



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Initial Renewal Recommendation Report

Bronx Charter School for Excellence

March 10, 2009

Charter Schools Institute
State University of New York
41 State Street, Suite 700
Albany, New York 12207
518/433-8277
518/427-6510 (fax)
www.newyorkcharters.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

REPORT INTRODUCTION.....2

RECOMMENDATION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....2

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION.....11

ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT AND IMPROVEMENT14

The final version of Institute renewal reports should be broadly shared by the school with the entire school community. The reports 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 Bronx Charter School for Excellence and renew the charter for a period of five years with authority to provide instruction to students in Kindergarten through 5th grade with a maximum enrollment of 300 students, and consistent with other terms set forth in its Application for Renewal.

Background and Required Findings

In initial renewal reviews, the State University Trustees evaluate the strength and effectiveness of a school’s academic program by the degree to which the school has succeeded in meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals during the Accountability Period² and by the quality of the instructional program in place at the school during the charter period, as assessed using the Qualitative Education Benchmarks (a subset of the Renewal Benchmarks). In giving weight to both student achievement and the emergent program, this approach provides a balance between an outcome-based system of accountability in which a school is held accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results, and a determination of the likelihood that the educational program will improve student learning and achievement going forward.

The Bronx Charter School for Excellence (“Bronx Excellence”) has applied for an initial, Full-Term Renewal of five years. In its fifth year of operation, the State University Renewal Practices provide three possible renewal outcomes for Bronx Excellence: Full-Term Renewal, Short term Renewal, or Non-Renewal. In order to earn a Full-Term Renewal, Bronx Excellence must demonstrate that it has met the criteria for such a renewal as described in the State University Renewal Practices. Specifically, the school must either: (a) have compiled a strong and compelling record of meeting or

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 For the purpose of reporting student achievement results, the Accountability Period is defined as the time the Accountability Plan was in effect. In the case of an initial renewal, the plan covers the first four years that the school was in operation during the charter period.

coming close to meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals, *and* have in place at the time of the renewal review an educational program that, as assessed using the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, is generally effective; or (b) have made progress towards meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals *and* have in place at the time of the renewal review an educational program that, as assessed using the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, is particularly strong and effective.

Based on the Institute's review of the evidence that it gathered and that Bronx Excellence has provided including, but not limited to, the school's Application for Renewal, evaluation visits conducted during the charter period, a renewal evaluation visit completed by the Institute in the last year of the charter period, and the school's record of academic performance as determined by Accountability Plan academic goal attainment, the Institute finds that the school has had a strong record of meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals during the Accountability Period and has had in place an educational program during the charter period that is generally effective.

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 Bronx Excellence 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 of the Act set out in Education Law subdivision 2850(2).

Therefore, in accordance with the standard for initial renewal found in the State University Renewal Practices, the Institute recommends that the State University Trustees approve Bronx Excellence's application for charter renewal and renew the charter for a full term of five years.

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 Record

The Bronx Charter School for Excellence has met the academic goals in its Accountability Plan. Since the school began administering the state's English language arts and mathematics exams in the third year of its charter, it was close to meeting its mathematics goal in the third year and met the English language arts and mathematics goals in the fourth, and most recent, year. Based on limited data, the school has also met its science goal during the charter period. As Bronx Excellence did not enroll 5th grade students during its Accountability Period, the social studies goal is not applicable. According to the state's NCLB accountability system, the school is deemed to be in good standing.

Over the last two years of its Accountability Period, Bronx Excellence has substantially improved its performance on the state's English language arts exam. In the most recent year, the school exceeded its absolute proficiency targets and far-outperformed its local community school district,

demographically similar schools state-wide, and a neighborhood school located a few blocks away, which it included in its Accountability Plan. The school surpassed the performance target set by the state for all public schools under its NCLB accountability system in both years as well. Additionally, as measured by the Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System (ECLAS 2), Bronx Excellence's Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade students consistently demonstrated grade level appropriate literacy skills during each year of the Accountability Period.

During the last two years, from the time Bronx Excellence first began administering the state's mathematics exam, the school exceeded its absolute performance targets each year, but fell short on its comparative measures in the first year. In the most recent year, nearly 100 percent of the school's students scored at or above proficient and Bronx Excellence far-outperformed its local community school district, demographically similar schools state-wide, and the neighborhood school included by Bronx Excellence in its accountability plan. In addition to exceeding its growth target on the New York State mathematics test, Bronx Excellence reported considerable year-to-year progress on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) math test, with students performing just above the national norm on the most recently administered assessment.

Previous Evaluation Visits

In addition to the first, third and renewal inspection visits each State University of New York-authorized charter school typically receives, Bronx Excellence also received second- and fourth-year school inspection visits. As the result, Bronx Excellence has received a school inspection visit in each year of its charter term either by the Institute or by an external party engaged by the Institute to perform such a visit. Each visit built upon the conclusions of the previous visit and Institute staff determined that each visit was warranted to provide adequate oversight to the school.

