



Charter Schools Institute  
*The State University of New York*

## **Albany Preparatory Charter School**

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### **School Evaluation Report 2006-2007**

August 9, 2007

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	2
INTRODUCTION.....	3
Background on Charter Schools and the State University .....	3
The State University Trustees’ Oversight Process.....	3
Inspection Visits and Reports .....	4
The Renewal Cycle and the Timing of School Inspection Visits .....	6
The Present Report.....	6
Keeping This Report in Context .....	6
SCHOOL DESCRIPTION .....	9
SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS EVALUATION VISIT .....	12
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS .....	14
Academic Attainment and Improvement .....	14
SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW .....	16
School Performance Summary for English Language Arts .....	17
School Performance Summary for Mathematics .....	18
BENCHMARK ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE.....	19
Learning Environment .....	19
Use of Assessment Data.....	20
Curriculum .....	21
Development of High Quality Teachers / Teacher Development.....	22
Governance .....	23
Key Design Elements.....	24
APPENDIX: RENEWAL BENCHMARKS USED DURING THE VISIT.....	25
CONDUCT OF THE VISIT .....	27

## INTRODUCTION

### Background on Charter Schools and the State University

The New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (“the Act”) called for the creation of tuition-free public schools that would operate independently and autonomously of local school districts; schools by design committed to improving student achievement for all students, particularly those at-risk of academic failure.

The Act specifies that civic leaders, community groups, educators and/or parents interested in bringing public school choice to their communities may apply to one of three chartering entities in the state to open a new charter school: the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the State University Trustees), the New York State Board of Regents (the Regents), or local boards of education (in New York City, authorizing power is vested in the Chancellor). Additionally, existing traditional district-operated schools can seek to convert to charter status through their governing boards of education.

The Charter Schools Institute (the Institute) was established by the State University Trustees to assist them in their responsibilities under the Act, including reviewing applications to establish charter schools as well as the review of renewal applications for those schools (as detailed more fully below, an initial charter is granted for a period of five years only). In each case the Institute makes recommendations to the State University Trustees. In addition the Institute is charged with providing ongoing oversight of SUNY authorized charter schools.

Charter schools are public schools in every respect. They are open to all children, non-sectarian in their programs and funded with public tax dollars. Unlike district operated schools, which are run by a board of education, each public charter school is governed by an independent board of trustees which is directly responsible for school performance. That board, while independent, is subject to public oversight. Just as traditional school boards, charter school boards of trustees must adhere to New York State’s Freedom of Information and Open Meetings laws. Public charter schools and their boards are also subject to oversight and monitoring. In the case of SUNY authorized schools, that monitoring is conducted by the Institute. Additionally, all public charter schools in New York State are jointly subject to inspection and oversight by the State Education Department (SED) on behalf of the Board of Regents. As such, charter schools, though free from many mandates, are more accountable to the public than district-run schools.

Charter schools are also accountable for performance. In exchange for the freedom from many state rules and regulations that the Act provides, a public charter school receives a charter, or contract, of up to five years and must meet stated student performance goals that are set forth in its Accountability Plan, as well as standards regarding its fiscal, legal and organizational effectiveness within the charter period, or risk losing its charter or not having its charter renewed. This tradeoff—freedom from rules and regulations in exchange for unprecedented accountability for student performance, and real consequences for failure—is one of the most significant differences between public charter schools and other public schools administered by traditional school districts.

### The State University Trustees’ Oversight Process

The State University Trustees, jointly with the Board of Regents, are required to provide oversight sufficient to ensure that each charter school that the Trustees have authorized is in compliance with applicable law and the terms of its charter. The Institute, together with the State Education Department, monitors compliance through a monitoring plan (which is contained in the schools’ charter itself) and other methods.

In addition to monitoring a school's compliance with the law, the State University Trustees view their oversight responsibility more broadly and positively. Accordingly, they have adopted policies that require the Institute to provide ongoing evaluation of charter schools authorized by them. By providing this oversight and feedback, the State University Trustees and the Institute seek to accomplish three goals.

The first goal is to facilitate improvement. By providing substantive information about the school's strengths and weaknesses to the school's board of trustees, administration, faculty and other staff, the Institute can play a role in helping the school to recognize those strengths and weaknesses. Of course, whether the school actually takes corrective actions, and more importantly, effective corrective action, remains the school's responsibility given that it is an independent and autonomous school.

The second goal is to disseminate information about the school's performance beyond the school's professional staff and governing board to all stakeholders, including parents and the larger community in which the school is located. Ideally this information, including the present report, should help parents make choices about whether a school is serving their children well and/or is likely to continue to do so in the future. For this reason, this report (and others like it) is posted on the Institute's website and the school is asked to inform parents of its posting. By providing parents with more information, the State University hopes to enhance the market accountability to which charters are subject: if they do not attract and retain sufficient numbers of students who want the product they are providing, they cannot survive.

The third goal is to allow the Institute to build a database of the school's progress over time. By evaluating the school periodically, the Institute is better able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a school—and the likelihood for continued success or failure. Having information based on past patterns, the Institute and the State University Trustees are better positioned to make recommendations and a decision on whether a school's charter should be renewed. In turn, a school will also have a far better sense of where they stand in the eyes of its authorizer.

#### Inspection Visits and Reports<sup>1</sup>

A central component of the Institute's evaluative oversight system is a schedule of periodic visits to and inspections of charter schools, resulting in letters and reports to the school's board of trustees. This inspection report is a product of one of those visits.

In evaluating schools at renewal and on a regular and ongoing basis, the Institute uses a series of benchmarks that cover not only the strength of the academic program but the strength and effectiveness of the organizational and fiscal policies, structures and procedures that the school has instituted at the time of the visit ("the Renewal Benchmarks"). How these benchmarks are used (and which are used) varies, depending on the specific year of the visit as well as whether the school is in its initial renewal cycle (the first five years) or, having been renewed one or more times, in subsequent renewal cycles.

In particular, the Institute uses a subset of the Renewal Benchmarks to review the effectiveness of a charter school's academic programs, e.g., the strength of a school's internal assessment system, the rigor of its pedagogical approach, and the breadth and focus of the school's curriculum. This subset,

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<sup>1</sup> More information on the Institute's school oversight and evaluation system may be found online at <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsPubsReports.htm>.

