



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Bronx Preparatory Charter School

School Evaluation Report 2006-2007

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INTRODUCTION

Background on Charter Schools and the State University

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

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

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

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

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

The State University Trustees’ Oversight Process

The State University Trustees, jointly with the Board of Regents, are required to provide oversight sufficient to ensure that each charter school that the Trustees have authorized is in compliance with applicable law and the terms of its charter. The Institute, together with the State Education

Department, monitors compliance through a monitoring plan (which is contained in the schools' charter itself) and other methods.

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

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

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

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

Inspection Visits and Reports¹

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

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

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

In particular, the Institute uses a subset of the Renewal Benchmarks to review the effectiveness of a charter school's academic programs, e.g., the strength of a school's internal assessment system, the rigor of its pedagogical approach, and the breadth and focus of the school's curriculum. This subset, Renewal Benchmarks 1.B-1.F, is often referred to as the "Qualitative Education Benchmarks," or "QEBs." In the formative years of a school (generally the first three years of operation), the QEBs are important precisely because the quantitative indicators of academic achievement, i.e., students' performance on standardized tests (especially the state's 3rd - 8th grade testing program and Regents assessments), are generally few in number and difficult to interpret. The qualitative indicators serve as proxy indicators, therefore, for student assessment data sets that are necessarily limited and incipient. Moreover, only by using these qualitative indicators can the Institute provide feedback not only on *how* the school is doing but also *why* it is succeeding or failing.²

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

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

- Measure 1 (absolute) shows the grade level and aggregate performance on the state test of both all students and students enrolled in at least their second year.
- Measure 2 (absolute) presents the school's Performance Index (PI) measured against the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set by the state's NCLB accountability system. The PI is derived by adding together the percentage of students at Levels 2 and above and the percentage at Levels 3 and above.

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

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

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

- Measure 3 (comparative) compares the performance of charter school students enrolled in at least their second year to all students in the same tested grades in the local school district. For instance, a grades 5-8 charter school would compare only its grades 6-8 results to the same tested grades in the district because students in its 5th grade were only in their first year at the charter school.
- Measure 4 (comparative) compares the actual overall performance of the school to the predicted level of performance of similar schools statewide using a regression analysis based on free lunch statistics. The Effect Size is a statistical measure calculated by dividing the difference between the actual and predicted outcomes by the standard deviation difference.
- Measure 5 (value added) shows both the number of grade level cohorts that achieved their target as well as the overall performance of all cohort students combined. If the baseline is above 50 NCE, then the target is an increase of any amount.

The Renewal Cycle and the Timing of School Inspection Visits

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

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

The Present Report

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

The report reflects the observations and findings from the one-day inspection visit conducted typically by a two- to four-member team comprised of Institute staff, and, in some cases, outside experts. Consistent with the Institute's evaluation process throughout the life of the charter, Institute visitors seek evidence of effectiveness in key areas: the academic success of the school including teaching and learning (curriculum, instruction and assessment) and the effectiveness and viability of the school as an organization, including such items as board operations and student order and discipline. Issues regarding compliance with state and federal laws and regulations may be noted (and subsequently addressed), and where the Institute finds serious deficiencies in particular relating to student health and safety it may take additional and immediate action; however, monitoring

compliance is not the principal purpose of the visit. The same is true with issues pertaining to the fiscal soundness of the school. Evaluation visits typically include an interview with the school board, the school leader, classroom visitations, in addition to the review of other school-based documents.

Keeping this Report in Context

In reviewing this report, readers should keep in mind that charter schools face a variety of challenges as they mature, and not all charter schools address each challenge at the same pace. The State University and the Institute recognize the difference between the challenges of starting-up a school and those involved in sustaining its viability and effectiveness over the long-term, as well as the differences in the richness of student assessment data available for a school which has recently opened compared to a school which has been in operation for an extended time. In reviewing this report, readers should keep in mind that charter schools face major challenges in the first few years of their charter. These challenges include:

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

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

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

While there is no one rating that the Institute gives as a result of a single-day visit, it is important to note that where the inspection team identifies area after area with not just room for improvement but significant and severe deficiencies, and few, if any, countervailing strengths, the difficulty that the

school may have in presenting a compelling case for renewal is likely to be substantially increased and this fact may well be noted. Conversely, where the inspection team finds that strengths outnumber weaknesses in both quantity and quality, the school is likely to be better positioned to build a strong case for renewal. So, too, this fact may be noted.

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

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

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

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approved the application for the Bronx Preparatory Charter School (“Bronx Prep”) on January 25, 2000, and the charter was subsequently issued by the Board of Regents on April 4, 2000. The school opened in August 2000 with an enrollment of 100 students in grades five and six and added one grade each year thereafter. In 2006-2007, the school enrolled 521 students in grades five through twelve. The school was originally located at 1508 Webster Avenue in South Bronx in a leased building that had previously been used as a parochial school. In the fall of 2004, the school completed the planned construction of a new facility located at 3872 Third Avenue and successfully moved into the new building for the 2004-05 school year. Bronx Prep has recently completed Phase II of its facility expansion which provides adequate space for the provision of middle and high school instruction through grade twelve.

Bronx Prep submitted an Application for Charter Renewal in 2004 and was granted a full-term, five-year renewal by the State University Trustees on March 1, 2005. The Board of Regents approved the renewal charter on May 17, 2005.

The mission of the Bronx Preparatory Charter School as stated in the school’s Renewal Charter is as follows:

The mission of the Bronx Preparatory Charter School is to prepare under-served middle and high school students for higher education, civic involvement and lifelong success through a structured, caring environment of high academic expectations.

