can be explained by the independent variables (the factors causing or explaining). R square in this regression model explains the percentage of variation in Reading, Mathematics, and Language scores that can be accounted for by the other factors such as student ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English language proficiency, etc.

Stanford 9 Reading

Table 6.8: Regression Coefficients for Stanford 9 Reading

READING	1997-98		1998-99		1999-00	
Variable	Coefficient	t-ratio	Coefficient	t-ratio	Coefficient	t-ratio
# of students	3,859		5,370		5,950	
SCHOOL A	-1.0	1.0	-4.2	5.2*	-2.9	3.6*
SCHOOL B	4.3	4.8*	1.0	1.3	1.8	2.3
SCHOOL C	0.8	0.8	-0.8	1.0	1.8	2.2
SCHOOL D	2.2	2.3*	2.9	3.8*	4.1	5.5*
SCHOOL E	-3.1	3.7*	-5.9	8.2*	-2.9	4.0*
SCHOOL F	1.5	1.5	2.4	2.2*	2.3	2.8*
SCHOOL G	1.5	1.6	-3.3	4.3*	-2.7	3.5*
HISPANIC	3.1	2.4*	1.8	1.3	4.4	3.3*
BLACK	-2.1	0.9	2.9	1.4	7.1	3.2*
OTHER	6.9	2.9*	5.8	2.6*	4.7	2.0*
GRADE_1	-1.4	7.3*	-2.3	14.8*	-2.6	17.8*
FEMALE	1.8	4.0*	1.1	2.7*	1.2	3.1*
LEP	-8.7	15.3*	-8.8	17.4*	-9.4	19.8*
RFEP	7.6	7.5*	8.6	9.4*	7.5	9.7*
FREE LUNCH	-4.5	2.2*	-4.6	3.7*	-5.3	5.4*
(Constant)	36.0		44.4		44.5	
R-square	16%		19%		20%	

As shown in **Table 6.8**, the regression model for Stanford 9 reading scores indicates that the performance of Montague students was positive and statistically significant in relation to Schools A, E, and G.   Put another way, compared to these schools, Montague students did better in reading in at least two of the three years after controlling for factors such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, English language proficiency, etc. For School A, Stanford 9 reading scores were 4.2 NCEs lower in 1998-99 and 2.9 NCEs lower in 1999-00. Similarly, the model indicates that the reading scores of students at Schools D and F were higher than those of

Montague students in at least two of the three years after controlling for student demographics. School D, for example, outperformed Montague in reading by 2.1, 2.9, and 4.1 NCEs for each of the successive three years under examination.

Ethnicity was a statistically significant predictor of reading scores for Hispanics in two years and among Black students for only one of the years under examination. Gender was statistically significant for all three years of data, with females likely to have slightly higher reading scores compared to males. Grade level also has a statistically significant impact as student scores tend to decline by 1-2 NCEs as they move through the grade levels. However, the demographic factors which have the greatest influence on Stanford 9 reading scores are English language proficiency and, to a lesser extent, student poverty. As shown in the table, Limited English Proficient (LEP) students scored, on average, 8-9 NCEs lower and redesignated students (RFEPs) scored 7-9 NCEs higher. Both results are statistically significant. Similarly, students who qualify for participation in the Free/Reduced Meal program tend to score about 4-5 NCEs lower than non-participants.

Stanford 9 Mathematics

The regression model for Stanford 9 math scores (see **Table 6.9** below) indicates that the performance of Montague students was statistically better in relation to Schools A, E, and G. Compared to these schools, Montague students did better in math in at least two of the three years after controlling for student demographic characteristics. For School E, Stanford 9 math scores were 3.0, 4.2, and 3.8 NCEs lower in 1997-98, 1998-99, and 1999-00, respectively. The regression model also indicates that the math scores of students at Schools B, D, and F were higher than Montague in at least two of the three years after controlling for student demographics. School B, for example, outperformed Montague in math by 3.5 NCEs in 1997-98 and by 2.1 NCEs in 1998-99.

