



Charter Schools Institute  
*The State University of New York*

# Child Development Center of the Hamptons Charter School

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## School Evaluation Report 2007-2008

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## INTRODUCTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (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 State University Trustees, however, 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 authorized by them. By providing this oversight and feedback, the State University 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 data 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. Having 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 State University 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 they stand 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 to that school’s renewal decision. These data include student performance results, financial audits, any legal records of issues addressed, board meeting minutes, and reports from regular inspection visits conducted by the Institute (or external experts contracted by the Institute) and other agencies with oversight responsibilities.

This annual School Evaluation Report includes four primary components. The first, titled Executive Summary of School Evaluation Visit, provides an overview of the conclusions of the inspection team regarding this year’s evaluation visit to the school. The second, titled School Description, provides descriptive information about the school, including enrollment and demographic data, as well as historical information regarding the school’s establishment. The third component, titled Academic Attainment and Improvement, is a review of academic performance based on assessment results through the previous school year. Finally, this report presents the evidence and conclusions from a one-day inspection visit conducted in the current school year titled School Evaluation Visit. Within this final section is a summary of conclusions from the previous school inspection.

Because of the inherent complexity of an organization such as a school, this School Evaluation 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 note areas in need of improvement. To the extent appropriate and useful, we encourage school boards of trustees to use this evaluation report in planning school improvement efforts.

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

### **Instructional Leadership**

The school has made substantial progress in a number of areas since last year's evaluation visit due, in large measure, to the presence of a strong experienced school leader. The school leader has instituted a number of changes in the instructional program and administrative procedures since his arrival a little more than a year ago. This year he hired two literacy mentors/coaches and a math consultant to support teachers in curriculum work and in strengthening classroom practices and pedagogy. He has improved parent communication by instituting individual parent conferences and utilizing a more comprehensive narrative reporting form. Recruitment of new students is one of his top priorities as is marketing the school to more parents of regular education students. The school leader has also successfully initiated a number of collaborative partnerships with community organizations to benefit the CDCH school community.

### **Use of Assessment Data**

The school has a system to gather assessment information and to report information to parents. This year the school implemented narrative report cards to replace mid-year and end-of-year report cards. Teachers are using formal and informal assessments such as commercial assessments and teacher-made assessments but, at the time of the inspection visit, follow-up was not yet systematic. Inspectors did not see evidence of assessment informing instructional practices. To the school's credit, the teachers have been trained in alternative assessments and, with only a few exceptions, all students are taking state examinations in all subject areas. This is a substantial improvement over what was observed in the previous visit.

### **Curriculum**

During the 2007-08 school year the school developed a curriculum framework based on the New York State standards for English language arts but has not yet done so in mathematics or other subject areas. Some teachers still believed that the Student Centered Plan (SCP) was the curriculum for each child. The school has adopted a common lesson plan format and teachers are submitting the lesson plans to the school leader, but this form was not utilized to drive instruction in the classroom. Additionally, at the time of the school visit, teachers' lesson plans were not yet closely tied to the curriculum framework.

### **Pedagogy**

CDCH takes pride in using the student centered planning process with its focus on an individual student's academic strengths and deficits to guide instruction. However, after a review of several plans and discussions with classroom teachers, the inspectors found that most teachers seem to continue to teach to the SCPs rather than addressing the scope and sequence of curricula for every subject at the child's designated grade level. As was the case during the 2006-07 visit, differentiation of instruction was not observed in any classroom during the current evaluation. The academic work of the special needs students appeared less rigorous than that for the regular education students. This was especially the case in the various pull-out support classes. There was a lack of a well-articulated sequence of courses in the middle school program due to the fluctuations in student enrollment and lack of a stable student population through the middle grades as well as many staffing changes over the years.

### Student Order and Discipline

Under the current leadership, CDCH has developed an orderly and purposeful school culture. Classrooms were generally controlled with relatively few student outbursts or breakdowns. Even though students appeared to be well-behaved, teachers seemed overly focused on student behavior; a relentless focus on student academic achievement was not yet in evidence.

### Professional Development

CDCH added three new staff developers in the 2007-08 school year: two language arts mentors/coaches and one math consultant. They, along with the school leader, are providing the professional development for the teachers. While both coaches articulated their own goals for the 2008-09 school year, no short-term or long-term professional development plan had yet been developed.

