



# **EXECUTIVE INSTITUTIONAL SUMMARY**

## **Six Mile Charter Academy Customer Number: 225241**

6851 Lancer Ave  
Fort Myers, Florida 33912 US

Ms. Patricia G. Duffy, Principal

Charter Schools USA

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## REPORT INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

### Your ASSIST-Generated Executive Institutional Summary

The Adaptive System of School Improvement Support Tools (ASSIST) is a new, state-of-the-art alternative that allows schools to streamline and enhance their efforts to boost student achievement. Using ASSIST, a school can gain a better understanding of its past successes and opportunities and confidently build a solid, research-based plan for the future.

Every school has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and student learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way school leadership considers how to organize, maintain order, and stay faithful to the school's vision. A description of the level of stakeholder engagement, trends and issues affecting the school, and the kinds of programs and services that the school implements to support student learning also contributes to the overall narrative.

The purpose of the Executive Institutional Summary (EIS) is to give schools an opportunity to tell their story, to describe their context both strengths and challenges so that the public and members of the school community have a more complete picture of how the school perceives itself and what it is deliberating as it engages in the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement.

This report is structured into 4 sections that give context about what the school faces on a day-to-day basis in providing teaching and learning in its community:

#### **Section 1: Introduction**

- Describes the community in which the school is located. Identifies the unique features and special challenges of this school community. Provides brief demographic information with regards to both students and staff and the community at large.

#### **Section 2: Student Performance**

- Gives a brief description of the school's vision about students and their performance.
- Provides a brief summary of student performance in this school. Identifies the school's goals and how the school will know they have achieved them. Describes the variety of the school's student performance assessments. Identifies how the staff engages in meaningful analysis of student work in order to modify instruction.
- Describes the school's student support programs and services. Identifies the ways in which the school ensures community/parent involvement in the life of the school.

#### **Section 3: Challenges and Opportunities**

- Identifies the major challenges the school has faced in the last 3 years and how it has addressed those challenges.

#### **Section 4: Conclusion**

- Identifies what the school is most proud of and why.
- Relates other information the school would like to share with the public and the school community.

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## DEMOGRAPHICS

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### Institution

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<b>District</b>	Charter Schools USA
<b>Country</b>	US
<b>State/Province</b>	FL
<b>City</b>	Fort Myers
<b>Governance</b>	Public, Startup
<b>Setting</b>	
<b>Type</b>	Elementary
<b>Grade(s)</b>	Pre-K, Kindergarten, 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08
<b>Religious Denomination</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	
<b>Enrollment</b>	1174

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### Contact

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## EXECUTIVE INSTITUTIONAL SUMMARY

### Section 1: Introduction

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**Describe the community in which your school is located. What are the unique features and special challenges of your school community?**

**Briefly provide demographic information with regards to both students and staff and the community at large.**

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**Narrative:**

Six Mile Charter Academy is a comprehensive public charter school that opened in August 2005 in the central Fort Myers area within Lee County, Florida. During the first year of Six Mile Charter, we had approximately 400 students. Our enrollment has grown significantly each school year, and we proudly boast over 1,100 students who are currently enrolled. Many of our students reside in the surrounding area, however many come from less affluent areas of the county, including east Lee County and Lehigh Acres. Students also travel from as far away as Bonita Springs, Cape Coral, and North Fort Myers.

The Southwest Florida community of Fort Myers attracts a great number of retirees with very few school-age children. The weather and relatively low taxes, as compared to many northern states, resulted in tremendous growth and will eventually continue as more and more baby boomers retire. However, as a result of the recent recession brought on by the real estate boom and crash and its associated banking and mortgage collapse, our area suffers some of the greatest economic problems in the country. Six Mile Charter Academy is managed by Charter Schools USA, one of the largest providers of charter school management services in the nation. The school's governing board is the Lee Charter Foundation, Inc., Board of Directors. Six Mile Charter Academy is one of the largest public schools in Lee County and chartered by the Lee County School District. Lee County Public Schools is the ninth-largest district in Florida and America's 40th-largest school district, with over 80,000 students. Lee County's school population reflects a much higher level of diversity than the overall community. As reported by the Lee County School District, the community at large is approximately 27% minority, while the elementary school district student population is 43.7%. The student body at Six Mile Charter Academy reflects the diversity of the surrounding areas at 43%. Our reputation for academic excellence, diversity, and a safe school environment are the main ingredients for explosive growth since our inception.

Six Mile Charter Academy employs 60 faculty members. Of these 60, 6 are first year teachers, 45 have between one and five years teaching experience, 9 have 6-14 years teaching experience, and 3 have 15 or more years of teaching experience. Additionally, 4 have advanced degrees. Only one teacher is teaching out-of-field in Gifted, however, she is currently taking the necessary classes to earn her endorsement. Additionally, 45 are ESOL endorsed and 4 are reading endorsed. At this time, none of the teachers are Board Certified. The faculty members are dedicated and caring. They work individually with students to promote learning. Reading and math tutoring are offered throughout the entire school year for students that need help in their classes or to pass their FCAT's. During the 2010-2011 school year, tutoring was expanded to all academic areas, and is available free of charge.