At the time of the Institute's first-year visit in 2005, school visit inspectors identified a number of challenges for the school's leadership to consider as the school established its operations and program. Challenges identified included the extent of the school's writing curriculum, the efficacy of the number and frequency of assessments given, the use of and professional development opportunities for the education associates, the structure of the school's instructional program, and the evaluation of the school leader. Inspectors suggested that some thought be given to the extent the departmentalized structure may contribute to the school's management difficulties. The departmentalized structure brought up numerous organizational and instructional issues, such as young students having to endure numerous transitions during the school day, and working with several adults whose expectations were not consistent. In addition, ownership of the classroom was unclear and teacher's responsibility for students' achievement was diluted. By the time of that year's school inspection visit, the school had made the decision to move from teachers who are subject matter specialists rotating from class to class to self-contained classrooms beginning the following school year, 2005-06.

As reported in the Institute's 2005-06 Evaluation Report, by the time of its second-year school inspection visit, Bronx Excellence had instituted a number of changes to refine its academic program and the overall governance of the school. Classroom instructional center activity and direct instruction appeared to take place in nearly all of the newly created self-contained classrooms, and education associates were included in the delivery of the academic program. Inspectors were yet not convinced of the efficacy of the number or frequency of assessments given by the school. In fact, school inspectors pushed the school's leadership to consider how assessment results were used to drive instruction and arrive at a common understanding of the capacity of the school's system for that

purpose, and its effectiveness in moving the school toward its Accountability Plan goals and measures. Bronx Excellence had developed a writing curriculum and scope and sequence for second grade, but work remained to do the same for kindergarten and first grades. In December of the second school year, the school's founder and executive director resigned and the principal assumed many of those responsibilities. This change resulted in some confusion regarding school leadership and support for instruction. Also during this school year, the school's board devoted significant time to the areas of development and the new Parkchester facility.

The school's third-year visit was conducted by an external group of educational experts engaged by the Institute. The Third-Year (2006-07) Inspection Report indicated that the academic program at Bronx Excellence, at the time of the inspection visit, was weak. In the key curricular areas of English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies, there were no clearly articulated curricula, or ones that were aligned to state standards. At the time of the visit, Bronx Excellence's new principal had been at the school for two months but had begun to make positive improvements. The visit team indicated that there was still little evidence that assessment data was routinely used to make decisions about what was taught, either at the classroom or school level. However, it was evident that the new principal had a clear plan to organize and systematize data, and to address the school's curricular issues. The new principal had scheduled Saturday professional development sessions on instructional topics that would have an impact on the whole school, and had ascertained that there was a need to change the school's provider of professional development. The report stated that Bronx Excellence was a viable organization, and that the recently expanded board of trustees had the expertise and potential to provide the school's professional staff with the support required to address the challenges at that time.

The letter to the school subsequent to the school's fourth year-inspection visit by Institute staff noted that the school had continued to refine its academic program. Bronx Excellence continued to collect assessment data from a variety of sources. The data were used to identify deficiencies and group students for instruction; however, there was little evidence that teachers effectively used data to modify classroom instruction. The school had changed the curricular materials used for literacy and mathematics, and the selected commercial programs provided teachers with pacing guides and lesson plan guides. Teachers, however, were not required to develop and submit their lesson plans for review. School visit inspectors could not determine the extent to which the curriculum was aligned to state standards or vertically across grades, or the extent to which the pacing aligned to the administration dates of state exams. Curriculum development in the areas of writing, social studies and science continued. Organizationally, the school had a new instructional leadership team in its fourth year comprised of the principal, an academic dean, dean of students and a special education coordinator. Teachers reported that they felt supported by the school leaders, and indicated that they received frequent observations and informal feedback. Also, just prior to the school's fourth year, a new executive director was hired and charged with stabilizing the school, especially in relation to the budget and facility.

The Present Renewal Visit

At the time of the renewal inspection visit, Bronx Excellence reflected a school well-poised to continue building and expanding on its current academic practices that have yielded positive performance outcomes. Bronx Excellence had created a warm, respectful environment where learning is valued and the school had established high expectations for student behavior. The renewal inspection team found the school to be orderly and students compliant. Students had

internalized procedures and routines within classrooms, and as a result teachers did not have to devote significant time to behavior management.

Bronx Excellence continues to collect assessment data from a variety of sources including standardized tests, regular quizzes, tests from commercial curriculum programs, practice state exams, and teacher developed assessments. The data are analyzed and used by school leaders and teachers to identify skill deficits and group students for instruction. At the time of the renewal visit, the most well-developed system for using data to inform instruction was found in the reading program. The results from regularly administered mathematics assessments from the commercial curriculum were used in a more limited way. While there were structures and routines in place at the time of the renewal visit for teachers and school leaders to use data to inform whole-class and small group instruction, the renewal inspection team found more limited evidence of teachers modifying instruction to meet students' individual needs. However, the process of assessment, reviewing results, consultation among teachers, and guidance by the principal was well-established at the time of the renewal visit, and teachers across the grades expressed a common understanding of the meaning and consequences of these assessment results. In addition, Bronx Excellence regularly communicates information regarding the academic performance of individual students and the whole school to families and the school community.