### Governance

Similar to last year's visit, few members of the board of trustees were available for a meeting on the day of the visit. The two board members who attended talked about a search for additional members for the board; qualified candidates who believe in the mission of CDCH and have expertise in certain fields. The board is cognizant of the need to educate the community about CDCH, especially in terms of the special services the school can bring to all children not just students with disabilities. Minutes of school board meetings reflect the board's commitment to understanding the educational program and assessment results through oral and written reports from the school leader. The board members have examined the results of recent assessments and appear to understand the need for monitoring assessment results throughout the year.

## SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approved the charter application for the Child Development Center of the Hamptons Charter School (“CDCH”) on January 21, 2000, which was subsequently approved by the Board of Regents on July 14, 2000. The school opened in January 2001 in Wainscott, New York (Long Island) with an initial enrollment of 24 students in kindergarten through fourth grade. The school was granted approval by the State University Trustees to amend its charter to allow the addition of fifth, sixth, and seventh grades in 2002-03, 2003-04, and 2005-06 respectively and added those grades accordingly. The school submitted an Application for Charter Renewal in the fall of 2004 and was granted a full-term, five-year charter renewal by the State University Trustees on March 1, 2005, which became effective by operation of law on July 14, 2005. As part of its Application for Charter Renewal, the school proposed to add the eighth grade and was granted authority to do so. For the 2007-08 school year, the school enrolled 69 students in kindergarten through eighth grades.

CDCH was located in leased space through the 2003-04 school year, moving into a new facility in the fall of 2004 located at 110 Stephen Hands Path in Wainscott. The building is completely physically accessible by all students and staff, and includes ten acres of land, which the school has partially developed into an enclosed play area for students. Historically, 50-57 percent of the student population at CDCH has been comprised of students with disabilities. The school continues to provide an inclusionary, community-based program where students with special education needs are instructed along with their non-disabled peers. A Student-Centered Plan (SCP) is developed for each student to ensure that the student’s educational needs are met and that student performance goals are established and measured. If a student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the IEP goals are incorporated into the student’s SCP.

The mission of the Child Development Center of the Hamptons Charter School as stated in the school’s renewal charter is as follows:

*The mission of the CDCH Charter School is to expand school choice and enhance educational opportunities for children and families in East Hampton, Long Island and neighboring communities.*

The philosophical underpinnings upon which CDCH is based center on the link between the intellectual development and academic achievement of all students, as well as personal and social development. As stated in the school’s Application for Charter Renewal, the school’s key design elements are intended to “bring together all facets of the school community in a collaboration designed to bring about educational excellence.” The emphasized key design elements include the following:

- employing a co-teaching model of instruction that implements differentiated instructional strategies;
- employing an inclusive and small classroom grouping that supports and strengthens individualized instruction for all students;
- complementing a shared instructional approach by supporting a theme-based framework to learning that allows for school-wide, family and a community-based interactions;

- employing a team-based approach in meeting each student’s and family’s needs;
- increasing parental and staff involvement in decision making;
- increasing data-driven decision making processes toward instructional approaches and school-wide issues;
- providing access to new technologies, and incorporating their use in the daily structure of the classroom;
- establishing interactive opportunities for shared instructional experiences between the school and other local public schools;
- supporting professional growth opportunities for staff and life-long learning opportunities for all;
- promoting a network of community members that are interested in bringing new ideas to public school design and practice; and
- being willing and able to develop new strategies to continue to meet the changing needs of students, their families and community.

**School Year (2007-08)**

186 Instructional Days

**School Day (2007-08)**

8:30 a.m. to 2:40 p.m.

