



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Renewal Report:

The Ark Community Charter School

January 6, 2009

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The final version of Institute renewal reports should be broadly shared by the school with the entire school community. This report will be posted on the Institute’s website at: www.newyorkcharters.org/pubsReportsRenewals.htm.

REPORT INTRODUCTION

This report is the primary means by which the Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) transmits to the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the “State University Trustees”) its findings and recommendations regarding a school’s application for renewal, and more broadly, details the merits of a school’s case for renewal. This report has been created and issued pursuant to the *Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University Board of Trustees* (the “State University Renewal Practices”).¹

Information about the State University’s renewal process, including the Institute’s comprehensive Charter Renewal Handbook and an overview of the requirements for renewal under the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (as amended, the “Act”), are available on the Institute’s website at: www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsRenewOverview.htm.

RECOMMENDATION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendation

Full-Term Renewal

The Charter Schools Institute recommends that the State University Trustees approve the application for renewal of the Ark Community Charter School and renew its charter for a period of five years with authority to provide instruction to students in Kindergarten through 6th grade in such configuration as set forth in its application for renewal, with a maximum projected enrollment of 220 students.

Background and Required Findings

According to the State University Renewal Practices:

In subsequent renewal reviews, and in contrast to initial renewal reviews, the State University Trustees evaluate the strength and effectiveness of a school’s academic program almost exclusively by the degree to which the school has succeeded in meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals during the Accountability Period. This approach is consistent with the greater time that a school has been in operation and a concomitant increase in the quantity and quality of student achievement data that the school has generated. It is also consistent with the Act’s purpose of moving from a rules-based to an outcome-based system of accountability in which schools are held accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results

The Ark Community Charter School (“the Ark”) has applied for a subsequent, Full-Term Renewal of five years. In its eighth year of operation, and having previously been awarded a renewal with conditions,² the State University Renewal Practices provide only two possible renewal outcomes for

¹ The *Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University Board of Trustees* (revised June 9, 2008) are available at www.newyorkcharters.org.

² In March 2008, the State University Trustees granted The Ark a non-precedent setting renewal of one year with conditions including that students entering the sixth grade must have been enrolled in the school’s fifth grade and that the school must

the Ark: Full-Term Renewal or Non-Renewal. In order to earn a Full-Term Renewal, the Ark must demonstrate that it has met the criteria for such a renewal as described in the State University Renewal Practices. Specifically, the school must demonstrate that it “has met or come close to meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals during the Accountability Period,” or it must face Non-Renewal. Based on the Institute’s review of the evidence that it gathered and that the Ark has provided including, but not limited to, the school’s Application for Renewal, and the school’s record of academic performance as determined by the extent to which it has met its academic Accountability Plan goals, the Institute finds that the school has “met or come close to meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals during the Accountability Period.”³ The Institute’s finding means that the Ark has met the subsequent renewal standard in the State University Renewal Practices.

Based on all the evidence submitted in the current charter term and as described in or submitted with the application for renewal, the Institute makes the following findings required by the Act. The Ark Community Charter School as described in the renewal application meets the requirements of the Act and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations. The school has demonstrated the ability to operate in an educationally and fiscally sound manner in the next charter period. Finally, given the programs it will offer, its structure and its purpose, approving the school to operate for another five years is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in Education Law subdivision 2850(2).

Consideration of School District Comments

In accordance with the Act, the Institute notified the school district in which the charter school is located regarding the school’s application for renewal. As of the date of this report, no comments were received in response.

Summary Discussion

Academic Success

In the Ark’s current one-year charter renewal, the State University Trustees set as a condition of eligibility for a full-term, five-year renewal that the school had to meet or come close to meeting both its English language arts and mathematics Accountability Plan goals by either 1) meeting the required absolute measures of student proficiency on state assessments and coming close to meeting three out of four of the remaining measures, or 2) coming close to meeting each of the five required measures.

employ a teacher certified in English to Speakers of Other Languages, and have a fully operational program for English language learners. The State University Trustees based the one-year renewal decision to a great extent on the fact that the school had previously received only a two-year renewal, which did not afford the school adequate time to implement revisions to its educational program. The school was not renewed under the current initial renewal standard, but according to the less stringent standards of the State University Renewal Practices of May 20, 2003 and December 13, 2005, respectively. See the February 2006 Initial Renewal Report at:

<http://www.newyorkcharters.org/forms/renewalReports/firstCharterTerm/2arkRenewal21306.pdf> and the March 2008

Subsequent Renewal Report at:

<http://www.newyorkcharters.org/forms/renewalReports/firstCharterTerm/2arkRenewal21306.pdf>.