Based on evidence collected as part of Bronx Excellence's renewal inspection visit, the visit team found the school's curriculum to be guided primarily by commercial programs. The school had taken some steps to institute curricular practices to build the capacity of its staff, such as creating a lesson plan template, developing curriculum maps and conducting gap analyses. Renewal visit inspectors found that curricula in subjects other than mathematics and English, such as writing, social studies and science, continued to be in various stages of development, and teachers relied on the principal, other school leaders, and newly developed internal documents for guidance. The writing curriculum followed a writer's workshop model and teachers reported that it was created by the principal at the start of the school year. The school had recently created curriculum maps in social studies and science, and teachers described using them to guide instruction in those areas. Teachers at Bronx Excellence engaged students in purposeful learning activities, although strategies designed to elicit higher order thinking were not often observed. With an exception noted below in the area of English language learners, the school deploys sufficient resources to provide a coherent program of interventions to address a range of student needs including students with disabilities, and students at-risk of academic failure. It is clear that Bronx Excellence has taken initial steps to develop its own curriculum, ensure alignment with New York State standards, and build the professional capacity of its teachers. It was also evident to inspectors that school leaders were aware that significant work remains in this area. It did not appear to inspectors, however, that they had yet created a comprehensive plan, including final outcomes, benchmarks, time and resource allocation, and key personnel, to do so.

Teachers and education associates are responsible for classroom instruction at Bronx Excellence. Teachers demonstrated subject-matter and grade-level competency in the subjects and grades they taught, with the notable exception of science. School leaders appeared aware of this issue, and articulated plans to address it. In addition, the school utilized education associates, who are certified teaching assistants, and deployed them in many classrooms. Their role is to support instruction and supervise students during specials and non-instructional time. Thus, at the time of the renewal visit, it was evident that students were engaged in purposeful learning activities and teachers were striving to execute effective lessons. At the same time, however, it was not clear to inspectors that learning time was maximized in all classrooms (with the exception of first grade), that reduced teacher/student

ratios in reading instruction and in the classroom were being maximized, or that instruction was differentiated to meet the range of individual learning needs represented in the school's student population. As a result, the school had not yet achieved in all classrooms the level of academic rigor to which it aspires.

At the time of the renewal visit, Bronx Excellence had three instructional leaders. In addition to the principal, the dean of students and the special education coordinator provided assigned facets of instructional support to classroom teachers at designated grade levels. Each person's role and responsibilities were well defined, and classroom teachers appeared to clearly understand which of the three administrators to approach for specific types of assistance. According to leaders and teachers, the principal provides overall leadership and support to all teachers, especially in first, second, third and fourth grades. The dean of students directly supports kindergarten, fifth grade, and specials teachers. The special education coordinator not only supported teachers' work with at-risk students and students with special education needs, but in conjunction with the principal, provided instructional support to the third grade teachers. The instructional leaders of Bronx Excellence have a clear vision for teacher performance, and teachers receive regular, classroom-based feedback and guidance, and feel supported by the leadership team. Bronx Excellence is clearly committed to the professional development of its teachers, and provides sufficient time, personnel, materials and funding to support it. Additionally, the dean of students provides guidance and support around classroom management to all teachers, and the special education coordinator supports teachers in data analysis and curriculum planning. The school's most recent results on state assessments indicate that instructional leaders have made significant progress in improving the academic program, and the school appears positioned to create the systems and structures necessary to sustain and continue to improve the school's performance.

Although the school, at the time of the renewal visit, administered a home language survey to identify students who spoke a language other than English at home, the school did not further assess to determine students' English language proficiency level. In addition, the school did not provide a program or services specifically designed to address student English language learning needs or administer an assessment to determine student readiness to discontinue such support. At the direction of the Institute, the board of Bronx Excellence has taken immediate action, including the adoption of clear policy, to address this programmatic need.

Organizational Effectiveness and Viability

The Bronx Charter School for Excellence has established a well-functioning organizational structure with staff, systems and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program. The roles and responsibilities of school leaders are clearly defined as are the lines of accountability. Staff scheduling is internally consistent and supportive of the school's mission, and classrooms are well resourced. The school has also created clear avenues for communication with staff, students, parents and the school's community.

Bronx Excellence has implemented the key design elements of its mission statement. Specifically, "...in a supportive and caring environment with high expectations..." the Bronx Charter School for Excellence is working to prepare "young people in New York City to compete for admission to and succeed in top public, private and parochial" schools by "offering a challenging and rigorous academic curriculum..." The inspection team noted strong evidence of high academic and behavioral standards, a commitment to academic performance accountability through student assessment, and active parent involvement. Stakeholders, including teachers, parents and school

leaders, are aware of and strongly support the school's priorities, and the school has met or come close to meeting the non-academic goals of its Accountability Plan.

Parents/guardians and students are very satisfied with the school, and the majority of parents with students enrolled have strong positive attitudes about the school as reflected by their participation in workshops for parents and their involvement in special school projects and events. The school's waiting list at the time of its renewal inspection visit reflected more students than enrolled in the school at the time (and the school's enrollment was at its projected charter enrollment level). Attendance and re-enrollment rates have become stronger along with the school's academic performance. Few parents have pursued grievances at the board level or outside the school, and the school handled an extremely acrimonious parent complaint deftly. The Institute notes that the school's complaint policy at the time of the renewal inspection was in need of revision.

