



Charter Schools Institute  
*The State University of New York*

## **Brownsville Collegiate Charter School**

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# **School Evaluation Report 2009-2010**

Visit Date: April 8, 2010

Report Issued: April 18, 2011

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

INTRODUCTION ..... 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT ..... 2

SCHOOL OVERVIEW ..... 3

SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE ..... 6

    Evaluation Visit Benchmark Analysis and Evidence ..... 6

    Conduct of the Visit ..... 13

APPENDIX A: RENEWAL BENCHMARKS USED DURING THE VISIT ..... 15

    State University Renewal Benchmark 1H ..... 17

## INTRODUCTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the “SUNY Trustees”), jointly with the New York State Board of Regents, are required by law to provide oversight sufficient to ensure that each charter school that the SUNY Trustees have authorized is in compliance with applicable law and the terms of its charter. The SUNY Trustees, however, consistent with the goals of the New York State Charter Schools Act of 1998, view their oversight responsibility more broadly and positively than purely monitoring compliance. Accordingly, they have adopted policies that require the Charter Schools Institute (“the Institute”) to provide ongoing evaluation of charter schools they authorize. By providing this oversight and feedback, the SUNY Trustees and the Institute seek to accomplish three goals:

- **Facilitate Improvement.** By providing substantive information about the school’s academic, fiscal and organizational 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 identify areas for improvement.
- **Disseminate Information.** The Institute disseminates information about the school’s performance not only to its board of trustees, administration and faculty, but to all stakeholders, including parents and the larger community in which the school is located.
- **Document Performance.** The Institute collects information to build a database of a school’s performance over time. By evaluating the school periodically, the Institute can more clearly ascertain trends, determine areas of strength and weakness, and assess the school’s likelihood for continued success or failure. Using information based on past patterns, the Institute is in a better position to make recommendations regarding the renewal of each school’s charter, and the SUNY Trustees are better informed in making a decision on whether a school’s charter should be renewed. In addition, a school will have a far better sense of where it stands in the eyes of its authorizer.

The Institute regularly collects a range of data about each school’s performance over the course of its charter period, which ultimately contributes its renewal recommendation decision. These data include student performance results, financial audits, any legal records of issues addressed, board meeting minutes, and reports from regular evaluation visits conducted by the Institute (or external experts contracted by the Institute) and other agencies with oversight responsibilities.

This annual School Evaluation Report includes three primary components. The first section, titled Executive Summary of School Evaluation Visit, provides an overview of the primary conclusions of the evaluation team regarding the current visit to the school, summarizing areas of strength and areas for growth. The second section, titled School Overview, provides descriptive information about the school, including enrollment and demographic data, as well as summary historical information regarding the life of the school. The third section, School Evaluation Visit, presents the analysis of evidence collected during the current school evaluation visit.

Because of the inherent complexity of an organization such as a school, this School Evaluation Report does not contain a single rating or 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 note areas in need of improvement with respect to the school’s performance as compared to the State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks. To the extent appropriate and useful, we encourage school boards to use this evaluation report in ongoing planning and school improvement efforts.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT**

Based on the analysis of evidence from the evaluation visit to the Brownsville Collegiate Charter School (“Brownsville Collegiate”), the school appears to be making substantial progress towards achieving its mission and meeting the SUNY Charter Renewal Benchmarks considered during this evaluation. Although this conclusion is drawn from a variety of indicators which are discussed more fully later in this report, some of the more salient indicators include the following:

### *Academic Success*

#### Areas of Strength:

- The school has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and uses it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.
- The school has a clearly defined curriculum.
- Quality instruction is evident in all classes throughout the school.
- The school has strong instructional leadership.
- The school has devoted significant resources to helping students who are struggling academically.
- The school promotes a culture of learning and scholarship.
- The school has a comprehensive professional development program.

#### Areas for Growth:

- Due to its small size, the school currently relies heavily on informal communication and collaboration, practices which may become challenging as the school grows.

### *Organizational Capacity*

#### Areas of Strength:

- The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.
- The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure with staff, systems, and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program.
- The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school’s mission and provide oversight.

#### Areas for Growth:

- The school has extremely small enrollment in its 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

## SCHOOL OVERVIEW

### School Name

	Name	Date
Chartered Name	Flatbush Collegiate Charter School	September, 2009
Revised Name	Brownsville Collegiate Charter School	February, 2010

### Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	September 9, 2008
Date Initial Charter Approved by Board of Regents	February 23, 2009
School Opening Date	August 31, 2009

### Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades At this Location	District
2009-10 through present	364 Sackman Street, Brooklyn, NY	All	NYC CSD 23

### Partner Organizations

	Partner Name	Partner Type	Dates of Service
Current Partner	Uncommon Schools, Inc.	Charter Management Organization	2009 through present

### Current Mission Statement

The mission of Brownsville Collegiate Charter School is to prepare each student for college.

