

BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DATE: July 10, 2012

TO: **BOARD OF EDUCATION**

FROM: S. Dallas Dance, Ph.D., Superintendent

SUBJECT: **UPDATE ON IMAGINE DISCOVERY CHARTER SCHOOL**

ORIGINATOR: Roger Plunkett, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction

RESOURCE PERSON(S): Pat Lawton, Assistant Superintendent, Elementary Zone 2
Kathleen McMahon, Executive Director, Special Programs

INFORMATION

As a follow up to the Board of Education's request, staff completed an instructional data analysis of Imagine Discovery Charter School. The attached report is a comparative analysis of Imagine Discovery's achievement data and the surrounding BCPS schools.

* * * * *

Attachment I – Report
Attachment II - Appendices
Attachment III – PowerPoint

Imagine Discovery Public Charter School Report Spring 2012

Imagine Discovery Public Charter School (Imagine Discovery) is the first and only public charter school in Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS). It opened its doors on August 26, 2008.

The school is located in a business park on Whitehead Road in the Woodlawn community in a building renovated for this purpose. In addition to classrooms, the facility includes offices, a health suite, a media center that houses the computer lab and a modest collection of library books, and a multipurpose room divided by a curtain to create a cafeteria and gym.

Enrollment

Imagine Discovery opened its doors with 465 students enrolled in Kindergarten through Grade 4. As of September 30, 2011, the school serves 623 students enrolled in Kindergarten through Grade 7 (Appendix A). In accordance with the contract signed on January 30, 2008, the charter school reserves the right to limit class size to 22 students per class in grades one through five, and 15 students per class in Kindergarten. However, the current Imagine Discovery Public Charter School enrollment of 623 students includes classes of 15 in Kindergarten and 23 to 26 in other grades.

The charter school accepts applications for students and conducts an annual lottery for Kindergarten enrollment. The lottery is facilitated with the support of the Office of Magnet Programs for Baltimore County Public Schools. In addition to the incoming Kindergarten students, the school fills vacancies throughout the grade levels and creates a waiting list for the remaining students not selected through the lottery process.

Imagine Discovery notified BCPS on February 22, 2011, that future enrollment plans for the 2012–2013 school year projected the school to grow to a student population of 704 students. As significant facility concerns have existed since the opening of the school in 2008, Imagine Discovery was notified by BCPS on April 12, 2011, that in accordance with its charter agreement, its enrollment may not exceed 660 students during the current or any subsequent school year.

Imagine Discovery draws its enrollment from Baltimore County students previously attending both private and public schools. An examination of home addresses would indicate that the population mainly comes from the Southwest (SW) area of Baltimore County with 10 elementary schools with 18 or more students from their catchment areas and seven middle schools with students from their catchment areas based on June 30, 2011 enrollment. A further examination of these elementary and middle schools would indicate that there is adequate space for these students to attend a Baltimore County school. (Appendix B and C)

Further examination of demographics indicates that Imagine Discovery's free and reduced meal participation (Appendix D) and special education student enrollment are significantly lower than their surrounding Baltimore County elementary and middle schools.

Faculty and Staff

The principal is fully responsible for the hiring of personnel at Imagine Discovery and has a staff which includes an assistant principal, an administrative assistant, and a fiscal assistant. At the time of its opening in 2008, Imagine Discovery's faculty was largely comprised of untenured teachers, meaning they had less than three years of teaching experience. Their current faculty is comprised of 39.5 teachers, over half of whom are tenured. (Appendix E)

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

The Imagine Discovery Public Charter School bears the same responsibility to teach and reach the standards of the state of Maryland as any other public school in the state. Terms of its agreement allow the school the autonomy to identify its own curriculum. Imagine Discovery has chosen not to use BCPS curriculum and curriculum resources and has chosen the Core Knowledge sequence developed by E. D. Hirsch.

Student Achievement

Appendix F through Appendix I compares Imagine Discovery students' achievement on the state-mandated Maryland School Assessment program to students in the schools that geographically surround it. The schools listed are the Baltimore County public schools most frequently identified (by address) as the BCPS' projected home schools for Imagine Discovery students.