Bronx Excellence has a nine member board of trustees that is strongly committed to fulfilling its responsibilities. Two of the nine members have been on the board since the founding of the school, and five have been board members for more than three years. The board meets regularly and has a standing agenda that includes a dashboard of indicators addressing academic, operations, and financial issues. The board has worked effectively to further the school's mission and has provided appropriate oversight for the school's operation. The board, at the time of the renewal inspection visit, was in the process of expanding its membership (maximum of 15 members per its current bylaws), and simultaneously seeking to ensure the long-term success of the school by spreading responsibilities across the full board. In addition, the board has conducted regular evaluations of the school's management, and has acted on the results where such evaluations demonstrated shortcomings in performance. With minor exceptions, the school board has operated in conformity with the Open Meetings Law. Through oversight the school board has increased its membership of trustees affiliated with an outside but related not-for-profit entity that benefits the school, The Friends of Bronx Charter School for Excellence, Inc., above the 40% threshold allowed by the charter. The situation will be ameliorated by seeking a waiver to that charter provision in the renewal charter, a change endorsed by the Institute. Nonetheless, the school has policies in place to guard against conflicts of interest and has avoided same.

With certain exceptions the school appears to be in general and substantial compliance with the Charter Schools Act, applicable state and federal law, rules and regulations, the terms of the its charter and its by-laws. The exceptions relate to the school's policies and practices related to: (1) the identification, service provision and exit from services procedures for students who are English language learners; and, (2) compliance with the State University Trustees' charter provision related to the number of school trustees that also sit on the board of any other organization other than another charter school. As described above, both situations are not now an obstacle to renewal.

In addition, with certain 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. Exceptions include the school's formal policies and procedures regarding student discipline (including the lack of a working special education discipline policy), complaints, the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Law. Minor revisions to the school's by-laws and code of ethics are also appropriate at this time. The school should also be commended for its whistleblower policy. While the school board has engaged in some policy revision during the life of the initial charter, it realizes the process must continue.

The school has a relationship with outside, *pro bono*, counsel and makes use of such as needed. The school has also utilized legal talent on the board and would retain paid counsel as appropriate. The

school currently has one or two pending, minor lawsuits that do not threaten the fiscal stability of the school.

Fiscal Soundness

The school's finances have been stable for the life of the charter. In its early years, the school relied heavily on fundraising to balance the budget and create a cash balance. However, beginning in the 2007-08 school year, the school began covering its program and operating expenses exclusively with public funds.

The school leases space from The Friends of Bronx Charter School for Excellence, which has a 30 year non-cancelable operation lease for the property. The school hopes to purchase the facility and the adjacent lot. The school projects that the cost of the mortgage will be roughly equivalent to what it currently pays for rent and real estate taxes.

Bronx Excellence has a mixed record regarding the timely filing of financial reports. On occasion reporting deadlines have not been met.

Although the school has received unqualified opinions on each of its annual audits, the school has received a management letter with each audit. The significant issues raised in these management letters have been addressed to the auditor's satisfaction.

The budget submitted with the school's application for renewal included a budget with a substantial amount of funds generated by fundraising efforts. However, given the change in the nation's economic climate, the school revised its budget projections to reflect more realistic financial goals. With the exception of a \$200,000, over two-years, private commitment the school's revised budget does not reflect a reliance on private funding. Cash flow is positive.

Plans for the Future

The Bronx Charter School for Excellence does not plan any significant changes to the school's structure in the next charter term, if awarded. The school has, however, more clearly articulated the school's key design elements to include the following:

- High academic standards;
- A broad liberal arts education;
- A "back to basics" educational approach (i.e. phonics-based reading curriculum in the early grades that includes direct instruction);
- Longer school day;
- Performance-based compensation for staff;
- Clearly articulated behavior standards for students;
- School uniforms for students;
- A commitment to academic performance accountability through internal and external standardized assessments and student portfolio reviews;
- A commitment to financial accountability; and
- Active parent involvement.

The mission statement would remain the same, and the grades served would remain at Kindergarten through 5th grade with an average class size of 26 students and 52 students per grade level. The projected maximum enrollment would remain at 300 students, and the school year would include 184 days of instruction plus eight Saturday sessions.

In its application for renewal, Bronx Excellence outlines plans to further develop its educational program to improve student outcomes and continue to meet its Accountability Plan goals. The plans focus on the core subject areas of English Language Arts and mathematics. In English, the school plans to focus its efforts on early identification of students in all grade levels who are struggling readers. The reading specialist and leadership team would work with teams of teachers to support them in identifying these students. Once identified, these students would receive additional instruction and materials as appropriate. The school plans to provide professional development to teachers in reading instruction, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of all readers in the lower grades and on guided reading and reading comprehension strategies in the upper grades. The primary elements of the English language arts program at the time of the renewal visit, such as daily reading blocks including flexible reading groups and ongoing coaching and support for teachers, would remain in place.

Similarly, the school plans to maintain its current mathematics program, and more effectively identify, within the first two weeks of school, and provide additional supports to students who have skill deficits in grade level appropriate basic mathematics skills. The school also plans to provide professional development to teachers in meeting the mathematic needs of the range of learners in the classroom.

In terms of governance, the board of the Bronx Charter School for Excellence plans to build on the governance structure in place during its first charter term by expanding the board's committee structure. The board, at the time of the school's renewal inspection visit, had finance, academic and executive committees. The board's development committee had recently met for the first time, and the board anticipated creating a nomination committee.

At the time of the renewal visit, the school also had in place a process by which new board members were oriented to the board and the school. The executive director reported that new board members received information about the school and their responsibilities as board members, as well as visited the school to learn more about the program. The board plans to provide professional development to its members at each meeting, addressing topics such as, "The Board's Role in Academic Excellence" and "Effective Decision Making and Meeting."