Renewal Benchmarks 1.B-1.F, is often referred to as the “Qualitative Education Benchmarks,” or “QEBs.” In the formative years of a school (generally the first three years of operation), the QEBs are important precisely because the quantitative indicators of academic achievement, i.e., students’ performance on standardized tests (especially the state’s 3<sup>rd</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade testing program and Regents assessments), are generally few in number and difficult to interpret. The qualitative indicators serve as proxy indicators, therefore, for student assessment data sets that are necessarily limited and incipient. Moreover, only by using these qualitative indicators can the Institute provide feedback not only on *how* the school is doing but also *why* it is succeeding or failing.<sup>2</sup>

Over time, and particularly at the school’s initial renewal (and subsequent renewals thereafter), the quantitative indicators (as defined by Renewal Benchmark 1.A, the school’s progress in meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals) take on paramount importance and the qualitative indicators concordantly diminish in importance. This is consonant with the fact that charter schools must demonstrate results or face non-renewal. However, while subsequent renewal decisions are based almost solely by the school’s progress toward meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals during the charter period, the Institute continues to use the Qualitative Education Benchmarks in its evaluation of charter schools. The reason for this is that it can give the school, parents, and other stakeholders information not only on how the school is doing but perhaps the reasons for its lack of performance (if such is the case).

This inspection report includes a review of academic attainment and improvement based on the school’s performance on state and other assessments. The School Performance Review provides an evaluation of the school’s academic achievement in the context of Renewal Benchmark 1A. Because of the timing of the release of state assessment data, the review is based on test results from the school year preceding the date of the school visit upon which the evidence for the Qualitative Education Benchmarks is based.<sup>3</sup> The narrative refers to School Performance Summaries which follow the School Performance Review section. These one page summaries present a synopsis of the Accountability Plan outcome measures in ELA and mathematics and the school’s performance against these measures in their first year of operation:<sup>4</sup>

- Measure 1 (absolute) shows the grade level and aggregate performance on the state test of both all students and students enrolled in at least their second year.
- Measure 2 (absolute) presents the school’s Performance Index (PI) measured against the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set by the state’s NCLB accountability system. The PI is derived by adding together the percentage of students at Levels 2 and above and the percentage at Levels 3 and above.
- Measure 3 (comparative) compares the performance of charter school students enrolled in at least their second year to all students in the same tested grades in the local school district. For instance, a grades 5-8 charter school would compare only its grades 6-8 results to the same tested grades in the district because students in its 5th grade were only in their first year at the charter school.

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<sup>2</sup> More often, of course, schools do not succeed or fail so much as parts of the highly complex organization are working well and parts are not.

<sup>3</sup> Not all schools will have state test results because the state only administers tests in certain grades: state ELA and math tests are administered to grades 3-8, science tests in grades 4 and 8, and social studies tests in grades 5 and 8.

<sup>4</sup> In indicating whether a performance measure has been met, the summaries only present a strict, narrow accounting; they do not show whether the school came close to meeting a measure or the relative weight of each measure for gauging student progress.

- Measure 4 (comparative) compares the actual overall performance of the school to the predicted level of performance of similar schools statewide using a regression analysis based on free lunch statistics. The Effect Size is a statistical measure calculated by dividing the difference between the actual and predicted outcomes by the standard deviation difference.
- Measure 5 (value added) shows both the number of grade level cohorts that achieved their target as well as the overall performance of all cohort students combined. If the baseline is above 50 NCE, then the target is an increase of any amount.

### The Renewal Cycle and the Timing of School Inspection Visits

Because some schools take planning years before opening (during which time their five-year charter continues to run as if they had opened) and/or receive renewal charter terms of less than five years, the number of years that a school has been in operation is not always co-terminus with the number of years that a school has provided instruction. Thus for example, a school that is in its seventh year of operation may be facing initial renewal, having previously received a short-term planning year renewal for a period of time equivalent to the number of planning years the school took. It will therefore receive a renewal visit, whereas another school that did not take any planning years and was renewed for five years would be in the second year of its second five-year charter. This school would therefore not receive a renewal visit but rather an evaluation visit and inspection report, which all schools in that position receive.

As such, each of the Institute's inspection reports contains a chart indicating the years the school has been in operation, the year of its present charter period, when it has been renewed and for how long, and the feedback that has been previously issued to the school. This chart is set forth in the following section.

### The Present Report

The information contained within this report is the result of evidence obtaining during the Institute's visit to the school conducted in the spring of the school's second year of instruction of its first or second charter term. In addition to this introduction, the report includes a brief description of the school, conclusions and analysis from the present visit, the Renewal Benchmarks, and, finally, data on the visit, including identities of the school inspectors and the date of the visit.

The report reflects the observations and findings from the one-day inspection visit conducted typically by a two- to four-member team comprised of Institute staff, and, in some cases, outside experts. Consistent with the Institute's evaluation process throughout the life of the charter, Institute visitors seek evidence of effectiveness in key areas: the academic success of the school including teaching and learning (curriculum, instruction and assessment) and the effectiveness and viability of the school as an organization, including such items as board operations and student order and discipline. Issues regarding compliance with state and federal laws and regulations may be noted (and subsequently addressed), and where the Institute finds serious deficiencies in particular relating to student health and safety it may take additional and immediate action; however, monitoring compliance is not the principal purpose of the visit. The same is true with issues pertaining to the fiscal soundness of the school. Evaluation visits typically include an interview with the school board, the school leader, classroom visitations, in addition to the review of other school-based documents.

### Keeping This Report in Context

In reviewing this report, readers should keep in mind that charter schools face a variety of challenges as they mature, and not all charter schools address each challenge at the same pace. The State

University and the Institute recognize the difference between the challenges of starting-up a school and those involved in sustaining its viability and effectiveness over the long-term, as well as the differences in the richness of student assessment data available for a school which has recently opened compared to a school which has been in operation for an extended time. In reviewing this report, readers should keep in mind that charter schools face major challenges in the first few years of their charter. These challenges include:

- establishing a positive, academically focused school culture that provides high expectations, support and encouragement for students and teaching staff, and any necessary remediation for students;
- establishing operational and communication patterns with the governing school board of trustees, as well as communication patterns with staff, parents and the community;
- setting up sound fiscal processes and procedures;
- establishing the school in often less-than-ideal facilities, without ready access to facilities funding mechanisms available to district administered public schools;
- creating an environment with strong instructional leadership where teachers receive timely professional development to address changing student needs;
- ensuring that all staff are familiar with and consistently use an effective system for behavior management; and
- retaining qualified staff and minimizing the frequency and rate of any staff turnover by understanding the reason for it, and providing replacement staff with an orientation to the school and its program, as well as the necessary professional development.

