

**PILOT EVALUATION OF THE
WISCONSIN CHARTER SCHOOL PROGRAM**

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Introduction

Charter schools have over the last ten years become an important education reform. During the 1990's charter schools were established in every area of the country. Wisconsin's charter school law, initially passed in 1993 and revised in 1995, 1997, and 1998, has resulted in the creation of 62 charter schools by 1999. By fall 2000, the Department of Public Instruction estimates that Wisconsin will have close to one hundred charter schools.

Supporters argue that because they are freed from many regulations that govern the typical public school and they have the autonomy to create innovative programs that better serve their students and parents, charter schools have great potential to improve education. Thus, proponents believe the practices charter schools develop can function as effective and efficient models for other schools and thereby lead to broader educational reform.

Most observers agree that for charter schools to justify the elimination of normal district and state regulations and to fulfill their promise, accountability is essential. Although individual charter schools as well as their chartering agencies may conduct their own evaluations of their programs, a statewide, longitudinal evaluation of Wisconsin's charter schools is essential if policy makers are to understand the overall impact of the reform.

Purpose

The purpose of this pilot evaluation is to develop a model for a statewide evaluation of charter schools. As such, it should not be considered an evaluation of the three charter schools used to pilot the design.

Evaluation Questions

The questions that guided the evaluation are the following:

1. What is the nature of the innovative program of the charter school?
 - a. What type of innovative program has been identified?
 - b. What is the innovative program's philosophical or empirical support?
 - c. How is the innovative program being implemented?
2. How effective is the innovative program in terms of academic and other types of achievement and success?

- a. How do the 3rd, 4th, 8th, and 10th grade state achievement test scores of students in pilot evaluation charter schools compare with students in other charter and non-charter schools?
 - b. To what extent do other indicators demonstrate student growth?
 - c. How satisfied are teachers and parents with the charter school innovative program and its effects?
3. Is the school environment conducive to student health and growth?
 4. Are the teachers prepared and committed?
 5. Does the school governance include parent voice and does it facilitate innovative program success?
 6. Does the charter contract ensure that the goals of the charter school reform will be achieved?
 7. Has the charter school influenced practice in public schools?

The term "innovative program" used in this evaluation refers to a non-typical, unusual program that is not generally used in similar contexts.

Selected Charter Schools

The charter schools selected for this pilot evaluation were Khamit Institute, Walker International Middle School, and Horizon Academy. These schools were chosen because they represent a range of school levels, types, sizes, and chartering agencies, and they are located in the Milwaukee area. Khamit Institute is a grade K4-8 elementary school enrolling 55 students. It is chartered by the city of Milwaukee and located on the near west side. It has been a functioning private school since 1996, and a charter school since 1998. Walker International Middle School is a grade 6-8 middle school on the south side of the city. It is chartered by the Milwaukee Public School and enrolls 790 students. Walker became a charter school in 1999. Horizon Academy is a grade 9-12 school-within-a-school for at-risk students. It is chartered by the St. Francis Schools and located in St. Francis High School on Milwaukee's far southeast side. Horizon Academy became a charter school in 1998 and currently enrolls about 40 students.

Data Collection

Data were collected from the three charter schools through an administrator questionnaire; administrator, teacher, and parent interviews; school and classroom observations; and charter school contract analysis. These data were collected from January through May, 2000. Achievement test scores for the three schools and comparison schools were obtained from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Administrator questionnaire. The administrator of each charter school was asked to complete a questionnaire that dealt with the innovative program features, implementation, goals, assessment processes, and effects. It also dealt with student discipline policy, school environment, teacher preparation and commitment, parent

involvement, school governance, chartering agency accountability, and impact on public schools.

Administrator interview. Each charter school administrator was interviewed regarding his or her views on the adequacy of the Administrator Questionnaire questions and format and to clarify or extend comments made on the administrator questionnaire. These interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.

School and classroom observations. The number of classroom observations varied with the size of the school, as did the number of teacher interviews. At both Khamit and Walker, variety in grade levels, subject areas, and teachers was sought. At Khamit eight observations were made, including all four teachers. At Walker 12 observations were made in the classrooms of one of the school's interdisciplinary teams. At Horizon, which has a single teacher, two observations were made. The observations were of complete lessons, using a general observation guide. Observers took notes and developed narrative accounts of the observations.

Teacher interviews. Four teachers at Khamit, six at Walker, and one at Horizon were interviewed once regarding their perceptions of the innovative program including teaching, assessment, and effects. Also, their perceptions of autonomy, parent involvement, and other matters were elicited. These interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Parent interviews. Two parents at each charter school were interviewed to determine their knowledge of and satisfaction with their charter school and the effects they perceived on their child or children.

Charter school contract. Each of the three charter school contracts was examined to determine the intended and implemented accountability measures and other intended features.

Achievement test scores. Students in grades 3, 4, 8, and 10 of Wisconsin charter schools are required by law to take state achievement tests. The scores attained by students in the three charter schools were obtained from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and used to create models for analyzing charter school performance.

Structure of This Report

This evaluation is divided into three parts. **Part I: Program Analysis** focuses on the nature of the innovative program but also describes other important characteristics of the selected schools. **Part II: Contract Accountability Analysis** primarily examines the accountability provisions of the charter contracts of the selected schools. **Part III: Achievement Test Analysis** provides a structure by which to compare student achievement in the selected charter schools with student achievement in other schools

matched on school size, racial makeup, exceptionality, and gender. The report concludes with a synthesis and discussion of findings.

Part I: Program Analysis

Khamit Institute

Intended Innovative Program

Khamit Institute serves children from four-year-old kindergarten through 8th grade. The purpose of the school is to have students "learn about and appreciate their cultural history and forms while obtaining an exemplary academic education" (Khamit Institute Staff Handbook, 1988). The culture in which students are immersed is based on the Khamitic culture of ancient Egypt. Guiding principles that are said to be drawn from that culture include knowledge of oneself, that all people have genius and worth, and that harmony and balance pervade existence.

The educational program of Khamit Institute has both a curricular focus and an instructional focus. The stated curricular focus is to prepare students to successfully interact in a world society without being overwhelmed. It includes the development of cultural appreciation, academic ability, life skills including entrepreneurial experience, self awareness, a range of intelligences, and global understanding. The specific academic curriculum goals of Khamit Institute as stated in their charter school contract are the following:

1. Global awareness. Students will be able to demonstrate and articulate an understanding of themselves and the world around them through humanities, social studies, and foreign language. They will develop personal growth and global identity. School-wide Khamitic themes based on the range of intelligences are studied.
2. Reading mastery. Students will become strategic, independent, and confident readers. They will become competent in decoding strategies, comprehension skills, literacy skills, and study skills.
3. Mathematics and science. Students will be able to make informed decision and use mastered science and mathematics concepts to solve problems. They will become capable problem solvers, think and communicate mathematically and scientifically, develop a depth of understanding needed for advanced study, and make connections between mathematics and science.
4. Reasoning and writing. Students will be able to think, express themselves, and write clearly.
5. Physical education. Students will be able to make mind-body connections through mastery of martial arts and health and wellness knowledge.

The curriculum, according to the administrator, uses themes "to integrate subjects, grades, and the school activities with the vision, mission, and philosophy of Khamit Institute."

The instructional focus is direct instruction. This method of teaching, heavily researched in the 1970's in reading and mathematics at the elementary school level, is a teacher-centered way of the teaching. Although there are various forms of direct instruction, characteristics common to all forms are that the teacher sets the learning agenda, provides and models knowledge and skills, controls participation, elicits and critiques students' understandings, provides practice experiences, reteaches when necessary, and reviews prior learnings. Student interests, choices, problem solving, critical thinking, and creativity are typically not associated with direct instruction.

The key elements of direct instruction specified in the Khamit Institute charter school contract are the following:

1. Explicit teacher-led learning that develops students' thinking and independent problem solving.
2. Homogeneous instructional groups based on academic level rather than grade using a common curriculum with no separate tracks.
3. Mastery of sequenced content and skills prior to advancement to a succeeding level.
4. Polished, scripted lessons.
5. Whole class engagement including frequent choral responses as well as individual responses.

In addition to direct instruction, accelerated learning was mentioned as a feature of the school's instructional program by the administrator and teachers. It was selected because it "is most closely aligned with Khamit principles," the administrator said. Accelerated learning is a method of teaching that is not dissimilar from direct instruction. It includes the use of behavioral objectives, preparing students to receive instruction, presenting and memorizing information, practice or performance activities, and assessment. It differs from direct instruction in that it incorporates the seven intelligences (described by Howard Gardner) and, as used at Khamit, employs music to enhance learning.

Implemented Innovative Program

Both the identified curriculum innovations and instructional innovations are being implemented at Khamit Institute to some degree.

Innovative curriculum. Rather than being an aspect of the curriculum, Khamitic culture, according to the administrator, serves as "a cultural base from which our children can learn. It's a system that has been successful in developing the potential of people. And we want to practice it and to teach it to our children." Curriculum is viewed as the core subjects such as reading, mathematics, and language. Nevertheless, Khamitic culture, principles, and values are a central feature of what is taught at Khamit Institute.

Although the authenticity of characterizing individual aspects of the program as Khamitic was not investigated for this evaluation, it appears that Khamitic and African

culture is rich and pervasive at Khamit Institute. The first thing one notices upon entering the school at about 8:00 a.m. is the rhythmic beat of African drums. Each school day is begun with a total school gathering in an assembly room, an entry room on the ground floor brightly decorated with African posters, murals, symbols, and art work. Four or more boys trained in African drumming beat the drums as children and teachers gather for daily opening activities. It appears that all the children and teachers are dressed in African-style "uniforms" of the same blue and pink (on this day) tie-dyed colors. The session, led by an older student and a teacher, consists of African songs, including the School Pledge to the tune of "Oklahoma;" the use of African terms and phrases such as "Heru Nefer" (Good Morning), "Ser-t" (Female Elder), and "Ur-Auat" (Queen Mother); the honoring of all adults in the room; unison pledge and ritual chants relating to Khamit principles; recognition of student behavior consistent with Khamitic ideals; and preparation for the school day by having students visualize themselves engaged in appropriate learning behavior. Throughout the session the drums spontaneously erupt to emphasize and applaud comments and events. They also strike up at the session's conclusion to accompany the flow of students to their classrooms.

The suffusion of Khamitic and African culture continues throughout the day. African maps and batik hangings are displayed on classroom walls. In an observed lesson in global studies for grades 4-6, the subject matter was countries of Africa. The students were to memorize the countries and regions of Africa as well as to acquire information about Ethiopia and Nigeria. During the lesson Khamitic terms were used such as "As" (attention), African songs were sung, and students danced African dances. The teacher reminded students of a raffle for a free trip to Ghana. In a lesson in entrepreneurship class for grades 1-3, the business enterprise being established was named the Men Nefer Magic Shop.

All curriculum, then, is augmented by Khamitic and African learnings. As one teacher remarked, "we weave it in because we are a Khamitic immersion school. We weave in Africa, African, whenever we can throughout the day."

What the administrator referred to as the core curriculum does not appear to differ substantially from what one might find in any elementary school. Reading, language, mathematics, science, and social studies all occur, but with the Khamitic overlay where appropriate. Music and languages, also, clearly reflect the cultural emphasis. Songs, dance, drums, and recorded jazz and other music seem to play an important role, as do the foreign languages of Swahili and French. The administrator said, in reference to the curriculum, "I didn't think we were an innovative school, per se."

Innovative instruction. Direct instruction, the type of instruction identified for use at Khamit, was observed in part in most classrooms. Teachers have received inservice training in direct instruction and appear to know its theory. Some of the teaching practices observed are consistent with direct instruction, but some are not. Homogeneous, multi-age grouping as is done in reading and mathematics fits direct instruction, although it is not required for direct instruction to be used. Helping students to memorize facts, asking recall questions, lecturing, unison responding, and practice

worksheets are all direct instruction techniques and were observed in the global studies lesson, the entrepreneurial lesson, and other lessons. Other characteristics of direct instruction such as stating a purpose for the lesson, modeling procedures and products, checking for understanding, and re-teaching were observed infrequently.

A number of practices that were observed, although effective if done well, were in opposition to direct instruction principles. These include assigning work rather than explaining it and guiding students through it, group work without teacher leadership, and structuring a lesson inductively. In addition, there seemed to be a wide range of competence among teachers and assistants when doing direct instruction: from unsure of content, stiff, and unaware of what students were actually doing in one class, to well-versed in the content, comfortable, and constantly cognizant of students' actions and needs in another.

In one classroom, students were given a booklet of worksheets to complete individually, apparently without previous directions or explicit substantive input. In another classroom students were told to open their textbooks and begin "Lesson 41, Section A." The teacher read the directions to the class, but content was not explained and demonstrated. In still another classroom, reasons why the class was engaging in a business enterprise were elicited from students and written on the chalkboard by the teachers. Students were required to copy the completed list. Again, no direct instruction about reasons for the business enterprise occurred. The activity previously mentioned about interviewing a person born in Africa could be consistent with direct instruction but only after students had obtained a substantial body of knowledge about Africa and the activity was carefully structured and controlled, not simply assigned.

In regard to accelerated learning, the use of song as a mnemonic device was observed in several classrooms, but other features of this method such as whole-to-part and a focus on auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning features mentioned by the administrator, were not observed.

Some instructional and some classroom management practices that were not developmentally appropriate were observed. In one lesson, for example, it was doubtful that the six- and seven-year-olds were able to grasp the meaning and role of corporate officers. In another, a young child who was not following the teaching assistant's complex entrepreneurial presentation but not disturbing others was nagged repeatedly by another assistant and physically removed, crying, from the room.

Innovative organization. Khamit students are grouped into four classes--K4-K5, 1st-3rd grade, 4th-6th grade, and 7th-8th grade. Multi-age grouping at Khamit, according to the administrator, is mainly a practical choice resulting from the small size of the student body rather than a theoretical decision. Generally, the daily schedule for all students is this: school opens with the assembly and breakfast, followed by reading and spelling, math, reasoning and writing, and Khamitic studies. Students generally stay with their homeroom teacher all morning. After lunch and recess, they might be with different teachers or teaching assistants for social studies, computer lab, French, or Swahili.

Effects of the Innovative Program

According to the Khamit Institute charter school contract, student progress will be measured in five ways:

1. Mastery tests at regular intervals associated with direct instruction.
2. Portfolios used in non-direct instruction areas.
3. "Constructs/projects" displaying students' intellectual strengths.
4. Journal writing providing "avenues for personal insight."
5. Self assessment as well as peer input and constructive teacher feedback.

The administrator reported that journals, portfolios, projects, and mastery tests were used, but results were not shared with CERAI evaluators. Regarding Khamit Institute effectiveness, the administrator said that "33% of the graduates have been in the top 10% of their high school classes; 84.1% of students advanced at least one grade level in reading, math, and language arts." She also remarked, "We've seen students make phenomenal progress since they've been here.... We haven't done a scientific documentation of it."