Elementary Achievement: Math MSA

Imagine Discovery Public Charter School students achieved the lowest percent of elementary students scoring proficient/advanced on the 2011 Math MSA in their elementary neighborhood group as well as receiving the second lowest elementary Math MSA scores in the entire district. Their percent of students scoring proficient/advanced was over twenty percentage points lower than the BCPS' average. (Appendix F)

Elementary Achievement: Reading MSA

In a ranking of BCPS elementary schools by their 2011 Reading MSA proficient/advanced achievement, Imagine Discovery Public Charter School was the twelfth lowest scoring elementary school in the entire district. Their percent of students scoring proficient/advanced was almost ten percentage points lower than the BCPS' average. Appendix G compares Imagine Discovery's proficient/advanced scores to those in its neighborhood group.

Middle School Achievement: Math MSA

Imagine Discovery Public Charter School students achieved the lowest percent of middle school students scoring proficient/advanced on the 2011 Math MSA in their middle school neighborhood group as well as receiving the lowest Math MSA middle school scores in the entire district. Their percent of students scoring proficient/advanced was over thirty percentage points lower than the BCPS average. (Appendix H)

Middle School Achievement: Reading MSA

Imagine Discovery Public Charter School students' achieved 75.3% percent of middle school students scoring proficient/advanced on the 2011 Reading MSA placing them in

the middle of their neighborhood group. Their percent of students scoring proficient/advanced was over seven percentage points lower than the BCPS average. (Appendix I)

BCPS' Benchmarks

While Board of Education Policy 1600 requires Imagine Discovery to administer the same benchmark assessments given to students in other BCPS' elementary and middle schools, there have been inconsistencies with implementation of the benchmarks over the years. Therefore, consistent benchmark scores are not available.

Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 10)

Imagine Discovery chooses to administer the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 10), a [standardized achievement tests](#) utilized by [school districts](#) in the [United States](#) for assessing children from [Kindergarten](#) through [high school](#). Imagine Discovery uses the assessment to track the longitudinal progress of their initial group of grade four students from the 2008–2009 school year. The assessment has been administered in the spring of each school year for the last three years. The charts included in Appendix J indicate a steady decline in students' assessment scores with each subsequent administration. The initial assessment year produced scores generally at or above the national percent correct. By the spring of 2011, all Reading subscores were below the national percent correct and all Math subscores were significantly below the national percent correct.

These data clearly show that BCPS' students who have the opportunity to remain in their home schools for their instructional program consistently outperform Imagine Discovery students in both math and reading.

Monitoring

The oversight and monitoring of the instructional program at Imagine Discovery is coordinated through the office of the assistant superintendent, Zone 2. This monitoring began with weekly systemwide readiness meetings in the months leading up to the opening of the school year. The monitoring activities have continued throughout the school year with very regular onsite visits by the assistant superintendent and her assistant. The school visits conducted by the assistant superintendent include a meeting with the school's administration, reflective dialogue with the teachers about the instructional program at the school, informal classroom visits, formal observations, and observation of grade-level meetings or data dialogues.

The visits provide an opportunity for the school administration to reflect on the daily instruction provided to students and the instructional expectations. The visits also provide support and recommendations to the administration regarding implementation of rigorous instruction, assigned with the State Curriculum and feedback on the structure and efficacy of data analysis, synthesis, and the subsequent instructional planning.

Additionally, staff from the Office of Special Education has been actively engaged in problem solving issues involving meeting the timelines and requirements of IDEA.

With all this feedback in mind, the implementation of the academic program at Imagine Discovery Public Charter School has not ever reflected the standards found in other schools in Baltimore County.

Gifted and Talented Services

Imagine Discovery Public Charter School is the only Baltimore County public school not identifying students for gifted and talented (GT) services. The school was notified in the spring of 2011 that they must identify students for GT services, consistent with the commitment in their Charter application. By the conclusion of SY11, no Imagine Discovery students had been identified or were receiving GT services. Imagine Discovery has identified zero GT students for the 2011–2012 school year. Assistance in the identification process has been offered by the BCPS’ Office of Gifted and Talented. Appendix K summarizes the GT identification in Imagine Discovery’s neighborhood schools.

Special Education

Since its opening, Imagine Discovery has always had a significantly lower percent of students receiving Special Education services than generally seen within BCPS (BCPS 12.7%; Imagine Discovery 5.6%). During the 2010–2011 school year there were significant special education compliance issues noted including inappropriate dismissal from services, timeline infractions, team notes not completed and sent home, no quarterly progress reports completed, inadequate documentation of levels of academic functioning, IEPs that did not address all identified needs, and questionable educational assessments.