**Enrollment**

|                | <b>Original Chartered Enrollment</b> | <b>Revised Chartered Enrollment</b> | <b>Actual Enrollment<sup>1</sup></b> | <b>Original Chartered Grades</b> | <b>Revised Grades Served</b> | <b>Actual Grades Served</b> | <b>Complying</b> |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| <b>2000-01</b> | 24                                   | 24                                  | <b>24</b>                            | K-4                              | K-4                          | <b>K-4</b>                  | YES              |
| <b>2001-02</b> | 36                                   | 36                                  | <b>47</b>                            | K-4                              | K-4                          | <b>K-4</b>                  | YES              |
| <b>2002-03</b> | 48                                   | 72                                  | <b>55</b>                            | K-4                              | K-5                          | <b>K-5</b>                  | YES              |
| <b>2003-04</b> | 60                                   | 70                                  | <b>70</b>                            | K-4                              | K-6                          | <b>K-6</b>                  | YES              |
| <b>2004-05</b> | 72                                   | 85                                  | <b>94</b>                            | K-4                              | K-7                          | <b>K-7</b>                  | YES              |
| <b>2005-06</b> | 110                                  | 110                                 | <b>107</b>                           | K-8                              | K-8                          | <b>K-8</b>                  | YES              |
| <b>2006-07</b> | 125                                  | 70                                  | <b>65</b>                            | K-8                              | K-8                          | <b>K-8</b>                  | YES              |
| <b>2007-08</b> | 135                                  | 85                                  | <b>69</b>                            | K-8                              | K-8                          | <b>K-8</b>                  | YES              |
| <b>2008-09</b> | 135                                  | 85                                  |                                      | K-8                              |                              |                             |                  |
| <b>2009-10</b> | 135                                  | 85                                  |                                      | K-8                              |                              |                             |                  |

<sup>1</sup> Actual enrollment per the Institute’s Official Enrollment Table. Note that the New York State Education Department School Report Card and Database, upon which the Free and Reduced lunch figures are calculated, may represent slightly different enrollment levels depending on the date in which this data was collected.

| Race/Ethnicity                              | 2004-2005         |                               | 2005-2006         |                               | 2006-2007         |                               |
|---|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
|   | % of Enroll. CDCH | % of Enroll. Wainscott Common | % of Enroll. CDCH | % of Enroll. Wainscott Common | % of Enroll. CDCH | % of Enroll. Wainscott Common |
| American Indian or Alaska Native            | 0.0 %             | 0.0 %                         | 0.0 %             | 0.0 %                         | NA                | NA                            |
| Black or African American                   | 15.0 %            | 0.0 %                         | 16.0 %            | 7.0 %                         | NA                | NA                            |
| Hispanic                                    | 22.0 %            | 0.0 %                         | 18.0 %            | 14.0 %                        | NA                | NA                            |
| Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander | 3.0 %             | 9.0 %                         | 5.0 %             | 7.0 %                         | NA                | NA                            |
| White                                       | 60.0 %            | 91.0 %                        | 61.0 %            | 71.0 %                        | NA                | NA                            |

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

| Special Populations        | 2004-2005         |                               | 2005-2006         |                               | 2006-2007         |                               |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
|                            | % of Enroll. CDCH | % of Enroll. Wainscott Common | % of Enroll. CDCH | % of Enroll. Wainscott Common | % of Enroll. CDCH | % of Enroll. Wainscott Common |
| Students with Disabilities | NA                | NA                            | NA                | NA                            | 61.7 %            | 25.0 %                        |
| Limited English Proficient | 0.0 %             | 0.0 %                         | 1.0 %             | 7.0 %                         | 0.0 %             | 12.5 %                        |

Source: Students with Disabilities: New York State Education Department Database  
Limited English Proficient: 2004-05, 2005-06: New York State Education Department School Report Card  
2006-07: New York State Education Department Database

| Free/Reduced Lunch         | 2004-2005         |                               | 2005-2006         |                               | 2006-2007         |                               |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
|                            | % of Enroll. CDCH | % of Enroll. Wainscott Common | % of Enroll. CDCH | % of Enroll. Wainscott Common | % of Enroll. CDCH | % of Enroll. Wainscott Common |
| Eligible for Free Lunch    | 0.0 %             | 0.0 %                         | 0.0 %             | 0.0 %                         | 0.0 %             | 0.0 %                         |
| Eligible for Reduced Lunch | 0.0 %             | 0.0 %                         | 0.0 %             | 0.0 %                         | 0.0 %             | 0.0 %                         |