³ State University Renewal Practices, Full-Term Renewal standard (9).

For this one-year accountability period,⁴ the Ark has posted strong results on the New York State assessments in English language arts and mathematics, coming close to meeting each of the five required measures in both subjects and therefore coming close to meeting both Accountability Plan goals. In mathematics, the Ark sustained the high level of performance it had achieved in the previous year. In English language arts, with a revised instructional program fully implemented, the school showed notable progress in 2007-08. In both subjects, the school has outperformed the local school district, as well as demographically similar schools state-wide.

Institute staff conducted an abbreviated renewal inspection visit to the Ark on November 7, 2008 to ensure that the structures, personnel and practices that resulted in the school's positive assessment outcomes remained in place and to determine if the school was abiding by the other conditions set by the Trustees in granting the current one-year renewal. Institute staff ascertained that the school is providing instruction in the specified grades, that enrollment is within the required range, that all 6th grade students had been enrolled at the Ark in the 5th grade, and that the school currently employs a teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages to provide services to the students who are English language learners. Thus, in addition to meeting its key academic goals, the Ark has satisfied all the conditions enumerated in its current renewal charter.

During the visit, Institute staff visited each Kindergarten through 6th grade classroom and met with school leaders and the board chairperson. Institute staff found that the Ark had ample materials and staff in all classrooms and throughout the school's three-story building. Each classroom was staffed by a full-time teacher and an aide. Since the previous renewal inspection visit, the school's leadership has continued to refine the curriculum by introducing a web-based curricular program called "Atlas." This program has allowed the school to create a variety of materials—including curriculum crosswalks, curriculum maps and pacing guides—for instructional staff, as well as curriculum guides for parents. The school's English language arts curriculum, which had undergone significant modification during the 2006-07 school year and resulted in the school being awarded the one-year renewal, had been fully implemented and was being used to prepare students to meet state performance standards.

The school's curriculum coordinators reported working closely with classroom teachers in core subject areas to provide feedback regarding lesson plans; to model instructional strategies; to discuss student assessments; to use assessment results to guide instruction; and to assist classroom teachers to set short and long-term goals. Teachers in each classroom used instructional strategies, such as differentiated instruction and cooperative learning, to address student needs while incorporating assessment results, remediation, and re-teaching into their planning. The school has a professional development plan that provides support for teachers in areas identified by staff, and includes training on the administration, use, and analysis of the variety of assessments used in the classrooms. The learning environment was safe and orderly, and most students focused on learning with little, if any, misbehavior in any classroom.

⁴ For the purpose of reporting student achievement results, charter period is defined as the time the Accountability Plan was in effect. In the case of a one-year renewal, the plan covers one annual data reporting cycle: the year subsequent to the previous renewal decision.

Organizational Effectiveness and Viability

The school's Renewal Application provides evidence that the Ark has been faithful to its mission and has implemented its charter's key design elements, which are: strong academic support with a low teacher/student ratio; a longer school day; enrichment programs; a small school; a safe environment; and families as partners.

The school's board of trustees has provided continuity in carrying out its oversight responsibilities. Four founding board members continue to serve actively. The school board maintains a productive relationship with the school's director and carries out its responsibilities through a number of board committees. The board manages the school's assets effectively and has ensured that the school presently occupies a facility that is consistent with its mission statement and charter. The school has also put in place certain practices to handle its future responsibilities related to ownership of the school building.

With certain, largely minor, exceptions the school's board of trustees has maintained appropriate policies and procedures, and the school appears to have generally abided by them over the term of its current charter. The school has policies in place to guard against conflicts of interest and has avoided same.

With minor policy exceptions, the Ark has substantially complied with the terms of its charter and applicable laws, rules and regulations. Specifically, as mentioned above, the school has complied with the conditions of its charter, and, therefore, the Institute recommends no conditions for the proposed full-term charter. The school has a relationship with outside counsel that it makes use of as needed.