In the past, numerous phone calls from parents to the Office of Special Education relating to grievances, students not receiving accommodations or supplementary aids and services, or a lack of response from school personnel were received requiring onsite intervention.

During the 2010–2011 school year there was little administrative oversight of the special education program. Staff was not held accountable for compliance and instructional responsibilities. There was no response to Office of Special Education recommendations.

The BCPS’ Office of Special Education became involved and worked to bring all cases to resolution. A few of the cases that had been mismanaged resulted in ultimately requiring inordinately expensive special education services be provided to the students.

During the 2011–2012 school year there is intense administrative oversight of the special education program. Staff is being held accountable for compliance and instructional responsibilities. Staff is being told to attend professional development offerings and coverage is arranged. There is an immediate response to Office of Special Education recommendations coupled with monitoring and follow up.

Safe School Concerns

Imagine Discovery Public Charter School has struggled with school safety concerns indicated by a high annual student suspension rate since its opening in 2008. Imagine Discovery’s June 2011 year-end suspension rate was 8.5%, the highest in its neighborhood group (excluding Winfield

which has Behavior and Learning Support Cluster Service Model classes. These Winfield special education classes support all the schools on the west side of Baltimore County).

The new Imagine Discovery principal, Dr. Mark Harris, worked with teachers to improve classroom management and reduce the use of student suspension as a management technique. The impact of his interventions on this year's suspension rate will be evident at the conclusion of the 2011-2012 school year. Suspension data is included in Appendix L.

Parent Involvement and School Climate

Imagine Discovery administers a parent satisfaction survey each year. Ms Lawton's office has requested a copy of that survey.

Professional Development

Professional development for teachers has been provided by Imagine Discovery Public Charter School. The school conducts weekly faculty meetings in which professional development is provided. The teachers also receive the BCPS' developed professional development sessions on the Common Core State Standards. Imagine Discovery teachers are afforded the opportunity to attend any of the professional development offerings provided by Baltimore County Public Schools.

Business Services

In addition to the administrative team, the principal is further supported by an Imagine Discovery Schools, Inc. regional finance manager, a regional director, and the corporate offices of Imagine Discovery Schools, Inc., located in Arlington, Virginia.

Fiscal Services

The Imagine Discovery Public Charter School is responsible for the fiscal management of an annual allocation of funds from BCPS as well as the U.S. Department of Education Planning and Design Grant. In FY12, the allocation of \$6.5 million was based on the September 30, 2011, enrollment of 623 students.

The principal's fiscal responsibilities for Imagine Discovery greatly exceed that of other BCPS' schools. The principal's expenditures, the publication of quarterly and annual financial reports, compliance with internal and external auditors, and all generally accepted accounting principles are maintained.

The charter school uses BCPS' payroll, accounting, purchasing, and budget systems to record and process all financial transactions of the school. The school compensates BCPS for these resources. BCPS' staff supports the charter school in the use of the system processes and procedures to monitor financial activities and help safeguard the use of public funds.

While the financial management of Imagine Discovery continues to require intensive support from BCPS' staff, at this time, funds are being spent in accordance with guidelines.

Facilities

In an effort to guide the building renovation and facility design toward compliance with MSDE guidelines, the BCPS' Department of Physical Facilities provided support and technical assistance to Imagine Discovery beginning in February 2008, six months prior to the school opening. These efforts included providing feedback to the contractor, architect, and Imagine Discovery's regional director as well as facilitating the timely submission of required documents to state and local regulatory agencies.

Despite the supplementary efforts of BCPS' staff, the final review of the facility was not conducted until Monday, August 25, 2008, and at that time, the occupancy permit was approved. As a result, Imagine Discovery Public Charter School opened to students on Tuesday, August 26, 2008, one day after the scheduled opening of other BCPS' school buildings.

The condition of the building is a daily source of concern for BCPS. Some of the facility concerns addressed with Imagine Discovery include:

- Availability of instructional space in the physical facility is inadequate.
- The cafeteria and gym share a space separated only by a curtain.
- The health suite does not provide developmentally appropriate privacy and resting areas for students from the ages of 5 to 12.
- The outdoor area is inadequate to allow for physical education for 623 students.
- The Library/Media collection is inadequate to meet the needs of older students.