The Bronx Preparatory Charter School seeks to graduate men and women who (1) think critically and creatively; (2) have attained strong skills in mathematics, language, literature, history, science, technology, and the arts; and (3) are committed to a lifetime of learning and civic involvement. The school will empower students through high intellectual and conduct standards – building on their promise, as they prepare for college, career, and citizenship.

Since its founding in 2000, Bronx Prep has emphasized reading and mathematics skills instruction in the middle school years, while preparing students to think critically and creatively as they approach high school. The school intends to ensure that the upper school curriculum is rich in the core academic areas of English language arts and mathematics, but also expansive to include advanced instruction in science, history and the arts. The school sets the expectation that all of its students will attend college, and seeks to build a nurturing school community and culture of achievement, developed in deliberate collaboration with parents, guardians, and community. As stated in Bronx Prep’s Application for Initial Charter Renewal, “...students will expand their understanding in three different ways, relying on different methods of instruction. (1) They will acquire organized knowledge with help of didactic instruction from their teachers. (2) They will develop intellectual skills, such as problem solving and applications of critical judgment, with help from teachers as coaches. (3) They will build their ideas, values, and aesthetic appreciation through Socratic seminars and artistic endeavors...”

Key design elements for Bronx Prep as stated in the school’s Application for Initial Charter Renewal include:

- in the middle school grades, considerable focus is given to critical reading, mathematics and writing skills, which students develop through nearly four hours daily of English and mathematics instruction;

- in the upper school grades, students analyze and evaluate subject matter with increasing sophistication, with importance given to historical, scientific, and literature content;
- extended school day and year for middle school grades, with increasing independent assignments in the upper school grades;
- a belief in being very specific about expectations of teachers and supportive of their instructional growth through significant dedication of resources to in-house professional development;
- a positive and highly structured school culture, with a “scholar dollar” system of positive reinforcement and immediate accountability for negative behavior;
- the school believing that student performance in the arts is critical to personal growth as well as supportive of academic learning and devotes significant resources to music instruction;
- continual assessment of student growth through both quantitative and qualitative measures;
- the school believing that learning should not be drudgery – lessons are expected to be engaging and fun;
- the school believing in creating an economic model that is sustainable without over reliance on private support, with the school’s support organization raising significant philanthropy to build its new facility so the debt burden will be manageable and the school will build an operating model in which key academic programming will be supported by the per pupil revenues from public sources;
- each member of the student-parent-teacher triangle being encouraged to enter into an Achievement Agreement in which each affirms their commitments to each other and to the child’s success; and
- a voting seat on the school’s board of trustees being reserved for the president of the Parent Advisory Council to support parental ownership.

School Year (2006-07)

200 Instructional Days (grades 5-7)
 210 Instructional Days (grade 8)
 190 Instructional Days (grades 9-12)

School Day⁵ (2006-07)

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday:
 7:55 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (grades 5-6)
 7:55 a.m. to 4:05 p.m. (grades 7-8)
 8:15 a.m. to 3:55 p.m. (grades 9-12)

Wednesday:
 7:50 a.m. to 1:20 p.m. (grades 5-8)

⁵ 3:15 to 4:05 p.m. is used as an Advisory Period for grades 5-8, while 4:10 to 5:00 p.m. is used as an Enrichment Period for grades 5-6.

8:15 a.m. to 1:05 p.m. (grades 9-12)

Enrollment

	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment⁶	Original Chartered Grades	Revised Grades Served	Actual Grades Served	Complying
2000-01	100	100	100	5-6	5-6	5-6	YES
2001-02	150	150	150	5-7	5-7	5-7	YES
2002-03	200	200	193	5-8	5-8	5-8	YES
2003-04	250	250	250	5-9	5-9	5-9	YES
2004-05	300	350	355	5-10	5-10	5-10	YES ⁷
2005-06	450	450	440	5-11	5-11	5-11	YES
2006-07	550	550	521	5-12	5-12	5-12	YES
2007-08	600			5-12			
2008-09	650			5-12			
2009-10	700			5-12			

Race/Ethnicity	2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006	
	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.
American Indian, Alaskan, Asian, or Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	1	0.4%	2	0.5%	0	0.0%
Black (Not Hispanic)	100	52.1%	146	58.6%	204	55.7%	227	52.4%
Hispanic	92	47.9%	102	41.0%	160	43.7%	206	47.6%
White	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Source: NYSED 2004-05 Report Card (2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05), NYSED Database (2005-06)

⁶ Actual enrollment per the Institute’s Official Enrollment Table. Note that the NYSED 2004-05 School Report Card, upon which the Free and Reduced lunch and student demographic figures are calculated, cited the following enrollment totals: 2002-03: 192; 2003-04: 249; 2004-05: 366 . The NYSED 2005-06 database cited an enrollment of 433 students.

⁷ The school requested from the State University Trustees and was granted permission to expand enrollment by 50 students in grade five to coincide with the move into a new facility.