Readers should also keep in mind the inherent limitations of a one-day visit, which provides only a snap-shot of the school on visit day. While the Institute is confident that the majority of its observations are valid, in that they reflect an underlying reality about the school's academic and organizational structures, they are not perfect or error-free.

For the reasons above, and because of the inherent complexity of an organization such as a school, this report does not contain a rating or a single comprehensive indicator that would indicate at a glance the school's prospects for renewal. It does, however, summarize the various strengths of the school and the areas that the inspection team found in need of improvement. To the extent appropriate and useful, we encourage school boards to use the inspection team's conclusions in planning school improvement efforts.

While there is no one rating that the Institute gives as a result of a single-day visit, it is important to note that where the inspection team identifies area after area with not just room for improvement but significant and severe deficiencies, and few, if any, countervailing strengths, the difficulty that the school may have in presenting a compelling case for renewal is likely to be substantially increased and this fact may well be noted. Conversely, where the inspection team finds that strengths outnumber weaknesses in both quantity and quality, the school is likely to be better positioned to build a strong case for renewal. So, too, this fact may be noted.

In sum, then, we urge all readers to review the entire report and not to take a particular comment in the report about the school out of context.

Finally, we note that this report cannot serve its three functions (providing data to the school to use for its potential improvement; disseminating information to stakeholders; and gathering data so that the Institute may come to renewal with a richer set of evidence) unless the report is not only unsparingly candid regarding the observations that the Institute has made, but also focused on those areas that are potentially in need of improvement rather than those accomplishments that the school has accumulated to date.

While this level of what can reasonably be termed *brutal honesty* is necessary, as is the focus on areas for improvement, readers should remember that almost no other entity in education is held to such a high standard of review. This is especially true of public schools that traditional districts and Boards of Education oversee. In so saying, the Institute does not ask the reader to make excuses for schools that are not succeeding—and the Institute’s accountability system does not and will not—but we do note that providing this level of accountability, which almost every charter school welcomes and even advocates for, represents in and of itself a revolution in how public education is governed.

## **SCHOOL DESCRIPTION**

Albany Preparatory Charter School (“Albany Prep”) was approved by the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York in December 2004. The school opened in August 2005 with an initial enrollment of 42 students in grade 5, added grade six in 2006-07 resulting in a total of 111 students, and plans on adding a grade each year until the school reaches its revised, approved enrollment and grade structure of 350 students in 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades in 2009-10. Albany Prep is currently located at 250 Central Avenue, Suite 207 in Albany, New York. The school continues to work in securing permanent facility arrangements, as the current location has minimal room for growth.

Albany Preparatory Charter School’s mission statement is as follows:

*Albany Preparatory Charter School will provide Albany’s middle-school students a quality alternative to the district’s middle schools and an education that: enables them to successfully compete for competitive high school admission; gives them the necessary academic foundation to graduate high school with honors and on-track to earn the renowned International Baccalaureate degree; prepares them for a successful college career; and allows them to fully participate in our national democracy and the global community.*

Key design elements as outlined in the school’s initial charter application include:

- An academic model and curriculum focused on the International Baccalaureate Program and aligned to New York State Learning Standards;
- Learning standards and curricular content for English language arts, mathematics, science, technology, history and geography, and the arts draw heavily from the *Core Knowledge Sequence* developed by the Core Knowledge Foundation in which learning is organized sequentially;
- Based on the International Baccalaureate Program, the Albany Prep program is focused on the five following areas of interaction: Approaches to Learning; Community and Service; Homo Faber; Environment; and Health and Social Education;
- A personal Project component, requiring the development of a self-chosen topic that encompasses each of the five areas of interaction and meets the International Baccalaureate Program guidelines;
- Students being required to complete a certain number of hours toward a community and service goal;
- 90 minute instructional blocks each day in the core subjects of English language arts and mathematics;
- A longer school day and year.

### **School Year (2006-2007)**

205 days

### **School Day (2006-2007)**

8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.<sup>5</sup>

**Enrollment**

	<b>Original Chartered Enrollment</b>	<b>Revised Chartered Enrollment</b>	<b>Actual Enrollment<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>Original Chartered Grades</b>	<b>Revised Grades Served</b>	<b>Actual Grades Served</b>	<b>Complying</b>
<b>2005-06</b>	100	50	<b>42</b>	5	5	<b>5</b>	YES
<b>2006-07</b>	200	100	<b>111</b>	5-6	5-6	<b>5-6</b>	YES
<b>2007-08</b>	300	200		5-7	5-7		
<b>2008-09</b>	400	300		5-8	5-8		
<b>2009-10</b>	400	350		5-8	5-8		

	<b>2005-2006</b>	
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>No. of Students</b>	<b>% of Enroll.</b>
American Indian, Alaskan, Asian, or Pacific Islander	2	4.8%
Black (Not Hispanic)	27	64.3%
Hispanic	8	19.1%
White	5	11.9%

Source: NYSED 2005-06 database

	<b>2005-2006</b>	
<b>Free/Reduced Lunch</b>	<b>No. of Students</b>	<b>% of Enroll.</b>
Eligible for Free Lunch	28	66.7%
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	5	11.9%

Source: NYSED 2005-06 Database

<sup>5</sup> As included in the Charter Application, the Albany Prep Charter School instructional schedule includes a Breakfast Period from 7:40 a.m. to 7:45 a.m., Homework Club from 3:55 p.m. to 4:25 p.m., and a non-instructional enrichment period from 4:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

<sup>6</sup> Actual enrollment per the Institute's Official Enrollment Table. Note that the SED 2005-2006 database, upon which the Free and Reduced lunch figures are calculated, cited the same enrollment figures.

**School Charter History**

<b>Charter Year</b>	<b>School Year</b>	<b>Year of Operation</b>	<b>Evaluation Visit</b>	<b>Feedback to School</b>	<b>Other Actions Taken</b>
Original Charter – 1st Year	2005-06	1 <sup>st</sup>	YES	Prior Action Letter, End-of-Year Letter	Request for modification of enrollment limits approved by CSI.
Original Charter – 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	2006-07	2 <sup>nd</sup>	YES	End-of-Year Report	

## SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS EVALUATION VISIT

In May of 2006, at the closing of the school's first year of operation, the Charter Schools Institute (the "Institute") conducted a visit to Albany Preparatory Charter School. The inspection team observed classrooms and interviewed board members, teachers and administrators. In a letter to the school's board of trustees, the Institute reported the results of the school site visit and those results are summarized below.