In addition, the school plans to continue its relationship with The Friends of Bronx Charter School for Excellence during its next charter term. The work that The Friends of Bronx Charter School for Excellence does in the areas of fundraising and facilities will be essential to achieving the school's goal of ultimately establishing a middle school. As Bronx Excellence enters its second charter term, it plans to continue to rent/lease the school facility and adjacent lot from The Friends of Bronx Charter School for Excellence. When the school's board begins to actively pursue expanding to include a middle school, it will determine the feasibility of purchasing the current facility and/or adjacent lot.

The school's plans for the future appear reasonable, feasible and achievable.

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approved the application to establish the Bronx Charter School for Excellence (“Bronx Excellence”) on February 25, 2003, which was subsequently approved by the Board of Regents on April 29, 2003. After taking one planning year in 2003-04, the school opened in August of 2004 at 1508 Webster Avenue in the Bronx. Bronx Excellence initially served 100 students in kindergarten and 1st grades, adding one grade each year thereafter, enrolling 300 students in kindergarten through 5th grade in 2008-09. The founders ultimately envision a kindergarten through 8th grade school program.

On October 26, 2007, the State University Trustees extended the school’s charter through July 31, 2008 to allow the school to apply for a one-year Short Term Planning Year Renewal. Consistent with having taken one planning year, the school submitted an Application for a one-year Short Term Planning Year Renewal on January 15, 2008, which was approved and extended the charter through July 31, 2009.

The mission statement for Bronx Excellence is as follows:

The Bronx Charter School for Excellence prepares young people in New York City to compete for admission to and succeed in top public, private and parochial high schools by cultivating their intellectual, artistic, social, emotional and ethical development. The Bronx Charter School for Excellence will accomplish this by offering a challenging and rigorous academic curriculum – which at the earliest of grades will have an eye towards college preparation. The Bronx Charter School for Excellence will accomplish this in a supportive and caring environment that has high expectations of all its students.

The academic program and school culture is modeled after high performing charter schools such as KIPP Academy, an accomplished charter middle school in New York City. The lead applicant studied these models during the planning phase recognizing, however, the need to adapt them in certain respects to the primary grades.

The charter’s Executive Summary states that Bronx Excellence will achieve its mission through the following key design elements:

- small classrooms (only 50 students per grade level);
- extended day and year;
- high academic standards;
- subject-based teaching;
- professional opportunities for teachers;
- school uniforms;
- clearly articulated behavior standards for students;
- a commitment to academic performance accountability through internal and external standardized assessments and student portfolio reviews;
- a commitment to financial accountability;
- executive director/principal administrative structure; and
- performance-based accountability.

School Year (2007-08)

200 Instructional Days

School Day (2007-08)

7:45 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.³

Enrollment

	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment⁴	Original Chartered Grades	Revised Grades Served	Actual Grades Served	Complying
2003-04	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year
2004-05	100	100	100	K-1	K-1	K-1	YES
2005-06	150	150	145	K-2	K-2	K-2	YES
2006-07	200	200	200	K-3	K-3	K-3	YES
2007-08	250	250	254	K-4	K-4	K-4	YES
2008-09	300	300	300	K-5	K-5	K-5	YES

Race/Ethnicity	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. Bronx Excellence	% of Enroll. Community District #11	% of Enroll. Bronx Excellence	% of Enroll. Community District #11	% of Enroll. Bronx Excellence	% of Enroll. Community District #11
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.0 %	1.0 %	0.0 %	1.0 %	1.0%	2.0%
Black or African American	68.0 %	47.0 %	62.0 %	48.0 %	62.0%	63.0%
Hispanic	32.0 %	39.0 %	36.0 %	39.0 %	36.0%	11.0%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0.0 %	5.0 %	2.0 %	5.0 %	2.0%	3.0%
White	0.0 %	8.0 %	0.0 %	7.0 %	0.00%	11.0%

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

³ According to the school's charter, 7:45 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. is used for arrival, welcoming, and breakfast. 3:15 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. is used as a time for supplemental instruction, homeroom, and study hall for second through fourth grades and kindergarten and first grades respectively.

⁴ Actual enrollment per the Institute's Official Enrollment Table. Note that the New York State Education Department School Report Card and Database, upon which the Free and Reduced lunch figures are calculated, may represent slightly different enrollment levels depending on the date in which this data was collected.

Special Populations	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. Bronx Excellence	% of Enroll. Community District #11	% of Enroll. Bronx Excellence	% of Enroll. Community District #11	% of Enroll. Bronx Excellence	% of Enroll. Community District #11
Students with Disabilities	NA	NA	NA	NA	8.1 %	15.9 %
Limited English Proficient	0.0 %	8.0 %	0.0 %	9.0 %	0.0 %	9.5 %

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

Free/Reduced Lunch	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. Bronx Excellence	% of Enroll. Community District #11	% of Enroll. Bronx Excellence	% of Enroll. Community District #11	% of Enroll. Bronx Excellence	% of Enroll. Community District #11
Eligible for Free Lunch	60.0 %	55.0 %	52.0 %	70.0 %	56.8 %	68.2 %
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	0.0 %	8.0 %	10.0 %	9.0 %	15.7 %	10.0 %

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

School Charter History

School Year	Year of Operation	Evaluation Visit	Feedback to School	Other Actions Taken
2003-04	Planning Year	NO		
2004-05	1 st	YES	Prior Action Letter; End-of-Year Evaluation Letter	
2005-06	2 nd	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	
2006-07	3 rd	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	Charter Extension Granted
2007-08	4 th	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Letter Renewal Report	School Granted Short-Term Planning Year Renewal
2008-09	5 th	YES	Renewal Report	

ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

Background

At the beginning of the charter 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.