Ethnicity was a statistically significant factor in explaining student math scores. Hispanics experienced higher scores in all three years as well as Blacks in two of the three years under examination. Unlike reading, gender did not exert a statistically significant impact on math scores. However, the impact of grade was statistically significant and slightly higher. According to the model, student performance in math tends to drop about 2 NCEs as students progress through the grade levels. The results related to English language proficiency are intriguing as they show a smaller but still statistically significant effect of LEP status on math performance. LEP students scored 3-4 NCEs lower. However, the impact of redesignation is statistically significant and more pronounced with RFEPs scoring 12-13 NCEs higher. Participation in Free/Reduced Meal program was associated with a lower Stanford 9 score (5-6 NCEs lower) that was statistically significant in two of the three years.

Table 6.9: Regression Coefficients for Stanford 9 Math

MATH Variable	1997-98 Coefficient	t-ratio	1998-99 Coefficient	t-ratio	1999-00 Coefficient	t-ratio
# of students	4,100		5,647		6,223	
SCHOOL A	-4.2	4.0*	-5.9	6.4*	-8.0	8.7*
SCHOOL B	3.5	3.5*	2.1	2.3*	-0.7	0.8
SCHOOL C	-2.6	2.4*	-1.8	1.9	-1.0	1.1
SCHOOL D	0.3	0.3	4.9	5.7*	3.3	3.8*
SCHOOL E	-3.0	3.3*	-4.2	5.0*	-3.8	4.6*
SCHOOL F	1.3	1.1	4.1	3.3*	2.7	2.9*
SCHOOL G	-0.8	0.9	-3.1	3.5*	-3.8	4.3*
HISPANIC	6.1	4.3*	5.6	3.7*	4.8	3.2*
BLACK	2.8	1.1	5.9	2.5*	5.3	2.1*
OTHER	11.1	4.2*	9.5	3.7*	5.5	2.1*
GRADE_1	-2.3	10.8*	-2.7	15.1*	-2.3	13.8*
FEMALE	0.8	1.6	0.4	0.8	-0.1	0.3
LEP	-2.8	4.4*	-3.4	5.9*	-4.5	8.4*
RFEP	12.2	10.6*	11.9	11.1*	13.0	14.6*
FREE LUNCH	-4.1	1.8	-4.7	3.3*	-6.2	5.5*
(Constant)	37.7		42.8		47.9	
R-square	9%		12%		14%	

Stanford 9 Language

Table 6.10: Regression Coefficients for Stanford 9 Language

LANGUAGE Variable	1997-98 Coefficient	t-ratio	1998-99 Coefficient	t-ratio	1999-00 Coefficient	t-ratio
# of students	3,981		5,562		6,006	
SCHOOL A	-2.7	2.8*	-2.4	2.9*	-2.7	3.1*
SCHOOL B	4.6	5.0*	4.2	5.0*	3.1	3.7
SCHOOL C	0.3	0.3	0.8	1.0	2.7	3.1
SCHOOL D	1.2	1.2	5.0	6.3*	6.5	7.9*
SCHOOL E	-2.9	3.5*	-4.5	5.9*	-2.7	3.4*
SCHOOL F	0.6	0.6	5.8	5.1*	4.5	5.1*
SCHOOL G	0.0	0.0	-1.8	2.2*	-0.02	0.03
HISPANIC	3.9	2.9*	3.4	2.4*	5.1	3.5*
BLACK	-1.1	0.5	2.9	1.3	4.4	1.8
OTHER	6.8	2.8*	6.3	2.6*	6.5	2.5*
GRADE_1	-0.8	3.9*	-1.6	10.1*	-1.3	7.9*
FEMALE	3.8	8.1*	3.4	8.2*	3.5	8.3*
LEP	-5.7	10.0*	-7.4	14.0*	-8.6	16.6*
RFEP	9.6	9.2*	11.0	11.3*	10.7	12.6*
FREE LUNCH	-3.7	1.9	-4.3	3.2*	-5.4	4.9*
(Constant)	34.0		39.8		40.0	
R-square	13%		16%		18%	