Free/Reduced Lunch	2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006	
	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.
Eligible for Free Lunch	136	70.8%	152	61.0%	228	62.3%	274	63.3%
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	37	19.3%	54	21.7%	63	17.2%	77	17.8%

Source: NYSED 2004-05 Report Card (2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05), NYSED Database (2005-06)

School Charter History

Charter Year	School Year	Year of Operation	Evaluation Visit	Feedback to School	Other Actions Taken
Original Charter 1st Year	2000-01	1 st	YES	Prior Action Letter; End-of-Year Evaluation Report	
Original Charter 2 nd Year	2001-02	2 nd	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	
Original Charter 3 rd Year	2002-03	3 rd	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	
Original Charter 4 th Year	2003-04	4 th	NO		
Original Charter 5 th Year	2004-05	5 th	YES	Initial Renewal Report	Granted full Charter Renewal for period of five years
Renewal Charter 1 st Year	2005-06	6 th	NO		
Renewal Charter 2 nd Year	2006-07	7 th	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS EVALUATION VISIT

On March 5, 2005, the State University Trustees granted Bronx Preparatory Charter School (Bronx Prep) a full-term five-year charter renewal. Prior to making the renewal recommendation, the Charter Schools Institute conducted a renewal visit to the school during which the Institute staff observed classrooms; interviewed administrators, board members and teachers; and reviewed documents. Based upon the totality of the school's record during its charter term, including evidence collected at the time of the visit, the Institute issued several findings in its report to the State University Trustees, the key points of which are summarized below.

At the time of renewal, Bronx Prep had met or exceeded most of its goals on key outcome measures in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. In its absolute level of performance on the eighth grade state examinations⁸, the school had made notable progress from previous years to surpass the goals set in its Accountability Plan. In its comparative level of performance on the eighth grade examinations, the school had substantially outperformed Community School District 9, the local district in which Bronx Prep is located. In contrast, results were mixed on the school's performance toward their value-added goal, as one of four grades met the objective in reading and two of four met the objective in mathematics.

Bronx Prep had in place a firmly-established internal assessment system for evaluating the delivery of instruction, consisting of weekly teacher-developed tests and monthly archived pre-tests and post-tests. However, the inspection team noted that the results of these tests did not appear to be used as the basis for instructional change. Furthermore, there was no evidence that test data were used for identifying students at-risk of academic failure at the beginning of the year or for monitoring their progress.

The school's performance data indicated that teachers at Bronx Prep were providing effective instruction based upon the school's approved curriculum. As the school had not yet begun to offer grades eleven and twelve, detailed curricular documents for the upper grades were unavailable. The inspection team noted the importance of devoting sufficient attention to crafting the details of the curricular content for the upper grades as the school continued to grow into a full fifth through twelfth grade program.

At the time of renewal, the school's principal was entering his first full year in this role and shared instructional leadership responsibilities with the school's staff developer. Teachers viewed the staff developer as a critical force in driving curriculum understandings and the improvement of classroom instruction. A particular strength noted by the inspection team was the consistent instructional format and pedagogical practices used by classroom teachers as a result of the staff development system. This practice of identifying strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers, primarily carried out through the use of what was referred to as "the plan," was used as the basis for ongoing teacher training and development.

Students in the school exemplified courteous and respectful behavior both toward teachers and administrators, and toward each other. The emphasis of being on-task, organized and following

⁸ At the time of renewal Bronx Prep only enrolled students in grades five through ten, with the ninth grade in its second year of existence and the tenth grade in its first year of existence.

through on homework was a consistent aspect of the school culture, especially in the upper grades. The school also had strategies in place to meet the needs of students with disabilities and those at-risk of academic failure. Bronx Prep used an integrated model for administering and providing such services through the Learning Enhancement Team, which also provided the school's instructional staff with related professional development during pre-service training.

Bronx Prep had a strong and effective board of trustees that was committed to ensuring the continuity and stability of the school's infrastructure to support the academic achievement of the school's students. The inspection team also noted at the time of renewal that the school was faithful to its mission and had implemented the key design elements contained within its initial Charter Application, evidenced by the focus on academic performance in preparation for college.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the present visit to the Bronx Preparatory Charter School on April 24, 2007. Inspectors visited classrooms, reviewed documents and interviewed instructional and administrative staff. Each of their conclusions is summarized below. The evidence base and further analysis is contained in the Benchmark Analysis and Evidence section which follows.

Academic Attainment and Improvement

Bronx Prep's middle school performance in English language arts (ELA) has declined from the 2003-04 through the 2005-06 school years and, based on 2005-06 results the school was not meeting the middle school component of its ELA goal. However, the school continues to come close to meeting the middle school component of its math goal. Data were not available for evaluating the middle school science or social studies measures. Despite some conflicting data, the school reported passing rates on the Regents exams that indicate the school has laid a foundation for meeting or coming close to meeting the high school components of its goals. The school also achieved its No Child Left Behind (NCLB) goal.

Governance and Leadership

Bronx Prep has benefited from a strong and committed board of trustees and a longtime executive director who, in addition to serving as a board member, was also the founding lead applicant. While the board's priority remains "increasing academic performance across the board," much of its work during the school's early years had been on securing a suitable facility to provide stability for the school's students and staff and to allow for the planned growth of the school. Beginning in 2006-07, the school added a second principal and began transitioning to a model of leadership that places primary responsibility for the development of teachers' pedagogical skills with the two principals and teacher-leaders who serve as department chairs. As the longtime executive director is stepping down as leader of the school at the end of the 2006-07 school year, it was unclear to the inspection team what, if any, changes would be made to the school's evolving leadership structure as a result of the skills and vision of a new head of school.

Instructional Leadership

At the end of the school's seventh year of instruction, its leadership model continues to evolve. Specifically, the school is transitioning to a model that places teacher-leaders in the role of providing ongoing support and coaching for teachers. It was unclear to the inspection team whether or not the teacher-leaders had the appropriate training and experience to provide support to other teachers. In contrast to what was in place at the time of the Institute's renewal visit, the school no longer had in place an effective and coherent system of instructional coaching. At the time of the seventh end-of-year evaluation visit, little ongoing coaching was occurring in either the middle school or high school programs.