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.⁵ 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 also presents the results of optional measures that the school may have included in its plan.

⁵ 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. For initial renewals, the Accountability Period is the first four years of the Charter Period.

English Language Arts

Accountability Plan Goal: *Students will become proficient readers of the English language.*

Outcome: The Bronx Charter School for Excellence has met its English language arts goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures:

Absolute Measure: <i>For the 2006-07 through 2008-09 school years, 75 percent of third through fifth graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State English Language Arts (ELA) examination.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Grade	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07 (Tested: 33)	2007-08 (Tested: 67)
3	-	-	39.4	86.1
4	-	-	-	93.5
5	-	-	-	-
6	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-
All	-	-	39.4	89.6

The Bronx Charter School for Excellence did not have state testing grades until 2006-07, the third year of its Accountability Period. In 2006-07, when the school had only one testing grade, it achieved a proficiency rate of 39 percent, well below the 75 percent target. However, in the next year, when both 3rd and 4th grade students were tested, the school surpassed the target with an overall proficiency rate of 90 percent and exceeded the target by at least 10 percentage points in both grades.

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)				
	School Year			
Index	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07 (Tested: 44)	2007-08 (Tested: 97)
PI	-	-	145	187
AMO	-	-	122	133

The Bronx Charter School for Excellence has surpassed the English language arts Annual Measureable Objective (AMO) established by the state's NCLB accountability system during each year of its Accountability Period in which the school had state testing grades. The school's Performance Index increased over 40 percentage points from 2006-07 to 2007-08.

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 Community School District 11.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07 (Grade 3)	2007-08 (Grades 3-4)
School	-	-	39.4	89.6
District	-	-	51.9	57.8

In its first year of state test administration and with only one tested grade level, Bronx Charter School for Excellence underperformed Community School District 11 on the state’s 3rd grade English language arts exam. However, in 2007-08, the school substantially improved its performance and exceeded the local district’s proficiency rate by over 30 percentage points with 90 percent of students scoring proficient or better.

Comparative Measure: <i>Each year, the school will exceed to a specified degree (as set by CSI) its expected level of performance on the State ELA exam, as determined by the performance of other schools that have a similar proportion of students eligible for free lunch among all charter and public schools in districts with charter schools.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Index	2004-05	2005-07	2006-07 (Grade 3) (Tested: 44)	2007-08 (Grades 3-4) (Tested: 97)
Predicted	-	-	59.8	66.1
Actual	-	-	47.7	86.6
Effect Size	-	-	-0.88	1.59

In comparison to demographically similar schools, Bronx Charter School for Excellence performed worse than expected to a large degree on the state English Language arts exam in 2006-07. In the following year, the school drastically improved its performance, outperforming similar schools by a large degree with an Effect Size of 1.59, far exceeding its Effect Size target of 0.3.

Growth Measure: <i>For the 2007-08 through 2008-09 school years, each grade-level cohort 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. If a grade-level cohort exceeds 75 percent at or above Level 3 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Percent Level 3 & 4	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08 (Grade 4) (N= 33)
Baseline	-	-	-	57.6
Target	-	-	-	66.5
Actual	-	-	-	93.9
Cohorts Made Target	-	-	-	(1 of 1)

English language arts growth data first became available for Bronx Charter School for Excellence in 2007-08, as only the 3rd grade had been tested in the prior year when no baseline data were available for comparison. In 2007-08 the school achieved its English language arts growth target posting a proficiency rate of 94 percent, far exceeding its target of 67 percent.

Analysis of Optional Measures

Absolute Measure: For the 2004-05 through 2008-09 school years, 75% of kindergarten students will perform at or above Level 2 on the rhyme recognition, rhyme generation, syllable clapping, initial consonants, ABC recognition and spelling strands for the spring administration of ECLAS 2.				
Results (in percents)				
School Year				
Strand	2004-05 (Tested: 44)	2005-06 (Tested: 48)	2006-07 (Tested: 49)	2007-08 (Tested: 52)
Rhyme Recognition	98	100	100	92
Rhyme Generation	93	98	100	94
Syllable Clapping	98	100	100	96
Initial Consonants	95	100	100	96
Alphabet Recognition	59	94	85	90
Spelling	68	88	85	96
All	85	97	95	94

From 2004-05 through 2007-08, with the exception of the alphabet recognition and spelling strands in 2004-05, Bronx Charter School for Excellence surpassed its target of 75 percent proficiency for all strands on the kindergarten ECLAS 2 during all years of the Accountability Period for which data were available.