### Current Key Design Elements

• A longer school day and year;
• Double periods of English and math daily, as well as an hour each of science and history for all students;
• Tutoring and Saturday school;
• Emphasis on college, including meetings with a college advisor and frequent college visits;
• Calm, composed and disciplined environment, including a strictly enforced dress code, and merit/demerit and rubric systems;
• Explicit instruction in literacy skills;
• Targeted curriculum focused on basic skills;
• Frequent school-wide assessments; and
• Strong family involvement.

## School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Charter Enrollment	Actual Enrollment <sup>1</sup>	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2009-10	78	112	103	5	5-6	186

## Student Demographics

	2009-10 <sup>2</sup>	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 23 Enrollment
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	1%
Black or African American	85%	84%
Hispanic	15%	13%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	1%	1%
White	0%	1%
Multiracial	0%	0%
<b>Special Populations</b>		
Students with Disabilities <sup>3</sup>	19%	NA
Limited English Proficient	11%	NA
<b>Free/Reduced Lunch</b>		
Eligible for Free Lunch	77%	NA
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	12%	NA

<sup>1</sup> Source: SUNY Charter School Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

<sup>2</sup> Source: This information is not yet publicly available and all given statistics were provided by the school.

<sup>3</sup> New York State Education Department does not report special education data; statistics were provided by the school.

**Current Board of Trustees<sup>4</sup>**

<b>Board Member Name</b>	<b>Position/Committees</b>
John Kim	Trustee
Reemah Sen	Chair
Eileen Shy	Trustee
Linton Mann III	Trustee
CJ Cash	Trustee
John Greenstein	Trustee
Bob Howitt	Trustee
Cindy Brea	Trustee
Brett Peiser	Trustee

**School Leader(s)**

<b>School Year</b>	<b>School Leader(s) Name and Title</b>
2009-10	Jessica Simmons, Principal and Jeannemarie Hendershot-Kim, Director of Operations

**School Visit History**

<b>School Year</b>	<b>Visit Type</b>	<b>Evaluator (Institute/External)</b>	<b>Date</b>
2009-10	First Year	Institute	April 8, 2010

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<sup>4</sup> Source: Institute Board Records

## SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE

### Background

Regardless of the type of visit, Institute evaluations of SUNY authorized charter schools are organized around a set of benchmarks that address the academic success of the school, including teaching and learning (e.g., curriculum, instruction, and assessment), and the effectiveness and viability of the school as an organization, including such items as governance and management. Entitled the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks, these established criteria are used on a regular and ongoing basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

While the primary focus of the visit is an evaluation of the school's academic program and organizational capacity, issues regarding compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations may be noted (and subsequently addressed); where the Institute finds serious deficiencies in particular relating to student health and safety, it may take additional and immediate action. However, monitoring for compliance is not the principal purpose of the visit.

This section of the School Evaluation Report includes a detailed analysis of the observations and conclusions from this year's evaluation, along with supporting evidence. Finally, information regarding the conduct of the evaluation, including the date of the visit and information about the evaluation team, is provided.

### Evaluation Visit Benchmark Analysis and Evidence

#### *Use of Assessment Data (Benchmark 1.B)*

#### **Brownsville Collegiate has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and uses it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.**

The school regularly administers assessments aligned to the school's curriculum and state standards. Reading levels are assessed throughout the year. Teachers utilize a variety of formative assessments, including Do Now and homework assignments, quizzes and exit tickets. Quarterly interim assessments used by the Collegiate network are administered in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies; they include both multiple choice and open response questions and are formatted to resemble state exams. Teachers also employ summative unit tests.

The school systematically collects valid and reliable assessment data and analyzes the results. Teachers reported meeting before administration of the interim assessment to ensure alignment with the covered curriculum. After each interim assessment cycle teachers spend a day analyzing and reviewing results as a team. Results are disaggregated by item, item type, standard and class, and compared across the Uncommon network of schools. The inspection team noted graphs and charts depicting student growth. Some teachers also reported correcting student work together to ensure reliability and consistency in their expectations.

Teachers and school leaders effectively use results to inform instruction and identify students for remediation. Reading assessments are used to group some students for guided reading instruction

and identify topics for re-teaching. For example, certain topics were reported to be integrated into future questioning or lesson activities. Many observed teachers also used exit tickets to gauge student mastery of learning objectives. Interim assessment results are used to identify students for tutoring and Saturday school. School leaders also schedule regular meetings with teachers to discuss results and next steps.

The school follows clear policies and procedures for the use of student performance data. There are well-established routines for analyzing interim assessment results and sharing those results with students. Parents receive regular reports of student progress and quarterly report cards. The promotion policy requires 70 percent or better in each class, which according to teachers had been clearly communicated to parents.