The regression model for Stanford 9 language scores (see **Table 6.10** above) indicates that the performance of Montague students was positive and statistically significant in relation to Schools A and E. Compared to these schools, Montague students did better in language in at least two of the three years after controlling for student demographic characteristics. For School E, Stanford 9 language scores were 2.9, 4.5, and 2.7 NCEs lower in 1997-98, 1998-99, and 1999-00, respectively. The regression model also indicates that the language scores of students at Schools B, D, and F were higher than Montague in at least two of the three years after controlling for student demographics. School F, for example, outperformed Montague in language by 5.8 NCEs in 1998-99 and by 4.5 NCEs in 1999-00.

Ethnicity was a statistically significant factor in explaining student math scores in a slightly positive direction but only for Hispanics. Similar to reading, female scores were 3-4 NCEs higher compared to males on the language portion of the Stanford 9. The impact of grade was statistically significant but only exerted about a one NCE drop with each year of advancement through the grade levels. The results related to English language proficiency indicate that LEP students score 6-9 NCEs lower while RFEPs score 10-11 NCEs higher. Participation in Free/Reduced Meal program was associated with a lower Stanford 9 score (4-5 NCEs lower) that was statistically significant in two of the three years.

Summary of Regression Results

School. In general, Montague performed significantly better than Schools A, E, and G on all portions of the Stanford 9 exam over the three-year period. Montague performed significantly lower than Schools D, F, and B. Montague and School C performed similarly with virtually no statistically significant differences in scores.

Ethnicity. Student ethnicity was statistically significant in a positive direction for Hispanics (and to a much lesser degree among Blacks), although this influence was most pronounced on the math portion of the Stanford 9.

Gender. Female students were more likely to achieve higher on both the reading and language sections of the Stanford 9 exam. There were no statistically significant differences related to gender for mathematics.

Grade. For all sections of the Stanford 9, slightly lower scores were associated with advancement through the grade levels. In other words, student scores tend to be lower in 5th grade compared to 1st grade.

English Language Proficiency. Proficiency in the English language was the best predictor of Stanford 9 scores for the schools included in the study. In all portions of the test, LEP students scored significantly lower and RFEP students scored significantly higher. The influence was highest in reading (8-9 NCEs) but also present in the other subtests. Interestingly, the impact of being an RFEP was most pronounced in the math section of the exam.

Socioeconomic Status. Student eligibility for participation in the Free/Reduced Meal program was associated with statistically significant lower Stanford 9 scores regardless of the subtest. On average, students from low-income households scored 4-6 NCEs lower.

Longitudinal Impact on Student Outcomes

This study looked at the long-term charter influence on student achievement *among those students who remained at the school over time.* By looking at "stayers" (those students who remain at the school for the entire three-year period under examination), we can get a better picture of the impact that Montague Charter has had on student outcomes in relation to the comparison schools.

These analyses were based on students who were enrolled in Grades 1-3 in 1997-98 and who stayed for the next two years. The derived results can be used to document the long-term charter school effect on student achievement. The following results are based on the students who have all three years of test scores, so the comparison is based on the same group of students in Montague and each of the seven comparison schools.

Table 6.11 below summarizes the performance of student "stayers" in all of the grade level cohorts (i.e., grades 1-3 in 1997-98 and their progress during the next two years). While the results are presented for each particular grade level cohort in **Appendix H**, the table below shows an aggregate of all student "stayers" at Montague and the seven comparison schools. As can be seen, Montague ranks 1st in its ability to improve reading achievement among students who remained at the school for three continuous years. On average, student reading achievement improved 7.5 NCEs over time. For math, Montague ranks 4th, moving "stayer" students an average of 2.8 NCEs. In language, Montague is tied for 2nd place with School C and behind School F. Language test NCEs improved an average of 8.3 NCEs at Montague.