The administrator said that results were "reported to authorities via monitoring agency." The *Khamitic Institute Programmatic Profile and Educational Performance – 1998-99 Academic Year*, the evaluation report conducted for the chartering agency, contains data from pre and post placement tests in math, reading, and writing. The report states results from the students who took pre-tests in September 1998 and post-tests in June 1999. Of the 37 students taking the math tests, 80% "advanced at least one grade level." Of the 27 student who took the reading tests, 85% advanced at least one grade level. Of the 31 students tested in "reasoning and writing," 87% similarly advanced at least one grade level.

That evaluation report contains figures indicating the percent of students (N=35) who attained specified benchmarks in three areas. In the areas of health habits 100% passed the exam. In the area of class project completion, 100% "completed [the] appropriate number. In "multiple intelligence knowledge" based on "role playing scenarios," 80% demonstrated average or above average competency, about 11% outstanding competency, and about 9% "some" competency.

That report also includes results on the required state examinations: for the 3rd graders (N=6) who took the Wisconsin Reading Comprehension Test (WRCT), and for 4th graders (N=7) and 8th graders (N=3) who took the Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS) exams. Finally, the report summarizes the results of surveys of parents and teachers. The report concludes that areas of focus should include facilities improvement, parental involvement, data collection for teacher-based assessment, and development of pre- and post-tests in science and social studies.

Other Features of the Charter School

Additional aspects of the charter schools examined in this evaluation are school environment, teacher preparation, school governance and parent involvement, the role of the chartering agency, and charter school's influence on other public schools.

School environment. Khamit Institute, housed in two connected storefronts, downstairs and up, is situated adjacent to the sidewalk of a busy thoroughfare. A paved parking lot for the closed business next door serves as the playground. Inside Khamit, as noted above, bright, African decor is pervasive. Some classrooms are formed by semi-permanent dividers.

The school and classroom environment at Khamit reflect the Khamitic philosophy and practices combined with assertive discipline procedures. Students are referred to as "geniuses" because of the belief that genius of one kind or another resides in everyone. Lunches and breakfasts, prepared on-site, are vegetarian. The modified assertive discipline practiced at Khamit is based on a set of rules which carries a "hierarchy" of consequences if a rule is broken. The rules, posted in each classroom, are the following:

1. Follow directions at all times.
2. Keep hands, feet, objects to yourself.
3. Get permission to speak or leave seat.
4. Complete work plan on time.

When a student violates the rules or procedures, according to the administrator, "we give them a tape, a meditation tape. And on the tape there are affirmations about the behavior that they should have had. And, it's done with music in the background that relaxes them. So, that's just an example of how Khamitics use discipline."

Use of the meditation tape was not observed, but numerous instances of acknowledging positive classroom behavior were observed. These include, "I like the way Marcus is sitting tall," "I like the way you're sitting tall like a young scholar," "Y'all were wonderful," "I like the way people are facing forward," and "You have such neat work, Carla." Rarely were reproofs or negative comments of any kind heard. When students misbehave, the teacher typically says "Ahs" (attention), which the students repeat and then quiet down.

Students with severe behavior problems are referred to a school discipline committee. The committee charts and implements an intervention plan for referred students.

The administrator described the school environment as being serene. A serene environment, she said, would be "one in which number one, the staff is serene and where they have techniques for helping students to achieve a serene [state].... They use music, we have a waterfall, we have plants, for the aesthetic part of it."

Teacher preparation. The teachers at Khamit appear to be committed and caring. Clearly, they embrace the curriculum and instructional thrusts of Khamit and are dedicated to Khamitic principles. They are knowledgeable about Khamit's philosophy, direct instruction theory, and assertive discipline. As one teacher said, "We have ongoing training for everything. You name it, we've got training for it." However, none of the four teachers possesses a Wisconsin teaching license. One holds a temporary teaching permit. The other three are unlicensed. (See Table 1.) Several teaching assistants were observed in classrooms throughout the day, including in teaching roles, and as substitute teachers. The academic director also teaches when needed. The extent of their preparation was not investigated for this report.

Table 1. Wisconsin licenses held by teachers at Khamit Institute.

Type of License	regular license; teaching in area and grade level of license	regular license; expired or teaching out of area or level	charter license	temporary permit	short-term sub license	unlicensed
Number of Teachers	0	0	0	1	0	3

Source: Staff list provided by Khamit administrator. Licensure information provided by DPI as of August 21, 2000.

School governance and parent involvement. Parents participate in Khamit Institute in a number of ways, according to the administrator and teachers. They serve on the Board of Directors, which is the school government group, they serve on school committees, they are involved in developing the learning plan for their child, they attend teacher-parent conferences, and they often participate in daily classroom events. The Board of Directors sets policy for Khamit Institute. In addition to parents, its members include the administrator, teachers, and community members. One of the principal school committees on which parents serve is the discipline committee. They also serve on the curriculum committee.

The personal learning plan that parents help develop for their child consists of identifying career goals of the child, establishing what needs to be accomplished in school to achieve the goals, and identifying quarterly bench marks in reading, math, and other subjects that must be reached. The parent-teacher conferences, which occur quarterly, serve as a primary way of reporting student progress. In relation to parents involved in everyday school life, one teacher remarked, "Parents come in...[and] do every thing. We have a parent that shops, we have parents that come in and cook when the cook is ill, ...parents who come in and work in the office. They're an integral part of what we do. Couldn't do it without them." Parents are also present at Khamit in one additional way: several of the teachers are parents of children at the school.

Chartering agency role. The administrator believes that Khamit has total autonomy to implement its education program, and further, that in exchange the chartering agency has implemented accountability measures through a contract with the Children's Research Center. No external constraints were mentioned by the administrator or teachers. They did mention, however, that they were outgrowing their current building.

Charter school influence. The administrator said that she does not know if Khamit Institute has had any influence on public schools at present. She believes that Khamit is developing a model of education that once documented could be replicated in other schools. She says, "We're still young and in the developing stage now, but our vision is that we would develop a model that others who wanted to be successful could replicate."

Program Summary: Khamit Institute

Khamit Institute immerses students in the Khamitic culture of ancient Egypt, as a vehicle for providing academic and life skills, cultural appreciation, and the ability to hold one's own in a world society. The curriculum contains the usual core subjects, but their augmentation via the Khamitic focus is innovative. Multi-age grouping and direct instruction are practiced, as well as features of accelerated learning. Assertive Discipline is practiced. A family-like atmosphere is often apparent. Although trained in and dedicated to the Khamit's principles and instructional model, the teachers lack appropriate certification. A report on an external evaluation conducted for the chartering agency contains 1998-99 aggregate data on student performance on state achievement tests, placement tests in three subject areas, and assessments regarding attainment of certain benchmarks. Parents serve actively on the Board of Directors, on school committees, and in various other roles. Significant efforts are made to keep parents involved with their children's programs. Constraints by the chartering agency are not apparent.

Walker International Middle School

Intended Innovative Program

The goal of Walker International Middle School, according to their Charter School Proposal is to "embrace the...five fundamental resources of an America's Promise school and to provide an educational program that will be attractive and beneficial to students and parents in the Walker neighborhood." The initiatives of the school are modeled after this program, which is a national program led by General Colin Powell and dedicated to ensuring that children have access to the fundamental resources they need to become successful adults. The administrator of Walker remarked that America's Promise is the "umbrella for everything."

The provisions of America's Promise and Walker's planned responses to each are the following:

1. A mentor for every student. Walker will assign an academic coach to students having trouble in school.
2. A safe place. Walker will provide a safe learning environment. Mediation skills will be taught to students as well as parents.
3. A nurturing environment. Walker will provide healthy meals and nursing services.
4. An education where marketable skills are taught. Walker will focus on the learning proficiencies as a means to provide students with marketable skills. Walker also will focus on preparing students for technology jobs.
5. A belief in service. Walker students will be required to participate in community "give back" projects.

The curriculum of Walker clusters around America's Promise, but it also centers around "the MPS Strategic Plan, the Equity 2000 Initiative, and the MPS Middle School Proficiencies," according to Walker's Middle School Proposal. The proposal identifies the following curriculum goals:

1. Reading. Walker's goal is that "every child leaves Walker reading at or above grade level."
2. Technology. Technology will be integrated into the curriculum at all levels. All students will have Internet licenses and use the Internet for research and communication.
3. Graphic arts and construction. This emphasis, which is aligned with career pathways at two high schools, is "designed to give students the skills and information needed should they decide to pursue a career in these fields."
4. Mathematics. The focus of mathematics is problem-solving skill as well as scale modeling connected with the construction emphasis.
5. Science. The foci of science are critical thinking and the body of scientific knowledge necessary for problem solving.
6. Communication. Communication skills are accomplished through regular classroom activities plus broadcasting classes and student contests.
7. Foreign language and music. All students are involved in one of these subjects.

Goals at Walker also include international studies and successful completion of the MPS Middle School Proficiencies.

Instructionally, Walker's goal is to individualize instruction. Their proposal states that:

Entering students will be pre-tested in math and reading. Standardized and non-standardized test results and recommendations from elementary schools and parents along with proficiency needs will be used to develop an education

program appropriate for the child so that he/she will have maximum success. Efforts will be made to identify and address individual learning styles.

The education program that Walker proposed also has organization goals. Through looping, multi-disciplinary teams of teachers will follow established groups of students through their entire three years at Walker. These groups, called "universities" at Walker, are fluid. Within a university, teachers can move students from one class to another to maximize opportunity for success. The teams include academic teachers, a special education teacher, and paraprofessionals. Instructional decisions, according to the administrator, are to be made by the teams. Teams may alter their daily schedule, including beginning the school day later and staying longer, to provide needed services to students.

A view expressed by the administrator and several teachers is that charter school status permits them to spontaneously experiment, rather than to carefully articulate a planned innovation, and then seek charter status to enable implementation. As one teacher said, regarding the reason for becoming a charter, Walker will do whatever is necessary to "reach the students that we have." Another said, "meeting the needs of the kids in our area, particularly, is our main focus." Still another remarked, charter status is "giving us the freedom to do what we want to do more, not every time we have an idea go head-to-head with somebody else, somewhere else." The administrator said concerning charter school status, "We talked about stepping out of the box and thinking about things differently...but I don't think until you actually have the freedom to do that...that you really start thinking about that."

Implemented Innovative Program

The administrator recognizes a lack of focus in the charter school. She says, "we have spent so much time getting through the contracting, and we're still working on the budget, that we have had very little time to actually talk about what we want to do different as a charter school....We went into this with the expectation to try new things but we have only touched the surface of what we want to do." She says further, regarding the educational program, "I don't know that anything is totally different." When asked to describe the innovative program at Walker, a teacher reported, "I really don't know what it is.... As for decisions that have been made [about the educational program], I'm not really aware of very many."

Innovative curriculum. Little evidence of the influence of America's Promise on the education program was seen. The school appears to be a safe place with a nurturing environment, but observers did not see mentors helping troubled students, an emphasis on marketable skills, or students engaged in service activities. What was observed, however, was the influence of the MPS Middle School Proficiencies. In an English class students were giving three-minute oral demonstrations to the class in preparation for the MPS oral proficiency examination. The demonstrations were carefully critiqued to identify the essential criteria of a successful oral presentation and to teach students the scoring rubric for the proficiency. In a science class students were

working on research projects using the scientific method because of a proficiency requirement. In another science class students reviewed the requirements for various grades relating to portfolios. Students then prepared their portfolios to be submitted to meet the science proficiency. As one teacher remarked, "The proficiencies pretty much guide our content right now....We're still going along with those guidelines from the district." Another remarked, "I don't think people have been able to take advantage of the innovative program because of the proficiencies imposed by MPS."

Computers were observed being used in report research and writing, but special emphasis on technology and the Internet was not observed. A scale-model construction project was observed, but attention to graphic arts was not otherwise in evidence. Nor were international studies. The administrator noted that the ethnically diverse student population is part of the reason for the school's designation as international. However, the only international aspect observed was that the "universities," described above, were named after international cities or countries such as the University of Quebec, University of Nigeria, and University of Athens.

Innovative instruction. A number of lessons observed appeared to be well planned, with clear, worthwhile goals, and required students to be active learners rather than passive responders. For example, in a mathematics class on negative numbers students had to work problems at their desks and explain their answers to the class using an overhead projector. In a social studies class in comparing Hinduism to Buddhism, students completed worksheets as a group with the aid of the teacher and then summarized their understanding using a Jeopardy-game format. In a French class students viewed a film about France, took notes on predetermined topics and, then, as a total class, created a master critique of the film. Students, for the most part, were attentive and cooperative.

Unusual efforts to individualize instruction based on perceived student needs were not observed. Learning styles of students were not overtly addressed in the observed lessons. During one class period, students for whom research, study, or use of computer was more appropriate than the classwork were sent to the library. However, most classes observed were directed by the teacher, and in most of those classes all students received the same instruction.

Innovative organization. Students attend most of their classes within their university, taught by their own multi-disciplinary team, with the same group of peers in the same several rooms. Looping is practiced, whereby the students in a given university have the same teachers for all three years. An instance of teaching across disciplines was noted in one university by the administrator, but neither cross-disciplinary teaching nor team teaching was seen in the university observed. The presence of a special education teacher in a university enhances the flexibility of the teaching team to mainstream students with special needs.

Effects of the Innovative Program

Teachers report that the university arrangement gives them considerable flexibility in grouping students and that much of the time between classes that in traditional arrangements is typically lost because of passing in the halls is put to use.

Walker students are evaluated with the state WSAS examination at the 8th grade level and with the MPS Middle School Proficiencies. In addition to these external evaluations teachers report that they use their own examinations, portfolios, and projects to evaluate student progress. Teachers see student growth on many fronts. As one teacher remarked, "Our kids have really improved. They are becoming more and more proud of what they're doing here and our test scores are going up, our attendance is going up. A lot of things are happening here."

Other Features of the Charter School

In addition to the educational program and its effects, the following features of Walker were also examined:

School environment. Walker is housed in a large, conventional, red brick school building of three stories and a basement. Its long, broad corridors of reflective, varnished wooden floors are lined by lockers and well-maintained wall spaces displaying occasional posters and student work. The halls were observed to be quite empty during classes and orderly during passing.

Walker conceptualizes itself as a community school. Neighborhood children have admission priority. An after school Community Learning Center is housed in the school. Parents are involved in school policy making. Also, Walker has an Aurora Health Care Center, a Best Friends program for girls, and a Yield 2000 program for boys in the building. These provisions along with the looping grade-level arrangement result in a caring, connected atmosphere in the school. The administrator describes the school environment as one with "high expectations for behavior." The discipline program implemented at Walker to attain acceptable behavior is a levels program. This program, designed to help students to be responsible for making good choices, makes students, as one teacher said, "aware that their behavior is unacceptable without having a big confrontation about it." It is a structured plan with consequences for misbehavior that are known in advance. The university team leader is responsible for disciplinary action.

Teacher preparation. According to DPI records, of 62 persons on Walker's professional staff, all hold or have held some form of license in Wisconsin. Ten hold licenses that are expired or are not valid for the subject area or grade level in which they are working. (See Table 2.) According to DPI, in urban schools in Wisconsin, such a proportion of certified staff teaching outside their areas of certification is not uncommon. An advantage of charter status for Walker is that certified teachers can be utilized in areas outside their areas of certification, because they would qualify for the special "charter school instructional staff license." With its looping grade-level arrangement, Walker

teachers with secondary school certification can qualify to teach 6th grade. However, DPI records do not indicate that MPS administrators have applied for that license for any Walker staff members.