As a result of these and other facility concerns, BCPS has placed a ceiling of 660 students on Imagine Discovery's enrollment.

Transportation

BCPS' Department of Transportation provided technical assistance in developing the bus routes, identifying approved pick-up and drop-off sites, and providing a list of pre-approved vendors. Woodlawn Motor Coach has been contracted by the school to provide buses to serve students within a five mile radius of the school.

In the past, the management of arrival and dismissal procedures, loading of school buses, and control of parent traffic in and around the parking lot did not consistently ensure student safety. These issues have begun to be addressed during the 2011-2012 school year.

Food Services

Food service is provided to Imagine Discovery by BCPS' Department of Food and Nutrition Services.

Next Steps

BCPS is ultimately accountable for the performance of the students at Imagine Discovery Public Charter School. With this in mind, the assistant superintendent, Zone 2 will continue to visit the school, coordinate the gathering of student performance data, and bring areas of concern to the attention of the principal, the superintendent, and the Board of Education.

Baltimore County Public Schools' staff will continue to support the students and staff at Imagine Discovery Public Charter School and continue to expect Imagine Discovery, LLC to provide a comparable level of support.

APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Enrollment**
- Appendix B: Home School for Elementary Students attending Imagine Discovery**
- Appendix C: Home School for Middle School Students attending Imagine Discovery**
- Appendix D: Free and Reduced Meal Participation**
- Appendix E: Staffing**
- Appendix F: Percent of Elementary Students Proficient/Advanced on MSA Math**
- Appendix G: Percent of Elementary Students Proficient/Advanced on MSA Reading**
- Appendix H: Percent of Middle School Students Proficient/Advanced on MSA Math**
- Appendix I: Percent of Middle School Students Proficient/Advanced on MSA Reading**
- Appendix J: Imagine Discovery Public Charter School Longitudinal SAT 10 Spring Reading and Math Results**
- Appendix K: Gifted and Talented Services**
- Appendix L: Safe and Orderly - Suspensions**

Appendix A

Enrollment		
Grade Level	Enrollment as of 9-30-08	Enrollment as of 9-30-11
K	90	45
1	110	80
2	89	94
3	85	96
4	89	94
5	-	90
6	-	57
7	-	67
Total	465	623

Appendix B

Home School for Elementary Students Attending Imagine Discovery as of 9/30/11				
Elementary schools with more than 18 students at Imagine Discovery	Area	# at Imagine Discovery 9/30/11	School is +/- capacity as of 9/30/11	% of Capacity
Edmondson Heights Elem	SW	64	-160	72.84%
Featherbed Lane Elem	SW	61	-149	77.22%
Woodmoor Elem	SW	54	-138	78.13%
Scotts Branch Elem	NW	36	+43	106.41%
Powhatan Elem	SW	32	-45	85.62%
Johnnycake Elem	SW	26	+69	112.34%
Winfield Elem	SW	25	-43	91.13%
Hebbville Elem	SW	21	-203	62.04%
Dogwood Elem	SW	18	-15	97.55%
Winand Elem	NW	18	-92	84.22%

Note: Schools listed have more than 18 students in their catchment area

Appendix C

Home School for Middle School Students Attending Imagine Discovery as of 9/30/11				
Middle schools with more than 10 students at Imagine Discovery	Area	# at Imagine Discovery 9/30/11	School is +/- capacity as of 9/30/11	% of Capacity
Woodlawn MS	SW	44	-381	62.46%
Southwest Academy	SW	24	-355	67.76%
Old Court MS	NW	23	-411	58.19%
Deer Park MS	NW	15	-133	90.28%
Windsor Mill MS	SW	10	-185	74.13%

Note: Schools listed have students in their catchment area.
Imagine Discovery added Grade 7 during the 2011-12 school year.