Table 6.11: School Impact on Student "Stayers"

School	Reading		Math		Language	
	NCE Change	Rank	NCE Change	Rank	NCE Change	Rank
Montague	**7.5**	**1**	**2.8**	**4**	**8.3**	**2**
School A	3.2	8	-0.5	7	6.0	4
School B	3.6	7	-1.2	8	1.8	7
School C	4.3	6	4.7	2	8.3	2
School D	5.2	4	4.7	2	6.7	3
School E	4.9	5	1.9	6	5.5	6
School F	7.2	2	5.9	1	12.3	1
School G	5.4	3	2.3	5	6.0	4

In terms of the different grade level cohorts, Montague did quite well compared to the other schools in the matched sample with the Grade 1 and Grade 2 Cohorts (i.e., 1st - 3rd graders and 2nd-4th grades beginning in 1997-98). Montague ranked

2nd, 3rd, and 2nd, for the Grade 1 Cohort in Reading, Math, and Language, respectively (see Appendix H for complete results). Likewise, the Grade 2 cohort ranked 2nd, 5th, and 2nd, for Reading, Math, and Language, respectively. The Grade 3 Cohort (i.e., 3rd -5th graders beginning in 1997-98) did less well achieving ranks of 3rd in Reading, and 4th in both Math and Language.

We also looked at "stayers" in terms of the *percentage of students at or above the 50th percentile*. This alternative method allowed us to compare schools in terms of their ability to move students to the national average of achievement. In addition, this method enabled us to examine whether Montague is better in improving low-performing students' test scores while maintaining high-performing students' achievement.

Reading

Overall, we found that Montague moved 5% of students who score below the 50th percentile to at or above the 50th percentile between 1997-98 and 1999-00. As illustrated in **Table 6.12**, Montague ranked 5th in its ability to move "stayer" students from low-performing status to high-performing status compared to the record of the other comparison schools over the three-year period.

Table 6.12: % of Students At or Above the 50th Percentile - Reading

School	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	Net Change
Montague	14%	18%	19%	5%
School A	11%	8%	17%	6%
School B	19%	20%	21%	2%
School C	18%	20%	19%	1%
School D	17%	21%	23%	6%
School E	7%	11%	11%	4%
School F	14%	16%	22%	8%
School G	11%	18%	24%	13%

Mathematics

Montague moved 12% of students who scored below the 50th percentile to at or above the 50th percentile between 1997-98 and 1999-00 (see **Table 6.13** below). Montague ranked 1st in its ability to move "stayer" students from low-performing status to high-performing status across the eight schools.

Table 6.13: % of Students At or Above the 50th Percentile - Math

School	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	Net Change
Montague	24%	36%	34%	12%
School A	12%	7%	13%	1%
School B	34%	36%	29%	-5%
School C	16%	21%	25%	10%
School D	27%	36%	34%	7%
School E	17%	18%	17%	0%
School F	24%	32%	35%	11%
School G	24%	28%	30%	6%

Language

As shown in **Table 6.14**, Montague moved 16% of the "stayer" students who scored below the 50th percentile to at or above the 50th percentile between 1997-98 and 1999-00. Montague ranked 3rd in terms of moving "stayer" students from low-performing status to high-performing status when we look at the stayers in 1998-99 and 1999-2000.