Table 2. Wisconsin licenses held by teachers at Walker International Middle School.

Type of License	regular license; teaching in area and grade level of license	regular license; expired or teaching out of area or level	charter license	temporary permit	short-term sub license	unlicensed
Number of Teachers	52	10	0	0	0	0

Source: Licensure information provided by DPI as of August 23, 2000.

The teachers interviewed and observed at Walker appeared to be conscientious. They seemed stimulated by the charter venture, but some were not clear about the meaning of charter status for Walker, even though they and their colleagues had been involved in developing the direction of the school. One teacher said, "I've gone to a couple meetings, yeah, and teachers were involved in it, but I think a lot of the teachers don't really know.... I really don't know what it is."

School governance and parent involvement. The administrator and teachers at Walker mentioned several ways that parents participate in the school. Parents serve on the school council. Of the 13 members of the council there are five parents, four faculty, one support staff member, one student, one community representative, and the administrator. The council's purpose is to make recommendations to the administrator. Teachers said that the council was active in developing the charter educational program, but a few teachers were not aware of the existence, not to mention the work, of the council.

Besides the council, parents do volunteer work in the school, such as chaperoning field trips. This volunteer work is organized by a paid parent coordinator. Also, parents participate in parent-teacher conferences. Although attendance at these conferences is not high, it has been increasing.

Chartering agency role. Little was said about Walker's relationship to the MPS school board. The administrator and teachers do not feel constrained by the board, however. They say, for example, that the use of the MPS Middle School Proficiencies was their decision. "We did elect to keep the proficiencies as part of our charter, but there are so many unanswered questions with proficiencies that are going to have to be

ironed out," a teacher remarked. The concern that the administrator seems to have in relation to the board is about budget and the school's fiscal responsibility.

Charter school influence. It is too early to expect Walker to have an impact on other schools especially since Walker has yet to identify a clear focus for its educational program. The administrator and teachers, none-the-less, are confident that they will have an influence in the future, Walker sees itself as "blazing a trail" for other schools.

Program Summary: Walker International Middle School

Intended to be a community school that fulfills the aims of the America's Promise program, Walker presents the Milwaukee Public Schools curriculum, emphasizing the MPS Middle School Proficiencies. Students work with the same small, multi-disciplinary team of teachers for three years, with a fairly constant group of peers at their grade level. The academic teachers teach one grade level per year, moving up with their students and then back to 6th grade.

Various internal methods are used to assess students' progress. Behavioral expectations are said to be high, and discipline is intended to minimize confrontation. Teachers are all licensed, though not all in their areas of responsibility. Five parents participate on the school council, which also includes one student. The main concern of the chartering agency, the MPS Board, has thus far seemed to be budgetary.

Horizon Academy

Intended Innovative Program

The unique purpose of Horizon Academy (originally named Project Opportunity) is to enable adolescents and young adults who have difficulty adapting--or fitting in--to conventional school and classroom structures to complete their high school requirements using individualized, self-paced programs. According to the school's 1998 application for its charter school implementation grant, Horizon is intended to facilitate "regular school attendance, appropriate behavior, individual responsibility, and continuous academic progress." These things are to occur in tandem with a paid or voluntary work experience. Horizon envisions enrolling older adults, as well, who lack a high school diploma.

Implemented Innovative Programs

Innovative curriculum. Each student signs an individualized Enrollment Contract and Education Plan (1) in which the student, parent, and staff members agree upon coursework and work experience to be taken. Course content is organized in traditional subject areas such as English, geometry, world history, and biology, with one-half credit awarded for each semester course. According to the school's grant application, the self-paced curriculum is said to be "aligning" with the Wisconsin State Standards (1). Additionally, for each subject, staff members have been paid to align the instructional

materials with the St. Francis High School curriculum. As a "competency-based educational program" Horizon is "eligible for a waiver of Carnegie Units to measure coursework completion." An aspect of curriculum proposed in the application but apparently not yet begun is "basic computer and employability skills."

The segment of Horizon's curriculum that can be considered non-traditional is the work experience engaged in by a portion of the students. Inasmuch as criteria for evaluation determine curricular emphases, the work experiences are meant to stress certain things, namely the criteria in the U.S. Department of Labor SCANS Report to America (Secretaries Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1992). Those criteria fall into the categories: basic academic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities. The teacher, the high school guidance counselor, and the high school work experience coordinator elicit in person or by phone from each employer a bi-monthly evaluation of each student, looking at: ability to work with peers, punctuality, attendance, grooming, attitude toward work, and other qualities.

Innovative instruction. Instruction at Horizon Academy is of two types: computer-assisted instruction and workbooks. Some of the students also receive a on-the-job training--voluntary (service learning) or paid work experience for which they receive credit, a third form of instruction.

Computer is the primary instructional medium. The system in use is NovaNET, which is Internet-based. Its interactions provide immediate feedback and permit students to work at their own pace. There is also a system of sequential workbooks (some with an accompanying textbook) called PASS. The acronym stands for Portable Assisted Study Sequence, a system that is used elsewhere for migrant education. According to the principal, "students...take at least one class via PASS materials for the occasions when the computer network is down (usually once every 2 weeks). This way students always have materials to work on. Also, giving students workbooks along with their NovaNET helps break up the monotony of looking at the computer screen for a few hours." He considers two-and-a-half to three hours the maximum appropriate time per day for a student to work at a computer. However, some students use the PASS materials exclusively.

NovaNET presents pretests, lessons, and posttests. Pretests determine the lesson at which a student will begin. Posttests determine whether the student has mastered the topic and may proceed to the next one. The NovaNET course catalogue notes that lesson formats include tutorial, game, "concept review," simulation, and quiz. Each lesson is expected to take from as little as five minutes to several hours. Via the computer network, the teacher monitors student progress and communicates with students when they are not in the classroom. Whether the student is in school or elsewhere, NovaNET can provide a record not only of his/her success rate on each question and overall but of how much work is attempted each day and how much time is spent on each portion of that work. This feature can inform teacher and parent of the student's difficulties in grasping the material and provide evidence of the degree of effort being expended. Conceivably, a student could experience this transparency as an informative incentive to

diligence or, on the contrary, as a controlling intrusion.

NovaNET is set so that 80% of answers must be correct before it will permit the student to move on. The principal is satisfied with this level (although it is unclear whether a different level could be set if desired). He notes that unlike grading in a traditional classroom, personal qualities of the students can have no influence upon their scores. He believes that this characteristic of the system is a positive factor in view of this charter school's student population.

Students also take pre-designed tests that are part of the PASS program. With these tests, however, the teacher said, "I usually require a score of 80 to pass, because I allow them to retake tests...A lot of these kids have trouble testing, and that's one of the reasons they weren't successful in the high school setting...I let them use notes or answer questions for them along the way. I'm more interested in them mastering, to some extent, the material." Less frequently, Horizon students take tests developed by the high school teachers for the regular classes.

The extent to which NovaNET poses an optimal degree of challenge--e.g., its rate of introduction of new material, its quality of instructional design, and how high a level of thinking it evokes--were not examined as part of this evaluation. Nor were on-line discussion groups that are said to be part of the system. Instructional content of observed NovaNET lessons and PASS materials seemed unexciting and routine, with little flare or "personality." However, according to one parent, the pace at which NovaNET allowed her child move from one point to the next was a strong incentive to go forward, even though the child did not consider it sufficiently challenging. Another parent noted that she and her child are pleased that the computer indicates whether his responses are right or wrong. "It's cut and dried.... It makes [him] think more; it keeps [him] more focused."

Students may take advantage of the computer's ability to provide a game or the Internet for a brief time at the end of class. CD-ROMs, stand-alone learning programs, and library books are available, as well, to students. In addition to regular curriculum, ACT and SAT preparation is offered. Seats in a "Satellite Distance Learning facility" are utilized, according to the implementation grant application, but the nature of that instructional medium and the content available through it have not been clarified for this evaluation.

Because classes are not groups that work toward common goals but aggregations of students doing their individual coursework, teaching at Horizon Academy involves no group instruction. The teacher's role is as (a) an aide who directs and assists students in their use of independent learning materials; (b) a tutor who helps students solve problems within content areas, occasionally suggests supplementary research topics, recommends resources in various media; and (c) a coach who closely monitors students' progress, whether they are in school or at home, developing relationships with them, encouraging them to come to class and helping them find ways to continue their pursuit when it seems difficult. "I try not to bug them too much, as long as they're working...When they first come in here they don't even want to deal with a teacher," the teacher remarked. The

teacher assesses the needs of students in the context of the program and the ability of the program to accommodate specific potential enrollees. The teacher exercises discretion as to the degree of assistance appropriate for a student on a PASS test and whether a student's supplementary project is proving worth continuing. The teacher is a knowledgeable contact person for parents. He makes himself available by phone and email, including over the summer.

The projected enrollment was expected to justify two part-time instructors and two part-time helpers supplementing the full-time teacher. Because of lower actual enrollment, the full-time teacher was assisted for part of the year by two consultants--the retired Guidance Director and "a math person"--who tutored students individually, as well as carrying out curriculum alignment work.

Innovative organization. Horizon's program is a flexible program. There are a wide variety of times and places at which a student can engage in coursework. The program is organized so that students can alternate a morning or afternoon classroom experience with work experience at the opposite time. The implementation grant application states that students may work toward either earning a high school diploma, a high school equivalency diploma, or passing the GED test. Those pursuing the former also take conventional high school classes. The latter group tend to be older--18 to 20 years old--usually with few credits. They generally are involved in work experience, since they may already be working. If and when older adults enroll, the charter school will remain open for a third, evening "shift" to accommodate their work schedules.

Of 35 students enrolled in 1999-2000, 21 come to class; the other 14 are working solely in PASS materials or using NovaNET at home. Those students working solely in PASS come to school only to turn in their work and take tests. Because computer coursework is available at any time of day or night, students can take other subjects in the regular high school that would ordinarily pose time conflicts. The computer system's Internet base allows students with access to computers outside of school to do their coursework at home or elsewhere. The charter school owns several laptop computers that are issued to some students so they can work at home. This flexibility accommodates students who choose to work away from the distractions of other students and the pressures of classroom academic and social conventions, to eliminate conflicts with job commitments, or to set their schedule according to their internal clock or because of poor health. At least one homebound, physically disabled student is currently pursuing the high school diploma, with frequent parental assistance. The possibility of allowing a Horizon student who has moved to northern Wisconsin to continue to use NovaNET is being explored.

Effects of the Innovative Program

The principal has determined that only a portion of the population defined by the state as "at risk" is likely to succeed at Horizon. He has found that "average academic ability" and "some level of motivation" are requisite qualities for success at Horizon. Special education students have generally not been successful and have been returned to

the high school's special education program. In contrast, a student previously unsuccessful in conventional classes was apparently served effectively by Horizon's program because she did not have to wait to move on each time she mastered her material.

Approximately one-fourth of the students who have taken advantage of the program are not at risk. A student who needed to take physics for college eligibility but could not because it was not offered that semester took it via NovaNET. A student in the high school's co-op program took Algebra II on NovaNET, allowing him to be at work during the hour Algebra II was offered by the high school.

The principal states that students "who have never come close to passing in the traditional high school courses" have succeeded in Horizon's program. He believes the success is due to Horizon's ability to (a) provide an individualized program for each student; (b) allow progress at the student's own rate; and (c) permit the student to move beyond any topic only after having demonstrated at least 80% mastery on the embedded testing. Other significant factors appear to be success of the teacher, and to some degree the principal, at encouraging students to continue in the face of difficulties, and the predisposition of some students to work on computers.

The teacher noted that three students graduated the first semester of 1999-2000, and three or four were likely to graduate in June. He is "pleased with the progress of at least half the students." The reason others were not making adequate progress, he felt, was poor attendance. The attendance rate is 70-80%, according to his estimate. Yet, "students [attend] that wouldn't bother to come to school if they had to get up early in the morning. But they'll come here in the afternoon and work--and always making progress," the principal said. A relatively high attendance rate that includes potential truants seems to indicate a relatively high level of motivation in students.

Although negative student responses--in terms of achievement or motivation--to any aspects of a program such as Horizon's are possible, no negative effects have been noted in the observations or interviews for this evaluation. One caveat raised by a parent of a disabled student is that, given the opportunity to return to regular high school classes, the child could be seduced by the convenience of working at home to avoid the pressures of interacting with peers. A list of suggestions developed prior to this year, based on "observations and experiences" in the program includes the following statement:

ProOpp [Project Opportunity] students should have regular, scheduled attendance required! This should make a student's learning experience more effective and also would allow more efficient scheduling of students to the ProOpp Lab. ProOpp students not in regular attendance at SFHS do have more difficulty in being on-site on a regular basis. Only in very special circumstances should a ProOpp student have home access to the NovaNET curriculum--and even then some sessions of scheduled attendance should be required on a regular basis.

Horizon students are evaluated with the state WSAS examination at the 10th grade level.

Other Features of the Charter School

The following features of Horizon were examined in addition to the educational program and its effects:

School environment. The physical facilities of Horizon Academy--seats, tables, computers, etc.--are housed in a single room, in St. Francis High School. The room, formerly a storage closet for A-V equipment, is entered from the library. Although the room is approximately the length of a regular classroom, its width is only enough to seat students along the two long walls, with barely space to walk down the middle. The feeling of being cramped is ameliorated by a glass wall shared with the library, which has a panoramic view of Lake Michigan. The room does, however, have a ventilation problem.

The charter school's location--within the high school--enables students to move easily from the charter school to high school classes and vice versa. Library resources are immediately at hand. It is convenient for one person to perform the dual role of principal of both schools. That Horizon is about a mile from a bus line is seen by the administrator as a significant disadvantage in that students need to travel to and from their work experience or home. The expected move of Horizon to the facility of Sacred Heart Parish in St. Francis for 2000-01 places the school on a bus line but far from the high school.

The times and number of hours spent in the room each week varies with each student, according to the courses being taken and personal factors. The principal characterizes the environment as "one of acceptance and individuality.... Students progress at their own rate and are given assistance whenever needed. Students are allowed a quite [*sic*] level of conversation as long as a conducive learning environment remains." Generally, there is not much interaction among students in class. While he envisions that Horizon will become a full-day program, the absence of public transportation nearby has limited the school's implementation of the community work component.

Teacher preparation. The teacher this year is described by the principal as "a well-rounded guy,...a national high school merit scholar...well grounded in most academic areas." In college he majored in international relations and math. Immediately prior to joining Horizon, he was a substitute teacher but had been self-employed in construction for more than two decades before that. DPI records indicate that he is licensed only as a day-to-day substitute. (See Table 3.) He is taking classes in preparation for full certification. He has had four in-service training sessions on the use of NovaNET. A previous Horizon teacher had been on the St. Francis High School faculty; another had been a substitute teacher.

Table 3. Wisconsin licenses held by teachers at Horizon Academy.

Type of License	regular license; teaching in area and grade level of license	regular license; expired or teaching out of area or level	charter license	temporary permit	short-term sub license	unlicensed
Number of Teachers	0	0	0	0	1	0

Source: Licensure information provided by DPI as of August 21, 2000.