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

### School Charter History

| <b>Charter Year</b>                      | <b>School Year</b> | <b>Year of Operation</b> | <b>Evaluation Visit</b> | <b>Feedback to School</b>                                | <b>Other Actions Taken</b>  |
|--|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--|---|
| Original Charter<br>1 <sup>st</sup> Year | 2000-01            | 1 <sup>st</sup>          | YES                     | Prior Action Letter;<br>End-of-Year<br>Evaluation Report | None  |
| Original Charter<br>2 <sup>nd</sup> Year | 2001-02            | 2 <sup>nd</sup>          | YES                     | End-of-Year<br>Evaluation Report                         | None  |
| Original Charter<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> Year | 2002-03            | 3 <sup>rd</sup>          | YES                     | End-of-Year<br>Evaluation Report                         | None  |
| Original Charter<br>4 <sup>th</sup> Year | 2003-04            | 4 <sup>th</sup>          | NO                      | None   | None  |
| Original Charter<br>5 <sup>th</sup> Year | 2004-05            | 5 <sup>th</sup>          | YES                     | Initial Renewal<br>Report                                | Moved into new facility;<br>Granted full Charter<br>Renewal for period of<br>five years |
| Renewal Charter<br>1 <sup>st</sup> Year  | 2005-06            | 6 <sup>th</sup>          | NO                      | None   | None  |
| Renewal Charter<br>2 <sup>nd</sup> Year  | 2006-07            | 7 <sup>th</sup>          | YES                     | End-of-Year<br>Evaluation Report                         | None  |
| Renewal Charter<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> Year  | 2007-08            | 8 <sup>th</sup>          | YES                     | Annual Evaluation<br>Report                              | None  |

## ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

### Background

Each charter school authorized by the State University Trustees has adopted an Accountability Plan, the primary purpose of which is to lay out the specific student achievement goals that a school agrees to meet and the specific measures that define what constitutes meeting these goals. The Institute currently requires a common set of goals and outcome measures which represent the expectations for student learning and achievement at the time of renewal. Individual schools may also have chosen to include in their Accountability Plans additional academic, organizational or other goals and measures. Schools should be aware that Accountability Plans developed prior to the Institute's establishment of common goals and outcome measures may not include all of the currently required measures. However, at renewal, those plans will be revised to reflect current measures.

Below is a narrative that provides an analysis of how this school measured up to the goals in its Accountability Plan as well as the Institute's required goals and measures should they not already be included in the school's Accountability Plan. The narrative summarizes the results of the relevant measures, and is followed by School Performance Summaries for English language arts and mathematics. The School Performance Summaries are one page compilations of performance data, for the last three years, based on the Institute's required measures. As noted above, the common measures used in the Performance Summaries may differ from the actual measures in the school's Accountability Plan, but are presented to provide trend data and consistency across schools. At the time of renewal, schools will be held accountable for the measures in their Accountability Plan, but the Institute will take into account other performance data as well.

Most state exams are administered in the winter and spring; official results are typically not released until at least early summer. Similarly, schools are not required to submit Accountability Plan Progress Reports until August. As a consequence, results for this current school year from state and school administered assessments were not available at the time of this school visit. Therefore, the following evaluation of school performance addresses assessment results up to and including the previous school year. These are the same data the school would have had available and considered at the beginning of the 2007-08 school year and used to make critical decisions related to this year's academic program. These are also the same data the school inspection team relied on at the time of its visit.

Academic Performance through 2006-07

Performance Summary: With a very small number of tested students and limited data, the Child Development Center of the Hamptons (CDCH) is not meeting its Accountability Plan goals in English language arts or mathematics. It is close to meeting its goal in science but not social studies. The school is in good standing under the state's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.

English language arts: Results were not reported for a number of the measures required to fully evaluate the English language arts goal in the school's Accountability Plan. Based on limited available data, CDCH is not close to meeting its English language arts goal. That said, the school has demonstrated some improvement on its absolute measure. In 2004-05 when only 4<sup>th</sup> grade students took the state exam, 33 percent of students enrolled in at least their second year (1 of 3 students)

scored at the proficient level, well below the 75 percent target. The following year the state exam was administered to students in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and 30 percent were proficient. In 2006-07 the percent rose to 48 percent. The school did not exceed the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set by the state's NCLB accountability system until 2006-07. Between the 2004-05 and 2006-07 school years, the school has underperformed the school district of location. In terms of growth on the state exam, one of four cohorts achieved its target in 2006-07, and performance overall improved.

**Mathematics:** Again, incomplete results make it difficult to assess this goal. Based on available data, CDCH has shown some progress on the state's mathematics exam, but is not yet close to meeting its mathematics goal. In 2004-05 on the state's 4<sup>th</sup> grade test 33 percent of the tested students enrolled in at least their second year (1 of 3 students) were proficient. The following year 13 percent of students tested in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade were proficient. In 2006-07, proficiency rose to 48 percent. CDCH exceeded the AMO in 2004-05 and 2006-07, but did not do so in the intervening year. Between 2004-05 and 2006-07, the school has performed below the district of location. In terms of growth on the state test, two of four cohorts achieved their targets, and overall performance increased. Again, data were not available for two of the five measures.