Absolute Measure: For the 2004-05 through 2008-09 school years, 75% of first grade students will perform at or above Level 4 on the spelling and decoding strands for the spring administration of ECLAS 2.				
Results (in percents)				
School Year				
Strand	2004-05 (Tested: 45)	2005-06 (Tested: 49)	2006-07 (Tested: 46)	2007-08 (Tested: 52)
Spelling	73.0	89.8	97.8	80.0
Decoding	42.0	89.8	97.8	84.0
All	57.5	89.8	97.8	82.0

In 2004-05, Bronx Charter School for Excellence did not achieve its 1st grade ECLAS 2 targets in spelling and decoding, falling short of the 75 percent target in both spelling (73 percent) and decoding (42 percent). In 2005-06, Bronx Charter School for Excellence improved its performance and surpassed its targets when 90 percent of students performed at or above Level 4 in both spelling and decoding. More recently, during the 2006-07 school year, the school exceeded its 75 percent targets with proficiency rates of 98 percent for both strands. In 2007-08, performance decreased somewhat to 80 percent in spelling and 84 percent in decoding, but remained above target levels.

Absolute Measure: For the 2004-05 through 2008-09 school years, 75% of second grade students will perform at or above Level 6 on the spelling and decoding strands for the spring administration of ECLAS 2.				
Results (in percents)				
School Year				
Strand	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07 (Tested: 48)	2007-08 (Tested: 52)
Spelling	-	N/A	81.3	75.0
Decoding	-	N/A	81.3	78.0
All	-	N/A	81.3	76.5

ECLAS 2 results are unavailable for the 2005-06 school year, the first year Bronx Charter School for Excellence had 2nd grade students. In 2006-07, 81 percent of students scored at or above Level 6 on the spelling and decoding strands of the ECLAS 2, exceeding the school’s Accountability Plan target of 75 percent. In 2007-2008, performance declined somewhat but remained at-or-above the measure’s target when exactly 75 percent of students achieved the target in spelling and 78 percent in decoding.

Comparative Measure: <i>Each year, the percent of students performing at or above Level 3 on the State ELA exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of PS 106X.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
Comparison	School Year			
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07 (Grade 3)	2007-08 (Grades 3-4)
School	-	-	39.4	89.6
PS106X	-	-	61	64.8

In 2006-07, when only one grade level of Bronx Charter School for Excellence students were administered the state English language arts exam, they did not outperform PS 106X. The following year, when both 3rd and 4th graders took the test, the school’s performance increased significantly to 90 percent scoring at-or-above Level 3, exceeding the 65 percent proficiency rate of PS 106X by 25 percentage points.

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 spring on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), a nationally-normed reading test, and an NCE of 50 (grade level) in the current spring. If a grade-level cohort exceeds an NCE of 50 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
Mean NCE	School Year			
	2004-05	2005-06 (Grades 1-2) (N=64)	2006-07 (Grades 1-3) (N=139)	2007-08
Baseline	-	43.8	44.5	-
Target	-	46.9	47.2	-
Actual	-	50.1	50.0	-
Cohorts Made Target	-	(2 of 2)	(1 of 3)	-

In 2005-06, on the nationally norm referenced ITBS reading test, both cohorts met their targets and were performing near the national norm. In 2006-07, aggregate performance improved from an NCE of 45 to an NCE of 50 while only one of three cohorts achieved its target and two cohorts performed above the national norm.

Mathematics

Accountability Plan Goal: *BCSE students will demonstrate steady progress in the understanding and application of mathematical skills and concepts.*

Outcome: The Bronx Charter School for Excellence met its mathematics goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures:

Absolute Measure: For the 2006 – 07 through 2008-09 school year, 75% of third through fifth graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Mathematics examination.				
Results (in percents)				
Grade	School Year			
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07 (Tested: 25)	2007-08 (Tested: 67)
3	-	-	78.1	97.2
4	-	-	-	100
5	-	-	-	-
6	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-
All	-	-	78.1	98.5

The Bronx Charter School for Excellence did not have state mathematics testing grades in 2004-05 or 2005-06. In 2006-07, when only 3rd graders were tested, the school exceeded its absolute proficiency target of 75 percent with a score of 78 percent. In 2007-08, when the school had two grades tested, they greatly improved their performance and posted an aggregate proficiency score of 99 percent. Notably, only one student in the two grades did not score proficient or better on the 2007-08 exam.

Absolute Measure: Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State mathematics exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.				
Results (in percents)				
Index	School Year			
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07 (Tested: 43)	2007-08 (Tested: 97)
PI	-	-	177	198
AMO	-	-	86	102

The Bronx Charter School for Excellence has surpassed the Annual Measureable Objective set by the state as part of its NCLB accountability system in each year that its students were administered the state mathematics exam. In 2006-07, the school's Performance Index was 177, well above the AMO of 86 set by the state. Notably, in 2007-08, the school posted a Performance Index of 198, just below the perfect score of 200, and nearly double that year's AMO of 102.

Comparative Measure: 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 Mathematics exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of Community School District 11.				
Results (in percents)				
Comparison	School Year			
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07 (Grade 3)	2007-08 (Grades 3-4)
School	-	-	78.1	98.5
District	-	-	82.4	82.0

In 2006-07, when only 3rd graders were administered the state mathematics test, Bronx Charter School for Excellence did not outperform Community School District 11. In 2007-08 when two grades were tested, the school outscored its district by more than 15 percentage points.