### *Curriculum (Benchmark 1.C)*

#### **The school has a clearly defined curriculum.**

Brownsville Collegiate has a comprehensive and organized curriculum framework. Reviewed documents indicated frameworks organized by unit with references to the standards used by other Collegiate schools in the Uncommon Network, which are reported to be aligned to state standards and the school's interim assessment system. English language arts instruction includes vocabulary, textual analysis using grade level novels, and guided reading using leveled texts. Writing emphasizes two strands: grammar and composition. History instruction is used to supplement literacy development through the focus on historical fiction. Mathematics is divided into a procedures class and a problem-solving class. Teachers generally know what to teach and when to teach it. Teachers have access to curriculum resources from other schools in the network and tend to rely on those of Williamsburg Collegiate, the Collegiate school in operation for the longest period of time which has already offered the grades served by Brownsville Collegiate. Teachers were provided with scope and sequences and objectives; they can adjust pacing within the limits of the objectives defined by the interim assessment schedule. At the time of the evaluation visit, the mathematics curriculum was the most articulated, while some of the reading units were less well defined, providing limited guidance to teachers in their instructional planning.

The school has adequate instructional materials aligned to its curriculum framework. Teachers had a range of available texts for leveled reading instruction. They create many of the materials used in their lessons or use those created by other teachers in the network -- all made available on a shared drive. Reviewed teacher-created lesson packets indicated a range of texts, tasks or problems, space for work and assessments.

The school has an effective process for selecting, developing and reviewing its curriculum framework and resources. Teachers in the Uncommon network work together during the summer to review and revise curriculum resources as well as interim assessments. As this was the school's first year of operation, it relied heavily on the curriculum resources in the network, especially those of Williamsburg Collegiate. Teachers have common planning time during the year to discuss and develop lessons and packets. They anticipate participating in the curriculum review process this coming to summer to adapt the curriculum to meet their students' needs, e.g., align trade book difficulty to student reading levels.

### *Pedagogy (Benchmark 1.D)*

#### **Quality instruction is evident in all classes throughout the school.**

Teachers implement purposeful lessons with objectives aligned to state standards and the school's curriculum. Teachers submit lesson plans for review; the plans include standards, objectives, and questioning and engagement strategies. Lesson activities are clearly designed to help students meet the objectives. In most observed classes the objectives were posted and in some classes they were discussed with students.

Teachers cognitively engaged students with rigorous instruction and challenged them to develop higher order thinking skills. Students were observed actively participating in learning activities, either in whole-class, small group or independent situations. In some classes the focus was on basic skills and automaticity. In others, teachers challenged students to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills. For example, a number of teachers used open-ended questioning techniques and required student to explain their answers. In a 5<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics class the teacher announced, "Achievement question of the day: I have a 10 sided cube. What is the probability of rolling a prime number in simplest form?" In a writing class students were asked to evaluate, compare, and contrast each others' work.

Instruction is differentiated primarily through small group interventions and is limited within general education classes. At the beginning of the year only the lowest 5<sup>th</sup> grade class and the single 6<sup>th</sup> grade class were broken into leveled groups for guided reading instruction, though an additional 5<sup>th</sup> grade class recently added this approach. Most observed instruction was whole-class and teacher-directed, using similar methods and materials. Some differentiation was evident in pacing and tasks, such as additional challenge problems for more advanced students.

### *Instructional Leadership (Benchmark 1.E)*

#### **The school has strong instructional leadership.**

School leaders instill high expectations for teacher performance and student achievement. The school-wide goal of 80 percent at or above grade level in core subjects was evident on posters throughout the school, and individual classes had posted their own goals for performance on state tests. The principal is clearly focused on rigorous instruction, with an emphasis on, "tipping the ratio of work onto students." Teachers are expected to thoroughly plan their instruction with a focus on mastery; a number of teachers were heard to say to students, "now that's what I call achieving." In addition, the theme of preparing students for college was heard and seen throughout the school.

Instructional leaders provide teachers with sustained and systematic support. Teachers submit lesson plans and receive feedback. They are also observed regularly and provided with feedback both in weekly meetings and via e-mail. The principal has a system for documenting topics and questions for weekly meetings and teachers can add their own topics for discussion. Teachers felt the support and scrutiny was fair and thorough and evidence suggests it is focused on instructional improvement. Said one teacher about the principal, "if she thinks I missed an opportunity to put the cognitive work on the students, she'll note it." Instructional leaders also model and co-teach to help teachers develop their skills. Math teachers benefit from the presence of an Uncommon Schools Fellow (a principal in training) who is a mathematics specialist and the lead network reading teacher also observes teachers in her subject area. As the faculty is quite small in the school's first year of

operation, considerable attention is available to individual teachers, including targeted support for instructional planning and lesson delivery.

Instructional leaders conduct regular evaluations that accurately identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses. At the beginning of the year teachers complete a self-assessment organized around teaching criteria developed by Uncommon Schools and set professional development goals. Teachers repeat the self-assessment mid-year, which is used as part of the discussion with school leaders in their evaluation process. A teacher noted that since feedback is ongoing the formal mid-year evaluation is "a large summary of how you're doing instructionally."

Teachers are held accountable for quality instruction and student achievement. They meet weekly with instructional leaders to discuss goals and progress, and implementation of interim assessment action plans and professional development is monitored in their classroom practice. As this was the school's first year of operation, decisions regarding teacher retention had not yet been made.