Curriculum

The documented curriculum is generally developed by individual teachers without internal consistency within content areas and across grade levels. Specifically, there appeared to be no identifiable scope and sequence for the content areas in the middle and high school grades. The absence of these tools is particularly problematic in the context of the current primary focus on the development of interim assessments. Teachers noted that the development of such assessments is hampered by the teachers' inability to determine what students should know and be able to do within

each grade and subject. The ad hoc and fragmented development of curriculum bifurcates the middle and high school programs.

Use of Assessment Data

The inspection team found some evidence that the results of formal assessments administered by the school are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the academic program. However, these efforts did not appear to be conducted in a systematic fashion and it was unclear what processes and/or products result from these efforts. The inspection team did not see evidence that teachers were using assessment data to make changes and improvements in their curriculum and instruction, despite the fact that school leaders had identified assessment development as a recent school priority with significant resources being allocated for this purpose. Finally, Bronx Prep has not yet made progress toward meeting one of the goals within its Accountability Plan related to the use of portfolio assessment in the high school grades.

Student Order and Discipline

Student order and engagement during classroom instruction varied throughout the school and appeared to be a function of the quality of instruction. While students in the upper high school grades were generally observed as being engaged and on-task, of particular concern to the evaluation team was the ineffective management of students in common areas and whole class transitions. Taken together, the evidence collected in this area suggests that the school has not yet maximized the use of the significant time available during its school day.

At-Risk Students

The school primarily uses a pull-out model to meet the needs of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), with the Learning Enhancement Team coordinator serving as the only full-time permanent staff member providing special education services. At the time of the evaluation visit, teachers reported little to no contact with special education staff regarding the planning of instruction and support for classified students. The school did not have in place a well-defined remedial program for literacy and mathematics for non-classified students in need of academic support at the middle school grades and had not implemented a structured remediation program in the high school grades.

PREVIOUS SCHOOL YEARS' PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The following review of academic attainment and improvement (Benchmark 1A) is based on assessment results and other data from the 2005-06 school year, although data is presented from the two previous years as well.

Summary: Bronx Prep's middle school performance in English language arts declined from the 2003-04 through the 2005-06 school years and, based on its 2005-06 performance, the school was not meeting the middle school component of its English language arts goal. However, the school continues to come close to meeting the middle school component of its mathematics goal. Data were not available for evaluating the middle school science or social studies measures. Despite some conflicting data, the school reported passing rates on the Regents exams that indicate the school has laid a foundation for meeting or coming close to meeting the high school components of its goals. The school also achieved its No Child Left Behind (NCLB) goal.

English Language Arts: Middle School: For its absolute measure, the school's performance declined from the 2003-04 through the 2005-06 school years. In 2003-04, 66 percent of eighth grade students scored at the proficient level on the state exam. This decreased to 60 percent in 2004-05. In 2005-06, when students in grades six through eight took the test, 43 percent were proficient. This level of performance is not close to meeting the stated measure. Despite not having met its goal of absolute performance, each year Bronx Prep has both achieved the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set by the state's NCLB accountability system and outperformed the local school district (Community School District 9). The school has not met its value added measure. In each year from 2003-04 through 2005-06, one or two out of five cohorts achieved their target on the Stanford 9. Overall performance was at about grade level in 2003-04 and 2004-05. Although not a measure in its Accountability Plan, in comparison to similar schools statewide, the school performed considerably better than predicted in 2004-05. In 2005-06, the school performed about the same as predicted which is below the Institute's standard. **High School:** For its absolute measure, 80 percent of students in the 2003 Regents cohort passed the English Regents Exam in 2005-06, which exceeds the stated absolute measure for Regents performance.

Mathematics: Middle School: On the absolute measure, 76 percent of eighth grade students were proficient in 2003-04 and 53 percent in 2004-05. In 2005-06, 57 percent were proficient in grades six through eight. Between 2003-04 and 2005-06 the school has consistently achieved the AMO and far exceeded the performance of the local school district. The school has not met its value added measure; in each year from 2003-04 through 2005-06, only two of five cohorts achieved their target on the Stanford 9. Overall performance was comparable to grade level in 2003-04 and 2004-05. For 2004-05 and 2005-06 the school has also performed much better than predicted in comparison to similar schools statewide. **High School:** For its absolute measure, 92 percent of the 2003 Regents cohort passed the Math A Regents Exam, which exceeds the stated absolute measure for Regents performance.

Science: Middle School: Results from the eighth grade state science test were not available. **High School:** Of the 2003 Regents cohort class, 81 percent passed one of the Science Regents Exams.

Social Studies: Middle School: Results from the eighth grade state social studies test were not available. **High School:** On the Global History Regents Exam, 64 percent of the 2003 Regents cohort passed. On the U.S. History Regents Exam, 69 percent passed.

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

Optional Goals: In its 2005-06 Accountability Plan Progress report, the school did not report on Goals V-IX in its Accountability Plan. Although not a measure in its Accountability Plan, Bronx Prep did note that on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), the average verbal score was 469 and the average math score was 489. As reported in the school’s Progress Report, these results are significantly higher than local comparisons.