Six Mile Charter Academy offers a full complement of extra-curricular activities including sports and clubs. Students participation is increasing in both sports and the after school clubs that we offer. We believe that we give our students a well-rounded education, academically, athletically, and socially, and prepare them to be lifelong learners and good citizens.

Students and their parents choose this school rather than an elementary school closer to their home because our school has more rigorous academic standards, as well as a uniform dress code, which helps to promote a more academically focused atmosphere. A challenge we sometimes face is students who struggle with the high standards that we set, and are not used to the rigorous curriculum; we are always working toward acclimating students toward pursuing higher education and staying focused on their studies, rather than being too preoccupied with the challenges they may face at home and in their communities.



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## Section 2: Student Performance

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**Give a brief description of your school's vision about students and their performance. Provide a brief summary of student performance in your school. What are your goals and how will you know you have achieved them?**

**Describe the variety of your school's student performance assessments. How does your staff engage in meaningful analysis of student work in order to modify instruction?**

**Describe the school's student support programs and services. In what ways does your school ensure community/parent involvement in the life of the school?**

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**Narrative:**

Over the past five years, the leadership's philosophy and the school's vision have worked hand-in-hand with strong expectations and commitment from the stakeholders when it comes to students and their performance. The leadership instilled in all school employees that we are not here for fame or fortune, but that we are here for the students. We were reminded at both staff meetings and student celebrations that "It's all about the kids" and the school's purpose is the betterment of all of our students. This philosophy and purpose ties directly to the school's vision statement, "All stakeholders will share the commitment to develop students, who are reflective, lifelong learners prepared to contribute to society". It does not matter what a stakeholder's title or position, administrator, teacher, or support staff, everyone working at Six Mile Charter Academy shares in the commitment to develop our students. This commitment might come in the way of providing extra help such as tutoring, lending an ear providing support for someone who is experiencing difficulty at home, or providing materials such as notebook paper and pen/pencil to someone who does not want his/her family financial status known. It is a philosophy and vision that we are proud of, and by which we define ourselves.

Along with commitment to our students come strong expectations for them. We set the bar high and challenge them to not only meet these expectations, but also to exceed them. As a school, and in keeping with the school's vision, we provide an individualized academic program to all of our students, including tutoring across the curriculum, enrolling our Level 1 and Level 2 FCAT Math and Reading students in intensive classes, and recognizing when a student needs to be advanced to an honors level or recommended for gifted services. We have on staff a reading and math coach to also assist students. Students are encouraged to join clubs, try out for an athletic team or participate in leadership roles like safety patrol and student government.

Six Mile Charter Academy has Charter Schools USA Non-Negotiable Goals and school FCAT goals. The CSUSA goals are divided into achievement and instructional goals. One example of an achievement goal is: "100% of students will meet or exceed proficiency on state specific accountability assessments". In addition to the CSUSA goals, each school sets their FCAT goals. These goals are based on the previous year scores and are aimed towards the school receiving an "A" grade according to the state of Florida's A+ School grading system. Each year the goals are reviewed to see if they were met. This process is part of the principal's evaluation.

Six Mile Charter Academy uses a variety of performance assessments including the FCAT, Benchmarks, SAT 10, FAIR, and FLKRS.

Teachers at Six Mile Charter Academy go through training at the beginning of each school year that emphasizes the importance of both formative and summative assessments to determine students learning. Teachers also take workshops on research-based instructional strategies to use in his/her classroom. Each teacher is required to know how a student scored on his/her previous FCAT, as well as benchmark tests, and then work with each student to set both classroom and FCAT goals.

Six Mile Charter Academy provides support and services by employing an ESOL Representative, two ESE teachers, an RtI Coordinator, and a Literacy Leadership Team (LLT). The media center includes two computer labs and a laptop cart. Additionally, our building has been outfitted with wireless internet access and each classroom has netbooks for students to utilize for academic

purposes. Tutoring is available across the curriculum for all students. A speech pathologist, an occupational therapist, a school psychologist and a staffing specialist are available through Lee County School District. The school also provides free and reduced lunch to nearly half of the students.

Six Mile Charter Academy has many opportunities for parents to be involved in the school, as they are required to complete 20 volunteer hours per school year. Volunteer opportunities include working in the copy room, assisting in the cafeteria, volunteering in the classroom, and helping with a variety of office tasks and school projects. We currently have a 95% parent involvement rate. The school has a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) that meets monthly and helps the school with events and activities as well as raising money to support school programs. The School Advisory Council (SAC) is made up of a balanced number of parents, staff, and community members who coordinate efforts with the school, to improve the educational opportunities for the students.

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## Section 3: Challenges and Opportunities

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**What are the major challenges your school has faced in the last 3 years and how have you addressed those challenges?**

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**Narrative:**

Our lowest quartile of students does not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in reading and math. Although we provide remediation for our Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Level 1 and 2 students, provide them with tutoring, use differentiated instruction, and utilize research-based strategies and resources, we must find alternative ways to help these students make AYP and to continue to challenge them academically.