School governance and parent involvement. Horizon's grant application states that the Community Advisory Council meets bimonthly and "assists with ongoing program development, implementation, and evaluation." However, according to the principal, the Council has not convened since the grant proposal was developed; the school has no governing board. Council participants have assisted individually in their areas of expertise, such as school safety and obtaining a new location.

Other than the normally expected parental support of the student and the program and communication between parent and teacher, it appears that for the large majority of students the only parent involvement is in initial determination of whether the school is an appropriate placement. The principal believes that in general, parents of at-risk students in the charter school, as elsewhere, make little effort to learn about the curriculum, instruction, or the interactions with their children unless informed that a problem is occurring. For this reason, surveys asking parents for feedback have been discontinued. The teacher calls parents "for non-attendance and things like that" and "keeps a pretty good log of the parents that he has called when students haven't shown up." On occasion, the police have been called to get a ticket written up when parents have not taken responsibility for their child to get to school at Horizon. There have been occasional instances of parents contacting the teacher because "their child was accomplishing something where he hadn't done much at all." One parent stated that it would be desirable for the charter school to make itself better known to the community of potential participants and their parents.

Chartering agency role. The only role of the chartering agency cited by the principal is to raise funds for the school. The school is required to document how those monies are spent. Other funding has come through the St. Francis school district and various grants from agencies and programs, i.e., Goals 2000, the School-Community Collaborative Project, the Wisconsin Educational Technology Board, a Technology Literacy Challenge Grant, and the Improving America's Schools Act.

Charter school influence. The school has been visited by representatives of South Milwaukee, Greendale, and Oak Creek that may be interested in starting similar schools.

Program Summary: Horizon Academy

Horizon Academy is a charter school focused mainly on at-risk students, although it is equipped to serve others with special circumstances. With the SCANS Report as its rationale, the school provides academic coursework and monitored work experience or service learning. Coursework is presented via Internet computer lessons and conventional workbooks. There appears to be a significant amount of flexibility in the program such that time, location, and selection of coursework can be adapted to the needs of individual students. Students can take part in the regular high school and the charter school as situations warrant. The planned move from its current location in St. Francis High School to a vacant parochial school facility is expected to give students ready access to transportation--between school and home, as well as school and job.

The teacher, through the technology, is able to monitor student effort as well as academic progress. The present teacher, who for all intents and purposes is in his first year of teaching, is not fully licensed, although he is preparing to become so. Members of the Community Advisory Council continue to participate as individuals in the school, but the council no longer meets. Parents have not been playing a significant role beyond that of supporting their own child's progress. Several other districts have visited the program.

Part II: Contract Accountability Analysis

Academic Accountability in the Documents of Charter Schools

Academic accountability is central to the argument in favor of charter school reform. Hudson Institute researchers maintain charters represent a shift in thinking about accountability, from input to output. In their words charter school accountability means being "clear, specific, and fairly uniform about ends while allowing wide diversity in the means by which those ends are achieved." (Manno, 1997).

Kolderie (1999) suggests that charters earn their freedom from "process controls" in exchange for accountability for results. This places considerable responsibility for insuring academic performance on the chartering agent. He asserts that responsibility for school performance rests with the sponsor and that a sponsor's oversight and monitoring are critical aspects to determining if a charter school's academic performance is adequate. Thus, accountability agreements need to be clear and precise in regard to accountability.

Although the charter contract is the key mechanism for establishing a charter school's academic responsibility, Manno (1997) and Finn (1997) of the Hudson Institute have noted that some charter schools have opted for standardized testing programs that

are not appropriate for their stated mission, purpose, or strategies. Consistent with this point, those researchers argue that there must be standards as well as assessments to see if the standards are being met.

In 1998, UCLA researchers identified the loss of the charter for failure to achieve as one of the characteristics of charter schools put forth by reformers (Wells, 1998). To insure that the academic accountability of the charter school is met, the sponsor must assume the responsibility not only for performance but also for determining and carrying out sanctions. Kolderie (1999) asserts that “The charter depends on sponsors acting courageously to enforce accountability. If they do, and schools know they do, then accountability should work at the school level.” Manno (1997), concurring with the need, notes that “the assessment emperor is still wearing few clothes....Deciding how consequences will be integrated into the student accountability system is a task yet to be taken seriously....We’ve seen a lot more accountability in the discipline area than the academic area” (p. 11).

Being more accountable to parents and students is also identified by the UCLA researchers as a major claim made by charter school reformers. This accountability is attributed to the fact that the schools are selected by the parents and students (Wells, 1998). As findings, however, they note that boards “often lack the necessary information or political clout to hold charter schools accountable for student outcomes” (p. 7). As Manno (1999) observes, “Truth be told, they [charter school sponsors] are often content to leave charter school accountability agreements nebulous and undefined” (p. 2).

UCLA researchers also identified innovation as a major claim made by charter school reformers. They noted that reformers embrace the idea that charter schools will be models of innovation (Wells, 1998). As such, charter schools “free from constraints, will be more innovative and...innovations will be shared and will foster change in all schools” (p. 10).

Charter School Accountability Under Wisconsin Law

“Wisconsin Charter Schools 1996-97,” a publication of the Department of Public Instruction, notes that charter schools are accountable to local school boards in three areas: student performance, fiscal management, and compliance to their contracts and with the charter school law. The publication further notes that a school that fails in any of the three areas can lose its charter.

The introduction to the Department of Public Instruction report, “Wisconsin Charter Schools 1998,” describes charter schools as coming into being through a “business like contract or ‘charter’” consummated between an “operator and the sponsoring school board or other chartering authority.” It goes on to describe how charters are intended to “foster...creativity” and to be “living laboratories” that will influence the rest of the public school system(s) and provide competition for the rest of the public school systems(s). The chartering authority is to hold the charter school accountable to its charter. In essence, charter schools are independent public schools that

have engaged in an exchange in which they receive “autonomy for accountability” (p. vii).

An attribute of charter schools is that other public schools system(s) can observe and learn from the charter schools, which will enable them to make changes without suffering through the “growing pains” (p. vii). As a result, all public schools will be continually challenged to improve.

Wisconsin’s charter school law (ss118.40) was passed in 1993 and amended in 1995, 1997, and 1998. The current law treats Milwaukee differently from the rest of the state. Throughout the state, local school boards have the authority to grant a charter. In Milwaukee, the City of Milwaukee, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and the Milwaukee Area Technical College are also authorized to grant charters.

Wisconsin’s charter school law provides that “the joint legislative audit committee may direct the legislative audit bureau to perform a(n) . . . audit of the charter school program . . .”(ss118.40(8). In December 1998, the Audit Bureau released *An Evaluation: Charter School Program*. In its report the Audit Bureau noted that “The legislature did not include specific goals for the charter school program in the statutes” (p. 9). The statute does require an entity petitioning for charter school status to include in its petition data regarding 15 (12 for the non-MPS entities) criteria related to accountability (ss118.40(1m)(b). (See Appendix II.) However, the law does not require that a charter school contract’s accountability provisions be met or that a charter be revoked if they are not. The law states only that “A charter may be revoked . . . [if] the pupils . . . failed to make sufficient progress toward attaining the educational goals under s. 118.01.” (ss118.40(5)(b). The goals referred to in 118.01 are not student performance outcome goals but educational input goals related to the instructional program.

Act 9 passed by the 1999-2000 legislature modified school law. By September, 2002 school boards must adopt a policy that specifies the criteria for granting a high school diploma that is in addition to the current law requirements relating to the number of credits and alternative education. This requirement applies to charter schools also. (See Act 9, Sections 2071s, 2074n, 2078n, 2084m-2086h, 2090, 2130.)

Currently and until the 2001-2002 school year school boards are required to administer knowledge and concepts tests in grades four, eight and ten. This requirement also applies to all charter schools. Act 9 also requires that beginning 2002-03, school boards adopt a policy specifying the criteria for promoting students from 4th to 5th grade and 8th to 9th grade. Required to be included in the criteria are a pupil’s score on the 4th and 8th grade exams, unless the student is excused from taking the test; the pupil’s academic performance; and recommendations of teachers that must be based on academic performance alone. These provisions apply to all charter schools. (See Act 9, Sections 2075-2077, 2080-2082g, 2084, 2086, 2090.)

Finally, Act 9 clarifies that as well as all other schools, charter schools associated with the City of Milwaukee, UWM, and MATC must administer the 3rd grade reading test. (See Act 9, Sections 2090 and 2129.)

Charter School Documents

Each of the schools studied was asked to provide any documents that would relate to the school as a charter school and to the chartering process. Suggested documents were applications and contracts. Administrators were free to include other documents and were encouraged to do so. The school administrator determined which documents to forward.

Khamit Institute

Khamit Institute provided four documents: (1) the contract with the City of Milwaukee; (2) the *Khamitic Institute Programmatic Profile and Educational Performance – 1998-99 Academic Year*; (3) the "Khamit Institute Staff Handbook;" and (4) the "Student Personal Learning Plan." As prescribed by 118.40 (3)(a), the contract includes all the required provisions enumerated in 118.40 (1m)(b), 118.40 (2r)(b) and 118.40 (4)(a)2 and (b)1 and 2 of the statutes. Additionally the contract provides for the City to inspect and receive information and reports and the right of the city to hold the charter school to any of the representations or assurances it made in its application. Included as part of the contract is the calendar for the 1998-1999 School Year (not attached). The contract is signed by both Khamit Institute and City of Milwaukee officials.

The *Khamitic Institute Programmatic Profile and Educational Performance-- 1998-99 Academic Year*, is a report of the operation of the charter school. The report is the result of a monitoring contract with the National Council on Crime and Delinquency's (NCCD) Children's Research Center. As stated in the executive summary, the data collected "resulted in a comprehensive Programmatic Profile and Educational Monitoring Report for the school. The Summary also states that while the report "provides some measures of academic progress...most of the data describes the academic status of the children at the end of the school year" (p. i).

Techniques employed to gather data for the report included site visits, examination of records, including testing data, to ascertain the education status and academic achievement of students, and interviews with parents, students and teachers. The report concludes that "Khamit Institute has complied with the education requirements in their Charter School contract with the City of Milwaukee" (p. 36). Further, the report makes four recommendations for focus for the following year: to develop an assessment and facility plan; to develop a format for parent contacts; to develop data collection methodologies for teacher-based assessment; and to develop pre- and post-test measures in science and social studies.

The "Khamit Institute Staff Handbook" describes the vision of the school, "to prepare people to interact with the world in a peaceful and sustainable way," and its mission, "to be a fore runner in educational reform by using Khamitic principles...." (p. 2). Included also is a history of the school and school songs.

The "Student Personal Learning Plan" form provides a record of a student's attainment level in key areas as well as a record of the progress the student is making. It also provides spaces for the teacher and the parent to check off "Strategies for Success" for the student. For example one of the strategies for the teacher is, "Develop weekly work plans with students." One strategy for parents is, "Monitor completion of work plan."

Walker International Middle School

Walker International Middle School provided two documents: (1) a petition entitled "A Proposal for Walker International Middle School to be a Charter School as an Instrumentality of the Board;" and (2) "Charter School Contract between the Milwaukee Board of School Directors and Walker International Middle School."

The petition meets all the requirements as set forth in 118.40 (1m)(a) and (b). The contract includes all the required provisions enumerated in 118.40 (1m)(b), 118.40 (2r)(b) and 118.40 (4)(a)2 and (b)1 and 2 of the statute, as required by 118.40 (3)(a). In addition, the contract provides for background screening of employees, and grants MPS the right to inspect and receive requested information and reports. The contract also specifies that the cost of services purchased from MPS will be determined by the Board and it prescribes that the enrollment is to be maintained at 730 pupils. Further the contract authorizes the Charter to implement its own transportation plan with Board approval and requires that the Charter adhere to any intergovernmental agreements entered into by MPS. The contract also specifies the allotment to be received by the Charter and how it relates to categorical aids. It notes that the Charter is free to apply for and receive grants. Finally, the contract specifies that the Board can exercise its right to terminate the contract if it is determined that students are not making satisfactory progress by not meeting three of the four following criteria: (1) maintaining or improving student achievement; (2) showing a one grade level gain by 80% of the students; (3) demonstrating a one grade level gain for the majority of students performing below grad level in math and reading; and (4) meeting or exceeding the State of Wisconsin average percentage of students scoring proficient and above or show improvement in state required tests.

Horizon Academy

Horizon Academy provided five documents: (1) an implementation grant application to the DPI; (2) a student application form; (3) a paper called "Considerations/Suggestions," developed from the experiences of the original pilot program; (4) a letter from the St. Francis School Board President to the Division Director for Learning Support: Instructional Services; and (5) a letter from the St. Francis High

School principal, who is also the administrator for Horizon Academy, to State Superintendent, John Benson.

The purpose of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction “Charter Schools Subgrant Application” is to seek funding. However, according to Horizon’s administrator, the document also serves in lieu of a contract, as an agreement between the charter school and the chartering authority, the St. Francis School Board. The application includes an executive summary that describes the nature of the program, a “school within a school”, the population it is intended to serve, the “districts most at-risk students”, and the two curriculum tools that it will use, ProOP and NovaNET. The body of the application describes in greater detail the educational program of the existing charter school and how it will be administered and managed. It also describes the kind and level of support the charter school will receive from the school district and how parents and the community were involved in the design and implementation of the school.

Additionally, the application explains the goals and objectives of the school and the methods of determining progress toward those goals and objectives as well as the assessment and accountability plan. Finally, the application describes how the charter school needs will be addressed through the requested funds and “how meeting these needs is required for improving the charter school and helping it attain its goals and objectives.” Included in the application is a proposed budget for use of the requested funds.

The eight-page student application and data form headed, “Project Opportunity High School,” describes the admission procedure and the dismissal procedure. It also includes a form for the student to complete personal data as well as answer questions about interests and goals. Additionally there is a form to be used to describe an educational plan for the student, and interview forms for both student and parent and a sheet entitled, “What will I need to succeed in ProOp [Horizon]?” which is to be used by the student to assess himself in regard to characteristics necessary to succeed in Horizon.

The “Considerations/Suggestions” page details some observations that grew out of the pilot phase of the program. There are observations about the students served by Horizon, such as attendance difficulties; suggestions, such as the need for on-site supervision at all times; and considerations, such as the need to modify assessments in the program where appropriate.

The letter from the School Board president expresses official Board support for the Charter School Planning Grant and the letter from the principal to Superintendent of Public Instruction informs him that the St. Francis School Board has approved the charter school.

Academic Accountability in the Documents of the Charter Schools

According to Molnar (1999), the literature on charter school reform suggests six elements of accountability associated with academic outcomes. Framed as questions, the

presence of these elements in the documents provided by the schools are a basis to assess the charter schools studied.

Academic Accountability Question 1: Do the academic accountability aspects of the charter schools focus on ends not means?