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

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

English Language Arts Bronx Preparatory Charter School



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

	2003-04 Grades Served: 5-9		2004-05 Grades Served: 5-10		2005-06 Grades Served: 5-11		MET
	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	
ABSOLUTE MEASURES 1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam. <small>Note: A comparison of overall results for all students and 2+ years students is not valid if the school's first year of enrollment is a test grade.</small>	4	(0) (0)	4	(0) (0)	3	(0) (0)	NO
	8	61.0 (41) 65.8 (38)	8	57.7 (52) 60.0 (45)	8	32.5 (62) 33.0 (61)	
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	Grades	PI AMO	Grades	PI AMO	Grades	PI AMO	YES
	4	123	4	131	5-8	140 122	
3. Each year the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State exam will be greater than that of students in the same tested grades in the local district.	Grades	School District	Grades	School District	Comparison: (Bronx District 9)		YES
	4	65.8 22.1	4	60.0 20.0	Grades	School District	
4. Each year the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3).	Grades	Actual Predicted Size	Grades	Actual Predicted Size	Comparison: (Bronx District 9)		YES
	8	57.7 30.5 1.38	8	60.0 20.0	Grades	School District	
VALUE ADDED MEASURE 5. Each grade level cohort will reduce by one half the difference between the previous year's baseline and 50 NCE on a norm referenced test or 75 percent proficient on the state exam.	Assessment: SAT-9		Assessment: SAT-9		Assessment: SAT-9		NO
	Grades	Cohorts Making Target	Grades	Cohorts Making Target	Grades	Cohorts Making Target	
	6-9	2 of 5	6-10	1 of 5	6-10	2 of 5	
	N	Base Target Result	N	Base Target Result	N	Base Target Result	
	166	51.3 51.4 50.5	204	50.4 50.5 48.0	319	45.1 44.9 0.01	

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Mathematics

Bronx Preparatory Charter School



	2003-04 Grades Served: 5-9			2004-05 Grades Served: 5-10			2005-06 Grades Served: 5-11			MET		
	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)			
ABSOLUTE MEASURES 1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam. <small>Note: A comparison of overall results for all students and 2+ years students is not valid if the school's first year of enrollment is a test grade.</small>	4	(0)	(0)	4	(0)	(0)	3	(0)	(0)	NO		
	8	70.7 (41)	76.3 (38)	8	52.8 (53)	53.3 (45)	4	67.0 (109)	76.0 (98)			
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	Grades	PI	AMO	Grades	PI	AMO	Grades	PI	AMO	YES		
	4	171	81	4	142	93	5-8	153	86			
COMPARATIVE MEASURES 3. Each year the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State exam will be greater than that of students in the same tested grades in the local district.	Comparison: (Bronx District 9)			Comparison: (Bronx District 9)			Comparison: (Bronx District 9)			YES		
	Grades	School	District	Grades	School	District	Grades	School	District			
4. Each year the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3).	4	76.3	28.2	4	53.3	21.5	6-8	56.5	24.6	YES		
	8	76.3	28.2	8	53.3	21.5	6-8	56.5	24.6			
VALUE ADDED MEASURE 5. Each grade level cohort will reduce by one half the difference between the previous year's baseline and 50 NCE on a norm referenced test or 75 percent proficient on the state exam.	Assessment: SAT			Assessment: SAT			Assessment: SAT			NO		
	Grades	Cohorts Making Target	Effect Size	Grades	Actual	Predicted	Grades	Actual	Predicted		Effect Size	
	6-9	2 of 4	NO	4	52.8	38.7	6-10	59.0	46.5	0.54		
	N	Base	Target	Result	N	Base	Target	Result	N	Base	Target	Result
	163	63.4	63.5	65.2	202	62.1	62.2	58.7	315	59.0	46.5	0.54

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE

Governance and Leadership

Bronx Preparatory Charter School has benefited from a strong and committed board of trustees, many of whom have been active members of the school's governing body since its inception in 2000. The school's longtime executive director, also the founding lead applicant and a member of the school board, has provided strong organizational leadership during the school's first seven years of operation. The Board Chair noted that, "we hold the charter and are accountable for results." In this regard, the school board identified its role as one of governance and accountability, as opposed to operational management.

While the board of trustees' priority remains "increasing academic performance across the board," much of its focus during the school's early years had been on securing a suitable facility to provide stability for the school's students and staff and to allow for the planned growth of the school. One of the school board's biggest accomplishments has been to successfully facilitate the completion of a multi-phase building project that began in 2002, with a capacity for housing the 700-800 students enrolled in the entire grade five through twelve academic programs.

As developed by the board of trustees, the school's mission since its founding has been in part to "...prepare underserved middle and high school students for higher education..." At the completion of the 2006-07 school year, Bronx Prep celebrated its first graduating class. In addition to that accomplishment, the inspection team noted another accomplishment directly related to the school's mission: the acceptance of 100 percent of the graduating class of 2006-07 into a college or university, many gaining admittance into highly selective institutions. Furthermore, in keeping with its mission, the school board allocated the necessary funding for an additional college counselor to monitor the performance of graduates and assist them with related challenges as they begin their college education. One board member stated, "The true measure of our impact will be the level of success these students experience once they get to college, not just their acceptance into the schools." This perspective suggests that the school is continuing to make positive strides in fulfilling its mission and that the board of trustees has begun to establish a system to monitor future progress in this area.

Until the 2005-06 school year, the school's primary instructional leadership team consisted of one principal and a staff developer. The main responsibility of the staff developer had been to provide ongoing support and coaching to the Bronx Prep teachers. At the time of renewal, the Institute noted that the school's use of a consistent approach to staff development was one of its primary strengths. Beginning in 2006-07, the school added a second principal and began transitioning to a model of leadership that places primary responsibility for the development of teachers' pedagogical skills with the two principals; one focusing on the middle school (grades 5-8) and the other on the high school grades (grades 9-12). Additionally, content-specific teacher-leaders served in the capacity of department chairs.