Comparative Measure: <i>Each year, the school will exceed to a specified degree (as set by CSI) its expected level of performance on the State Mathematics exam, as determined by the performance of other schools that have a similar proportion of students eligible for free lunch among all charter and public schools in districts with charter schools.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Index	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07 (Grade 3) (Tested: 43)	2007-08 (Grades 3-4) (Tested: 97)
Predicted	-	-	81.1	84.7
Actual	-	-	79.1	97.9
Effect Size	-	-	-0.15	1.18

In 2006-2007, in comparison to demographically similar schools, Bronx Charter School for Excellence performed worse than expected on the state mathematics exam. However, in 2007-08, when two grade levels were tested, the school exceeded its target and outperformed similar schools to a large degree with an Effect Size of 1.18, far exceeding the target of an Effect Size of 0.3.

Growth Measure: <i>For the 2007-08 through 2008-09 school years, each grade-level cohort of students will reduce by one-half the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 on the previous year's State Mathematics exam and 75 percent at or above Level 3 on the current year's State mathematics exam. If a grade-level cohort exceeds 75 percent at or above Level 3 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Percent Level 3 & 4	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08 (Grade 4) (N=33)
Baseline	-	-	-	87.9
Target	-	-	-	88.0
Actual	-	-	-	97.0
Cohorts Made Target	-	-	-	(1 of 1)

State mathematics growth data first became available for Bronx Charter School for Excellence in 2007-08, as prior to this only the 3rd grade had been tested and no baseline data were available for comparison. In 2007-08, the school achieved its mathematics growth target and far surpassed the 88 percent target with a proficiency rate of 97 percent.

Analysis of Optional Measures

Comparative Measure: <i>Each year, the percent of students performing at or above Level 3 on the State Mathematics exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of PS 106X.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2004-05 (Grades)	2005-06 (Grades)	2006-07 (Grade 3)	2007-08 (Grades 3-4)
School PS106X			78.1 89	98.5 86.1

In 2006-07, Bronx Charter School for Excellence did not outperform PS 106X on the state mathematics exam, scoring 11 percentage points lower with a proficiency rate of 78 percent. In 2007-08, the school improved its absolute and relative performance, posting a proficiency rate of 99 percent and exceeding PS 106X's proficiency rate by 13 percentage points.

Growth Measure: <i>For the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school year, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one half the gap between their average NCE in the previous spring on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), a nationally-normed mathematics test, and an NCE of 50 (grade level) in the current spring. If a grade-level cohort exceeds an NCE of 50 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Mean NCE	2004-05	2005-06 (Grades 1-2) (N=64)	2006-07 (Grades 1-3) (N=138)	2007-08
Baseline	-	46.3	39.5	-
Target	-	48.2	44.8	-
Actual	-	39.6	50.4	-
Cohorts Made Target	-	(0 of 2)	(3 of 3)	-

In 2005-06, when ITBS mathematics test growth data first became available, Bronx Charter School for Excellence did not achieve its growth targets for either cohort and students were performing below the national norm. In 2006-07, the school met its growth targets for all three cohorts and students had improved their overall performance to just above the national norm.

Science

Accountability Plan Goal: *BCSE students will demonstrate proficiency relevant to science achievement.*

Outcome: Based on the limited data available, the school met its science goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures:

Absolute Measure: <i>For the 2007-2008 through 2008-09 school years, 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 Science examination.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Grade	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08 (Tested: 46)
4	-	-	-	100.0
8	-	-	-	-

In 2007-2008, when Bronx Charter School for Excellence first had 4th grade students take the state science exam, 100 percent of students scored proficient or better, exceeding its target of 75 percent.

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 in each tested grade will be greater than that of Community School District 11.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
School	-	-	-	100.0
District	-	80.0	75.0	-

While district comparison data for the 2007-08 school year is yet unavailable, Bronx Charter School for Excellence’s 100 percent proficiency rate exceeds the district’s performance in each of the two previous years. Assuming district performance remained at a similar level on the 2007-08 exam, the school will have met its target.

Social Studies

Accountability Plan Goal: *BCSE students will demonstrate steady progress in the attainment of knowledge and skills relevant to social studies achievement.*

Outcome: This goal is not applicable until the 2008-09 school year.

NCLB

In addition to meeting its specific subject area goals, the school is expected under No Child Left Behind to made 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.

Accountability Plan Goal: *Under the state’s NCLB accountability system, the school’s Accountability Status will be “Good Standing” each year.*

Outcome: The school met the goal. The Bronx Charter School for Excellence was deemed to be in good standing in each of the four years of the Accountability Period.

Absolute Measure: <i>Under the state’s NCLB accountability system, the school’s Accountability Status will be “Good Standing” each year.</i>				
Results				
	School Year			
Status	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Good Standing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Analysis of Additional Evidence

The Bronx Charter School for Excellence received a letter grade of "A" on its 2007-08 New York City Department of Education (DOE) Progress Report. According to the DOE, overall Progress Report scores are based on school performance in three categories: School Environment, Student Performance and Student Progress, with the greatest emphasis placed on Student Progress. Consistent with the data presented for the Institute’s Accountability Plan measures in English

language arts and mathematics above, Bronx Excellence received the highest possible score for both Student Performance and Student Growth on its DOE Progress Report. These high marks reflect the school's near-perfect proficiency rate on state mathematics exams, its high level of performance on state English language arts exams and the extraordinary year-to-year growth in student proficiency rates from 2006-07 to 2007-08 on both exams.