Science: Based on limited data, CDCH is close to meeting its science goal. In 2006-07 on the 4<sup>th</sup> grade state test 6 of 9 tested students (67 percent) were proficient. Comparison data were not available.

Social Studies: Based on limited data, CDCH is not close to meeting its social studies goal. On the 5<sup>th</sup> grade state exam 2 of 5 tested students (40 percent) scored at the proficient level. Comparison data were not available.

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

Additional Goals (Optional): Results for organizational and unique non-academic goals were not available.

**SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: English Language Arts**  
**Child Development Center of the Hamptons Charter School**



|   | 2004-05<br>Grades Served: K-7           |                       |                         | 2005-06<br>Grades Served: K-8 |   |                         | 2006-07<br>Grades Served: K-8 |                    |   | 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)                 |           |           |             |        |
| <b><u>ABSOLUTE MEASURES</u></b>   |   |                       |                         |                               |   |                         |                               |                    |   |           |           |             |        |
| 1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam.   | 4                                       | 37.5 (8)              | 33.3 (3)                | NO                            | 3                                       | 50.0 (4)                | 66.6 (3)                      | 4                  | 66.7 (9)                                | 75.0 (4)  |           |             |        |
|   | 8                                       | (0)                   | (0)                     |                               | 5                                       | 38.5 (13)               | 33.3 (3)                      | 5                  | 25.0 (4)                                | 33.3 (3)  |           |             |        |
|   |   |                       |                         |                               | 6                                       | 28.6 (14)               | 50.0 (4)                      | 6                  | 85.7 (7)                                | 83.3 (6)  |           |             |        |
|   |   |                       |                         |                               | 7                                       | 15.4 (13)               | 28.6 (7)                      | 7                  | 10.0 (10)                               | 12.5 (8)  |           |             |        |
|   |   |                       |                         |                               | 8                                       | 25.0 (8)                | 0.0 (4)                       | 8                  | (0)                                     | (0)       |           |             |        |
|   |   |                       |                         |                               | All                                     | 27.7 (65)               | 29.6 (27)                     | All                | 47.1 (34)                               | 48.0 (25) | NO        |             |        |
| 2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.  | Grades                                  | PI                    | AMO                     |                               | Grades                                  | PI                      | AMO                           | Grades             | PI                                      | AMO       |           |             |        |
|   | 4                                       | 125                   | 131                     | NO                            | 3-8                                     | 111                     | 122                           | 3-8                | 138                                     | 122       | YES       |             |        |
|   | 8                                       |                       | 116                     |                               |   |                         |                               |                    |   |           |           |             |        |
| <b><u>COMPARATIVE MEASURES</u></b>  |   |                       |                         |                               |   |                         |                               |                    |   |           |           |             |        |
| 3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.                              | Comparison: (East Hampton Free Schools) | Grades                | School                  | District                      | Comparison: (East Hampton Free Schools) | Grades                  | School                        | District           | Comparison: (East Hampton Free Schools) | Grades    | School    | District    |        |
|   |   | 4                     | 33.3                    | 96.5                          | NO                                      | 3-8                     | 29.6                          | 71.7               | NO                                      | 3-8       | 48.0      | 73.6        |        |
|   |   | 8                     |                         |                               |   |                         |                               |                    |   |           |           |             |        |
| 4. Each year the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3) based on its Free Lunch (FL) rate.   | Grades                                  | Actual                | Predicted               | Effect Size                   | N                                       | Actual                  | Predicted                     | Effect Size        | % FL                                    | Actual    | Predicted | Effect Size |        |
|   | 4                                       |                       |                         | --                            | 61                                      | 26.2                    | 78.0                          | -4.20              | 0.0                                     | 50.0      | 80.7      | -2.45       |        |
|   | 8                                       |                       |                         |                               |   |                         |                               |                    |   |           |           |             |        |
|   | Assessment: TERRA NOVA                  |                       |                         |                               | Assessment: TERRA NOVA                  |                         |                               |                    | Assessment: NYSTP                       |           |           |             |        |
| 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 NYSTP. An asterisk indicates cohort met target. | Grades                                  | Cohorts Making Target |                         |                               | Grades                                  | Cohorts Making Target   |                               |                    | Gr                                      | N         | Base      | Target      | Result |
|   | 1-7                                     | 0 of 7                | NO                      |                               | 2-8                                     | 4 of 7                  | NO                            |                    | 4                                       | 3         | 66.7      | 70.9        | 66.7   |
|   |   |                       |                         |                               |   |                         |                               |                    | 5                                       | 3         | 33.3      | 54.2        | 33.3   |
|   |   |                       |                         |                               |   |                         |                               |                    | 6                                       | 5         | 20.0      | 47.5        | 80.0 * |
|   |   |                       |                         |                               |   |                         |                               |                    | 7                                       | 8         | 25.0      | 50.0        | 12.5   |
|   |   |                       |                         |                               |   |                         |                               |                    | 8                                       |           |           |             |        |
|   | All                                     | 19                    | 31.6                    | 53.3                          | All                                     | 19                      | 31.6                          | 53.3               | All                                     | 19        | 31.6      | 53.3        | 42.1   |