Table 6.14: % of Students At or Above the 50th Percentile - Language

School	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	Net Change
Montague	17%	27%	33%	**16%**
School A	11%	13%	19%	**8%**
School B	23%	26%	26%	**3%**
School C	12%	30%	34%	**21%**
School D	17%	35%	32%	**15%**
School E	8%	12%	17%	**9%**
School F	14%	19%	34%	**20%**
School G	24%	25%	34%	**10%**

Summary of Charter's Longitudinal Impact

Among "stayers" (students who stay at the school over time), the *rate of growth* in terms of mean (average) SAT-9 score among Montague students was significantly higher compared to all schools in the comparison group in Reading (ranked 1st). For Math, Montague's rate of growth was higher than four schools (ranked 4th). In Language, Montague's rate of growth was higher than five schools, and equal to one (tied for 2nd rank). We also looked at "stayers" in terms of the *percentage of students at or above the 50th percentile.* In terms of rank among the eight schools, Montague was 5th in Reading (5% growth), 1st in Math (12% growth), and 3rd in Language (16% growth).

Montague Charter Evaluation

Appendix A

Site Visit Interview Guide

Site Visit Questions

Evaluation Research Questions

- What contextual, programmatic or implementation factors might be associated with the student outcomes observed at Montague?
- To what extent were these programs and activities linked to the adoption of the charter? Put another way, what was the school able to do that it could not have done without the charter?

I.   Curriculum and Instructional Support

Key Respondents: Teachers, paraprofessionals, site administration and school coordinators.

Curricular Changes
- How has the school been restructured to put the focus on curriculum/instruction? With the freedom allowed under the Charter, what did you change? Why?
- Who makes curricular decisions? What role does the Curriculum Committee play?

Charter Impact
- What is the impact of the Charter on core curriculum? Standards-based instruction? *Probe:School-determined and developed curriculum model*
- How have ELLs (specifically) benefited from the charter?
- How does curriculum/instruction differ for students with different needs (special education, gifted, etc.)? What does special education student inclusion look like?
- What would you say are your chief curricular "successes"?
- Is the charter more beneficial in (*probe for rank ordering*)
    - Flexibility (e.g., student grouping)
    - Climate change conducive to staff collaboration
    - Leveraging additional fiscal resources
    - Enlisting parent/community support
    - Other

Teacher and Classroom Support
- Is there anything specific to the charter that provided more support to teachers/classrooms?
- What kinds of on-site support are missing? Who else needs support? How are teacher/classroom needs communicated?

II.   Intervention Strategies

One-to-one Reading Center
Early Education Phonological Program
Home Literacy Trainer
School Readiness Language Development Program (2 SRLDP Classes)
Kindergarten "Doing Words" Extended Program
Waterford Early Literacy Program
Intermediate Classes (K, 1, 3)
3 "10-1" Intensive Academic Support Classes (for 2nd graders)
5th Grade Intervention Class
Newcomers' Class
Saturday ESL Academy
Resource Specialist
Special Education Classes
Intersession Classes
After-school Tutoring
Parent as Partners

Key Areas: Design
                 Evidence
                 Linkages

Key Respondents: Teachers, grade level/department chairs, site administration and school coordinators.

Description of Programs
- What entry criteria are used to determine whether a student needs intervention? Exit criteria?
- What staff is responsible for designing intervention strategies?
- What staff is responsible for coordinating and delivering intervention support?
- How are parents informed about the intervention strategies? How are parents involved? *Probe:Grade retention*
- How are these intervention strategies funded?

Linkages and Effectiveness
- How much linkage exists between intervention and the regular instructional program? *Probe: communication between teachers, role of assessment, curricular strands present in both, etc.*
- What evidence do you have of the effectiveness of the intervention strategies?

Charter Impact
How has charter school status had an impact on intervention strategies?
        Probe: Extended inter-session classes and extended time programs
                Intermediate intervention classes in grades K, 1, 3 and 5
                Established Lindamood Bell One-to-One Reading Center
- What have you learned about intervention that you would share with others? *Probe: Rollout/implementation, Staffing, Curricular focus/materials, School linkages*

III.   Professional Development

Key Areas: Allocation of time
                        Link to assessment results/student needs
                        Evidence of impact

Key Respondents: Teachers, site administration, and school coordinators.