Fiscal Soundness

The Ark completed the 2007-08 year in good financial condition. The school has maintained positive fund balances and adequate cash flow, and has been effective in establishing appropriate internal controls and procedures. The Ark's annual audit reports on internal control over financial reporting and compliance with laws, regulations and grants did not disclose any reportable conditions, material weaknesses, or instances of non-compliance. The management letter included with the school's most recent audit offered recommendations for strengthening internal control and operating efficiency regarding accounting matters. It was also noted that the school had fully addressed three out of four of the prior years' issues; and partially addressed the fourth (enhancing internal controls regarding the purchase of school uniforms).

Plans for the Next Charter Period

The Ark does not plan to add any new grades and would remain a K-6 school for the next charter period. The school would maintain an enrollment of 20-22 students in each class. In order to maintain a small school size, the school would cap projected enrollment at 220 students, which represents a slight increase over current enrollment. The school, consistent with a charter revision the Institute is putting in place for all new charters, would also have the flexibility to increase or decrease its enrollment within a 20 percent margin. The school would follow the same curriculum, abide by the same mission statement, and focus on the same key design elements as are currently in place.

The Ark's fiscal plan for the proposed new charter period is reasonable and appropriate. The five year projection includes net deficits in four of the five years; however cash flows remain positive. The school has operated in a fiscally sound manner at its current enrollment and grade configuration and is highly likely to continue to do so in the future. If the school completes the purchase of the building the mortgage payments should be comparable to the current rent, and the school has budgeted for this contingency.

To the extent that the Ark has achieved its key academic goals, continues to implement an educational program that supports achieving those goals, operates an effective and viable organization, and is fiscally sound, its plans to continue to implement the educational program as currently constituted during the next charter period are reasonable, feasible and achievable.

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approved the Ark Community Charter School (“the Ark”) on January 23, 2001, and its charter was subsequently issued by the Board of Regents in March of the same year. The school opened in September 2001 with an enrollment of 96 students in Kindergarten through 5th grade. The school currently serves 186 students in grades Kindergarten through 6th grade.

The Ark Community Charter School was seen by its founders as the logical extension of the Ark Center, which opened in 1971 and by 1978 had become a comprehensive fine arts program for children and adults living in the John P. Taylor federal housing project in Troy. In collaboration with Sage College’s School of Education, the Ark Center became the Ark After School Program, an educational program designed to help children with homework through daily tutoring, reading education and training in computer and communication technology.

The Ark Community Charter School was originally housed in the former St. Paul’s parochial school building under a lease with St. Paul’s Church. In the 2004–2005 school year, the school moved into the former St. Patrick’s School, which the school is leasing with an option to purchase. Approximately \$1.6 million in renovations have been undertaken by the school.

The Ark submitted an Application for Initial Renewal in the fall of 2005. As a result of a mixed record of academic performance, the State University Trustees granted the school a Short-Term Renewal with conditions on March 13, 2006 for a period of two years. The Short-Term Renewal was approved by the Board of Regents on May 23, 2006.

The school submitted an Application for Subsequent Renewal in August of 2007. The Institute’s review, conducted pursuant to the State University Renewal Practices, resulting in a recommendation that the school’s application for charter renewal be denied. However, the school subsequently appealed that decision to the State University Trustees Charter Schools Committee, also pursuant to the Renewal Practices. On March 3, 2008, the Committee on Charter Schools met and concurred that the school would not be renewed if the Renewal Practices were strictly followed. However, the Committee acknowledged that the school made curriculum changes that its board felt would enable the school to meet its Accountability Plan goals when the educational program was fully implemented by the next test administration. The Committee also noted that it not see evidence of the systemic failure typical of other schools recommended for non-renewal. Therefore, the Committee on Charter Schools recommended that the Board of Trustees exercise its discretion and renew the school’s charter for one year subject to conditions. The State University Trustees granted the one-year renewal on March 11, 2008.