#### *At-Risk Students (Benchmark 1.F)*

#### **The school has devoted significant resources to helping students who are struggling academically.**

The school uses clear procedures for identifying at-risk students. Diagnostic assessments were administered in the summer and the school uses a wide range of data, including ongoing formative and interim assessment results, to identify students who are struggling academically and behaviorally. Students in need of counseling were identified during summer home visits and observations during the year. Staff members discuss students of concern during weekly meetings, develop strategies to assist those students, and follow up to determine the efficacy of those strategies. The school uses a respond to intervention (RTI) model to determine which students should be evaluated for special education services. At the time of the visit the school enrolled 19 students with individualized education programs (IEPs). The school also enrolled nine English language learners who are provided with a range of services, including pull-out instruction for literacy and mathematics and testing accommodations.

The school provides sufficient resources and support to meet the needs of at-risk students. An "academic boot camp" was provided for 10 students prior to opening and the school has established a number of interventions for struggling students, including tutoring before, during and after school. Most interventions occur outside the general education classroom. All staff are expected to tutor, which is reportedly provided to about half of the students. The special education coordinator/teacher provides push-in and pull-out services for students with IEPs as well as other struggling students, and a social worker provides both mandated and optional counseling. The school employs remedial programs, e.g., Wilson Reading, for students significantly below grade level and utilizes external service providers as needed, e.g., occupational therapy, speech.

The school adequately monitors the progress and success of at-risk students. The student support office, including the school leader, special education coordinator, social worker, and dean of students meet regularly to discuss student progress, and teachers meet weekly to develop and evaluate strategies. Interim assessment results as well as reading levels are used to measure student progress. As this is the school's first year of operation, the efficacy of the school's interventions remains to be seen.

Teachers are provided with sufficient support to help them meet the needs of at-risk students. Classroom teachers received some training during the summer and were provided with students' IEPs. The special education coordinator holds weekly student support team (SST) meetings with teachers to discuss each student's needs and attends their team meetings to provide suggestions. The dean of students and social worker provide weekly updates regarding students and suggestions for effective practices. Much of the communication with general education teachers was described as informal given the school's small size, with the acknowledgement that this may be difficult to sustain as the school faculty grows. However, the school's formalized curriculum system and shared server provides an effective tool for collaboration.

#### *Student Order and Discipline (Benchmark 1.G)*

##### **The school promotes a culture of learning and scholarship.**

The school is safe and orderly. Transitions between classes were planned and efficient with constant adult supervision. Students were well-behaved in public spaces throughout the day of the visit. The school is focused on order and structure, and staff and students appear to have internalized the school's routines and procedures.

Teachers have effective classroom management and routines that promote learning. Posters for SSLANT (smile, sit up, listen, ask/answer, nod for understanding, track) and MAPP (mindful achievement, professional, prepared) were evident in classrooms and teachers and administrators were consistent in their use of such systems. Students were generally well-behaved during their classes and few distractions from learning were observed.

The school has a clear discipline system in place that is consistently applied. The school employs a merit/demerit system and charts in classrooms make clear the consequences for misbehavior. Accrual of three demerits results in detention, which is held after school. Handbooks clearly articulate expectations and systems. During the summer staff conduct numerous exercises to norm their expectations and have continued with trainings and conversations throughout the year, including the use of peer observation through video. One teacher said, "Calibrating the discipline system is going to be an ongoing discussion. We have broad buckets for automatic detentions and not everyone is applying it the same way." Students who regularly break rules are designated as, "off the map" and wear a blue shirt, sit apart from their peers during class and lunch, and miss enrichment opportunities. One evaluator noted two such students during the visit who received some individualized attention during independent time but did not complete their work during whole class instruction. At the time of the visit, the school reported that it had administered 71 out-of-school suspensions, and reported manifestation hearings had been conducted for students with IEPs.

Teachers were observed giving students demerits throughout the day and the dean of students pushes into classes to support classroom management. The school also uses positive reinforcement to encourage compliance with behavioral expectations. For example, merit points were given to students who were prepared rather than demerits to those who were not and to a whole class for staying on task.

#### *Professional Development (Benchmark 1.H)*

**The school’s professional development program assists teachers in meeting student academic needs and school goals by addressing identified shortcomings in teachers’ pedagogical skills and content knowledge.**

The school has a comprehensive professional development program. A summer session was devoted to learning the Uncommon School’s taxonomy of effective teaching practices, expectations for student behavior and school culture. Staff members meet weekly to discuss students, continue developing taxonomy skills and plan instruction. Part of weekly professional development time also involves devising and evaluating strategies for achieving goals based on interim assessment results. The use of video is a regular feature of professional development; teachers said they frequently tape instruction and partner with other teachers to review it with a focus on a particular teaching area. The school also benefits from the Uncommon School network, with lead teachers providing content-specific professional development as well as opportunities for observing teachers in other schools and sharing practices across subject areas. In addition, Uncommon Schools provides substantive support and development for school leaders. The principal has weekly meetings with her managing director, monthly meetings with a leadership coach, and monthly sessions with other principals. The special education coordinator received two weeks of summer training and has weekly meetings with the Uncommon Schools director of special education.