The inspection team concluded that the school was well on its way to implementing the main components of its standards-based curriculum design for the majority of its subjects. The school created its own math curriculum, supplemented by Accelerated Math as well as its own English language arts (ELA) program supplemented by Accelerated Reader and the STAR Reading Program. The writing program was an amalgam of several programs. FOSS Science and Core Knowledge were used to support instruction in science, history and geography. School Performance, Inc. ("SPI") continually analyzed, and if necessary, modified the curriculum in an effort to improve its content.

In most classrooms visited by Institute inspectors, instruction was observed to be generally sufficient in delivery; the pace was brisk and students appeared attentive and engaged. However, instructional quality, especially related to content knowledge, varied from teacher to teacher.

A comprehensive assessment system, developed by SPI, was used to evaluate student work in math and science every six weeks. The pre- and post-testing was followed by item and content area analysis on which subsequent re-teaching was based. As is the case with any first-year charter school, it remained to be seen whether this data-driven, highly planned and organized system translated into positive results on the New York State examinations and whether this comprehensive level of accountability would prove to accelerate student achievement.

During its first year, the school provided multiple avenues for professional development, including two weeks of training prior to the school's opening and monthly half-day sessions. The principal met with each teacher on a bi-weekly basis to review interim assessment data and change instructional strategies. Yet teachers indicated a need for additional professional development focused on instructional methods for teaching core subject matter to middle school students. Moreover, the school's increasing enrollment would make it difficult for the principal to continue to provide this level of individual attention to each teacher. At the time of the site inspection, the board was considering options to fulfill the additional professional development needs, such as the creation of a Dean of Instruction.

The principal had worked to establish a school-wide culture of scholarly behavior and high expectations. Routines and rituals were clearly established throughout the school. Student behavior and discipline were managed through a behavior modification system with which student and staff appeared thoroughly familiar and took seriously. The system included both a visual component, uniform shirt color, and a mock monetary component, paychecks, through which students earned eligibility for special activities.

Albany Prep's 10-member board of trustees held monthly meetings at which the school's principal served in an *ex-officio* capacity as a staff representative to the board. Challenges faced by the school in its first year included reaching enrollment levels indicated in the school's charter, attracting good teachers and obtaining a permanent facility. The trustees remained focused on student achievement and, when interviewed, spoke knowledgeably about the school's academic program, assessment and

student performance. As part of the accountability process for the school principal, the board established merit guidelines for the annual evaluation of the principal.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the present visit to the Albany Preparatory Charter School on February 28, 2007. Inspectors visited classrooms, reviewed documents and interviewed instructional and administrative staff. Each of their conclusions is summarized below. The evidence base and further analysis is contained in the Benchmark Analysis and Evidence section.

### Academic Attainment and Improvement

As 2005-06 was the school's first year of operation, test results for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, the only grade served that year, essentially serve as baseline information for the charter period. About half of the students were proficient in both English language arts (ELA) and math. The school does not yet have testing grades for science and did not report results for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade social studies exam.

### Learning Environment

Albany Preparatory Charter School appears to value an orderly, focused learning environment and to recognize that academic behaviors must be taught and reinforced. Albany Prep has a school-wide behavior management system in place through which students can earn monthly rewards such as field trips. In general, classrooms and common spaces were well managed. Examples of rituals and routines were prevalent throughout the school and individual classrooms.

### Use of Assessment Data

The school collects data from a variety of assessments, including those created by School Performance, Inc., the Village Academies reading assessments, Terra Nova tests, STAR reading and math assessments, as well as teacher-created assessments. However the school is only at the beginning stages of using this information to drive instructional decisions. The school has identified literacy as an area of concern based on assessment data. At the time of the visit, the response had been to add a more diagnostic assessment and to research possible professional development and programmatic resources. Assessment data is also used to identify students for tutoring.

### Curriculum

The school primarily relies upon scope and sequences developed by School Performance, Inc. (SPI) and the school Director as its guide regarding curricular documents. While these documents provide a framework that teachers use for instructional planning, they do not explicitly align the school's chosen curricular resources with student learning objectives, assessments, and state standards. This presents a substantial challenge to the school's relatively novice teaching faculty's attempts to prepare rigorous lessons.

### Development of High Quality Teachers / Teacher Development

Albany Prep has allotted significant time and a substantial portion of the Director's responsibilities to teachers' professional development. Teachers have access to professional development prior to the start of the school year and at weekly faculty meetings and grade-level meetings. In addition, the Director had recently instituted a coaching plan for each teacher. However, at the time of the site inspection, it was unclear the degree to which these measures translate into improved teaching.

### Governance

Albany Prep's board of trustees has been, and continues to be, dedicated to the work of educating children. The trustees use data to evaluate the progress of the school's Director and its programs, and can point to examples of adjustments that have been made based upon their findings.

### Key Design Elements

While the inspection team did not specifically collect evidence around the school's key design elements outlined in the school's charter application, it is noteworthy that inspectors did not hear mention of or find evidence to indicate whether the school had implemented certain elements, including components or characteristics of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, personal projects, or a community service program.

## SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The following review of academic attainment and improvement (Benchmark 1A) is based on assessment results and other data from the 2005-06 school year, the school's first year of operation.

**Summary:** As 2005-06 was the school's first year of operation, test results for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, the only grade served that year, essentially serve as baseline information for the charter period. About half of the students were proficient in both English language arts and mathematics. The school did not yet have testing grades for science and did not report results for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade social studies exam.

**English Language Arts:** As 2005-06 was the school's first year of operation, none of the students were enrolled for two or more years. That said, 46 percent of all students in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade scored at the proficient level on the state exam. The school met the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) under the state's No Child Left Behing (NCLB) accountability system. The school performed about the same as the local school district and performed worse than predicated in comparison to similar schools statewide. On the Terra Nova the same student cohort moved from the 23<sup>rd</sup> percentile in the fall to the 37<sup>th</sup> percentile in the spring.

**Mathematics:** About half (53 percent) of students was proficient in mathematics on the state's 5<sup>th</sup> grade test. The school met the AMO under the state's NCLB accountability system. It outperformed the local school district and did about the same as predicated compared to similar schools statewide. On the Terra Nova from fall to spring the same student cohort moved from the 41<sup>st</sup> percentile to the 45<sup>th</sup> percentile.

**Science:** The school did not yet have a testing grade for science.

**Social Studies:** Although this goal is not applicable until the school has an 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the school did not report results from the 5<sup>th</sup> grade social studies test.