At the time of the current renewal visit, the board of trustees of the Ark was comprised of the following individuals:

- Steven Axelrod, President;
- Bruce Backer, Vice President;
- Peter McDermott, Secretary;
- David Levow, Treasurer;

- Christina Francis, Parent Representative;
- Rosetta DeVito;
- Ron Eglash;
- Joseph Fama;
- Kathleen Gormley;
- Helen Martin, Teacher Representative; and
- Mary Theresa Streck, Director/Principal.

The Ark's mission statement, as stated in its Subsequent Renewal charter, is as follows:

The Ark Community Charter School's continuing mission is to create within the city of Troy a community that fosters the academic, social and spiritual growth of our members in an environment that is both supportive and challenging. In this community everyone is celebrated, respected, and heard; all are intellectually engaged, socially concerned, ethically responsible, and culturally open-minded.

Key design elements as outlined in the school's Subsequent Renewal charter include the following:

- small school design;
- extended school day by 40 minutes;
- child-centered instruction;
- personalized instruction;
- highly qualified teachers and staff;
- integrated instruction supported by the arts; and
- a safe school environment.

School Year (2008-09)

180 Instructional Days

School Day (2008-09)

7:45 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Enrollment

	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment⁵	Original Chartered Grades	Revised Grades Served	Actual Grades Served	Complying
2001-02	96	96	96	K-5	K-5	K-5	YES
2002-03	96	96	96	K-5	K-5	K-5	YES
2003-04	96	96	96	K-5	K-5	K-5	YES
2004-05	96	112-140	125	K-5	K-5	K-5	YES
2005-06	96	128-160	160	K-5	K-5	K-5	YES
2006-07	180	180	179	K-6	K-6	K-6	YES
2007-08	180	180	184	K-6	K-6	K-6	YES
2008-09	180	180	186	K-6	K-6	K-6	YES

Race/Ethnicity	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. the Ark	% of Enroll. Troy City District	% of Enroll. the Ark	% of Enroll. Troy City District	% of Enroll. the Ark	% of Enroll. Troy City District
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Black or African American	59%	29%	65%	30%	64%	30%
Hispanic	37%	9%	29%	10%	25%	10%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0%	2%	0%	2%	0%	1%
White	5%	60%	6%	58%	9%	56%

Source: 2004-05, 2005-06, 2006-07: School Report Card (New York State Education Department).

⁵ Enrollment figures per the Institute's official enrollment table, which are reported by the school. Figures used to calculate students populations may differ depending on the date of data collection.

Special Populations	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. the Ark	% of Enroll. Troy City District	% of Enroll. the Ark	% of Enroll. Troy City District	% of Enroll. the Ark	% of Enroll. Troy City District
Students with Disabilities	NA	NA	NA	NA	8.9%	15.6%
Limited English Proficient	13%	2%	18%	2%	13.4%	1.6%

Source: Students with Disabilities: Renewal Application - Statistical Overview (2004-05, 2005-06); New York State Education Department Database (2006-07). Limited English Proficient: 2005-06 New York State Education Department School Report Card (2004-05, 2005-06); New York State Education Department Database (2006-07).

Free/Reduced Lunch	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. the Ark	% of Enroll. Troy City District	% of Enroll. the Ark	% of Enroll. Troy City District	% of Enroll. the Ark	% of Enroll. Troy City District
Eligible for Free Lunch	92 %	47 %	87 %	49 %	89%	47%
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	6 %	9 %	7 %	10 %	7%	10%

Source: 2004-05, 2005-06, 2006-07: School Report Card (New York State Education Department).

School Charter History

Charter Year	School Year	Year of Operation	Evaluation Visit	Feedback to School	Other Actions Taken
1 st Charter – 1 st Year	2001-02	1 st	YES	Prior Action Letter; End-of-Year Evaluation Report	
1 st Charter – 2 nd Year	2002-03	2 nd	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	
1 st Charter – 3 rd Year	2003-04	3 rd	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	
1 st Charter – 4 th Year	2004-05	4 th	NO		
1 st Charter – 5 th Year	2005-06	5 th	YES	Renewal Report	Granted Short-Term Renewal of two years
2 nd Charter – 1 st Year	2006-07	6 th	NO		
2 nd Charter – 2 nd Year	2007-08	7 th	YES	Renewal Report	Recommended for Non-Renewal, Granted a One-Year Renewal with Conditions
3 rd Charter – 1 st Year	2008-09	8 th	YES	Renewal Report	Recommended for Full-Term Renewal of five years

ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

Background

At the beginning of the Accountability Period the school developed and adopted an Accountability Plan that set academic goals in the key subjects of English language arts and mathematics, as well as science and social studies. The plan also included an NCLB goal. For each goal in the Accountability Plan specific outcome measures define the level of performance necessary to meet that goal. Furthermore, the Institute has established a set of required outcome measures that include the following three types: 1) the absolute level of student performance on state examinations; 2) the comparative level of student performance on state examinations; and 3) the growth in student learning according to year-to-year comparisons of grade level cohorts. The following table shows the outcome measures currently required by the Institute in each subject area goal, as well as for the NCLB goal. Schools may have also elected to include additional optional goals and measures in their Accountability Plan.

Summary of Required Goals and Outcome Measures in Elementary/Middle School (K-8) Accountability Plans					
GOAL	Required Outcome Measures				
	Absolute		Comparative		Growth
	75 percent proficient on state exam	Performance Index (PI) meets Annual Measurable Objective (AMO)	Percent proficient greater than that of local school district	School exceeds predicted level of performance compared to similar public schools by small Effect Size	Grade-level cohorts reduce by half the gap between prior year's percent proficient and 75 percent
English Language Arts	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
Mathematics	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
Science	✦		✦		
Social Studies	✦		✦		
NCLB	School is deemed in "Good Standing" under state's NCLB accountability system				

The most important criterion for renewal is academic success, which is demonstrated in large part by meeting or coming close to meeting the goals in a school's Accountability Plan. The Institute determines the outcome of a goal by evaluating the multiple measures associated with that goal. In the case of the Ark's unique one-year renewal, the SUNY Trustees established specific criteria for meeting or coming close to meeting its English language arts and mathematics goals in 2007-08. The Ark must either 1) meet the required absolute measure of student proficiency on the 2007-08 state exam and come close to meeting three out of four of the remaining required measures, or 2) come close to meeting each of the five required measures.

The following presentation indicates the outcome of each of the school’s goals, as well as an analysis of the respective measures for each goal during the Accountability Period.⁶ The tables show three years of data, which represent the current one-year Accountability Period and the two years of the previous Accountability Period. Italicized text indicates goals or measures as written in the school’s Accountability Plan; bold numbers appearing in the tables are the critical values for determining if a measure was achieved in a given year. Aside from required Accountability Plan measures, the following discussion also presents the results of additional evidence and optional measures that the school may have included in its plan.

English Language Arts

Accountability Plan Goal: *Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding, for literary response and expression, for critical analysis and evaluation, and for social interaction.*

Outcome: The Ark came close to meeting its English language arts goal, by meeting or being close to meeting the five required outcome measures.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures

While the Ark showed demonstrated some improvement in its absolute results from 2005-06 to 2006-07, the school only came close to meeting only two of the five outcome measures that make up the English language arts goal. In 2007-08, with notable gains on the state’s English language arts exam, the Ark came close to meeting the goal.

Absolute Measure: <i>Each year, 75 percent of 3-6 graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State ELA examination.</i>			
Results (in percents)			
	School Year		
Grade	2005-06 Tested: 27	2006-07 Tested: 55	2007-08 Tested: 61
3	14.3	53.8	63.2
4	33.3	15.4	76.5
5	27.3	38.5	58.3
6	-	62.5	38.5
7	-	-	-
8	-	-	-
All	25.9	43.6	60.7

The Ark has demonstrated improved performance over the last three years. In 2005-06 when the school served students through the 5th grade 26 percent scored at the proficient level on the state exam. The following year when the school added a 6th grade 44 percent were proficient. In 2007-08 61 percent of students tested in 3rd through 6th grades were proficient.

⁶ Because the renewal decision is made in the last year of a Charter Period, the Accountability Period ends in the next to last year of the Charter Period. In the case of the Ark’s one-year renewal, the Accountability Period is the last year of the previous charter.