The school successfully develops the competencies and skills of all teachers. Professional development goals are tailored for each teacher and monitored throughout the year. Teachers meet weekly with instructional leaders and most were positive about the coaching and suggestions they receive. Some teachers, however, expressed frustration with the rigid focus on the Uncommon School’s taxonomy and felt it was “over used.”

#### *Mission & Key Design Elements (Benchmark 2.A)*

The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented most key design elements included in its charter. Brownsville Collegiate has a clear focus on college preparation with classes named after colleges. It has implemented an extended day and school year, and has expanded instruction in English language arts and mathematics. It uses school-wide assessments to drive instruction, remediation and programmatic evaluation. The school has also developed a calm, composed and disciplined learning environment using a merit/demerit system, which it is continuing to norm. Finally, remediation is provided through tutoring and Saturday school.

#### *Parents & Students (Benchmark 2.B)*

As this is the school’s first year of operation, there is limited data to address this benchmark. At the time of the visit, only 5 out of 105 students were reported to have left the school since the beginning of the year. The school also reported nearly perfect attendance. Finally, no formal grievances had been filed.

#### *Organizational Capacity (Benchmark 2.C)*

**The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure with staff, systems, and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program.**

The school’s organizational structure supports distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Leadership is divided between an instructional principal and director of

operations who manages all non-instructional matters. Staff was clear about whom to go to for what. School leaders report to a managing director at Uncommon Schools who visits the school regularly and supports their efforts and growth. Staff and administrators also have opportunities to communicate and collaborate with their peers in other network schools. The principal anticipates developing grade team and subject area leaders as the school grows, and has begun coaching teachers for these roles.

The school is competently managed. Most teachers were happy with the systems in place and the school appears to be adequately resourced. One teacher expressed her pleasure with not having to worry about operational matters. As with instructional staff, the operations staff also benefits from the school's association with Uncommon Schools, which provides back office support, guidance and resources. For example, Uncommon Schools assists with staff recruitment and screening. The school has had to negotiate space issues as district plans to close another school in the same building did not come to fruition. Brownsville Collegiate has reportedly developed a working relationship with the other school. Brownsville Collegiate had anticipated running a summer program but did not because it could not access the building. The school is planning for its future growth, including staffing, facility and special education services.

The school has hired quality staff. Teachers appeared competent in their subject areas and had, for the most part, successfully implemented the school's discipline and classroom management systems while emphasizing rigor of instruction. The small size of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade had complicated the school's original hiring plan, but it has adapted effectively. The school has maintained sufficient enrollment. Brownsville Collegiate is in a unique situation in that it had originally planned to open with only a 5<sup>th</sup> grade and then modified its charter to accept 6<sup>th</sup> graders from PS 150 which was supposedly closing. In the end, the school was not closed, but the 6<sup>th</sup> grade was phased out. Every entering 6<sup>th</sup> grader from PS 150 who applied was accepted to Brownsville Collegiate. Those that did not apply went to other schools in the district. As a result, Brownsville Collegiate opened with 75 students in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and only 30 students in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The school has successfully adjusted its program and staffing to accommodate this situation and has taken steps to reach out to the surrounding community, including all neighboring public housing, to attract students. Given the low achievement levels of incoming students some may be retained; one teacher thought many of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in that situation might decide not to return.

#### *Governance (Benchmark 2.D-E)*

#### **The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school's mission and provide oversight to the total educational program.**

The board has adequate skills, structures and procedures with which to govern the school. It oversees multiple schools within the Collegiate network and board members possess a range of relevant skill sets, including legal, media, finance and non-profit management and governance. The board continues to seek additional members and is particularly interested in expertise in education reform and finance. The Uncommon Schools managing director who oversees the school is also on the board. The board operates with three standing committees: executive, accountability and finance; the development committee was disbanded because Uncommon Schools now handles that area. The board changed the frequency of its meetings from six to four times per year, with committees meeting more frequently as needed. The board conducted a mid-year retreat at which it discussed Uncommon School's evaluation of the school and priorities.

Board minutes indicate a clear focus on program implementation and academic progress. For example, a school update in December reflected classroom goals by subject, profession development, interventions and enrichment, school culture and family involvement. The board receives a dashboard for all schools in the Collegiate network, which allows it to compare performance across them. The dashboard includes student performance, enrollment and financial data. The principal is also expected to discuss with the board one positive accomplishment and an area in which she is struggling,

The board holds school leaders, the management company/organization and itself accountable for student achievement. The board has taken action to ensure that the unanticipated enrollment challenges did not affect its ability to implement its programs as planned. For instance, it was able to fund a full-time dean of students in the first year despite the small 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The board is mindful of the challenges of raising the current 6<sup>th</sup> grade's achievement levels in comparison to the extra year the school will have with the entering 5<sup>th</sup> grade, but has maintained expectations for significant growth. Uncommon Schools conducts annual inspections of its schools and shares the results with the board, which described them as "brutally honest." The board has also scrutinized the performance of its members and had conversations with those not felt to be carrying their weight.