As the enrollment at Six Mile Charter Academy continues to increase and has more than doubled during the period 2005-2010, bussing continues to be a challenge. An outside vendor, A & S Transportation, provides transportation for our students. Due to the widespread area of Lee County in which students come, bus service cannot be provided to all corners of the county. This results in students transferring to other schools. In response to our current contract with the vendor, negotiations between Charter School USA, our Management Company, and A & S Transportation continue.

One of the greatest challenges facing Six Mile Charter Academy increase in enrollment is the lack of classroom space and facilities for athletics and arts programs. The cafeteria is being utilized as a gymnasium for drama, concerts and other performances, including assemblies but it lacks appropriate acoustics and seating. To work around this, agreements have been made with other schools and community organizations to use their facilities. For example, the basketball team uses the Gateway Charter School facilities; and the track and field team uses South Fort Myers and Estero's High Schools' track. The lack of our own facilities means increased time and money spent on transportation.

Additionally, Six Mile Charter Academy is challenged with the lack of parent participation and low membership in the Parent Teacher Cooperative. Volunteer hours are offered to those that join the organization as well as those that attended the monthly meetings. We have tried scheduling the meetings to coincide with other events on campus, which on occasion has resulted in a few more parents attending.

The primary struggle in recent years has been managing growth and its resultant increase in diversity during an economic downturn. The economic impact of unemployment, family and home uprooting, and vanishing necessities on the families of our students have made everyday life incredibly difficult for so many of them. The importance of maintaining a safe harbor for our student body during this very trying time can not be understated. Stretching our very limited resources to meet the needs both physically and socially has everyone working in overdrive. The work ethic of our staff, from the administration to cafeteria workers, and especially the teachers, is simply amazing.

Another challenge facing Six Mile Charter Academy, as well as schools across the country, is attracting, hiring and retaining the most highly qualified teachers in a school with the high levels of need and diversity. As state legislatures across the board are cutting school budgets, laying off teachers, and freezing or even cutting salaries, attracting and keeping the best and brightest is becoming more and more difficult. The most talented, who are also the most employable, will leave the teaching profession if salaries are not competitive with other private industry employment opportunities. While teaching is a special calling, the rigors of continuing education, bureaucratic demands, long hours, and the stress of meeting the daily challenges of today's students takes a toll on all those who are committed to providing the highest level of education. To overcome these problems, administrators of all schools must incorporate all the latest techniques and advances in people management skills to ensure a highly professional work environment. Recognition, proper compensation, respectful demeanor, and listening to all stakeholders are critical to succeeding. While hiring new teachers is easier in a distressed market, keeping them after they are fully trained and more experienced is far more difficult. They will leave quickly if their work environment is poorly managed or greater financial rewards are offered. The same principles apply to support staff. All employees

require the understanding and support of his/her administration to do his/her jobs properly.

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## Section 4: Conclusion

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**What is your school most proud of and why?**

**Is there any other information you would like to share with the public and the school community?**

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**Narrative:**

Six Mile Charter Academy is proud of accomplishing many things in just a few years. Of these accomplishments, holding our students to higher standards and expectations than other schools in our district is one of which that we are most proud. Always striving to be better than the previous year and maintaining high levels of achievement is something we practice in our day to day functions.

Employees of Six Mile Charter Academy not only maintain professionalism in their fields, but are also willing to go beyond the limits of their classroom to support the needs of the students.

Our Parent Teacher Organization, through multiple fundraisers, was responsible for technology upgrades throughout the school, as well as funding field trip opportunities.

We are also proud of the fact that, as difficult as it is, we have established a relationship with the Lee County School District. Teachers are now able to take, at no cost, courses that are needed for certification and receive in-service points. Further, because the district updated their database, all charter school employees are enrolled in their database, which makes tracking in-service hours much easier.

Two years ago, Charter School USA, our management company, partnered with the Clarion Council to bring character education into our schools. This program, STRIVE, is another area that we are proud of as it allows us to recognize and reward students who are doing the right thing. At the beginning of this school year, all faculty members were trained in the Positive Behavior Support Program, which has resulted in a consistent school-wide behavior system.

Finally, what has brought our school its greatest sense of accomplishment in these recent years has been the charitable work of our students. Last year, our students organized a drive to send supplies to Haiti for those affected by the natural disaster. They also sent letters and care packages to the U.S. Troops in Afghanistan. Our parents and students have logged over 5,000 hours of community service hours this past year working in soup kitchens, cleaning up our environment, visiting senior citizens in nursing homes and collecting coats for the homeless. To be a leader in an academic achievement is admirable, to be a leader in helping those who need it most, the poor, the sick, and the hungry, is the highest calling and our kids have made us all, administration, teachers, and support staff proud to be a part of Six Mile Charter Academy!

All of this can be achieved in the face of losing many teachers to higher paying jobs both in and out of the area, which is our one most formidable problem to solve.

It is worth noting that at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year, Six Mile Charter Academy announced it would be adding two administrative positions to our school. We are now excited to have Mr. Terry Johnson and Mr. Leonard Ulrich joining our staff as Assistant Principal, and Assistant Principal in Training, respectively, to support Principal Patricia Duffy!