Data Sources: New York State and City data, workbooks submitted by schools and databases compiled by the Institute.



|  | 2004-05<br>Grades Served: K-7 |                    |                         | 2005-06<br>Grades Served: K-8 |                    |                         | 2006-07<br>Grades Served: K-8 |                    |                         | 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) | MET      |      |      |           |           |        |           |         |     |         |         |        |         |         |     |           |           |           |    |  |  |
| <b><u>ABSOLUTE MEASURES</u></b>  |                               |                    |                         |                               |                    |                         |                               |                    |                         |          |      |      |           |           |        |           |         |     |         |         |        |         |         |     |           |           |           |    |  |  |
| 1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam.  | 4                             | 77.8 (9)           | 33.3 (3)                | NO                            | 3                  | 50.0 (4)                | 33.3 (3)                      | 4                  | 23.1 (13)               | 11.1 (9) | NO   | 5    | 53.8 (13) | 40.0 (10) | 6      | 14.3 (14) | 0.0 (9) | 7   | 0.0 (9) | 0.0 (9) | 8      | 0.0 (7) | 0.0 (6) | All | 23.3 (60) | 13.0 (46) | 48.0 (25) | NO |  |  |
| 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.   | 4                             | 167                | 142                     | YES                           | 3-8                | 85                      | 86                            | 3-8                | 85                      | 86       | NO   | 3-8  | 131       | 86        | 3-8    | 131       | 86      | 3-8 | 131     | 86      | YES    |         |         |     |           |           |           |    |  |  |
| <b><u>COMPARATIVE MEASURES</u></b>   |                               |                    |                         |                               |                    |                         |                               |                    |                         |          |      |      |           |           |        |           |         |     |         |         |        |         |         |     |           |           |           |    |  |  |
| 3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.                                   | 4                             | 33.3               | 100.0                   | NO                            | 3-8                | 13.0                    | 75.7                          | 3-8                | 13.0                    | 75.7     | NO   | 3-8  | 48.0      | 81.8      | 3-8    | 48.0      | 81.8    | 3-8 | 48.0    | 81.8    | NO     |         |         |     |           |           |           |    |  |  |
| 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) based on the Free Lunch (FL) rate.  | 4                             |                    |                         | --                            | N                  | 56                      | 21.4                          | 80.8               | -4.26                   | 56       | 21.4 | 80.8 | -4.26     | 56        | 21.4   | 80.8      | -4.26   | 0.0 | 43.2    | 88.8    | -4.32  | NO      |         |     |           |           |           |    |  |  |
| <b><u>VALUE ADDED MEASURE</u></b>  |                               |                    |                         |                               |                    |                         |                               |                    |                         |          |      |      |           |           |        |           |         |     |         |         |        |         |         |     |           |           |           |    |  |  |
| 5. Each grade level cohort will reduce by one half the difference between the previous year's baseline and 50 NCE on a norm referenced test or 75 percent proficient on the state exam. An asterick indicates cohort met target. | 1-7                           | 0 of 7             | NO                      | Grades                        | 2-8                | 4 of 7                  | NO                            | Grades             | 2-8                     | 4 of 7   | NO   | Gr   | N         | Base      | Target | Result    | Gr      | N   | Base    | Target  | Result | NO      |         |     |           |           |           |    |  |  |
|  | 38                            | 47.1               | 48.6                    | 37.9                          | 39                 | 40.3                    | 45.1                          | 46.5               | 39                      | 40.3     | 45.1 | 46.5 | All       | 19        | 26.3   | 50.7      | 36.8    | All | 19      | 26.3    | 50.7   | 36.8    |         |     |           |           |           |    |  |  |

Data Sources: New York State and City data, workbooks submitted by schools and databases compiled by the Institute.