### **Conduct of the Visit**

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the school evaluation visit at Brownsville Collegiate Charter School on April 8, 2010. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit:

#### ***Institute Staff Members***

**Simeon Stolzberg** (team leader) was the former Director of School Evaluation at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. He is responsible for the coordination of school evaluation visits by Institute staff and external consultants, the development of reporting tools/protocols and the production of reports, and he also coordinates internal staff training with regard to school evaluation visits and reporting tools. 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.

**Sean Fitzsimons** is a Program Analyst for the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. He supports SUNY's new charter school application process by addressing questions from applicants, reviewing and analyzing new applications, coordinating the review of applications to establish new charter schools by Institute staff and external educational experts, and drafting application summaries and other related documents. Mr. Fitzsimons most recently served as Chair of the Social Studies Department at Manassas Park Middle School in Manassas Park, Virginia where he guided curriculum sequencing and pacing to align the school's courses with state standards, trained

and mentored faculty, and designed and implemented courses in Civics and Economics, American Studies, American History, and World Geography. He also taught remedial reading curriculum to special education students and English language learners. Prior to his service at Manassas Park Middle School, Mr. Fitzsimons was an Administrative and Research Assistant at the Embassy of Japan in Washington, D.C. In addition, Mr. Fitzsimons was a visiting instructor at Shanghai Teachers University in Shanghai, China, where he designed and taught curriculum for English language learners. Mr. Fitzsimons received his Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction and Secondary Education Social Studies from George Mason University and his Bachelor of Arts degrees in International Relations and Political Science from the State University of New York, College at Geneseo.

**Maya Lagana** is an Analyst for School Evaluation for the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. She is responsible for scheduling ongoing school evaluation visits, communicating with school team members and administrative staff regarding site visit logistics and requirements, developing and disseminating RFP documents, and coordinating the recruitment and work of consultants. Ms. Lagana worked for New Visions for Public Schools, Achievement First and Boston Collegiate Charter School while in graduate school. Previously, Ms. Lagana was an Assessment Specialist at the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence in Washington D.C., where she helped to develop teacher certification exams and analyzed item level statistics and demographics information. In addition to her extensive background as an analyst, Ms. Lagana also has experience as a third grade classroom teacher at P.S. 195 through the New York City Teaching Fellows Program. Ms. Lagana received her Master of Public Administration degree in Policy Analysis from New York University's Wagner School for Public Service, her Masters of Education degree from Mercy College and her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Carleton College.

### ***External Team Member***

**Curtis A. Palmore** is currently the Resident Head of School at Harlem Day Charter School. He is in his fifteenth year of working in public education. He is a native of New York City and a product of public schools in the Bronx and Manhattan. He taught in Washington Heights and the Bronx as a Teach for America teacher in the early 1990's. He later went on to be a staff developer, consultant, and most recently an Assistant Principal at Beginning with Children Charter School in Brooklyn, NY. He received his BA from Morgan State University and his MS. Ed from Fordham University and has completed the Principal's Institute at Harvard University. Mr. Palmore is a big supporter of public and charter schools and frames his work around this quote from Dr. Martin L. King Jr, "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically... Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education." In his personal time, he enjoys volunteering at his church and spending time with his fiancé and family.

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

*An excerpt of the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks follows.*

*Visit the Institute’s website at:*

<http://newyorkcharters.org/documents/renewalBenchmarks.doc>

*to see the complete listing of Benchmarks.*

Benchmarks 1B – 1H, and Benchmarks 2A – 2E were using in conducting this evaluation visit.