**No Child Left Behind:** The school is deemed to be in Good Standing under the state's NCLB Accountability system.

**Optional Goals:** None.

**Note:** The following two pages present School Performance Summaries that provide data addressing the required Accountability Plan outcome measures for ELA and mathematics and the school's performance against these measures. Please refer to the "Inspection Visits and Reports" section of the Introduction for full definitions of the measures used and details about the tables themselves.



# SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

## Mathematics

### Albany Preparatory Charter School



Charter Schools Institute  
The State University of New York

	2003-04			MET	2004-05			MET	2005-06			MET	
	Grades Served:	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades Served:	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades Served:	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		
<b>ABSOLUTE MEASURES</b>  1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam.		4	(0)	(0)		4	(0)	(0)		3	(0)	(0)	
		8	(0)	(0)		8	(0)	(0)		4	(0)	(0)	
		4	(0)	(0)		4	(0)	(0)		5	52.5 (40)	(0)	
		8	(0)	(0)		8	(0)	(0)		6	(0)	(0)	
										7	(0)	(0)	
										8	(0)	(0)	
										All	52.5 (40)	(0)	--
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	Grades	PI	AMO		Grades	PI	AMO		Grades	PI	AMO		
	4				4				5	148	86		YES
	8				8								
<b>COMPARATIVE MEASURES</b>  3. Each year the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State exam will be greater than that of students in the same tested grades in the local district.	Comparison: (Albany City Schools)				Comparison: (Albany City Schools)				Comparison: (Albany City Schools)				
	Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District		
	4				4				5	52.5	46.3		--
	8				8								
4. Each year the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3).	Assessment:				Effect Size				Effect Size				
					4				N	Actual	Predicted		NO
					8				40	52.5	54.0	-0.06	
<b>VALUE ADDED MEASURE</b>  5. Each grade level cohort will reduce by one half the difference between the previous year's baseline and 50 NCE on a norm referenced test or 75 percent proficient on the state exam.	Assessment:				Assessment:				Assessment:				
	Grades	Cohorts Making Target	Target		Grades	Cohorts Making Target	Target		Grades	Cohorts Making Target	Target		--
	NA								NA				
	N	Base	Target		N	Base	Target		N	Base	Target		

## BENCHMARK ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE

### Learning Environment

Albany Preparatory Charter School values an orderly, focused learning environment and recognizes that academic behaviors must be taught and reinforced. According to members of the board of trustees, substantial effort has been devoted to acclimating new students to the school and its behavioral expectations. The board indicated that the school needed to address behavioral issues first and then address academic performance. They also believe that as the school increases in size, this will be less of an issue as the majority of the school will already be acculturated and new fifth graders will then be a minority in relation to the larger student population.

As part of its community building work, the school holds grade-level and “all school” meetings for students each week. The Director leads the grade-level meetings, but the Dean of Students also plays a significant role. At the “all school” meetings, students are given “shout outs” for good behavior and they participate in community building work, such as activities around “Tribes” and minimizing or eliminating aggressiveness among student groups. During the all school meetings, the Director talks about “something [that] is concerning [to] the whole community” and recognizes students who have earned special privileges based on their behavior. The school also devotes a portion of each week’s professional development to school culture.

The position of Dean of Students was added this year to focus on all student-related issues, including the behavior management system, uniforms, field trips and social relationships. The Dean reported that the school holds students to high behavior standards that can be simplified to “when you make good choices, good things happen.”

Albany Prep has a schoolwide behavior management system in place that is shared with students and their families during pre-school opening home visits and is described in the parent handbook. According to the Dean of Students, the system is designed to close the gap for students so they can focus on learning. Staff members have sheets with behaviors and consequences listed, and students accumulate points and/or demerits based on their performance. During the first three weeks of school, called “pre-season,” staff taught students about the behavior management system and the behavior required to succeed within it. For students who enroll later in the school year, they are given some time to get up to speed prior to full implementation of the system with them.

Students begin with white shirts and must earn 5 points in a week and maintain 10 points over each month to move to the standard blue shirt. To earn a purple shirt, and the special privileges that are awarded with it, a student must receive 9-10 points in a week. Students can collect “purple shirts.” When they have accumulated a certain number, they earn a pin and become a student prefect.

A monthly reward is given for those students who have maintained their blue shirts. The Dean of Students stated that the majority of each grade level has typically been able to participate in the rewards. Rewards have included trips to museums, plays, laser tag, roller skating and trips to colleges. At the time of the visit, the Dean of Students revised the rewards to include an in-house activity every other month so that the students who did not earn enough points to participate would see what they are missing.

In general, classrooms and common spaces were well-managed. Examples of rituals and routines were prevalent throughout the school and individual classrooms, including raising hands to ask questions, starting on the “Do Now” upon entering the classroom, and a clear procedure to govern student movement between classrooms at the beginning and end of class periods as well as student

use of restrooms. Teachers relied on common attention-getting strategies, such as the call-and-response, “Stop, look, and listen. Okay!” All students were also in possession of a two-sided card that was kept on their desks, the green side up indicating the student was making progress, the red side up signaling that the student was in need of teacher attention. Although students appeared to become impatient and frustrated waiting for their teacher to respond to them, the system was generally well-implemented.

While students seemed to have internalized the routines and were well-behaved, for the most part, several inspectors noted that students seemed bored. This lack of student engagement may be related to the quality of instruction and/or the substantial amount of time devoted to these routines, such as uniform checks, movement of classroom furniture, and a ritual of tapping fists that was intended to motivate students, but appeared to be merely tolerated by them. Additionally, while students were quiet, they were not necessarily responsive to teachers’ directions. For example, one teacher had to repeat the directions for the location of where to write one’s name on a test four times.

### Use of Assessment Data

The school collects data from a variety of assessments, including those created by School Performance, Inc., the Village Academies reading assessments, Terra Nova tests, STAR reading and math assessments, as well as teacher created assessments. However the school is only at the beginning stages of using this information to drive instructional decisions.

The board is familiar with the school’s performance record, knowledgeable about the assessment system used, and wants to base its decisions on data. They are concerned about moving the school’s “baseline data upward,” and are convinced it is moving in the right direction in math. The board’s review of the data has led them to believe that literacy is a key issue or challenge for the school.

Although not clearly defined, the literacy problem was identified through the school’s assessment system. The board attributed the lack of clarity, in part, to the limitations of the school’s current literacy assessment. This assessment, which was also administered last year, relies on grade-level text. Therefore it is difficult to know if a student’s poor performance should be attributed to his/her lower than grade-level reading ability or poor comprehension skills. In response to the limitations of the literacy assessment, the school began to administer the Village Academies reading assessments, based on “leveled” reading selections, two months before the inspection. Given the limited data from these newly implemented assessments, their impact is unknown. With regards to writing, at least one teacher indicated that the current tests do not assess “good writing.” Within her own class, this teacher used rubrics, including writing process grades and 6 Traits. It is unclear to inspectors the role of rubrics in the school’s assessment plan.