## **SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT**

### **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, assessment, and the effectiveness and viability of the school as an organization, including such items as board operations and student order and discipline. Called 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 inspection visit is an evaluation of the school's academic program, issues regarding compliance with applicable 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 for compliance is not the principal purpose of the visit.

This section of the School Evaluation Report begins with a summary of the observations and conclusions from the previous inspection visit to the school. This information is used by the inspection team in preparation for this year's inspection and assists the observers in understanding the accomplishments and challenges the school has faced. Similarly, this information provides the reader with insight into the Institute's monitoring of the school's academic program and conclusions from prior inspection visits, including those conducted by external experts on behalf of the Institute. Following this summary is a detailed analysis of the observations and conclusions from this year's inspection, along with supporting evidence. Finally, information regarding the conduct of the inspection, including the date of the visit and information about the Inspection Team is provided.

## **Summary of Previous Evaluation Visit**

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the previous visit to the Child Development Center of the Hamptons (CDCH) on May 22, 2007. The school continued to benefit from an established and committed board and had stabilized its operations by partnering with Services for the Underserved (SUS). With an infrastructure more firmly in place, the board, SUS and a new school leader had been able to turn their attention more fully to the educational program. Despite being in its seventh year, the school had not yet developed a strong educational program with high expectations for student achievement. With six principals in six years and notable turnover in staff, including teachers, related service providers, and the school psychologist, the school had to address the demands of integrating new personnel into the organization rather than concentrating on developing systems for delivering the program.

At the time of the visit, the role of principal, with the title of Assistant Executive Director, had recently been filled by a highly-experienced educator. He recognized the challenges the school faced and had a clear set of priorities for moving the educational program forward. He acknowledged that the school's viability rested at least to some extent on its ability to attract a general education population by establishing itself as a school serving both general education students, as well as students with disabilities. However, the school culture has remained focused on meeting the special needs of the individual rather than concentrating on establishing a set of uniform grade-level benchmarks, reflected in the state performance standards, which all students are expected to meet. Based on the data available at the time of the visit, CDCH had not been meeting its goals in the English language arts (ELA) or mathematics, as set forth in its Accountability Plan.

The school leadership was supportive of the teachers and aware of their professional needs as novice teachers. A monthly planning process and formal observations had provided them with guidance in developing their instructional practice. Despite the regular support, however, the teachers had not been coached in their day-to-day pedagogy and in particular special education instructional techniques. At the time of the visit the school had no curriculum maps or scope and sequence documents as well as a crosswalk document between commercial materials and the state standards and the Student-Centered Plans (SCPs). The SCPS are not aligned to the state's performance indicators and core curriculum in each subject area. Teachers were not aware, much less focused on, providing instruction based on state standards.

As one of its key design elements, the school's emphasis on differentiating instruction appeared to be a carry-over from its attention to individualization. However, teachers demonstrated limited understanding of the concept and application. Teachers did not formally and systematically assess student academic performance on an ongoing basis. While school leaders intended to use data to drive instruction, there was virtually no current evidence of a link between curriculum and assessment. Teachers also lacked a technical expertise about special education and there was a lack of clarity about the roles of the special education teacher, the classroom teachers and the teacher aides. There was no articulated plan with clear priorities or expectations and no strategy to support the development of novice teachers and of teachers new to special education.

The board of trustees had helped guide the school through the transition created by the departure of the school's founder and original school leader, and had established a new management and oversight structure with SUS. With SUS's management resources and expertise, a viable reporting structure, an improved relationship with the pre-school, and the school-wide leadership of a highly experienced educator, the school was poised to return to the path it was on at the time of renewal in 2005.