Absolute Measure: <i>Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State ELA exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.</i>			
Results (in percents)			
Index	School Year		
	2005-06⁷ Tested: 56	2006-07 Tested: 76	2007-08 Tested: 72
PI	109	126	160
AMO	122	122	133

The Ark did not achieve the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set by the state's NCLB accountability system in 2005-06, but exceeded the AMO in the subsequent two years. Last year it surpassed the AMO by almost 30 points.

Comparative Measure: <i>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 ELA exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of the local school district.</i>			
Results (in percents)			
Comparison	School Year		
	2005-06 Grades 3-5	2006-07 Grades 3-6	2007-08 Grades 3-6
School	25.9	43.6	60.7
District	52.9	51.8	58.3

In comparison to the local school district, the Ark underperformed the district in 2005-06 and again in 2006-07. Last year the school performed slightly better than the district.

Results (in percents)			
Comparison	School Year		
	Percent Eligible for Free Lunch⁸	2006-07 Grades 3-6	2007-08 Grades 3-6
Ark CS	89	43.6	60.7
PS 2	76	39.4	51.3
PS 12	65	35.7	41.6
PS 14	60	44.2	52.5

This table shows the Ark's results in comparison to other public elementary schools in Troy, an additional indicator of school performance, not included in its Accountability Plan. The Ark has a larger percentage of students eligible for free lunch than any other school in the district, yet in 2006-07, the Ark performed about the same or better than the three schools in Troy with the next highest percent of students eligible for free-lunch. In 2007-08, the Ark outperformed all of these schools.

⁷ In 2005-06 English language arts and mathematics testing began in grades 3-8, and the Performance Index was henceforth calculated based on the aggregate of all tested students.

⁸ Source: SED 2006-07 school report cards.

Comparative Measure: <i>Each year, the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State ELA exam by at least a small Effect Size (i.e., at least 0.3 or performing higher than expected to a small degree) according to a regression analysis controlling for students eligible for free lunch among all public schools in New York State.</i>			
Results (in percents)			
Index	School Year		
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
	Grades 3-5 Tested: 56	Grades 3-6 Tested: 76	Grades 3-6 Tested: 72
Predicted	44.8	43.4	50.5
Actual	30.4	39.5	59.7
Effect Size	-0.85	-0.29	0.59

In comparison to demographically similar schools state-wide, identified by the percent of students qualifying for free lunch,⁹ the Ark has gone from performing worse than expected in 2005-06 and 2006-07 to considerably better than expected in 2007-08 when it achieved an Effect Size nearly double its 0.3 target.

Growth Measure: <i>For the 2005-06 school year, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one half the gap between their average NCE in the previous fall on the Terra Nova, a nationally-normed ELA test, and an NCE of 50 (grade-level) in the current spring. If a grade level exceeds an NCE of 50 in the fall, the cohort will show an increase in the current year.</i>			
Results (in percents)			
Mean NCE	School Year		
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
	Grades 3-5 (N=26)		
Baseline	33.3	-	-
Target	41.7	-	-
Actual	37.8	-	-
Cohorts Made	(1 of 3)	-	-
Target			

Examining growth based on Terra Nova results in 2005-06, one out of three cohorts achieved its target. The overall average NCE increased by almost five NCEs, but remained well below the national average, such that the school was barely closing the achievement gap.

⁹ The free-lunch statistics are based on October 2006 reports to the State Education Department, the most current official data.

Growth Measure: <i>Each year, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 on the previous year's State ELA exam and 75 percent at or above Level 3 on the current year's State ELA exam.</i>			
Results (in percents)			
Percent Level 3 & 4	School Year		
	2005-06	2006-07¹⁰ Grades 4-6 N=44	2007-08 Grade 4-6 N=48
Baseline	-	25.0	37.5
Target	-	50.0	56.2
Actual	-	38.6	62.5
Cohorts Made	-	(1 of 3)	(2 of 3)
Target	-		

Examining growth on the state exam in 2006-07, one out of three cohorts achieved its target and, though overall performance improved, only 39 percent of students attained proficiency. In 2007-08 two out of three cohorts achieved their targets and overall performance improved considerably, rising from 38 percent to 63 percent proficient in a year. As such, the school notably closed the achievement gap.