At the time of the site visit, the school did not have a plan in place to improve the teaching and learning of literacy. The Director indicated that the school will need to make additional changes in its approach to literacy. The school has taken steps to connect with other resources to assist the school in determining what additional changes should be made by reaching out to the State Education Department (SED) literacy experts to identify literacy specialists in the Capital Region, by joining the Capital Area School Development Association (CASDA), by reaching out to the University at Albany and local school districts, and by looking nationally for pertinent research and best practices literature.

Data from the standardized assessments are used by teachers to identify students for small group tutoring opportunities. According to the Special Services Coordinator, students whose SPI scores fall below the 33<sup>rd</sup> percentile are identified as “high-need” and referred for tutoring. Students who need

reading remediation receive instruction in decoding and comprehension based on SRA materials until they “test out of it.” In contrast, the Special Services Coordinator refers to mathematics tutoring as more of a “quick fix” to teach particular skills or concepts. Individual teachers also reported tutoring students whose assessment results indicated a need. However, some acknowledged that it was difficult to work into their schedule. They stated, however, that they meet with students during “Homework Club”, physical education, Accelerated Reader, and enrichment.

Based on interview data, inspectors concluded that the school uses data for remediation, but not to drive instruction. Teachers do not appear to differentiate instruction based on these assessment results within the regular classroom. Of particular note, one teacher stated, “Just because you are a teacher doesn’t mean you can analyze data,” signaling that opportunities to improve teachers’ skills in this area could be a powerful addition to the school’s professional development program.

### Curriculum

The school continues to rely primarily upon the scope and sequences developed by School Performance, Inc. (SPI) as its guiding curricular documents. The SPI “Superstandards” are broken down into six intervals to be used as the primary scope and sequence for ELA and mathematics. Additionally, the Director developed scope and sequences for science and history in the absence of SPI created documents. While these documents provide a framework that teachers use for instructional planning, they do not explicitly align the school’s chosen curricular resources with student learning objectives, assessments, and state standards. This presents a substantial challenge to the school’s relatively novice teaching faculty. Four of the school’s nine teachers have three or more years of experience, while four have one year or less.

The Director indicated that he determines what commercially-produced curriculum materials will be used by the school, and that he monitors the implementation of curriculum by staff on a weekly and yearly basis in addition to the 6-week intervals. Despite feedback from the Director, having to create one’s curricular resources is very demanding for teachers. While the school’s leaders encourage the faculty to work together, curriculum is not developed within departments and at the time of the visit, there was no time for the departments to meet. Teachers reported that there has not been a school-wide dialogue about curriculum to identify department and grade-level priorities. It appeared to inspectors that the professional development and coaching provided by the school was often insufficient to prepare teachers to design rigorous lessons. This may be one reason why inspectors observed the use of numerous worksheets and limited writing assignments.

The mathematics curriculum, consisting of worksheets and “problems,” is created by the teachers week to week based on the SPI intervals (New York State standards divided into pre-and post-March material). The reading teachers also used the SPI “Superstandards” as a guide as they prepared lessons. One teacher reported purchasing supplementary materials to prepare lessons. SRA Decoding Strategies is used to tutor low-performing students.

Reading and mathematics teachers use the Accelerated Math and Reading programs to individualize each student’s assignments based on previous performance. Students scan answers and are immediately provided a report which shows them which answers they got incorrect. Some teachers reported using these programs when there is sufficient time.

Again this year, the writing teachers reported drawing on several resources, including WriteSource, Easy Grammar, and Ed Helper, as well the 6 Traits and Writer’s Workshop models. Science classes continue to use FOSS Science while History relies on Geography Alive! and History Alive kits, rather than the Core Knowledge sequence identified the previous year.

### Development of High Quality Teachers / Teacher Development

In its second year, Albany Prep has continued to allot significant time and a substantial portion of the Director's responsibilities to teachers' professional development. However, at the time of the site inspection, it was unclear the degree to which these measures translated into improved instruction.

Teachers have access to professional development prior to the start of the school year. Teachers who are new to the school receive an extra week of training prior to the opening of school. Each day of the previous summer's professional development was structured to include morning discussions on articles such as "teachers as leaders," "teaching scenarios," or "strategies," which were borrowed from Teach for America-created resources, while the afternoons allowed teachers a few hours to complete specific tasks, such as creating a long-term instructional plan (based on the Superstandards and interval assessments) or preparing one's classroom.

Ongoing professional development is provided to teachers during weekly 90-minute faculty meetings each Friday. The 90-minute meetings, on average, devote 30 minutes to upcoming tasks, 30 minutes to a school culture issue, such as cooperative discipline, and 30 minutes to discussions on a Teach for America *Teaching as Leadership* article. At the time of the inspection visit, the most recent topic focused on "proper ways to give and receive feedback to peers and administration."

In addition to whole faculty meetings, two teachers reported that grade-level meetings that focus on student issues and the sharing of instructional goals were implemented beginning in January. While administrators currently lead these meetings, the school is trying to move toward teacher-driven grade level meetings.

In addition to the group professional development sessions, the Director had recently instituted coaching plans for the thirteen people he supervises, including all classroom teachers. Although the school had prioritized and formalized a mechanism to provide teachers with timely formative feedback through weekly one-on-one meetings with the instructional leader, it did not appear that the school's Director had provided sufficient guidance to assist teachers in honing their craft.

Typically, scheduled one-on-one meetings take place after the Director observes a fifteen minute block of the class (which he marks with a timer). Of the 30-minute meeting, ten minutes are devoted to teacher selected topics, ten minutes to Director selected topics and the final ten minutes to the teacher's development. Teachers are to set quantifiable goals that can be measured six to eight weeks in the future and then to brainstorm how the goal can be accomplished. According to teachers, the Director points out problems while encouraging them to figure out how to fix them. He sees his role as holding teachers "accountable" for achieving their goals, but not necessarily for providing clear guidance or strategies for addressing the issues.

The coaching plans were recent developments at the time of the inspection visit. In fact, not all teachers had completed them, so their potential to improve teaching remained unclear. Furthermore, in some cases, it is not clear that the goal is specifically linked to improving teachers' pedagogical skill. For example, one teacher's selected goal was "to quickly and efficiently file emails in a way to have quick access." (Additionally, since the school inspection, the Institute has learned that the Director will be leaving the school at the end of the year and it is unknown whether his successor will continue these processes.)