	<b>Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?</b>
<b><u>Evidence Category</u></b>	<b><u>State University Renewal Benchmarks</u></b>
<b>State University Renewal Benchmark 1B</b>  <b>Use of Assessment Data</b>	<p><b>The school has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and uses it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school regularly uses standardized and other assessments that are aligned to the school’s curriculum framework and state performance standards;</li> <li>• the school systematically collects and analyzes data from diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, and makes it accessible to teachers, school leaders and the school board;</li> <li>• the school uses protocols, procedures and rubrics that ensure that the scoring of assessments and evaluation of student work is reliable and trustworthy;</li> <li>• the school uses assessment data to predict whether the school’s Accountability Plan goals are being achieved;</li> <li>• the school’s leaders use assessment data to monitor, change and improve the school’s academic program, including curriculum and instruction, professional development, staffing and intervention services;</li> <li>• the school’s teachers use assessment data to adjust and improve instruction to meet the identified needs of students;</li> <li>• a common understanding exists between and among teachers and administrators of the meaning and consequences of assessment results, e.g., changes to the instructional program, access to remediation, promotion to the next grade;</li> <li>• the school regularly communicates each student’s progress and growth to his or her parents/guardians; and</li> <li>• the school regularly communicates to the school community overall academic performance as well as the school’s progress toward meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals.</li> </ul>
<b>State University Renewal Benchmark 1C</b>  <b>Curriculum</b>	<p><b>The school has a clearly defined curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school has a well-defined curriculum framework for each grade and core academic subject, which includes the knowledge and skills that all students are expected to achieve as specified by New York State standards and performance indicators;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school has carefully analyzed all curriculum resources (including commercial materials) currently in use in relation to the school’s curriculum framework, identified areas of deficiency and/or misalignment, and addressed them in the instructional program;</li> <li>the curriculum <i>as implemented</i> is organized, cohesive, and aligned from grade to grade;</li> <li>teachers are fully aware of the curricula that they are responsible to teach and have access to curricular documents such as scope and sequence documents, pacing charts, and/or curriculum maps that guide the development of their lesson plans;</li> <li>teachers develop and use lesson plans with objectives that are in alignment with the school’s curriculum;</li> <li>the school has defined a procedure, allocated time and resources, and included teachers in ongoing review and revision of the curriculum; and</li> <li>the curriculum supports the school’s stated mission.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 1D</b></p> <p><b>Pedagogy</b></p>	<p><b>High quality instruction is evident in all classes throughout the school.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>teachers demonstrate subject-matter and grade-level competency in the subjects and grades they teach;</li> <li>instruction is rigorous and focused on learning objectives that specify clear expectations for what students must know and be able to do in each lesson;</li> <li>lesson plans and instruction are aligned to the school’s curriculum framework and New York State standards and performance indicators;</li> <li>instruction is differentiated to meet the range of learning needs represented in the school’s student population, e.g. flexible student grouping, differentiated materials, pedagogical techniques, and/or assessments;</li> <li>all students are cognitively engaged in focused, purposeful learning activities during instructional time;</li> <li>learning time is maximized (e.g., appropriate pacing, high on-task student behavior, clear lesson focus and clear directions to students), transitions are efficient, and there is day-to-day instructional continuity; and</li> <li>teachers challenge students with questions and assignments that promote academic rigor, depth of understanding, and development of higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 1E</b></p> <p><b>Instructional Leadership</b></p>	<p><b>The school has strong instructional leadership.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school’s leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for student achievement;</li> <li>the school’s leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance (in content knowledge, pedagogical skills and student achievement);</li> <li>the school’s instructional leaders have in place a comprehensive and on-going system for evaluating teacher quality and effectiveness;</li> <li>the school’s instructional leaders, based on classroom visits and other available data, provide direct ongoing support, such as critical feedback, coaching and/or modeling, to teachers in their classrooms;</li> <li>the school’s leadership provides structured opportunities, resources and guidance for teachers to plan the delivery of the instructional program within and across grade levels as well as within disciplines or content areas;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school’s instructional leaders organize a coherent and sustained professional development program that meets the needs of both the school and individual teachers;</li> <li>the school’s leadership ensures that the school is responding to the needs of at-risk students and maximizing their achievement to the greatest extent possible in the regular education program using in-class resources and/or pull-out services and programs where necessary ; and</li> <li>the school’s leadership conducts regular reviews and evaluations of the school’s academic program and makes necessary changes to ensure that the school is effectively working to achieve academic standards defined by the State University Renewal Benchmarks in the areas of assessment, curriculum, pedagogy, student order and discipline, and professional development.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 1F</b></p> <p><b>At-Risk Students</b></p>	<p><b>The school is demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school deploys sufficient resources to provide academic interventions that address the range of students’ needs;</li> <li>all regular education teachers, as well as specialists, utilize effective strategies to support students within the regular education program;</li> <li>the school provides sufficient training, resources, and support to all teachers and specialists with regard to meeting the needs of at-risk students;</li> <li>the school has clearly defined screening procedures for identifying at-risk students and providing them with the appropriate interventions, and a common understanding among all teachers of these procedures;</li> <li>all regular education teachers demonstrate a working knowledge of students’ Individualized Education Program goals and instructional strategies for meeting those goals;</li> <li>the school provides sufficient time and support for on-going coordination between regular and special education teachers, as well as other program specialists and service providers; and</li> <li>the school monitors the performance of student participation in support services using well-defined school-wide criteria, and regularly evaluates the effectiveness of its intervention programs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 1G</b></p> <p><b>Student Order &amp; Discipline</b></p>	<p><b>The school promotes a culture of learning and scholarship.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school has a documented discipline policy that is consistently applied;</li> <li>classroom management techniques and daily routines have established a culture in which learning is valued and clearly evident;</li> <li>low-level misbehavior is not being tolerated, e.g., students are not being allowed to disrupt or opt-out of learning during class time; and</li> <li>throughout the school, a safe and orderly environment has been established.</li> </ul>
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 1H</p> <p><b>Professional</b></p>	<p><b>The school’s professional development program assists teachers in meeting student academic needs and school goals by addressing identified shortcomings in teachers’ pedagogical skills and content knowledge.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school provides sufficient time, personnel, materials and funding to support a</li> </ul>