Appendix D

Free and Reduced Meal Participation			
Elementary schools with more than 18 students at Imagine Discovery	Area	FY12 Title I School (Yes/No)	FARMS % (as of 10/31/11)
Imagine Discovery	SW	No	48.15%
Edmondson Heights Elem	SW	Yes	75.06%
Featherbed Lane Elem	SW	Yes	72.61%
Woodmoor Elem	SW	Yes	76.26%
Scotts Branch Elem	NW	Yes	77.08%
Powhatan Elem	SW	Yes	70.00%
Johnnycake Elem	SW	Yes	76.71%
Winfield Elem	SW	Yes	76.09%
Hebbville Elem	SW	Yes	70.09%
Dogwood Elem	SW	Yes	68.88%
Winand Elem	NW	No	56.01%

Middle schools with more than 10 students at Imagine Discovery	Area	FY12 Title I School (Yes/No)	FARMS % (as of 10/31/11)
Imagine Discovery	SW	No	48.15%
Woodlawn MS	SW	No	73.34%
Southwest Academy	SW	No	69.71%
Old Court MS	NW	No	66.96%
Deer Park MS	NW	No	54.33%
Windsor Mill MS	SW	No	67.48%

Appendix E

Imagine Discovery Staffing		
Grade Level	Staffing 8/2008	Staffing 9/30/11
K	6	3
1	5	3
2	4	4
3	4	4
4	4	4
5	-	4
6/7	-	7
Art		1.5
Music		2.0
Phys Ed		1.5
Spanish	both vacant	1.5
Library/Media		1.0
Nurse		1.0
Guidance		1.0
Special Ed		1.0

Appendix F

Percent of Students Proficient/Advanced on MSA Math 2011	
Elementary schools with more than 18 students at Imagine Discovery	SY 11
Imagine Discovery	68.1%
Edmondson Heights Elem	77.6%
Featherbed Lane Elem	70.2%
Woodmoor Elem	78.4%
Scotts Branch Elem	75.2%
Powhatan Elem	78.0%
Johnnycake Elem	81.1%
Winfield Elem	69.5%
Hebbville Elem	70.5%
Dogwood Elem	93.7%
Winand Elem	74.9%
BCPS	88.7%

Source: Cognos

Appendix G

Percent of Students Proficient/Advanced on MSA Reading 2011	
Elementary Schools with more than 18 students at Imagine Discovery	SY 11
Imagine Discovery	80.6%
Edmondson Heights Elem	82.5%
Featherbed Lane Elem	79.5%
Woodmoor Elem	78.4%
Scotts Branch Elem	82.4%
Powhatan Elem	79.5%
Johnnycake Elem	82.6%
Winfield Elem	78.5%
Hebbville Elem	71.1%
Dogwood Elem	92.8%
Winand Elem	85.7%
BCPS	90.3%

Source: Cognos

Appendix H

Percent of Students Proficient /Advanced on MSA Math 2011	
Middle Schools with more than 10 students at Imagine Discovery	SY 11
Imagine Discovery	42.5%
Woodlawn MS	67.2%
Southwest Academy	80.9%
Old Court MS	60.7%
Deer Park MS	83.6%
Winsor Mill MS	58.7%
BCPS	72.7%

Source: Cognos

Appendix I

Percent of Students Proficient/Advanced on MSA Reading 2011	
Middle Schools with more than 10 students at Imagine Discovery	SY 11
Imagine Discovery	75.3%
Woodlawn MS	67.6%
Southwest Academy	80.4%
Old Court MS	64.2%
Deer Park MS	79.9%
Winsor Mill MS	61.1%
BCPS	83.2%

Source: Cognos

Appendix J

Imagine Discovery Public Charter School Longitudinal SAT 10 Spring Reading Results						
Cluster Objective	GRADE 6 SPRING 2011		GRADE 5 SPRING 2010		GRADE 4 SPRING 2009	
	Local % Correct	National % Correct	Local % Correct	National % Correct	Local % Correct	National % Correct
Word Study Skills	---	---	---	---	74	64
Structural Analysis	---	---	---	---	86	76
Consonant Sounds	---	---	---	---	67	59
Vowel Sounds	---	---	---	---	66	53
Vocabulary	70	78	71	80	73	69
Synonyms	67	75	66	78	68	64
Multiple Meaning Words	75	81	79	79	79	74
Context Clues	69	80	71	81	74	69
Thinking Skills (Rd. Voc)	72	81	75	80	76	72
Comprehension	58	70	57	66	59	59
Literary	62	74	58	66	60	62
Informational	52	64	56	65	55	54
Functional	59	72	57	68	62	61
Initial Understanding	63	74	65	74	62	64
Interpretation	60	73	54	64	63	63
Critical Analysis	52	64	56	61	56	55
Strategies	53	67	56	68	51	49
Thinking Skills (Rd. Comp.)	56	69	55	64	58	58