When the selected goal is directly tied to pedagogy, such as improving group work within the classroom, teacher's resources to accomplish the goal appeared inadequate. Teachers appeared to

have limited access to models of best instructional practices. While they have access to SPI's video library and the Director had sent teachers to see model teachers at other schools, there was no one on site to help them translate what they saw or read into practice within their own classroom. The Director does not model instructional strategies for the teachers nor is there anyone else assigned this role.

Overall, Albany Prep's teachers do not have expertise in the content areas they teach. Of the five reading and writing teachers, only one has expertise in secondary literacy. Two have elementary backgrounds and two are enrolled in certification programs. Neither mathematics teacher has certification in secondary mathematics, although one appears to be close to certification in elementary mathematics. Both history/science teachers have elementary certifications and neither has advanced study in either history or science. The board approved covering the cost of moving a limited number of teachers toward full state certification by paying for required courses. Two teachers reported receiving such assistance in interviews.

The board stated that resources are available to the teachers to improve their pedagogy, but thought that creating peer to peer relationships was very important. Teachers reported that a formal peer observation program was not in place; however, they had participated in training designed to develop their skills at providing feedback to peers. While such skills may be useful, inspectors questioned the extent and depth of pedagogical knowledge resident in the school's faculty. As such, the feedback that they could share with each other would be limited. Teachers who are early in the careers would benefit from access to expert instructors. For example, a writing teacher who was trying to implement writing workshop had "yet to see a full [writing] workshop in practice" and would like to do so.

Despite substantial time and effort, more focused professional development (including modeling and subject specific content) is likely to be necessary to prepare teachers to provide the rigorous and targeted instruction necessary to ensure students perform at high levels.

At the time of the visit, teachers had not been formally evaluated, as the mid-year evaluations were scheduled to take place the week subsequent to the school inspection visit. Teachers reported that they would be evaluated against the job descriptions provided to them at the beginning of the year. However, they did not know what the evaluation process would entail, or what model of teacher evaluation the school planned to utilize.

### Governance

Albany Prep's board of trustees has been, and continues to be, dedicated to the work of educating children. The 8-member board, of which eight positions are currently filled, continues to meet monthly. The school's Director is an ex-officio member of the board and reports on student performance data at each meeting. While the board gets "independent performance data," they want to hear the Director's interpretation and comments. The school's Assistant Director provides a financial report, including budget timeline, at each board meeting.

At the time of the inspection visit, the board functioned as a committee of the whole, although they were considering creating two subcommittees—finance and parent complaints. Additionally, board members have taken on particular responsibilities. For example, one board member serves as Treasurer while two others focus on accountability. Two board members have provided coaching to the Director in the critical areas of marketing and recruiting which they described as a "big hurdle" that he overcame.

Based on multiple test scores, the board has identified “literacy” as the top area of need. While the board spoke about the complexity of the issue including “decoding,” “comprehension,” and “writing,” they will rely on the Director to identify solutions. They see the board’s role as helping him to think “critically” regarding these issues. At the time of the visit, the school did not have a plan in place to improve the teaching and learning of literacy. The board attributed this in part to their literacy assessment which they believed was “not a sophisticated enough tool.”

The board conducts an annual review of the school’s Director, using a protocol that includes 8 – 10 objectives that are tied to the Institute’s Renewal Benchmarks (e.g., financial accountability, student performance, recruitment/retention, staffing and development, environment). While the objectives are consistent, the weight of each objective varies each year according to its importance to the school’s development. The process adopted by the board includes a self-assessment component for the school’s Director prior to the board’s evaluation.

In response to the ongoing review of the Director and the school’s program, the board approved modifications to the organizational structure of the school’s administration. Based on their review in the prior year, they expanded the school’s organizational structure to include a Dean of Students, an Assistant Director and Special Services Coordinator. Subsequent to the site inspection, the Institute learned that the Director will not be returning to the school for the subsequent year. This will present an additional challenge to the board as the school enters its third year.

#### Key Design Elements

While the inspection team did not specifically collect evidence around the school’s key design elements outlined in the school’s charter application, it is noteworthy that inspectors did not hear mention of or find evidence to indicate whether the school had implemented certain elements, including components or characteristics of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, personal projects, or a community service program. However, the school has made an acceptable transition from Core Knowledge to History Alive! and Geography Alive! (by TCI).

**APPENDIX: RENEWAL BENCHMARKS USED DURING THE VISIT**

<b>Evidence Category</b>	<b>Benchmarks</b>
	<b>Renewal Question 1</b> <b>Is the School an Academic Success?</b>
<b>Benchmark 1A</b> <b>Academic Attainment &amp; Improvement</b>	<b>1A.1</b> <b>English Language Arts: The school meets or has come close to meeting the English Language Arts goal in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.</b>
	<b>1A.2</b> <b>Mathematics: The school meets or has come close to meeting the mathematics goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.</b>
	<b>1A.3</b> <b>Science: The school meets or has come close to meeting the science goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.</b>
	<b>1A.4</b> <b>Social Studies: The school meets or has come close to meeting the social studies goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.</b>
	<b>1A.5</b> <b>NCLB: The school has made adequate yearly progress as required by NCLB.</b>
<b>Benchmark 1B</b> <b>Use of Assessment Data</b>	<b>1B</b> <b>The school has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and to use it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.</b>
<b>Benchmark 1C</b> <b>Curriculum</b>	<b>1C</b> <b>The school has a clearly defined and aligned curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards.</b>

<b>Benchmark 1D</b> <b>Pedagogy</b>	<b>1D.1</b>	<b>The school has strong instructional leadership.</b>
	<b>1D.2</b>	<b>High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.</b>
<b>Benchmark 1E</b> <b>Student Order &amp; Discipline</b>	<b>1E</b>	<b>The school's culture allows and promotes a culture of learning.</b>
<b>Benchmark 1F</b> <b>Professional Development</b>	<b>1F</b>	<b>The school's professional development program assists teachers in meeting student academic needs and school goals, by addressing identified shortcomings in student learning and teacher pedagogical skill and content knowledge.</b>

<b>Evidence Category</b>	<b>Benchmarks</b>	
	<b>Renewal Question 2</b> <b>Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?</b>	
<b>Benchmark 2C</b> <b>Governance</b>	<b>2C.1</b>	<b>The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school's mission and specific goals.</b>

## CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the Second Year Visit at Albany Preparatory Charter School on February 28, 2007. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit:

**Jennifer G. Sneed, Ph.D.** (Team Leader), is the Senior Vice President at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Dr. Sneed has worked for the Charter Schools Institute since 2001, beginning as its Vice President for Applications. Prior to joining the Institute she served as the Executive Director of Personnel for the Western Suffolk BOCES on Long Island for three years, and worked for 11 years for the New York State Education Department in a variety of areas, including special education law, regulations and policy development, special education research, development and training, school improvement/School Quality Review, and as Coordinator of BOCES District Superintendents. Dr. Sneed also has experience as a classroom teacher and school administrator. She received her B.S. and M.S. in Special Education from Illinois State University, and her Certificate of Advanced Study (C.A.S.) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) from the University at Albany in Educational Administration and Policy with a focus on educational policy, politics and law.