Khamit Institute

The design of the forms for monitoring student progress do suggest a commitment to a focus on ends. The form, Student Personal Learning Plan, includes spaces for both the current level and year-end goal to be inserted for reading, math, and reasoning and writing. There are also spaces for "quarterly benchmarks and spaces for "review dates by quarter" to indicate the number of goals met and the number of goals not met. The contract with the City of Milwaukee states that the charter will "prepare statistical reports...[to] monitor progress of pupils"(p. 2). The contract also specifies goals for students in the areas of global awareness, reading, mathematics/science, reasoning and writing, and physical education. However, no standards are detailed. The charter must also guarantee that it "provides a sequentially progressive curriculum of fundamental instruction in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and health" (p. 3). However, as noted above, most of the data reported reflects students' status at the end of the year rather than progress.

Walker International Middle School

Both the charter proposal and the contract do focus on ends. The proposal (p. 5) and contract (p. 6) state that Walker will guarantee that "students who come to school at least 90% of the time, bring supplies, do homework, and participate in class will increase at least one grade level in reading and math during the year." The contract requires that the school establish a method for determining the baseline against which pupil performance and growth will be measured. Further, the school must report scores showing growth by class level as well as by individual student. Additionally, the contract requires that 80% of the students must show one grade level of gain for students at grade level and more than a one grade level gain for those below grade level.

Horizon Academy

A focus on ends is only minimally apparent at Horizon. The Dismissal Procedures state that a student may be dismissed for "Failure to make continued progress in his/her course work." Also, within the "Project Opportunity [Horizon] High School Education Plan, student goals are to be listed and the student is to complete a section that lists what he/she agrees accomplish to be successful. There is, however, no indication that a specific outcome is to be specified. As noted in the analysis of the Horizon's education program, above, there is some recognition of outcomes in the NovaNET program used in the school. It is set so that a student must answer 80% of the questions correctly before the program will allow a student to go forward with the lesson.

The executive summary of the application grant states that the goals of the charter school are to help students meet the Wisconsin State Standards and Wisconsin Learner Goals. The summary also states that the purpose of the school is to help students attain the skills and qualities described in the U.S. Department of Labor SCANS Report to America (Secretary's Commission..., 1992), but no specific goals are described. Horizon's accountability plan does state that it is based on "measurable outcomes related to...students' academic...performance as outlined in [the] goals/objective section..." That section does state that student D's and F's will decrease by a minimum of 50%, that students will fulfill the requirements of the Enrollment Contract and Education Plan, that the use of computer technology and on-line resources will increase by 50% to be demonstrated by "skill level to 85% competency."

Academic Accountability Question 2: Do the academic accountability aspects of the charter schools define and make clear the role of the sponsor?

Khamit Institute

The role of the sponsor, as described in the documents, is largely limited to overseer and monitor and does not include active participation in the school. As an overseer and monitor, the contract with the City does state that the school will meet with the City's Charter School Committee "to develop an accountability plan by which pupils' progress in attaining educational goals will be measured..." (p. 9). This language is related to the section that describes reasons for termination of the contract. An audit by an independent CPA is also required. That audit must attest to, among other things, "the accuracy, validity and reasonableness of academic achievement and programmatic results..." (p. 19). Additionally, the contract provides that the City or its designee can inspect charter school records at any time. The results of the audit can be used by the to terminate the contract. Finally, the contract specifies that the City can hold the charter school "to any of the representations or assurances made in its...application or other papers submitted in support of its Charter School Application, regardless of whether such representations or assurances are contained in this contract" (p. 20).

Walker International Middle School

An oversight and monitoring role is the extent of the participation by the sponsor. As noted in the program analysis, above, "Little was said about Walker's relationship to the MPS School Board." The contract calls for the school to submit to an annual performance/compliance audit. One of the audit options is for the school to employ an independent (non-MPS) auditor. That audit must attest to, among other things, "the accuracy, validity and reasonableness of academic achievement and programmatic results..." (p. 15). The results of the audit results can be used by the MPS Board to terminate the contract. Additionally, the contract allows MPS to hold the charter school "to any of the representations or assurances made in its charter school petition or other papers submitted in support of its charter school petition, regardless of whether such representations or assurances are contained in this Contract" (p. 26).

Horizon Academy

There is only minimal attention to the role of the sponsor evident in the documents. The documents do not describe any role for the sponsor except as that of funder. The Charter Schools Subgrant Application states that the St. Francis School Board will provide to the United States Department of Education and to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction any information they might require to determine if the school is meeting its goals and objectives. In addition it states that the Board will cooperate “in evaluating the charter school”(p. 9). There is nothing to indicate that any information has been sought or that any evaluation has been done.

Academic Accountability Question 3: Do the academic accountability aspects of the charter schools result in accountability agreements between the charter school and the sponsor that are specific and precise?

Khamit Institute

The methods by which pupil progress is to be measured are detailed in the contract. They include mastery tests, portfolio assessments, constructs/projects, journal writing and self-assessments. The contract also calls for an annual academic report to be provided to the City as well as for an audit that includes verification of academic achievement. However, the question of setting and achieving standards is not addressed. The *Khamit Institute Programmatic Profile and Educational Performance* report for 1998-99 does include specific achievement data on a group basis. As noted in Part I of this report, the school administrator explained that results of academic progress are “reported to authorities via [the] monitoring agency.” She also stated that “We’ve seen students make phenomenal progress...[but] we haven’t done a scientific documentation of it.”

Walker International Middle School

Within the documents there are no standards of performance that must be met. The contract does state, as goals, what level of performance is sought. As noted before, for example, 80% of the students on grade level who attend 90% of the time will progress one grade level and those below grade level will progress more than one grade level. The contract with MPS specifies that the charter school will employ the “same Tier-1 Accountability measures, administer the same district-wide performance assessments and follow the same proficiency measures as all MPS non-chartered middle schools.” The contract permits deviation, with approval, but includes the caveat that state assessment measures must be included as a minimum. Additionally, the contract specifies that scores on standardized tests must be reported both as grade level scores and individual scores. Although, as noted above in Part I, one teacher commented that test scores are going up, there are no systematic data to support this claim.

Horizon Academy

There are no accountability agreements between the charter school and sponsor that address academic performance. Except for a letter from the president of the St. Francis School Board to Dr. Tom Stefonek (Division Director, Division for Learning Support: Instructional Services) stating that the Board supports the application for a grant, and a letter from principal Rick Monroe to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, stating that the St. Francis Board of Education voted to establish the charter school, there are no agreements of any kind between the sponsor and the charter school.

The Subgrant Application does describe an accountability plan that includes records of student progress and surveys completed by students, parents, instructors and staff. The survey data is intended to measure “the extent to which the charter school offers comprehensive, flexible, and individually-paced curricula that helps students develop appropriate employment and life skills” (p. 6). According to the application, reports of the results are given to the Board twice a year. However, as noted in Part I, above, parent surveys have been discontinued. There is no indication of what standards are to be met in the results of the surveys. Similarly there is no indication of any standards the Board uses to evaluate the reports or to determine the success or failure of the charter.

Academic Accountability Question 4: Do the accountability aspects of the charter schools identify the sponsor’s responsibility for insuring the academic performance of the school and for sanctioning the school if it fails to meet agreed upon academic standards?

Khamit Institute

The contract, as well as other documents, describe the educational program. The descriptions include what children will learn and how they will be taught. For example, the contract states that kindergarten students all begin to learn a foreign language. “They learn how to ask and answer everyday questions, to read and write simple sentences about daily activities...” (p. 8). The contract also specifies that the charter uses Direct Instruction as its curriculum and instruction design. According to the contract, it is a contract violation if the charter school does not adhere to the representations it has made in any of its documents, and a contract violation is cause for termination of the contract. The contract also specifies that a cause for termination of the contract is that “pupils enrolled...have failed to make sufficient progress toward attaining the educational goals under sec. 118.01, Stats.” (p. 19).

Walker International Middle School

The contract specifies that the contract can be terminated if “pupils enrolled...have failed to make sufficient progress toward attaining the educational goals under sec. 118.01, Stats., or the academic performance criteria established by the Board...”(p. 24). Included by reference in the contract is the educational program that is

part of the petition. The program is stated in some detail in the petition. For example, the petition states, “All students will study a foreign language and/or be involved in a music program” (p. 6). Under the terms of the contract, failure to comply with the representation in the petition would be a violation that could bring about termination. The contract also states, “Failure on the part of the Board to exercise its right to terminate this Contract...shall not ...constitute a waiver of the right of the Board to terminate this Contract at a later date under that ground”(p. 24). As stated above in the program analysis, however, the administrator's concern in relation to the MPS Board is not in area of academics but in the area of fiscal responsibility.

Horizon Academy

There is nothing in any of the documents from Horizon that addresses the question.

Academic Accountability Question 5: Do the academic accountability aspects of the charter schools insure that data about school performance be publicly available from the sponsor and disseminated according to a plan?

Khamit Institute

The contract with the City does not provide a plan to be in place for disseminating performance data. The contract does require that the charter prepare an annual academic report that must be submitted to the City by June 30 of each year.

Walker International Middle School

There is no requirement in the contract that establishes a plan for disseminating performance data. The contract does provide for a Walker International School Council that is to be an advisory body (WISC). Among the responsibilities of the WISC is to “focus its attention on matters of...overall progress in achieving the educational outcomes of [the] Charter School” (p. 9). In addition, the Charter School is required by contract to submit an “annual pupil academic achievement report” (p. 8).

Horizon Academy

There is minimal assurance. Although there is no formal plan for disseminating performance data, the Subgrant Application describes a Community Advisory Council. Membership on the council “includes a School Board member, Parent Communications Network and Parent Advisory Forum representatives, business/industry representative, Police Liaison Officer, an at-risk student, and a parent of an at-risk student” (p. 4). Additionally, the principal is required to give semi-annual reports to the St. Francis School Board regarding the results of evaluation data.

Academic Accountability Question 6: Do the academic accountability aspects of the charter schools provide means by which the charter school can be used as a model for broader school reform?

Khamit Institute

The characteristic is not addressed in any of the documents. However, as noted above in Part I, while the administrator does not know if Khamit has had any influence on public schools, she believes they have a program that other schools can replicate.

Walker International Middle School

The characteristic is not addressed in any of the documents. The evaluation notes that the school has not been in existence long enough to have an influence on other schools. However, as noted in the program analysis, above, Walker envisions itself as “blazing a trail” for other schools.

Horizon Academy

Provision is minimal. The characteristic is not addressed in any of the documents. However, as noted in the in Part I, other school districts which are considering starting similar schools have visited Horizon.

Contract Accountability Analysis Summary

The documents that are the bases for the existence of the charter schools in this pilot evaluation are rather uneven in addressing accountability. Horizon has no contract. Whatever accountability the school may be subject to is limited to the goals detailed in its application for funds, which its chartering authority accepted as the basis for granting the charter. While there are aspects of the Khamit contract that speak to accountability, absent are any standards against which performance can be measured. The Walker contract is the most specific in terms of accountability with the commitment to one grade level gain for students who attend school 90% of the time. However, there is no commitment about how many students will meet the attendance standard.

The analyses of the documents from all three charters show that oversight rather than participation and responsibility is the major role of the sponsoring agency. There are provisions in the Khamit and Walker contracts for the sponsoring agencies to impose sanctions under certain conditions, most of which are related to financial performance. The Walker document is more precise than that of Khamit. But like Khamit's, it does not spell out exactly what kind of academic performance would cause the charter contract to be voided or cancelled.

Analyses of the documents from all three charters show that none of them makes any provision for information about school performance to be shared with its public or for the school to be a source of information to other public schools in the area of

innovative and effective education. Therefore, to be a laboratory for the strengthening of all public schools is, based on the documents, not seen as a function of the charters.

Charter schools, as envisioned by charter school reformers, are to be given freedom from constraints in order to implement innovative practices that will improve student performance. These practices can then be employed by public schools to improve the performance of all students. The contract is to be the catalyst that makes it happen. The contracts (and other documents) provided by the three charter schools studied do contain aspects that move the schools in the desired direction. The contracts, however, do not appear to be strong enough to ensure that the overall outcomes envisioned and desired for charter school reform will occur.

Part III: Achievement Test Analysis

The charter school evaluation protocol compares scores from students on required state achievement tests at the appropriate grade levels (3rd, 4th, 8th and 10th) to the test scores of other public school students matched for income, race, gender, and other factors as well as to other students at the same grade levels of the particular charter school. The following analyses will pilot:

1. a means of creating a demographic profile of the selected charter schools;
2. two methods by which comparison schools may be selected to match these profiles; and
3. a way of determining mean baseline scores on state achievement tests for students from the charter and comparison schools which meet the profile within:
 - a. the city of Milwaukee;
 - b. Milwaukee County;
 - c. the Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA);
 - d. other major urban centers in Wisconsin; and
 - e. the remainder of the state of Wisconsin.

It must be noted that each progressively larger geographic area will be addressed exclusive of the smaller areas contained within it. For example, the PMSA as designated by the U.S. Census Bureau includes Milwaukee, Waukesha, Washington and Ozaukee counties. Since charter and public schools within Milwaukee County will be addressed separately, Milwaukee County schools will not be included in analyses of PMSA schools, with the exception of the three charter schools selected for the pilot evaluation.

The achievement test scores of Wisconsin charter and public school students from the 1999-2000 academic year were provided on data tapes by the DPI. The two databases provided are:

1. Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS). The Wisconsin Student Assessment System, Terra Nova Multiple Assessments, Form B, was

administered to Wisconsin charter and public school students in February 1999. The complete battery includes subtests in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and writing. Fourth-grade students received the Level 14 tests, 8th grade students received the Level 18 tests, and 10th grade students received the Level 20 tests.

2. Wisconsin Reading Comprehension Tests (WRCT). The Wisconsin Reading Comprehension Tests were administered in spring 1999 to 3rd grade students in Wisconsin charter and public schools. Three dimensions of reading ability are tested: Reading Comprehension, Prior Knowledge, and Reading Strategies.

Both the WSAS and the WRCT databases also provide demographic information for each student tested. Thus, it is possible to determine the following variables for each school: percent of economically disadvantaged students; percent of students with disabilities; percent of males and females; percent of various racial/ethnic groups; class size. The DPI defines the first four of these variables as follows:

1. Economically disadvantaged status. An “economically disadvantaged” student is a student who is a member of a household that meets the income eligibility guidelines for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program. In absence of reliable subsidized meals eligibility data, districts may use available county data, scholarship information, post-secondary options information, etc.
2. Racial/ethnic group. The DPI uses five racial/ethnic codes: (1) Asian/Pacific Islander; (2) African-American, not of Hispanic origin; (3) Hispanic; (4) American Indian/Alaskan Native; and (5) White, not of Hispanic origin. A student’s “racial/ethnic group” is that group to which the student belongs or with which a student identifies. For purposes of the Charter evaluation, an additional category (“Other”) has been added to encompass cases where racial/ethnic status was not reported.
3. Disability status. A “student with a disability” is a student who is considered eligible for the federal child count as reported by the district to the DPI on the IDEA Federal Student December 1 Data Report (PI-2197).
4. Gender. A student’s gender is coded as either “Male” or “Female.”
5. Class size. In the context of this evaluation, “class size” is defined as “the number of students *for whom test results are reported* at a particular grade level for a particular school.” This is not to be confused with the total number of students at a particular grade level, the number of students in a classroom at any given school, or the number of students per teacher at any given school.