Imagine Discovery Public Charter School Longitudinal SAT 10 Spring Math Results						
Cluster Objective	GRADE 6 SPRING 2011		GRADE 5 SPRING 2010		GRADE 4 SPRING 2009	
	Local % Correct	National % Correct	Local % Correct	National % Correct	Local % Correct	National % Correct
Math: Problem Solv.	43	57	57	63	61	58
Number Sense & Operat.	43	58	55	61	64	59
Patterns, Relate., & Alg.	38	58	60	70	75	73
Data, Statist., & Prob.	39	50	57	64	58	55
Geometry and Measurement	48	61	62	62	51	48
Comm. and Representation	52	64	65	72	72	64
Estimation	45	58	57	63	52	52
Mathematical Connections	43	60	61	63	65	59
Reason. & Problem Solving	36	51	49	58	56	56
Thinking Skills (Prob Solv)	42	57	56	61	60	57
Math: Procedures	42	64	51	67	68	62
Comp. with Whole Numbers	49	73	57	74	67	61
Computation with Decimals	41	62	43	63	67	63
Comp. with Fractions	36	57	54	66	71	63
Computation in Context	39	60	44	62	59	56
Comp. with Symb. Notation	45	68	58	72	77	67
Thinking Skills (Proced.)	39	60	44	62	59	56

Appendix K

Gifted and Talented Services 6/30/2011		
School	# of Students	% of Student Population
Imagine Discovery	0	0.0%
Edmondson Heights Elem	26	11.2 %
Featherbed Lane Elem	37	14.8 %
Woodmoor Elem	36	19.3 %
Scotts Branch Elem	34	12.5 %
Powhatan Elem	49	37.1 %
Johnnycake Elem	34	11.8%
Winfield Elem	32	13.6 %
Hebbville Elem	28	15.5%
Dogwood Elementary	36	13.4 %
Winand Elementary	34	15.8 %

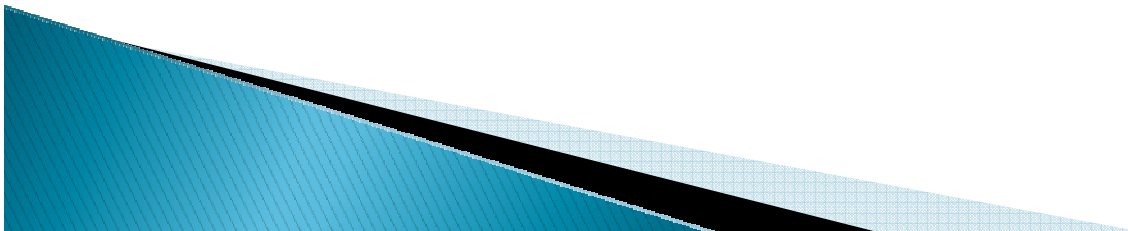
Appendix L

Safe and Orderly Environment – Suspensions	
School	Year-End Suspension Rate 2010-2011
Imagine Discovery	8.5%
Edmondson Heights Elem	7.6%
Featherbed Lane Elem	2.9%
Woodmoor Elem	3.5%
Scotts Branch Elem	2.8%
Powhatan Elem	7.9%
Johnnycake Elem	4.2%
Winfield Elem **	10.3%
Hebbville Elem	5.4%
Dogwood Elem	6.4%
Winand Elem	4.5%

** Winfield has Behavior and Learning Support Cluster Service Model classes that provide support to students from neighboring schools.