**Joanne Falinski, Ph.D.** is the Vice President for Charter School Evaluation at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Dr. Falinski joined the Institute's staff in January of this year. She most recently served as an Assistant Professor in the School of Education at Pace University, Pleasantville, NY. Her responsibilities included teaching both undergraduate and graduate education courses, supervising literacy practicum students in the field and conducting relevant research. She also presented at numerous regional and national conferences on topics of literacy, professional development and collaboration between special education and regular education. Dr. Falinski was actively involved in the University community, serving as a member of the Institutional Review Board and Writing Center Advisory Board. Prior to joining Pace, Dr. Falinski served as an Assistant Professor in the School of Education for Manhattanville College and Director of a NYS site of the National Writing Project. Dr. Falinski's vast experience in the K-12 community includes serving as an Elementary Classroom Teacher and Elementary Principal.

**Kim Wechtenhiser** is the Associate Vice President at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Ms. Wechtenhiser has primary responsibility for the Institute's charter renewal process; overseeing a comprehensive evaluation of each SUNY authorized charter school as it comes up for renewal. Ms. Wechtenhiser joined the Institute in September 2005 as a Senior Analyst. Prior to her work with the Institute, Ms. Wechtenhiser served as the Coordinator of New Schools Development in the Charter School Office at the Massachusetts Department of Education, where

she led the review of new charter school applications, provided technical assistance to newly chartered schools, participated in the ongoing review of their academic and organizational performance, and oversaw the charter amendment process. Ms. Wechtenhiser is the former Lead Teacher of Spanish at City on a Hill Charter Public School in Boston, where she also served as faculty representative to the school's Board of Trustees. She taught Spanish at Westfield Public High School and English at the Universidad de Córdoba in Spain. Ms. Wechtenhiser holds a B.A. in Spanish and Secondary Education and a M.A. in Spanish Language and Literature, both from Simmons College. She earned an Ed.M. in School Leadership from Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

**Jason L. Sarsfield** is a Senior Analyst at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Mr. Sarsfield fulfills a leadership role in informal and annual visits to SUNY authorized charter schools as well as participates in the charter renewal review process, provides technical assistance to schools as needed, and contributes to the Institute's research agenda. Prior to joining the Institute in January, 2007 Mr. Sarsfield was a Contract Analyst at The Center for Charter Schools at Central Michigan University – Office of Academic Accountability where he was responsible for evaluating the academic performance of authorized schools, reviewing school curricula and educational program, and measuring progress toward educational goals. While at Central Michigan University, Mr. Sarsfield worked closely with the Michigan Department of Education on annual legislative reports, grant reviews, and policy recommendations. Previously, Mr. Sarsfield taught social studies in grades 7-12 in Michigan and Alaska while also completing curriculum development responsibilities and serving as an Advanced Placement Exam Reader for The College Board. Mr. Sarsfield holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Secondary Education from Northern Michigan University and is completing the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in Educational Leadership from Central Michigan University.

**Susan Seymour** is a Senior Analyst at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Mrs. Seymour has taught pre-kindergarten through 10th grade. From 1996 to 1999 she worked in the Governor's Office of Regulatory Reform as an analyst. There she assisted various state agencies, among others the banking department and the Office of Children and Family Services, in cutting "red tape" from their New York State regulations. Interested in education reform, she joined the Charter Schools Institute in 1999. She received her B.S. from The University of Rochester and her M.A. from Manhattanville College concentrating in Special Education and Reading.

**Simeon Stolzberg** is a Senior Analyst at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Part of the Institute's oversight and evaluation team, Mr. Stolzberg participates in informal, annual and renewal school visits. Mr. Stolzberg also assists in the development and execution of the Institute's research agenda, performing statistical analyses of student academic data, and providing technical guidance to schools as needed. Prior to joining the Institute, Mr. Stolzberg managed his own consulting practice, advising charter schools across the country in their application and planning phases. He also served as Middle School Director for the Beginning with Children Charter School in Brooklyn, New York. In 2002, as a Building Excellent Schools Fellow, Mr. Stolzberg wrote the prospectus and application for the Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter School (BArT) in Massachusetts; the school was one of only five schools approved by the state that year. Mr. Stolzberg served as the school's founding principal. Mr. Stolzberg received his Master's Degree in Public Policy from Georgetown University and his Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy, with independent studies in education and political economy, from Williams College.

In addition, the Institute was pleased to have the following consultant join the school visit team:

**Hillary Johnson, Ed.D.** (Consulting Writer), is an independent educational consultant with 15 years experience as a teacher, staff developer and researcher. Dr. Johnson has conducted over 10 school inspections with the Charter Schools Institute, primarily as a consulting writer. Past projects include providing professional development in reading and writing instruction, analyzing the alignment between standards and curriculum, and designing video-based professional development to support principals in developing instructional monitoring skills. She began her career as a Spanish bilingual teacher and a Reading Recovery teacher in Oakland CA. Subsequently, she served as a Literacy Content Coach and Whole School Change Coach to several Boston Public Schools. Dr. Johnson earned her B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, her M.Ed. from Harvard University and her Doctorate of Education from Harvard University with a concentration through its Urban Superintendents Program.

Also joining the team, as an observer, from the Institute was:

**Cynthia Proctor** is Director of Public Affairs at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Ms Proctor has more than 10 years experience in the communications field, including seven years in higher education, Ms. Proctor brings a comprehensive set of writing, editing, and media relations skills to the position. Ms. Proctor responds to external inquiries to the Institute as well as oversees the implementation of the Institute's multi-faceted communications plan. Prior to joining the Institute, Ms. Proctor served as a member of the senior leadership team of the Office of the Provost at the State University of New York System Administration. Ms. Proctor received her B.S. degree in Public Relations/Journalism from Utica College of Syracuse University.