Mathematics

Accountability Plan Goal: *Students will understand mathematics and become mathematically confident by communicating and reasoning mathematically, by applying mathematics in real-world settings, and by solving problems through the integrated study of number systems, geometry, algebra, data analysis, probability, and trigonometry.*

Outcome: The Ark has met its mathematics goal by achieving four of the five required measures, including its absolute proficiency measure, and coming close to achieving its growth measure.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures

The Ark has met its mathematics goal during the last two years, after having failed to meet it in 2005-06. During this time period it has more than doubled the percent of students scoring proficient on the state's mathematics exam.

Absolute Measure: <i>Each year, 75 percent of 3 - 6 graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Mathematics examination.</i>			
Results (in percents)			
Grade	School Year		
	2005-06 Tested: 24	2006-07 Tested: 55	2007-08 Tested: 58
3	42.9	76.9	88.9
4	25.0	84.6	94.1
5	55.6	53.8	70.0
6	-	75.0	100.0
7	-		
8	-		
All	41.7	72.7	89.7

¹⁰ New York State began administering English language arts and mathematics exams in grades 3-8 in 2005-06, thus year-to-year growth could not be evaluated until 2006-07 when two years' of results were first available.

The Ark has demonstrated improved performance in mathematics. In 2005-06 when the state first introduced testing in the 3rd through 8th grades, 42 percent of student in 3rd through 5th grade scored at the proficient level, well below the 75 percent target. The following year, when the school added a 6th grade, 73 percent were proficient. Last year 90 percent of students in those grades were proficient.

Absolute Measure: <i>Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State math exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.</i>			
Results (in percents)			
Index	School Year		
	2005-06 ¹¹	2006-07	2007-08
	Tested: 56	Tested: 79	Tested: 69
PI	123	162	190
AMO	86	86	102

The school has consistently exceeded the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set by the state's NCLB accountability system. Last year its Performance Index was 190 out of a possible score of 200, far exceeding the target (AMO) and indicating that very few students scored at the lowest levels on the state test.

Comparative Measure: <i>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 Math exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of the local school district.</i>			
Results (in percents)			
Comparison	School Year		
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
	Grades 3-5	Grades 3-6	Grades 3-6
School	41.7	72.7	89.7
District	57.2	60.1	69.6

Although the Ark underperformed the Troy school district in 2005-06 by a wide margin, it outperformed the local school district in both of the last two years. In 2007-08 it exceeded the performance of the district by 20 percentage points.

Results (in percents)			
Comparison	Percent Eligible for Free Lunch ¹²	School Year	
		2006-07	2007-08
		Grades 3-6	Grades 3-6
Ark CS	89	72.7	89.7
PS 2	76	43.8	63.5
PS 12	65	43.0	50.4
PS 14	60	55.9	63.9

This table shows the Ark's results in comparison to other public elementary schools in Troy, an additional indicator of school performance, not included in its Accountability Plan. The Ark has a larger percentage of students eligible for free lunch than any other school in the district, yet in both 2006-07 and 2007-08, the Ark performed better than the three schools in Troy with the next highest percent of students eligible for free-lunch.

¹¹ In 2005-06 English language arts and mathematics testing began in grades 3-8, and the Performance Index was henceforth calculated based on the aggregate of all tested students.

¹² Source: SED 2006-07 school report cards.

Comparative Measure: <i>Each year, the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State Math exam by at least a small Effect Size (i.e., at least 0.3 or performing higher than expected to a small degree) according to a regression analysis controlling for students eligible for free lunch among all public schools in New York State.</i>			
Results (in percents)			
Index	School Year		
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
	Grades 3-5 Tested: 56	Grades 3-6 Tested: 79	Grades 3-6 Tested: 69
Predicted	55.4	62.2	71.8
Actual	39.3	69.6	89.9
Effect Size	-0.94	0.40	1.07

In comparison to demographically similar schools state-wide, identified by the percent of students qualifying for free lunch,¹³ the Ark performed far worse than predicted in 2005-06. The following year it performed better than predicted and exceeded its Effect Size target of 0.3. In 2007-08 the school performed far better than predicted, with an Effect size of 1.07.