Articulation
- How often do teachers come together by grade level? What is usually discussed at these meetings? Who leads/coordinates these discussions? *Probe: Lead teacher role*
- What is the role of the various charter committees in shaping the content, frequency or benefits of articulation forums?
- How has charter school status influenced the content or frequency of these articulation forums?

Assessment
- How prominent a role has assessment assumed since becoming a charter school? Is assessment more of a priority? How is this manifest?
- Who wants assessments? Who uses assessments (teachers, grade level, school-wide)?
- What, if anything, are you held accountable for as a Charter school that you would not be held to as a regular LAUSD school?

Professional Development
- How has charter school status had an impact on the type of professional development offered? How is staff input (teachers and others) communicated? Who is included in training?
- How has charter school status had an impact on how much professional development is offered? *Probe: Number of buy-back days, minimum days, Saturdays, etc.*
- Is there any follow-up process (formal or informal) to evaluate whether training is being implemented in the classroom? Having an impact on student learning? If so, please describe.

IV.   Parent/Community Involvement

Key Areas: Awareness/School Outreach
Satisfaction
Changed Behaviors

Key Respondents: ALL but especially parents, school coordinators, community representatives, and parent center directors

Parental Awareness/School Outreach
- What do you think "charter school" means to parents?
- How is information about school activities and programs communicated to parents?
- How are parents informed about the school's progress as a charter school? What are they informed about?
- How far does the "charter" penetrate into the surrounding community (neighborhood and business)? Does the label "charter" help bring parents/community on board?
- What types of parent involvement have been encouraged by the school? *(Probe: parent education, reinforcement of learning at home, volunteerism, involvement in school governance, etc.)*
- What role does the parent center play? What about the school's Community Representative funded through Title I?

Charter Impact
- What lessons have you learned about parent involvement?
  - community outreach strategies
  - staffing positions
  - hiring parents
  - training parents
  - involving parents n school decisions
  - improving interactions with teachers
- What can you provide parents/community as a charter school that you couldn't otherwise?
  Probe: Parental enrollment choice
  School-linked health and social services through five-school collaborative
- What is your greatest "success" in terms of parent/community involvement? What's next?

V.   School Organization and Climate

Key Areas: Structure
                 Communication
                 Resource Allocation

Key Respondents: ALL but decision-making questions should be directed to site administration, school coordinators, and school leadership team.

School Decision-Making
• How has charter school status had an impact on school decision-making practices?
        Probe: Local school governance
                 Reduced class size in grades 4-5
                 Flexible groupings and assignment of students
                 School-determined calendar and instructional schedules
                 Flexible use of state funds under the Charter Block Grant
                 Site-based budgeting
                 Site-based staff selection
                 Site-based maintenance and operations

• How inclusive is the decision-making process? Does collaborative decision-making help or hurt? P*robe for examples.*
• To whom does Charter governance matter? Why? Outside of key participants, how much attention do staff/parents pay to it?
• How important is charter governance to instructional reform? Is it a prerequisite for comprehensive school reform?
• How closely does the school's budget align with school improvement goals? How would you know?

School Climate
• How much trust and collaboration exists among teachers? Between faculty and administration? Between school staff and parents/community? What role did the charter play in changing the nature of these relationships?
• How has the school integrated those not involved in the establishment of the charter into the charter "team"? Does the "charter" lose momentum over time?
• Do you feel that this school supports and encourages leadership and initiative among teachers? Parents?

Montague Charter Evaluation

Appendix B

Classroom Observation Tool

Date:	Observer:
School:	Grade:
Teacher:	# Students:

STANDARDS-BASED INSTRUCTION	no evidence	weak evidence	some evidence	strong evidence	Not Observed
Lessons are based on standards that are clearly indicated and integrated into classroom activities.	0	1	2	3	
Standards are integrated into project-based or hands-on classroom learning projects.	0	1	2	3	
Instructional delivery is based on a grade level pacing plan	0	1	2	3	
Students are informed about the educational objectives (standards) of each lesson.	0	1	2	3	
Students are informed about the criteria/basis for evaluating assignments.	0	1	2	3	
Examples of high quality, exemplary student work are displayed in the classroom.	0	1	2	3	
Comments:					