The school's longtime executive director stepped down at the conclusion of the 2006-07 school year and a new leader has been selected and hired by the school's board of trustees. The board recently completed the search process for the new leader in a systematic and thorough manner, including eliciting feedback from various school stakeholders and utilizing an external consulting firm to facilitate the search. Most notably the board changed the title of the position from executive director to head of school. The board articulated in the job description for head of school that the new leader

will “ensure that the curriculum, programs and operations are both vibrant and well-managed and that the School is fiscally and administratively sound.” This focus indicates that the school board had made a priority of selecting an individual with a strong background in teaching and learning as well as school administration within which to guide the school’s future development.

The school will likely continue to benefit from the organizational leadership and vision of the current executive director and founder who plans to continue to serve as a member of the school’s board of trustees. She noted that the school is “infinitely more complex than two years ago” and refers to her replacement as a “real reformer and true educational leader.” Because the current executive director does not possess a formal background in instructional leadership, she candidly admitted not being able to provide the type of support that the relatively inexperienced school principals required and envisions the new head of school serving in such a role. It was unclear to the evaluation team what, if any, changes will be made to the school’s evolving leadership structure as a result of the skills and vision of the new head of school.

Instructional Leadership

At the end of the school’s seventh year of operation, Bronx Prep’s structure and method for the provision of instructional leadership continues to evolve. Specifically, the middle school is transitioning to a model that places teacher-leaders in the role of providing ongoing support and coaching for teachers. The middle school principal noted that all staff members are aware of this change and that it will be fully implemented during the 2007-08 school year. Teacher-leaders have been identified for each of the four core academic areas in the middle school and, according to the middle school principal, there will be release-time built into their teaching schedules in future years to allow teacher-leaders to work with other teachers. The high school program is undergoing a similar evolution in terms of the role that department chairs will fulfill as instructional leaders. According to the high school principal, department chairs, whose current responsibilities are related to curriculum development and administrative functions, will have more flexibility in their schedules in order to enable them to perform more coaching duties. However, it was unclear to the inspection team whether or not these teacher-leaders had the appropriate training and experience to provide support to teachers. In fact, some of the identified teacher-leaders questioned their own ability to provide the type of support and coaching required by the new structure due to their lack of experience and training, suggesting that they may not be able to adequately support the teachers in their respective departments.

In contrast to what was in place at the time of the Institute’s renewal visit, the school no longer had in place an effective and coherent system of instructional coaching. There was little evidence of ongoing coaching occurring in both the middle and high school. Staff members were not generally aware of the current and future role that teacher-leaders and department chairs are expected to fulfill. Responding to a question regarding the identification of the instructional leader, one veteran teacher responded that “no one and a lot of people” function as the instructional leader. This suggests that the school has not clearly articulated the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of all staff related to the present and proposed organizational structure.

At the time of the school visit, the inspection team noted an inconsistent system of teacher evaluation at the middle and high school grades. Both the middle and high school principals reported that they were responsible for all formal teacher evaluations (mid-year and end-of-year evaluation) within their respective grade levels. However, several teachers reported that they had yet to be formally evaluated and that informal evaluations typically take the form of “10-15 minute walk-throughs” that do not result in formal feedback to teachers. Given the range of instructional abilities displayed by

the school's teachers and relative inexperience of teachers new to the profession and/or to the school, this evidence suggests that teachers are in need of a well-defined system of evaluation and feedback that meets the instructional needs of individual teachers. Further, given changes to the school's leadership model, Bronx Prep did not yet have in place a structure to ensure the alignment between teacher evaluation conducted by the school principals and coaching provided to teachers primarily by the teacher-leaders and department heads.

Curriculum

In the middle school, the documented curriculum was generally developed by individual teachers without internal consistency within content areas and across grade levels. The middle school principal identified "standards-based instruction," or the purposeful teaching of agreed-upon skills and sets of knowledge, as one of the main priorities for improving the academic program. The inspection team found inconsistent evidence to suggest that New York State performance standards (state standards) were the basis for instruction. Several teachers reported using the state standards to informally guide their planning, and most teachers in the middle school appeared to be aware of their respective standards; however, the use of state standards in forming a comprehensive written curriculum framework and as a guide in the delivery of instructional content was not apparent. Furthermore, there appeared to be no identifiable scope and sequence for the content areas in the middle grades. One teacher reported, "There is no scope and sequence and no teaching to the standards." In addition, teachers did not follow a consistent method of instructional planning or delivery and were not required to submit lesson plans for the purposes of quality or content review. Another teacher commented that, "I'm developing my own curriculum....It's frustrating in the sense that no one follows the state standards. I don't know what they learned last year." Teachers delivering instruction in the same content area and/or grade level were observed using different sets of resources and materials, suggesting that there is not a common curriculum for each grade level and content area. The inspection team found limited evidence that teachers were developing what was referred to as "diary maps" as a way of developing written curriculum. Teachers reported that this work began in the 2005-06 school year, but that this effort had been inconsistently applied through the 2006-07 school year. The evaluation team noted that this practice appeared to be retrospective in nature, in that teachers were documenting what was taught and not purposefully planning instruction based on a set of skills and enduring understandings that students were expected to acquire.