Growth Measure: <i>For the 2005-06 school year, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one half the gap between their average NCE in the previous fall on the Terra Nova, a nationally-normed mathematics test, and an NCE of 50 (grade-level) in the current spring. If a grade level exceeds an NCE of 50 in the previous year, the cohort will show an increase in the current year.</i>			
Results (in percents)			
Mean NCE	School Year		
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
	Grades 3-5 N=26		
Baseline	33.3	-	-
Target	41.7	-	-
Actual	37.8	-	-
Cohorts Made Target	(1 of 3)	-	-

Examining growth based on results from the Terra Nova, a norm-referenced standardized test, one of three grade level cohorts achieved its target in 2005-06, and overall results were well below the national norm.

¹³ The free-lunch statistics are based on October 2006 reports to the State Education Department, the most current official data.

Growth Measure: <i>Each year, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 on the previous year's State Math exam and 75 percent at or above Level 3 on the current year's State Math exam.</i>			
Results (in percents)			
Percent Level 3 & 4	School Year		
	2005-06	2006-07¹⁴ Grades 4-6 N=45	2007-08 Grades 4-6 N=47
Baseline	-	35.6	63.8
Target	-	55.3	69.4
Actual	-	68.9	89.4
Cohorts Made	-	(3 of 3)	(2 of 3)
Target	-		

In 2006-07 when growth could be evaluated for the first time using state test results, all three cohorts achieved their targets, enabling the school to approach the absolute target of 75 percent proficient. Last year, while only two of three cohorts achieved their targets, overall 90 percent of the students were proficient.

Science

Accountability Plan Goal: *Students will understand and apply scientific concepts, principles, and theories pertaining to the physical setting and living environment and recognize the historical development of ideas in science.*

Outcome: The Ark met its science goal

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures

Absolute Measure: <i>Each year, 75 percent of fourth graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Science examination.</i>			
Results (in percents)			
Grade	School Year		
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
	Tested: 9	Tested: 13	Tested: 18
4	77.8	69.2	88.9

In 2005-06 on the state's 4th grade science exam, 78 percent of students scored at the proficient level, just above the 75 percent target. The following year performance dipped to 69 percent proficient, but in 2007-08 rose to 89 percent proficient.

¹⁴ New York State began administering English language arts and mathematics exams in grades 3-8 in 2005-06, thus year-to-year growth could not be evaluated until 2006-07 when two years' of results were first available.

Comparative Measure: <i>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 Science exam will be greater than that of the local school district.</i>			
Results (in percents)			
	School Year		
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
	Grade 4	Grade 4	Grade 4
School	77.8	69.2	88.9
District	86	80	NA

In 2005-06 and 2006-07 the school underperformed the local school district in science. The district's 2007-08 are not available; however, given the Ark's high level of performance it likely came close to, or exceeded, the district.

Social Studies

Accountability Plan Goal: *Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.*

Outcome: The Ark met its social studies goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures

Absolute Measure: <i>Each year, 75 percent of fifth graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Social Studies examination.</i>			
Results (in percents)			
	School Year		
Grade	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
	Tested: 10	Tested: 13	Tested: 13
5	80.0	30.7	84.6

In 2005-06 on the state's 5th grade social studies exam, 80 percent of students scored at the proficient level, exceeding the 75 percent target. The following year performance dropped to 31 percent proficient, but in 2007-08 increased to 85 percent proficient.

Comparative Measure: <i>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 Social Studies exam will be greater than that of the local school district.</i>			
Results (in percents)			
	School Year		
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
	Grade 5	Grade 5	Grade 5
School	80.0	30.7	84.6
District	NA	NA	NA

District social studies data is not available for comparison.

NCLB

In addition to meeting its specific subject area goals, the school is expected under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to make adequate yearly progress towards enabling all students to score at the proficient level on the state English language arts and mathematics exams. In holding charter schools to the same standards as other public schools, the state issues an annual school accountability report that indicates the school’s status each year.

Goal: The Ark will make adequate yearly progress each year.

Outcome: The Ark met its NCLB goal

Absolute Measure: <i>Under the state’s NCLB accountability system, the school’s Accountability Status will be “Good Standing” each year.</i>			
Results			
Status	School Year		
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Good Standing	Yes	Yes	Yes

In each of the last three years the State Education Department has deemed the Ark to be in good standing under the state’s NCLB accountability system.