Selection of Comparison Schools

The selection of comparison schools was guided by the charter school evaluation protocol, which calls for comparing three selected charter schools to other schools matched by income, race, gender, grade level and disabilities.

The specific method of identifying schools for the comparison group was to first obtain a demographic profile of the students at each of the three pilot charter schools. As Table 4 shows, the students at Khamit and Horizon are substantially similar. Class size at both schools is very small. No students are considered disabled or economically disadvantaged. Males and females are approximately equally represented at Khamit, while male students predominate the 10th grade class at Horizon. The major demographic difference between the two schools, other than grade level, is in the racial/ethnic content: Khamit students are African-American; Horizon students are Hispanic and White.

Walker Middle School is demographically dissimilar to Khamit and Horizon. Walker has a larger proportion of students from low-income households, a moderate number of disabled students, and the 8th grade class size is over 40 times larger than the 3rd, 4th, and 8th grade classes at Khamit and the 10th grade class at Horizon. Walker is racially mixed, the largest group being African-American, with approximately equal numbers of Hispanic and White students, and a small percentage of Asian, Native American and other students. The proportions of male and female students are equal.

Selection of comparison schools was first attempted by determining those schools in which the demographic profiles of the students “best” match the charter student profiles as described above. “Best” is defined in terms of quantitative considerations. By this method, the “best” matches are considered to be those schools still remaining after the elimination of schools which do not fall within criterion ranges for: (1) the percentages of low-income students; (2) class size; (3) numbers of disabled students; and (4) racial/ethnic composition matched to the appropriate charter school. In all cases, potential comparison schools with a class size of one student were eliminated, as were classes in which all students were disabled.

For Khamit and Horizon, both of which reported no low-income or disabled students and small class size, criterion ranges were set at 2-15 students, low-income 0-20%, and disabled 25% or less. Ranges for comparisons to Walker, which reported a high percentage of low-income students and a large class size, were set at 200-300, 70-90% and 10% or greater respectively. In piloting this method, it quickly became apparent that setting criteria for racial/ethnic composition would not be feasible outside of Milwaukee county because the large population of African-American and Hispanic students in Milwaukee area schools could not be matched to schools outside of Milwaukee county where the student population is predominantly White. For this reason, racial/ethnic composition is included in the profiles but is not used as a criterion.

Table 5 shows, by grade and geographic area, the numbers of comparison schools considered the “best” matches to the selected charter schools using this purely

quantitative method of selection. It can readily be seen that the numbers of matches are small. In some cases, there are no matches. In other cases, almost all of the matches are limited to one or two geographic areas.

Consequently, a second method of selecting comparison schools was also piloted. This method calls for first stratifying schools according to geographic area and then isolating the “best” matches within each. In this case, “best” is defined as: (1) those schools which still remain after the elimination of schools which do not fall within the criteria as described in the first method; or (2) if no schools remain, the schools in that geographic area which come closest to the profiled charter school. In addition, all charter schools in a geographic area are also included in the stratified method, regardless of whether or not they match the selected profile. In this way, a geographic area in which no schools meet all criteria might still be represented by the comparison school or schools that come close on at least one or more of the criteria. Table 6 shows the number of schools, by grade and geographic area, which are the “best” matches using this stratified design.

As Table 7 shows, using this stratified method of selecting comparison schools resulted in a mean gain of about 14 additional schools at each grade level. These schools are listed in Tables 8-12 which display the demographic profiles of each charter school selected for this pilot study and the comparison schools which come closest to that school’s profile. (Each individual comparison school is represented by a random number beginning with “CS” for a charter school and “PS” for a public school.)

The stratified method has the advantage of including all the schools selected by the “best match” method plus allowing for the inclusion of some comparison schools within each geographic area of interest even if the schools do not meet all the criteria. The disadvantage of using the stratified method is that not all of the additional comparison schools identified will meet all of the criteria. However, since the schools selected by the “best match” method are included in the second method, the schools identified by the stratified method will be featured through the rest of these piloted designs. Schools that were selected using the “best match” method are indicated with an asterisk (*) throughout the tables.

Achievement Test Results

All Wisconsin charter schools, by the terms of their charter contract, as well as Wisconsin’s public schools are obligated to test their students at the appropriate grade levels using state-mandated achievement tests and to make the results of these tests available to the DPI. Thus, the WSAS and WRCT test score databases from the DPI provide an available measure of academic achievement for charter and public schools. As of the 1999-2000 academic year, the State of Wisconsin has chartered 63 schools. The spring 1999 WSAS and WRCT databases, however, provide achievement scores for only 26 of them, as shown in Table 13. According to the DPI, the reasons for this discrepancy are varied. Ten schools were not chartered until after the spring 1999 testing was completed. Nineteen schools did not have grade levels that required state

assessments. In some cases, building numbers were not yet assigned to the schools. (Note: If a school is not open on the third Friday for the official DPI count, it does not get a building number.) The DPI advises, however, that the 2000-2001 assessments will be reported by all charter schools that did not report during the spring 1999 assessment period.

This piloted design of the proposed charter evaluation uses only descriptive statistics. Due to the small class sizes of Khamit and Horizon, statistical comparisons of achievement means would be inappropriate. Consequently, the following analyses are presented for purposes of design illustration only and are not meant to be taken as definitive for any of the schools identified therein. Thus, no attempt will be made to interpret these tables.

WSAS achievement results are presented in many ways, such as grade equivalents, proficiency levels, normal curve equivalents, number of mastered objectives, and national stanines. For purposes of this pilot study, it was elected to present achievement results in the form of scale scores and national percentiles.

Table 14 displays a means of comparing achievement scores of students in a targeted charter school with individual comparison schools, by geographic area, which meet the targeted school's student profile. Table 15 displays a method of comparing, again by geographic area, the achievement scores of students in a targeted charter school to the mean achievement scores of other charter and public schools that meet the targeted school's student profile. Table 16 displays a way of comparing, on a statewide level, the achievement of charter students at a specific grade level with public school students at the same grade level. Similar comparisons could be made by geographic area or by student demographics, such as gender, ethnic/racial composition, or other variables of interest.

Table 4. Example of a demographic profile using the three charter schools selected for the pilot evaluation (1999 data).

	KHAMIT				WALKER				HORIZON	
	Third Grade		Fourth Grade		Eighth Grade		Eighth Grade		Tenth Grade	
	Number of Students	Percent of Students	Number of Students	Percent of Students	Number of Students	Percent of Students	Number of Students	Percent of Students	Number of Students	Percent of Students
RACE										
Asian	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	3.9%	0	0
African-American	6	100%	7	100%	3	100%	99	38.9%	0	0
Hispanic	0	0	0	0	0	0	70	27.3%	2	33.3%
American Indian	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	2.3%	0	0
White	0	0	0	0	0	0	66	25.8%	4	66.7%
Not reported	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2.0%	0	0
GENDER										
Female	3	50%	3	42.9%	1	33.3%	126	49.2%	1	16.7%
Male	3	50%	4	57.1%	2	66.7%	130	50.8%	5	83.3%
ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED										
Yes	0	0	0	0	0	0	213	83.2%	0	0
No	6	100%	7	100%	3	100%	43	16.8%	6	100%
DISABILITY STATUS										
Disabled	0	0	0	0	0	0	34	13.3%	0	0
Not disabled	6	100%	7	100%	3	100%	222	86.7%	6	100%

Table 5. Example of the "best match" method of selecting comparison schools for the charter schools in the pilot evaluation by grade level and geographic area (1999 data).

	Milwaukee Area						Wisconsin			
	City		County		PMSA		Urban		Other	
	Charter	Public	Charter	Public	Charter	Public	Charter	Public	Charter	Public
3rd grade	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	20
4th grade	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	20
8 th grade	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8 th grade *	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	8
10th grade	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	3

* Unstarred 8th grade is Walker; starred 8th grade is Khamit

Table 6. Example by grade level of the number of comparison schools selected using the stratified method (1999 data).

	Milwaukee Area						Wisconsin			
	City		County		PMSA		Urban		Other	
	Charter	Public	Charter	Public	Charter	Public	Charter	Public	Charter	Public
3rd grade	1	2	0	2	0	2	3	2	3	20
4th grade	0	1	0	2	0	3	3	3	3	20
8 th grade	3	8	1	1	0	2	2	3	2	8
8 th grade*	3	7	0	1	0	1	2	1	1	8
10 th grade	0	4	0	1	0	2	4	4	4	5

* Unstarred 8th grade is Walker; starred 8th grade is Khamit

Table 7. Increase in the number of comparison schools to selected charter schools by grade level and geographic area using the stratified method (1999 data).

	Milwaukee Area						Wisconsin			
	City		County		PMSA		Urban		Other	
	Charter	Public	Charter	Public	Charter	Public	Charter	Public	Charter	Public
3rd grade	+1	+2	0	+2	0	+2	+2	+1	+1	0
4th grade	0	+1	0	+2	0	+3	+3	+2	+1	0
8 th grade	+3	0	+1	+1	0	+2	+2	+3	+2	+8
8 th grade *	+3	+4	0	+1	0	+1	+2	0	0	0
10th grade	0	+1	0	+1	0	+2	+3	+2	+2	+2

* Unstarred 8th grade is Walker; starred 8th grade is Khamit

Table 8. Demographic profiles of Khamit and 3rd grade comparison schools (1999 data).

	Low	Ethnicity					Disabled	Gender	
	Income	Afr	Asian	Hispanic	White	Other	Students	Male	Female
KHAMIT (N=6)	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50.0%	50.0%
COMPARISON SCHOOLS									
Milwaukee Schools									
CS #4 (N=4)	100	75.0	0	25.0	0	0	0	50.0	50.0
PS #22 (N=42)	0	0	0	95.2	4.8	0	0	57.1	42.9
PS #23 (N=29)	17.2	6.9	0	3.4	89.7	0	10.3	75.9	24.1
Milwaukee County Schools									
CS #0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PS #24 (N=23)	13.0	0	4.3	91.4	0	8.7	8.7	47.8	52.2
PS #25 (N=35)	2.9	0	0	5.7	94.3	0	20.0	51.4	48.6
PMSA Schools									
CS #0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PS #26 (N=27)	3.7	0	3.7	11.1	81.5	3.7	14.8	55.6	44.4
PS #27 (N=34)	0	2.9	0	0	97.1	0	2.9	44.1	55.9
Wisconsin Urban Schools									
CS #1 (N=15)*	6.7	6.7	6.7	0	86.6	0	0	53.3	46.7
CS #5 (N=18)	0	0	0	5.6	94.4	0	0	50.0	50.0
CS #6 (N=53)	37.7	0	13.2	1.9	83.0	1.9	24.5	50.9	49.1
PS #1 (N=14)*	14.3	0	0	0	100	0	0	28.6	71.4
PS #28 (N=19)	5.3	0	5.3	0	94.5	0	21.1	52.6	47.4
Other Wisconsin Schools									
CS #2 (N=6)*	0	16.7	0	0	83.8	0	0	66.7	33.3
CS #3 (N=5)*	20.0	0	0	0	100	0	20.0	20.0	80.0
CS #7 (N=40)	2.5	2.5	0	0	97.5	0	2.5	45.0	55.0
PS #2 (N=7)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	14.3	85.7	14.3
PS #3 (N=9)*	0	0	11.1	0	88.9	0	22.2	33.3	66.7
PS #4 (N=12)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	50.0	50.0
PS #5 (N=12)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	58.3	41.7
PS #6 (N=14)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	28.6	71.4
PS #7 (N=14)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	50.0	50.0
PS #8 (N=14)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	14.3	35.7	64.3
PS #9 (N=15)*	0	0	0	0	93.3	6.7	0	40.0	60.0
PS #10 (N=15)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	13.3	60.0	40.0
PS #11 (N=14)*	7.1	0	0	0	100	0	7.1	35.7	64.3
PS #12 (N=13)*	7.7	0	0	7.7	84.6	7.7	0	46.2	53.8
PS #13 (N=13)*	7.7	0	0	7.7	92.3	0	0	38.5	61.5
PS #14 (N=13)*	12.5	0	0	0	100	0	12.5	50.0	50.0
PS #15 (N=14)*	14.3	0	0	0	100	0	0	57.1	42.9
PS #16 (N=14)*	14.3	0	0	0	100	0	21.4	42.9	57.1
PS #17 (N=13)*	15.4	0	0	0	100	0	0	53.6	46.4
PS #18 (N=6)*	16.7	0	0	0	100	0	0	33.3	66.7
PS #19 (N=12)*	16.7	0	0	8.3	91.7	0	8.3	33.3	66.7
PS #20 (N=15)*	20.0	0	0	0	93.3	6.7	0	60.0	40.0
PS #21 (N=15)*	20.0	0	0	0	100	0	0	40.0	60.0

Note: CS = charter school. PS = public school. The numeral following each # is a random code signifying one school. N = number of students in the school who took the 3rd grade WRCT test.

Table 9. Demographic profiles of Khamit and 4th grade comparison schools (1999 data).

	Low	Ethnicity					Disabled	Gender	
	Income	Afr	Asian	Hispanic	White	Other	Students	Male	Female
KHAMIT (N=7)	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	57.1%	42.9%
COMPARISON SCHOOLS									
Milwaukee Schools									
CS #0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PS #22 (N=41)	4.9	0	0	87.8	7.3	0	0	51.2	48.8
Milwaukee County Schools									
CS #0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PS #24 (N=16)	0	0	0	12.5	81.2	6.3	12.5	50.0	50.0
PS #25 (N=24)	8.3	0	0	8.3	91.7	0	0	41.7	58.3
PMSA Schools									
CS #0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PS #40 (N=36)	0	0	0	0	97.2	2.8	0	47.2	52.8
PS #41 (N=40)	0	2.5	2.5	0	92.5	2.5	15.0	65.0	35.0
PS #42 (N=40)	0	0	0	0	100	0	12.5	57.7	42.3
Wisconsin Urban Schools									
CS #1 (N=15)*	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.7	79.9	0	6.7	40.0	60.0
CS #5 (N=16)	12.5	6.3	0	0	93.7	0	18.8	62.5	37.5
CS #6 (N=59)	37.3	0	13.6	1.7	84.7	0	15.3	59.3	40.7
PS #1 (N=16)	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	68.8	31.2
PS #43 (N=19)	0	0	0	0	100	0	21.1	36.8	63.2
PS #28 (N=19)	10.5	0	0	0	100	0	5.3	68.4	31.6
Other Wisconsin Schools									
CS #7 (N=39)	10.3	5.1	0	0	94.9	0	0	56.4	43.6
CS #2 (N=10)*	20.0	0	10.0	0	90.0	0	20.0	60.0	40.0
CS #3 (N=11)	36.4	0	0	0	100	0	2.5	45.5	54.5
PS #3 (N=5)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	40.0	60.0
PS #14 (N=6)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	83.3	16.7
PS #29 (N=6)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	50.0	50.0
PS #5 (N=7)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	14.3	28.6	71.4
PS #6 (N=9)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	55.6	44.4
PS #4 (N=12)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	58.3	41.7
PS #30 (N=12)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	16.7	66.7	33.3
PS #8 (N=14)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	7.1	57.1	42.9
PS #31 (N=14)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	64.3	35.7
PS #32 (N=15)*	6.7	0	0	0	100	0	6.7	53.3	46.7
PS #33 (N=14)*	7.1	0	0	0	100	0	0	64.3	35.7
PS #34 (N=13)*	7.7	7.7	0	7.7	84.6	0	7.7	53.8	46.2
PS #35 (N=11)*	9.1	0	0	0	90.9	9.1	9.1	36.4	63.6
PS #36 (N=10)*	10.0	0	0	7.2	92.8	0	0	40.0	60.0
PS #17 (N=14)*	14.3	0	0	2.7	97.3	0	0	57.1	42.9
PS #11 (N=5)*	20.0	0	0	0	100	0	0	80.0	20.0
PS #9 (N=10)*	20.0	0	0	10.0	90.0	0	0	30.0	70.0
PS #37 (N=10)*	20.0	0	0	0	90.0	10.0	0	10.0	90.0
PS #38 (N=15)*	20.0	0	0	0	100	0	0	53.3	46.7
PS #39 (N=15)*	20.0	0	0	0	100	0	6.7	60.0	40.0

Note: CS = charter school. PS = public school. The numeral following each # is a random code signifying one school. N = number of students in the school who took the 4th grade WSAS test.