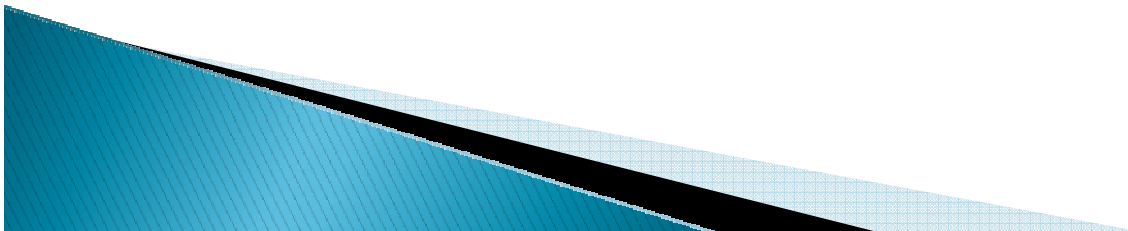
Elementary Reading MSA Percent Proficient/Advanced 2010–2011

- ▶ Imagine Discovery 80.6%
- ▶ BCPS 90.3%



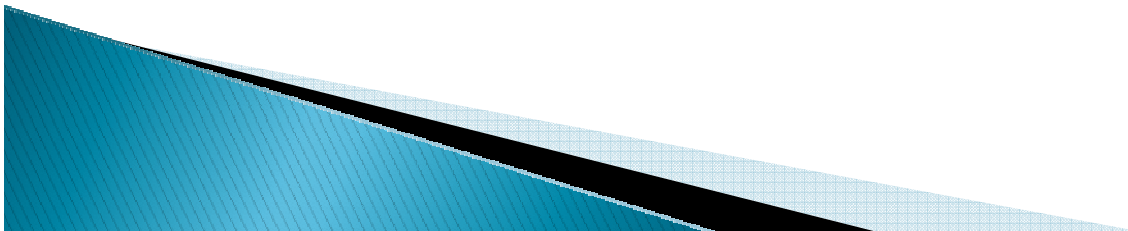
Middle School Math MSA Percent Proficient/Advanced 2010–2011

- ▶ Imagine Discovery 42.5%
- ▶ BCPS 72.7%



Middle School Reading MSA Percent Proficient/Advanced 2010–2011

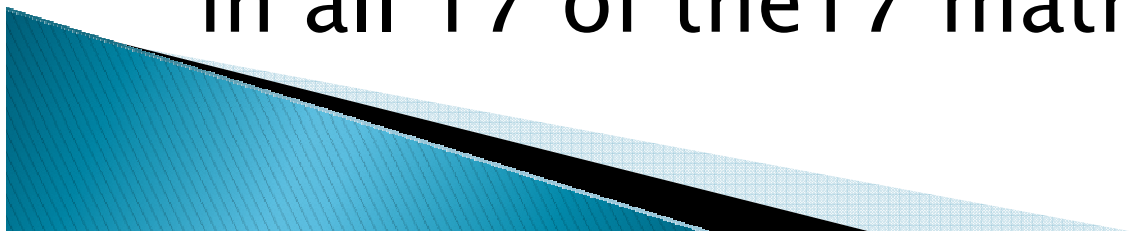
- ▶ Imagine Discovery 75.3%
- ▶ BCPS 83.2%



Imagine SAT 10 Math

Comparison to National Averages

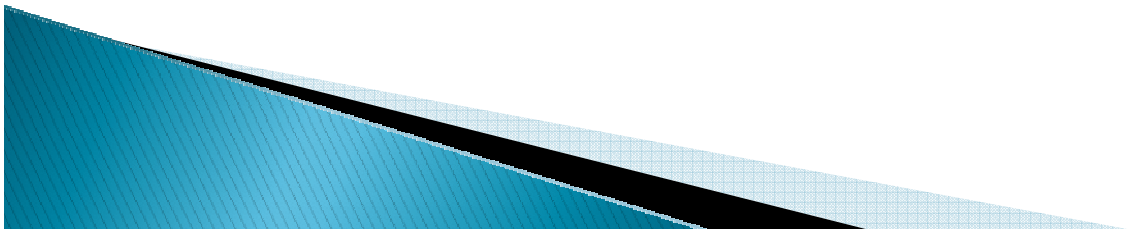
- ▶ In 2009 (Grade 4), this group of students outperformed the national average in 17 of the 17 math strands tested.
- ▶ In 2011 (Grade 6), this group of students lag behind national averages in all 17 of the 17 math strands.



Imagine SAT 10 Reading

Comparison to National Average

- ▶ In 2009 (Grade 4), this group of students outperformed the national average in 14 of the 18 reading strands tested.
- ▶ In 2011 (Grade 6), this group of students lag behind national averages in all 14 of the 14 reading strands.



Concluding Comments

- ▶ Additional information about Imagine Discovery Public Charter School is included in the full report submitted to the Board of Education.