<p><b>Development</b></p>	<p>comprehensive and sustained professional development program;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the content of the professional development program dovetails with the school’s mission, curriculum, and instructional programs;</li> <li>annual professional development plans derive from a data-driven needs-assessment and staff interests;</li> <li>professional development places a high priority on achieving the State University Renewal Benchmarks and the school’s Accountability Plan goals;</li> <li>teachers are involved in setting short-term and long-term goals for their own professional development activities;</li> <li>the school provides effective, ongoing support and training tailored to teachers’ varying levels of expertise and instructional responsibilities;</li> <li>the school provides training to assist all teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities, English language learners and other students at-risk of academic failure; and</li> <li>the professional development program is systematically evaluated to determine its effectiveness at meeting stated goals.</li> </ul>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Renewal Question 2</b> <b>Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?</b></p>	
<p><u>Evidence Category</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>State University Renewal Benchmarks</u></p>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 2A</b></p> <p><b>Mission &amp; Key Design Elements</b></p>	<p><b>The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>stakeholders are aware of the mission;</li> <li>the school has implemented its key design elements in pursuit of its mission; and</li> <li>the school meets or comes close to meeting any non-academic goals contained in its Accountability Plan.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 2B</b></p> <p><b>Parents &amp; Students</b></p>	<p><b>Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school has a process and procedures for evaluation of parent satisfaction with the school;</li> <li>the great majority of parents with students enrolled at the school have strong positive attitudes about it;</li> <li>few parents pursue grievances at the school board level or outside the school;</li> <li>a large number of parents seek entrance to the school;</li> <li>parents with students enrolled keep their children enrolled year-to-year; and</li> <li>the school maintains a high rate of daily student attendance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 2C</b></p> <p><b>Organizational Capacity</b></p>	<p><b>The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure with staff, systems, and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school demonstrates effective management of day-to-day operations;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staff scheduling is internally consistent and supportive of the school’s mission;</li> <li>• the school has established clear priorities, objectives and benchmarks for achieving its mission and Accountability Plan goals, and a process for their regular review and revision;</li> <li>• the school has allocated sufficient resources in support of achieving its goals;</li> <li>• the roles and responsibilities of the school’s leadership and staff members are clearly defined;</li> <li>• the school has an organizational structure that provides clear lines for accountability;</li> <li>• the school’s management has successfully recruited, hired and retained key personnel, and made appropriate decisions about removing ineffective staff members when warranted;</li> <li>• the school maintains an adequate student enrollment and has effective procedures for recruiting new students to the school; and</li> <li>• the school’s management and board have demonstrated effective communication practices with the school community including school staff, parents/guardians and students.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 2D</b></p> <p><b>Board Oversight</b></p>	<p><b>The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school’s mission and provide oversight to the total educational program.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school board has adequate skills and expertise, as well as adequate meeting time to provide rigorous oversight of the school;</li> <li>• the school board (or a committee thereof) understands the core business of the school—student achievement—in sufficient depth to permit the board to provide effective oversight;</li> <li>• the school board has set clear long-term and short-term goals and expectations for meeting those goals, and communicates them to the school’s management and leaders;</li> <li>• the school board has received regular written reports from the school leadership on academic performance and progress, financial stability and organizational capacity;</li> <li>• the school board has conducted regular evaluations of the school’s management (including school leaders who report to the board, supervisors from management organization(s), and/or partner organizations that provide services to the school), and has acted on the results where such evaluations demonstrated shortcomings in performance;</li> <li>• where there have been demonstrable deficiencies in the school’s academic, organizational or fiscal performance, the school board has taken effective action to correct those deficiencies and put in place benchmarks for determining if the deficiencies are being corrected in a timely fashion;</li> <li>• the school board has not made financial or organizational decisions that have materially impeded the school in fulfilling its mission; and</li> <li>• the school board conducts on-going assessment and evaluation of its own effectiveness in providing adequate school oversight, and pursues opportunities for further governance training and development.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 2E</b></p>	<p><b>The board has implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes, and has abided by them.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school board has established a set of priorities that are in line with the school’s</li> </ul>

## Governance

goals and mission and has effectively worked to design and implement a system to achieve those priorities;

- the school board has in place a process for recruiting and selecting new members in order to maintain adequate skill sets and expertise for effective governance and structural continuity;
- the school board has implemented a comprehensive and strict conflict of interest policy (and/or code of ethics)—consistent with those set forth in the charter—and consistently abided by them through the term of the charter;
- the school board has generally avoided creating conflicts of interest where possible; where not possible, the school has managed those conflicts of interest in a clear and transparent manner;
- the school board has instituted a process for dealing with complaints (and such policy is consistent with that set forth in the charter), has made that policy clear to all stakeholders, and has followed that policy including acting in a timely fashion on any such complaints;
- the school board has abided by its by-laws including, but not limited to, provisions regarding trustee elections, removals and filling of vacancies;
- the school board and its committees hold meetings in accordance with the Open Meetings Law, and minutes are recorded for all meetings including executive sessions and, as appropriate, committee meetings; and
- the school board has in place a set of board and school policies that are reviewed regularly and updated as needed.