Table 10. Demographic profiles of Khamit and 8th grade comparison schools (1999 data).

	Low	Ethnicity					Disabled	Gender	
	Income	Afr	Asian	Hispanic	White	Other	Students	Male	Female
KHAMIT (N=3)	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	66.7%	33.3%
COMPARISON SCHOOLS									
Milwaukee Schools									
CS #9 (N=304)	54.9	42.4	1.3	11.5	44.1	.7	15.5	50.3	49.7
CS #10 (N=7)	57.1	85.7	0	0	14.3	0	0	71.4	28.6
CS #18 (N=256)	83.2	38.7	3.9	27.3	25.8	4.3	13.3	50.8	49.2
PS #66 (N=2)*	0	0	0	0	50.0	50.0	0	100	0
PS #68 (N=7)*	0	42.9	0	14.3	14.2	28.6	0	85.7	14.3
PS #82 (N=13)*	15.4	100	0	0	0	0	0	53.8	46.2
PS #22 (N=17)	17.6	5.9	0	94.1	0	0	0	64.7	35.3
PS #83 (N=5)	40	0	40.0	40.0	20.0	0	0	80.0	20.0
PS #84 (N=10)	40	20.0	0	10.0	10.0	10.0	0	60.0	40.0
PS #85 (N=9)	44.4	66.7	0	22.2	11.1	0	0	66.7	33.3
Milwaukee County Schools									
CS #0 (N=0)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PS #86 (N=31)	19.4	9.7	12.9	3.2	74.2	0	22.6	67.7	32.3
PMSA Schools									
CS #0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PS #87 (N=51)	0	0	0	0	100	0	9.8	51.0	49.0
Wisconsin Urban Schools									
CS #12 (N=20)	25.0	5.0	10.0	10.0	75.0	0	10.0	45.0	55.0
CS #13 (N=2)	100	0	0	0	100	0	50.0	100	0
PS #71 (N=11)*	0	36.4	0	0	63.6	0	18.2	63.6	36.4
Other Wisconsin Schools									
CS #7 (N=22)	4.5	0	0	4.5	95.5	0	9.1	77.3	22.7
CS #14 (N=12)*	0	0	0	8.3	91.7	0	0	58.3	41.7
PS #2 (N=11)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	36.4	63.6
PS #3 (N=11)*	0	0	9.1	9.1	81.8	0	18.2	72.7	27.3
PS #5 (N=9)*	0	0	0	11.1	88.9	0	22.2	88.9	11.1
PS #6 (N=10)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	10.0	60.0	40.0
PS #14 (N=13)*	0	0	7.7	0	84.6	7.7	0	46.2	53.8
PS #31 (N=11)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	45.5	54.5
PS #88 (N=9)*	11.1	0	0	0	100	0	0	55.6	44.4
PS #89 (N=15)*	20.0	0	0	0	100	0	6.7	66.7	33.3

Note: CS = charter school. PS = public school. The numeral following each # is a random code signifying one school. N = number of students in the school who took the 8th grade WSAS test.

Table 11. Demographic profiles of Walker and 8th grade comparison schools (1999 data).

	Low	Ethnicity					Disabled	Gender	
	Income	Afr	Asian	Hispanic	White	Other	Students	Male	Female
WALKER (N=256)	83.2%	38.7%	3.9%	27.3%	25.8%	4.3%	13.3%	50.8%	49.2%
COMPARISON SCHOOLS									
Milwaukee Schools									
CS #8 (N=3)	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	66.7%	33.3%
CS #9 (N=304)	54.9	42.4	1.3	11.5	44.1	.7	15.5	50.3	49.7
CS #10 (N=7)	57.1	85.7	0	0	14.3	0	0	71.4	28.6
PS #44 (N=303)*	71.9	71.6	8.9	13.9	5.3	.3	12.2	50.5	49.5
PS #45 (N=304)*	75.0	74.7	8.2	3.3	13.1	.7	15.5	59.2	40.8
PS #46 (N=281)*	75.1	62.6	6.0	10.7	17.8	2.9	16.7	54.5	45.5
PS #47 (N=279)*	75.3	85.7	4.3	0	9.6	.4	10.8	52.3	47.7
PS #48 (N=237)*	77.6	55.3	5.5	19.8	18.6	.8	16.0	49.4	50.6
PS #49 (N=228)*	78.1	45.6	6.6	28.1	18.9	.8	16.7	43.9	55.7**
PS #50 (N=220)*	79.5	90.9	1.4	2.3	3.6	1.8	12.7	46.8	53.2
PS #51 (N=197)*	85.8	98.0	0	.5	1.0	.5	14.2	48.2	51.8
Milwaukee County Schools									
CS #0 (N=0)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PS #52 (N=204)	27.0	5.9	4.4	8.8	77.9	3.0	15.2	49.0	51.0
PMSA Schools									
CS #0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PS #53 (N=191)	15.7	.5	1.6	2.6	89.6	5.7	14.1	55.5	44.5
PS #54 (N=312)	15.7	.6	1.6	7.4	89.8	.6	14.4	48.4	51.6
Wisconsin Urban Schools									
CS #12 (N=20)	25.0	5.0	10.0	10.0	75.0	0	10.0	45.0	55.0
CS #13 (N=2)	100	0	0	0	100	0	50.0	100	0
PS #55 (N=259)	48.6	16.2	.8	21.1	61.1	.8	13.9	54.4	45.6
PS #56 (N=307)	45.9	2.9	13.0	7.2	65.9	11.0	23.5	53.1	46.9
PS #57 (N=321)	44.9	2.5	17.4	3.1	65.4	11.6	19.6	51.1	48.9
Other Wisconsin Schools									
CS #7 (N=22)	4.5	0	0	4.5	95.5	0	9.1	77.3	22.7
CS #14 (N=12)	0	0	0	8.3	91.7	0	0	58.3	41.7
PS #58 (N=183)	54.1	1.6	0	3.3	88.5	6.6	13.7	56.8	43.2
PS #59 (N=218)	33.5	0	0	.5	96.7	2.8	14.2	49.5	50.5
PS #60 (N=210)	30.0	2.9	0	21.4	75.2	.5	8.6	53.3	46.7
PS #61 (N=241)	27.8	.8	0	1.7	97.1	.4	10.8	53.9	46.1
PS #62 (N=226)	25.2	.4	.4	1.8	94.8	2.6	12.4	57.1	42.9
PS #63 (N=249)	24.5	1.1	1.6	.8	91.3	5.2	9.6	58.6	41.4
PS #64 (N=285)	23.9	.4	8.8	.7	77.8	12.3	8.1	54.0	46.0
PS #65 (N=186)	23.7	.5	0	.5	96.9	2.1	16.1	53.8	46.2

Note: CS = Charter School; PS = Public School; each random code signifies one school. N = Number of students in the school who took the 8th grade WSAS test ** Gender does not add to 100% due to missing data.

Table 12. Demographic profiles of Horizon and 10th grade comparison schools (1999 data).

	Low	Ethnicity					Disabled	Gender	
	Income	Afr	Asian	Hispanic	White	Other	Students	Male	Female
HORIZON (N=6)	0%	0%	0%	33.3%	66.7%	0%	0%	83.3%	16.7%
COMPARISON SCHOOLS									
Milwaukee Schools									
CS #0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PS #66 (N=4)*	0	100	0	0	0	0	8.8	100	0
PS #67 (N=6)*	0	16.7	0	16.7	16.6	50.0	0	100	0
PS #68 (N=8)*	0	62.5	12.5	62.5	12.5	0	0	75.0	25.0
PS #77 (N=19)	0	0	0	94.7	5.3	0	0	47.4	52.6
Milwaukee County Schools									
CS #0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PS #78 (N=77)	15.6	7.8	2.6	11.7	71.4	6.5	9.1	50.6	49.4
PMSA Schools									
CS #0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PS #79 (N=48)	14.8	2.5	.6	16.6	78.5	1.8	8.9	57.8	42.2
PS #80 (N=71)	2.8	1.4	0	0	98.6	0	11.3	59.2	40.8
Wisconsin Urban Schools									
CS #15 (N=3)*	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	33.3	66.7
CS #17 (N=35)	28.6	0	5.7	2.9	91.4	0	25.7	45.7	54.3
CS #13 (N=5)	40.0	20.0	0	0	60.0	20.0	20.0	80.0	20.0
CS #19 (N=12)	58.3	0	0	0	91.7	8.3	0	50.0	50.0
PS #69 (N=6)*	0	0	0	0	83.3	16.7	83.3	66.7	33.3
PS #70 (N=9)*	0	33.3	0	11.1	55.6	6.7	0	0	100
PS #71 (N=15)*	0	33.3	0	6.7	53.3	0	6.7	66.7	33.3
PS #81 (N=27)	0	0	0	3.7	85.2	11.1	0	66.7	33.3
Other Wisconsin Schools									
CS #16 (N=3)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	66.7	33.3
CS #14 (N=7)	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	57.1	42.9
CS #20 (N=9)	22.2	0	0	0	77.8	22.2	11.1	88.9	11.1
CS #21 (N=2)	50.0	0	0	0	100	0	50.0	100	0
PS #72 (N=5)*	0	0	0	7.7	60.0	40.0	0	20.0	80.0
PS #73 (N=12)*	0	0	0	0	100	0	8.3	66.7	33.3
PS #74 (N=13)*	0	23.1	0	0	69.2	0	61.5	100	0
PS #75 (N=15)*	13.3	0	0	0	100	0	20.0	60.0	40.0
PS #76 (N=16)*	0	0	0	6.3	93.7	0	25.0	56.3	43.7

Note: CS = charter school. PS = public school. The numeral following each # is a random code signifying one school. N = number of students in the school who took the 10th grade WSAS test.

Table 13. Wisconsin charter schools.

District School	District School	District School
Antigo <i>Chrysalis Family*</i> <i>Chrysalis Elementary*</i> Appleton <i>Appleton Central Alternative</i> <i>Appleton Community Learning Center*</i> <i>Classical Charter*</i> <i>TAG School Within a School*</i> Beaver Dam <i>Beaver Dam Charter</i> Beloit <i>Knight's Academy*</i> Black Hawk <i>E*X*C*E*L *</i> Colfax <i>Academic Center-High*</i> <i>Academic Center-Middle*</i> Deerfield <i>Deerfield Charter High</i> Eau Claire <i>McKinley Charter</i> <i>Technology Charter*</i> Elkhorn <i>Walworth Co. Education Consortium*</i> Fond du Lac <i>Charter Products, Inc*</i> Hurley <i>Dr. Joseph Lulich Charter*</i> Janesville <i>Rock River Charter School*</i> Jefferson <i>Jefferson County Alternative*</i> Kenosha <i>Paideia Charter</i> <i>The Brompton School</i> La Crosse <i>School of Technology and Arts</i> <i>School of Technology and Arts II</i> <i>Coulee Montessori*</i> <i>Medical Partnership at Lincoln Middle*</i>	Lac du Flambeau No. 1 <i>Leadership Academy</i> Ladysmith-Hawkins <i>Ladysmith Evening Alternative*</i> Lancaster <i>Lancaster Academy</i> Lodi <i>Lodi Charter *</i> Madison Metropolitan <i>Affiliated Alternatives*</i> <i>James Wright Middle School</i> Marshall <i>The Fifth Dimension*</i> Mauston <i>Mauston Alternative Resource*</i> Menomonie Area <i>Lucas Charter*</i> Middleton-Cross Plains Area <i>Middleton Alternative Senior High*</i> City of Milwaukee <i>Downtown Montessori Academy*</i> <i>Khamit Institute</i> <i>YW Global Career Academy</i> <i>Central City Cyberschool*</i> Milwaukee Public Schools <i>Fritsche Middle</i> <i>Highland Community School</i> <i>Walker International Middle</i> Monona Grove <i>Monona Grove Alternative</i> Monroe <i>Monroe Alternative</i> Neillsville <i>Clark Co. Alternative*</i> New Lisbon <i>Juneau Co. Charter*</i> Oconto Falls <i>Oconto Falls Alternative Learning Site</i> <i>Spruce School: A Rural Community Alternative</i> Portage <i>Portage Alternative Learning High*</i> Parkview <i>Parkview Charter*</i>	St. Francis <i>Horizon Academy</i> Stevens Point Area <i>TEAMS</i> <i>C.A.R.E. *</i> <i>McKinley Center</i> Sun Prairie Area <i>Dane Co. Transition*</i> Trevor <i>Trevor Accelerated Program*</i> Verona <i>Core Knowledge Charter</i> <i>New Century</i> Viroqua Area <i>Laurel High*</i> Waupaca <i>Waupaca Co. Charter*</i> Wausau <i>Star Bright Charter*</i> Wisconsin Dells <i>Kilbourn Academy*</i>

*Starred schools are those for which there is no achievement data in the Spring 1999 WSAS and WRCT databases.

Table 14. Example of 8th grade WSAS achievement test scores for a targeted charter school compared to individual comparison schools (1999 data).