The inspection team also found similar evidence at the high school level. At the time of renewal, the Institute's visit team noted the need for the school to devote significant attention to crafting the details of the curricular content for the high school grades. This practice of comprehensive curriculum development is in the early stages and its implementation is in need of further attention. Consistent with the middle school grades, primary responsibility for curriculum development in the high school grades is placed upon classroom teachers with support from department chairs. Curriculum "diary maps" are the primary tool used in the school's efforts to establish a coherent curriculum; work on the "diary maps" began in the 2005-06 school year, and continued in an inconsistent fashion into the 2006-07 school year. The extent to which curricular material within specific content areas are aligned from grade to grade to create a seamless program is limited. Several teachers reported using a combination of state standards and their respective textbook sequence as their primary guide in determining the appropriate sequence of content and pacing. One teacher reported that curriculum development "hasn't been a school priority or had focus...The push is for interim assessments, but we haven't felt ready to do that because we haven't scaffolded out the skills yet." This evidence suggests that the school has neither clearly communicated nor implemented effective instructional priorities for teachers.

Several teachers reported a disconnect between the middle school and high school grades and expressed interest in scheduling more time for purposes of collaboration around curriculum. One high school teacher reported that, “right now there’s no sense of what the eighth graders need in order to succeed at the ninth grade,” while another reported that “once our [high school] curriculum and their [middle school] curriculum gets built out, we can look at grades five through twelve.” Similarly a middle school teacher reported, “We have no contact with the high school. Meetings between the middle school and high school are rare.” The ad hoc and fragmented development of the school’s documented curriculum bifurcates the middle and high school programs.

Use of Assessment Data

The school regularly administers a variety of formal assessment instruments, including the required components of the New York State Testing Program (NYSTP), Stanford 9 norm-referenced assessment for English-language arts and mathematics in grades five through ten, Lindamood-Bell literacy assessments, and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) in the high school grades. The inspection team found some evidence that the results of these assessments were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the academic program. For example, the middle school principal noted that the results of the state mathematics and English language arts tests were contributing factors when considering changes to the commercial materials used in the classroom. Furthermore, and consistent with the school’s mission as a college preparatory institution, every student enrolled in the school’s eleventh grade and many in the twelfth grade take the SAT test, the results of which are used anecdotally to monitor the effectiveness of the high school program. However, these efforts do not appear to be conducted in a systematic fashion and it was unclear what processes and/or products result from these efforts.

The evaluation team found limited evidence that the results of the Stanford 9 and Lindamood-Bell assessments were used to identify students in need of academic intervention, yet this practice was not conducted in a clearly defined way. Regarding the use of the Stanford 9 assessment results, one teacher reported that, “I don’t know that anyone else in our building does [use the results]. I did a comparison between my students this year and last.” Another teacher stated, “I never saw the fall Stanford scores. We are starting to use the test scores. We talked about how to use the scores to set up an Excel program to show the skills, which ones [are] mastered or not. This was very helpful.” The middle school principal stated that the results of the Stanford 9 tests were “in a box when I got here and I provided them to teachers in a professional development session.” However, teachers were generally unaware of these results. In summary, the team did not see evidence that teachers were using the data to make changes and improvements in their curriculum or to improve instruction.

In the high school, teachers were responsible for developing regular assessments but, at the time of the end-of-year visit, assessments mainly consisted of unit and mid-term tests and were not being used to drive instructional decisions. The inspection team found inconsistencies between and among content areas in terms of the number of assessments developed and their particular use despite being presented as a common school-wide initiative by the principal. In mathematics, some teachers reported the development of eight interim assessments to mirror the Regent’s Exam while others reported more infrequent development and use of interim assessments. One teacher reported developing his respective interim assessments following the delivery of related material, suggesting that the knowledge and skills students are expected to know had not clearly been established prior to the planning and implementation of the instructional program. In English language arts, teachers generally reported that the development of interim assessments was a practice that was prioritized near the beginning of the 2006-07 school year, but has since diminished. These teachers reported that they were not engaged in developing interim assessments because they had not yet identified

what students should know and be able to do at each grade level, and therefore could not build assessments around non-existent standards. Accordingly, teachers reported that, “We lost out in both ways. We were working on the assessments, but we stopped them because we didn’t have a curriculum. Then we didn’t really get to develop that either. So we lost out on two things.”

This is despite the fact that the Bronx Prep leadership team identified the development and effective use of interim assessments as a main priority of their recent work. The school stated in its 2005-06 Accountability Plan Progress Report that “...at a school-wide level we will focus intensely this year on effective use of assessment in every classroom. The board has made a special budget allocation of \$25,000 to bring in the most effective resources possible to lead the staff through a process of creating an effective, coherent set of interim assessments for the school.” The implementation of this focus is limited and, consistent with the Institute’s Renewal Report in 2005, assessment results are not yet being used as the basis for instructional change.

Bronx Prep has not implemented tools to assess its progress toward meeting one of the goals within its Accountability Plan. Regarding the school’s goal that focuses on student success in developing a “portfolio of written work, which is verbally defended and which demonstrates mastery of various forms of writing,” the school reported in its Accountability Plan Progress Report that, “There are no results to report here. Portfolios will be created this year [2006-07] and results will be reported in the 2007 Annual Report.” Inspection team members noted evidence of portfolios containing a rich assortment of student work products accomplished throughout the 2006-07 school year. However, there was no evidence of student reflection on the work and limited teacher feedback and/or grading. The portfolios appear to be collections of student work and not yet a part of a portfolio assessment system. School leaders acknowledged that the school has yet to fully implement a portfolio assessment system and is planning on doing so in upcoming years.