LITERACY	no evidence	weak evidence	some evidence	strong evidence	Not Observed
Literacy is integrated across subject areas.	0	1	2	3	
Students have opportunities to read, write, and communicate orally in the classroom.	0	1	2	3	
Literacy curriculum delivery accommodates diverse learning styles and needs.	0	1	2	3	
Written text (e.g., classroom labels, word walls, center instructions, etc.) is displayed throughout the classroom.	0	1	2	3	
The influence of Core Knowledge is present in classroom literacy instruction.	0	1	2	3	
Teaching respects the 120-minute language arts block and is focused on Open Court (if applicable)	0	1	2	3	
Comments:					

MATH	no evidence	weak evidence	some evidence	strong evidence	Not Observed
Mathematical concepts and applications are integrated across subject areas.	0	1	2	3	
Mathematics curriculum delivery accommodates diverse learning styles and needs.	0	1	2	3	

	no evidence	weak evidence	some evidence	strong evidence	Not Observed
Mathematical concepts and applications are displayed throughout the classroom.	0	1	2	3	
The influence of the school's reform model is present in classroom mathematics	0	1	2	3	
Teaching is based on a school or grade level math program/textbook series.	0	1	2	3	

Comments:

Classroom Aides/Paraprofessionals	no evidence	weak evidence	some evidence	strong evidence	Not Observed
Instructional aides work effectively with small groups of students.	0	1	2	3	
Instructional aides work mostly with students performing at grade level, allowing the teacher to work intensely with students in need of extra assistance.	0	1	2	3	
The academic/instructional contribution of the classroom aide is apparent and well-defined.	0	1	2	3	

Comments:

TEACHING PRACTICE/STYLE	no evidence	weak evidence	some evidence	strong evidence	Not Observed
Students have opportunities to work in both small and large group settings.	0	1	2	3	
Students are engaged and most actively participate in classroom activities.	0	1	2	3	
Students understand and obey classroom rules.	0	1	2	3	
Students work cooperatively during classroom projects.	0	1	2	3	
Students move among different learning centers as part of classroom activities and learning.	0	1	2	3	
Teaching accesses multiple learning modalities (e.g., visual, kinesthetic, auditory, etc.)	0	1	2	3	
Teachers use different assessment tools to monitor student needs and check on student progress.	0	1	2	3	
Students have the opportunity to apply advanced thinking skills (i.e., instruction addresses Bloom's taxonomy).	0	1	2	3	
Transitions from one activity/lesson to the next are smooth and seamless.	0	1	2	3	

Comments:

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS	no evidence	weak evidence	some evidence	strong evidence	Not Observed
Instruction is differentiated based on a student's level of English attainment (i.e. ELD level).	0	1	2	3	
Instruction emphasizes oral English language skills (i.e., ELLs have opportunities to practice oral English)	0	1	2	3	
Instruction demonstrates use of SDAIE strategies.	0	1	2	3	
Teacher uses realia and/or visual aids (e.g., graphic organizers) to help ELLs understand new concepts.	0	1	2	3	
Instruction of ELLs involves building on students' previous knowledge and experience (Language Experience Approach).	0	1	2	3	
The teacher checks for signs that ELLs understand instructions and what is being taught.	0	1	2	3	
Comments:					

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT	poor	fair	good	excellent	Not Observed
Lighting	0	1	2	3	
Seating arrangement	0	1	2	3	
Bulletin boards/wall decorations	0	1	2	3	
Print-rich environment (classroom labeling)	0	1	2	3	
Safety	0	1	2	3	
Noise	0	1	2	3	
Temperature	0	1	2	3	
Student behavior and discipline	0	1	2	3	
Availability of textbooks/instructional materials	0	1	2	3	
Comments:					