	Reading		Language Arts		Mathematics		Science		Social Studies	
	Scale Score	Nat'l %	Scale Score	Nat'l %	Scale Score	Nat'l %	Scale Score	Nat'l %	Scale Score	Nat'l %
WALKER (N=256)	679.2	54.1	677.1	54.0	700.4	60.8	689.5	54.2	686.6	58.4
COMPARISON SCHOOLS										
Milwaukee Schools										
CS #8 (N=3)	674.0	48.3	671.7	49.7	678.7	44.0	693.3	58.0	685.0	57.7
CS #9 (N=304)	674.3	52.1	672.7	52.9	697.8	57.7	689.2	54.6	682.2	56.3
CS #10 (N=7)	659.3	43.4	672.4	49.3	664.7	33.7	680.6	46.0	681.0	54.6
PS #44 (N=303)	670.7	50.8	677.1	54.5	687.5	50.8	686.5	52.7	679.8	55.2
PS #45 (N=304)	676.3	52.3	673.1	52.9	681.1	48.3	687.4	53.1	683.1	55.6
PS #46 (N=281)	681.3	55.0	684.2	58.8	695.7	56.7	690.7	55.1	682.6	56.4
PS #47 (N=279)	673.0	49.2	672.3	50.8	682.9	47.9	684.5	50.2	679.2	53.3
PS #48 (N=237)	671.2	50.3	675.1	52.6	686.3	51.3	684.2	51.5	680.9	55.6
PS #49 (N=228)	680.9	55.5	681.3	57.1	691.6	53.8	689.2	55.2	687.0	58.5
PS #50 (N=220)	674.0	52.6	677.3	55.1	690.5	53.2	684.4	51.3	679.2	53.4
PS #51 (N=197)	663.0	47.5	667.7	50.7	679.8	47.5	677.3	48.0	675.7	50.7
Milwaukee County Schools										
CS #0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PS #52 (N=204)	694.7	65.0	696.0	67.9	708.1	64.9	705.7	66.3	697.6	67.7
PMSA Schools										
CS #0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PS #53 (N=191)	688.4	60.5	688.9	63.7	711.5	67.5	702.2	64.2	697.1	67.0
PS #54 (N=312)	691.5	62.9	691.3	64.4	711.8	66.4	704.1	65.4	696.9	67.0
Wisconsin Urban Schools										
CS #12 (N=20)	682.3	56.2	673.1	54.1	696.7	57.0	702.0	64.6	686.2	58.4
CS #13 (N=2)	647.5	37.0	643.0	34.0	682.0	46.5	667.0	44.0	607.0	33.0
PS #55 (N=259)	689.0	61.1	687.3	62.2	704.9	62.9	700.9	63.9	693.1	64.3
PS #56 (N=307)	683.7	57.7	685.5	60.1	703.3	61.4	696.5	60.1	689.6	60.8
PS #57 (N=321)	687.7	59.9	686.1	60.2	705.5	62.5	699.0	61.9	691.5	62.7
Other Wisconsin Schools										
CS #7 (N=22)	695.2	67.1	697.4	72.8	721.8	75.2	713.0	73.4	704.7	75.1
CS #14 (N=12)	693.4	65.3	690.4	63.3	709.3	67.3	695.0	58.4	696.9	67.2
PS #58 (N=183)	684.5	58.1	688.2	61.7	705.2	62.6	701.5	64.1	695.2	65.6
PS #59 (N=218)	694.1	65.1	691.1	65.0	713.3	68.2	705.2	66.8	698.1	68.3
PS #60 (N=210)	682.7	57.5	683.4	58.9	698.6	57.9	695.6	59.8	690.1	62.3
PS #61 (N=241)	686.9	59.7	685.2	60.4	706.3	64.0	703.1	66.3	693.9	65.0
PS #62 (N=226)	694.5	65.3	691.5	65.5	709.8	65.1	707.6	68.8	697.9	67.7
PS #63 (N=249)	687.9	60.5	690.2	63.4	708.1	65.5	702.6	65.9	694.0	65.5
PS #64 (N=285)	690.3	62.1	692.2	65.1	713.6	68.3	710.5	69.6	698.0	68.4
PS #65 (N=186)	691.2	62.9	689.2	62.6	708.9	65.9	706.2	66.6	699.0	68.2

Note: CS = charter school. PS = public school. The numeral following each # is a random code signifying one school. N = number of students in the school who took the 8th grade WSAS test.

Table 15. Example of 4th grade WSAS achievement test scores for a targeted charter school compared to the average scores of comparison schools (1999 data).

	Reading		Language Arts		Mathematics		Science		Social Studies	
	Scale Score	Nat'l %	Scale Score	Nat'l %	Scale Score	Nat'l %	Scale Score	Nat'l %	Scale Score	Nat'l %
KHAMIT (N=7)	657.3	64.1	648.6	60.9	648.3	69.7	642.6	59.7	648.3	62.7
COMPARISON SCHOOLS										
Milwaukee City Schools										
Charter (N=0)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Public (N=41)	654.0	64.1	654.5	62.5	646.6	68.5	657.8	69.5	655.8	69.2
Milwaukee County Schools										
Charter (N=0)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Public (N=40)	656.1	63.5	648.6	58.0	643.7	64.3	650.1	64.2	650.4	63.9
PMSA Schools										
Charter (N=0)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Public (N=116)	654.2	62.2	652.4	60.8	644.2	66.0	654.5	67.8	655.1	67.4
Wisconsin Urban Schools										
Charter (N=90)	655.6	63.8	654.4	62.5	646.6	67.1	655.9	68.9	655.6	68.3
Public (N=53)	644.4	55.5	642.2	52.4	640.5	62.3	649.2	62.3	649.5	61.0
Other Wisconsin Schools										
Charter (N=60)	650.4	59.8	649.9	59.1	642.1	64.1	652.3	66.0	653.3	65.8
Public (N=217)	653.3	61.5	650.7	59.9	643.6	65.4	653.4	67.0	653.4	66.1

Note: CS = charter school. PS = public school. The numeral following each # is a random code signifying one school. N = number of students in the school who took the 4th grade WSAS test.

Table 16. Example of WSAS achievement test scores of all 10th grade charter schools with all 10th grade public schools (1999 data).

	Reading		Language Arts		Mathematics		Science		Social Studies	
	Scale Score	Nat'l %	Scale Score	Nat'l %	Scale Score	Nat'l %	Scale Score	Nat'l %	Scale Score	Nat'l %
CHARTER SCHOOLS										
9 schools, 75 students	708.9	67.0	707.9	68.2	740.4	71.6	724.8	70.7	713.5	70.0
PUBLIC SCHOOLS										
430 schools, 56,234 students	707.4	66.2	706.5	66.8	733.3	68.5	719.7	67.2	712.9	69.3

Conclusions and Issues Raised

Pilot Evaluation Schools

Based upon the program and contract analyses, the following conclusions can be drawn regarding the educational programs of the three charter schools:

Khamit Institute

By immersing students in the philosophy of the ancient Khamitic culture of what is today Egypt, Khamit Institute intends to develop cultural appreciation, academic ability, life skills, self awareness, a range of intelligences, and ability to succeed in a global society. Khamit has a well-articulated, carefully designed plan. Its education program is fully implemented. The Khamitic focus of the school in both theory and practice is clearly innovative, although in the core subjects the curriculum and the instructional methods used are not.

The participants at Khamit, in supporting Khamitic philosophy and practices in conjunction with assertive discipline, appear to have created a positive, nurturing, and productive environment, in which students and teachers are treated with respect. The instructional techniques used by Khamit teachers appear to be generally sound, although direct instruction as practiced at Khamit is not always consistent with the direct instruction model. The instructional methodology cannot be considered innovative. Accelerated learning is being used in other schools nationally. Direct instruction has been and is being used in many other schools locally and nationally. In addition, the compatibility of direct instruction and accelerated learning based on brain functioning is questionable. Khamitic philosophy and practices are clearly innovative, serving as an overarching focus of the curriculum and influencing everything in the school, including the core subjects.

Multi-age grouping across three grades, in this case 1st-3rd and 4th-6th, can enable teachers to place children of different ages but like developmental levels together for instruction. However, when instruction to children two or more years apart is aimed at one level, it can and at Khamit sometimes does result in teaching that is not developmentally appropriate, especially for the youngest in the group. With an appropriately licensed staff, including teaching assistants, instances of developmentally inappropriate teaching and discipline could be avoided.

Although the physical facilities are unconventional and in some ways inadequate, the environment that is maintained appears to be conducive to student health and growth. The positive effects of the wholistic, Khamitic approach are enhanced by personalized contacts between adults and children. That type of contact is enabled at Khamit by the small size of the school and its classes and by the daily assembly. A result is a family atmosphere in which older students seem to act responsibly toward younger ones, and younger ones look to the older ones for support. The vegetarian menu is consciously aimed toward student well-being.

Parents are clearly welcome at Khamit, and some seem to have significant influence in the day-to-day and overall running of the school. Teachers and parents interviewed professed strong commitment to Khamit and a high degree of satisfaction with it. Conferences involving parents, teacher, and student are held at least twice yearly and when specially needed. The “Student Personal Learning Plan” used at conferences would seem to provide a beneficial focus. The Governing Board and committees, with parents and teachers participating, appear to be active and knowledgeable of the requirements for a successful program under the Khamitic philosophy. The administrator, or “academic director,” is apparently the most knowledgeable exponent of that philosophy and would seem at this time to be a vital link to Khamitic resources and perhaps to the success of the school.

It appears that in exchange for accountability measures including testing and checking on the attainment of benchmarks, Khamit enjoys a high degree of autonomy from the chartering agency. The contract focuses primarily on ends rather than means, and measurement methods are detailed in it. The contracting agency’s role is essentially limited to oversee and monitor. The contract is to be terminated if pupils do not make sufficient progress toward the educational goals stated in the state charter legislation. There is no contractual provision for Khamit to model broader school reform, nor is it evident that Khamit has begun to do so.

Khamit Institute is offering a defensible education program for its students and parents that is consistent with its charter contract. Whether Khamitic philosophy could be implemented as fully in a regular public school as in a small, formerly private charter school such as Khamit Institute is a matter of speculation. While its instructional program is not innovative, it appears that Khamit’s charter status is enabling it to proceed with its unique cultural focus.

Walker International Middle School

Walker is in its first year as a charter school, and at this point Walker's planned program lacks clear definition and innovation. An evaluation of its implemented program is constrained by this confusion surrounding its intended program. Walker's intended educational program as revealed in the school's charter proposal, the administrator questionnaire, and interviews is diffuse. Aspects of America's Promise are visible in the stated curriculum, instruction, and organization goals, but America's Promise is a broad national agenda for schools, not a specific guide for school practice. Further, attempting to use it for direction along with other competing guides such as the MPS Middle School Proficiencies has led to an educational program that lacks focus and might be considered unwieldy.

Walker's curriculum is that of its school district. Instruction, although clearly quite competent, does not appear to be innovative. The school's division into self-contained sub-units should allow the flexibility for staff to provide individualized instruction. That system of organization has permitted special education teachers to be

utilized, to the satisfaction of their colleagues, in ways that integrate special needs students successfully in regular classes. However, at this point, Walker does not appear to demonstrate that it provides innovative ways to educate its students.

Teachers report improvement in students' achievement levels, test scores, pride in their work, and attendance. But because Walker has only been a charter school for several months, it is not known how much improvement to attribute to its charter status. While teachers have in some instances seen clear, positive results from staff committees organized since Walker became a charter school, the role and impact of the school council is not clear.

Walker's charter contract focuses on ends rather than means. The role of the chartering agency is oversight and monitoring. Specific required performance levels are stated in the contract, and it is to be terminated if sufficient progress toward goals in the state charter legislation are not met. The contract does not provide for dissemination of program information to other public schools, and Walker has not, in any apparent way, influenced other public school programs.

Although Walker's educational program may be beneficial for students, it appears to be comprised of add-ons rather than a unified program. It lacks focus and should have been more clearly articulated prior to the granting of charter status. Walker appears to be an effective school, where students tend to be engaged in their work and where energetic, committed teachers feel stimulated and efficacious. It is not clear, however, that Walker could not have entered into its various component programs without charter status.

Horizon Academy

Horizon Academy has a well-developed plan with a specific, narrow focus. The plan to offer standard high school curricula to at-risk students using self-paced intervals is fully implemented. Horizon seems to be successful in its exchange of the potential synergies of a classroom where the teaching and learning are more public and collaborative, for the benefits of individualized instruction and the absence of a classroom's social pressures. Despite limits imposed by the size and configuration of the classroom, students generally seem well able to focus on their tasks there. The atmosphere seems relaxed and friendly.

The teacher's role often appears to be more that of monitor and record keeper than instructor. Yet the teacher's ability to provide encouragement for students to continue their work when they find it or their circumstances to be difficult is a key to the success of students and consequently of the program. The present teacher seems quite able in this role.

With the planned move to a new location, both the academic and work portions of the program would become accessible to more students. Yet, the advantages unique to having a school-within-a-school will largely be lost. It will not be as easy for students to take conventional high school classes, nor will they any longer have easy access to the

high school library. Assistance from subject-area teachers will not be so readily available to Horizon staff.¹

The Horizon subgrant application, which served in lieu of a contract as the basis for granting the school's charter, contains no provisions for the sponsoring school district to impose sanctions under certain conditions. The document pays little attention to the role of the chartering agency and focuses only minimally on ends rather than means. Assessment results are to be reported semi-annually to the St. Francis School Board, but no standards are set forth. The application does not provide for information about school performance, effectiveness, or innovations to be shared with the public or with other schools. However, Horizon has shared information about its program with interested nearby districts.

The Community Advisory Council which, according to the subgrant application, "assists with ongoing program development, implementation, and evaluation" is apparently no longer together, although its individual members may still take part in the school's operation, such as in developing curriculum alignment. Parents' participation in their children's education is sought, and parents' suggestions are welcome, but parents do not appear to play a significant role in the ongoing development of the school.

The broad use of computer-based instruction and programmed texts is not the type of innovation that can only take place in a charter school. It is not clear why, other than for financial reasons, Horizon would need to operate as a charter school. Requirements for completion leading to high school graduation, a GED, or HSED do not seem significantly different from requirements in traditional programs. There seems to be no attempt to seek relief from the requirements that characterize traditional schools. Horizon does not appear to have promoted itself as an innovative program. Horizon functions more as a department of a traditional school than as a separate, unique entity.

General Conclusions

Based on the analyses of the programs, contracts, and achievement test results of the three charter schools in this pilot evaluation, it is not clear that Wisconsin's charter school reform ensures fulfillment of the claims made by its proponents. The program and contract analyses indicate that the implementation of the charter school program is mixed. The program analysis suggests that the impact of charter school reform--on students, parents, and other public schools--is mixed, as well. From the program analysis, it can be concluded that each of the three schools is presenting an education program that may lead to academic achievement. However, the program implemented in each school is not necessarily innovative or consistent with its charter school plan. It is unclear that any of the observed program features could not be carried out in a regular public school. The contract analysis determined that charter school accountability to chartering agencies, as provided in contracts and as carried out, may be inconsistent and ineffective. Program assessment practices and contractual provisions for program assessment may vary widely. Sufficient achievement data are not available to judge the

¹ At the beginning of the 2000-01 school year, Horizon is operating in its new facility.

academic effectiveness of the three charter schools studied in this pilot evaluation. Nor do the three schools represent a large enough population to draw a conclusion about charter school reform in Wisconsin. The framework developed herein for assessing the achievement impact of charter schools will be used with a larger population in subsequent analyses.

Issues for Policymakers to Consider

Although this pilot evaluation is limited in scope, tentative recommendations for DPI and chartering agencies follow:

1. Consider approving charter status to a school only if the proposal presented by the school: (a) clearly demonstrates coherence among its various reforms; (b) includes a detailed explanation of how each reform will be evaluated each year; and (c) prescribes measures to be taken by the chartering agency when the goals of each reform are not met.
2. Consider approving an implementation grant to a charter school only if the proposed educational program could not be carried out within the constraints of a regular public school or within the budgetary constraints of a Milwaukee private school.
3. Consider stricter enforcement of licensure requirements for charter school teachers and teaching assistants.
4. Consider developing a statewide mechanism for disseminating innovative ideas that may arise as a result of the charter school reform.

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