Student Order and Discipline

Student order and engagement during classroom instruction varied throughout the school and appeared to be a function of the quality of instruction. Students in several high-ability classes in the high school grades, such as advanced mathematics and science courses where class size was relatively small, were observed to be on-task and engaged in meaningful learning exercises. The orderly behavior of these students suggests that they, as veteran students of Bronx Prep, had internalized the school culture over a period of time. As the upper-class students, they set a positive pro-academic tone in the school. In grades nine and ten, and many classrooms in the middle school, student order and engagement was inconsistent, suggesting that some of the teachers new to the school had yet to implement strong classroom management practices. In some classes students were observed following classroom procedures as directed; in others, where lessons were focused on low-level factual presentations, several students were observed sleeping during class or involved in off-task activities, which suggests that a school-wide standard for behavior had not been internalized by all students and staff.

Of particular concern to the evaluation team was the ineffective management of students in common areas and whole-class transitions. Students were commonly observed “hanging out” in the hallways. In addition, one inspector noted an unsupervised classroom following whole-class transitions for almost 10 minutes. On more than one occasion, instruction started several minutes late due to the ongoing arrival of late students. Taken together, this evidence suggests that the school has not yet maximized the use of the significant time available during its school day.

At-Risk Students

Bronx Prep's efforts for assisting students who are at-risk of academic failure, including the implementation of the school's special education program, is led by the Learning Enhancement Team (LET) coordinator. During 2006-07, this member of the school's leadership team was new to the position and the school. The school primarily uses a pull-out model to meet the needs of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), as the LET coordinator served as the only full-time permanent staff member providing such services. However, the coordinator did report hiring two additional special education staff members who will join the school in the 2007-08 school year.

A consulting practitioner from the Lindamood-Bell literacy program, who is also a certified special educator, served in a contracted capacity at the school and provided pull-out instruction for struggling students, those classified with IEPs and students generally lagging behind their peers. Additionally, several other general education teachers reported success in using strategies from this program in meeting the needs of all students. The program includes a double-block of literacy for identified students, yet inspectors noted a concern that some students were missing a considerable amount of instructional time in other core subject areas.

Teachers reported little to no contact with special education staff regarding the planning of instruction and support for classified students. According to a teacher, the LET Coordinator, "doesn't have time to visit classrooms;" suggesting that meeting the needs of students with IEPs is not coordinated well between classroom and special education teachers. This lack of apparent coordination of special education services is exacerbated by the general inexperience of many classroom teachers who, along with many of their colleagues, expressed an interest in receiving further training in strategies they can employ to meet the needs of special education students and a desire to collaborate with special educators on a more regular basis.

The school does not have in place a formal remedial program for literacy and mathematics for non-classified students in need of academic support. Generally, teachers in the middle school grades used an enrichment block at the end of the school day or optional after-school tutoring to provide informal assistance to students struggling in mathematics, with the middle school principal delivering some of the remediation efforts in the after-school program due to her past experience related to mathematics instruction. Remediation is provided inconsistently within the high school grades; most teachers reported using various techniques within the regular classroom and available non-instructional time to assist struggling students.

APPENDIX: RENEWAL BENCHMARKS USED DURING THE VISIT

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

<p>Benchmark 1D Pedagogy</p>	<p>1D.1 The school has strong instructional leadership.</p>
	<p>1D.2 High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.</p>
	<p>1D.3 The school has programs that are demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically to meet the school’s academic Accountability Plan goals, including programs for students who require additional academic supports, programs for English Language Learners and programs for students eligible to receive special education. .</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?</p>
<p>Benchmark 2C Governance</p>	<p>2C.1 The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school’s mission and specific goals.</p>

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the Second-Year Visit at Bronx Preparatory Charter School on Tuesday, April 24, 2007. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit:

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

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

Ron Miller, Ph.D., is the Vice President for Accountability at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Dr. Miller was the Educational Accountability Officer for the New York City Department of Education. After teaching grades three through five in New York City public schools for seven years, he joined the central offices of the New York City schools, where he conducted evaluative research and organizational studies. As Director of the Office of School Planning and Accountability, he worked with school leaders to develop their capacity to use data for school improvement. In this capacity he developed PASS, a school performance review system which was adopted in 600 city schools. Dr. Miller holds an AB degree from the University of California at Berkeley and a Ph.D. in Applied Anthropology from Columbia University.

Susan Seymour is a Senior Analyst at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. In the past Mrs. Seymour taught pre-kindergarten through 10th grade. From 1996 to 1999 she worked in the Governor's Office of Regulatory Reform as an analyst. There she assisted various

state agencies, among others the banking department and the Office of Children and Family Services, in cutting “red tape” from their New York State regulations. Interested in education reform, she joined the Charter Schools Institute in 1999. She received her B.S. from The University of Rochester and her M.A. from Manhattanville College concentrating in Special Education and Reading.

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

Kim Wechtenhiser is Associate Vice President at the Charters Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Ms. Wechtenhiser has primary responsibility for the Institute’s charter renewal process; overseeing a comprehensive evaluation of each SUNY authorized charter school as it comes up for renewal. Ms. Wechtenhiser joined the Institute in September 2005 as a Senior Analyst. Prior to her work with the Institute, Ms. Wechtenhiser served as the Coordinator of new Schools Development in the Charter School Office at the Massachusetts Department of Education, where she led the review of new charter school applications, provided technical assistance to newly chartered schools, participated in the ongoing review of their academic and organizational performance, and oversaw the charter amendment process. Ms. Wechtenhiser is the former Lead Teacher of Spanish at City on a hill Charter Public School in Boston, where she also served as faculty representative to the school’s Board of Trustees. She taught Spanish at Westfield Public High School and English at the Universidad de Córdoba in Spain. Ms. Wechtenhiser holds a B.A. in Spanish and Secondary Education and a M.A. in Spanish Language and Literature, both from Simmons College. She earned an Ed.M. in School Leadership from Harvard University Graduate School of Education.