## **CONCLUSIONS OF THE INSPECTION TEAM AND SUPPORTING EVIDENCE**

### Benchmark Analysis and Evidence of the School's Academic Success

#### **Instructional Leadership**

The school has made substantial progress in a number of areas since last year's visit due, in large measure, to the presence of a strong experienced school leader. "He is a good leader; he's decreased the chaos, improved teamwork and increased enrollment," according to one teacher. "There's been a huge improvement [in the school]. He's a very hands-on guy. He'll listen to me," stated another teacher. Teachers reported feeling a sense of direction, esprit de corps and a loyalty to their school leader.

One of the new initiatives implemented this year is a daily school-wide morning meeting designed to strengthen the school culture. The school leader helped create a format for the meeting which begins every new school day which includes a hello, a handshake, a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, a weather report, a news report, a song, etc. Each grade level team leads the morning meeting every day for a month; a primary grade class presented on the day of the team's visit. According to the school leader, the goal for the morning meeting is for each child to begin his/her day in a very positive way which certainly seemed to be the case on the day of the visit with lots of high-five's and smiles emanating from the children.

The school leader expressed confidence that there has been an improvement in instruction as a result of several other new initiatives. Specifically, there is more instructional support provided through two English language arts mentor/coaches and a math consultant. The coaches are both special education trained and certified and work the equivalent of two days a week. One coach works with teachers in fourth through sixth grade while the other works with teachers in Kindergarten through third grade. Both coaches meet weekly with the school leader and reported having easy access to him. During these weekly meetings, the coaches share what they are doing and the school leader brings to their attention certain things that need to be addressed. The coaches have autonomy to design their days around observing teachers and planning with teachers as well as attending faculty staff development sessions and monthly faculty meetings. Although the coaches are not part of staff evaluation, they are part of the planning process for teacher evaluations and sometimes participate in the post conference of observations of lessons. A retired high school teacher was hired as a part-time math consultant this year but her time has been allocated to teaching mathematics classes at the middle school level and not as much to staff development efforts.

Additionally, the school leader stated that he has established a school-wide focus on one instructional practice, that of checking for understanding. He requires that teachers align their assessment evaluation with the stated objective of a lesson and build in medial strategies for checking understanding during delivery of a lesson as well as a final check at the end (e.g., use of exit slips). However, this was not observed in any classroom on the day of the visit. Monthly faculty meetings are devoted to having the school leader teach various teaching strategies to the staff.

Improved parent communication has been another area of focus this year. A CDCH Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) was established this year with regular parent meetings and monthly executive board meetings now a part of the school. The school leader also initiated an individual parent conference day in November. To accomplish this, he hired substitute teachers so that teachers could be released from teaching responsibilities, set the teachers up in offices and stations throughout the

building, used his secretaries to organize 30 minute conference schedules, and released related services staff to be available to participate in conferences when needed. Parental feedback to the school leader was overwhelmingly positive.

The school leader, along with the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) person, the social worker and the school psychologist hold team meetings to discuss student concerns and needs at various grade levels. The school leader develops the agenda for those meetings and notes are shared with related services personnel. Parents are brought into the meetings as needed.

Recently, the school leader was appointed as head of schools for the preschool program and the charter school program. He discussed how the preschool program, because it is now viewed as a full partner with the charter school, is a strong source of students for the charter school with between 50-75% of the students in that program continuing on to Kindergarten. Parents appear to make a commitment to CDCH for Kindergarten through fourth grade but after that parents are interested in more activities (e.g., music, athletics, drama, etc.) available in district middle schools. CDCH does run a modified middle school program for those students who are not yet ready to return to their home districts.

The school leader has made recruitment of new students one of his top priorities. As a result of efforts to reach out to the Hispanic community, he reported having approximately 30 parents (and their translator) attend a recent recruitment meeting at the school. What was most notable, according to the school leader, was that current CDCH parents came and gave testimonials about what the school meant to them.

This year the school leader has successfully initiated a number of collaborative partnerships with community organizations to benefit the CDCH school community. For example, all students (with staff) attend a weekly PE swimming program at the YMCA. Other partnerships include the Children's Museum of East End where CDCH students act as docents, Cody Center where children with autism participate with a grandparents support group, Parrish Art Museum and Guild Hall. According to the school leader, "We [CDCH] are getting a good reputation," in large measure because of these new initiatives.

#### Use of Assessment Data

The school has a system to gather assessment information and to report information to parents. This year the school implemented narrative report cards to replace mid-year and end-of-year report cards. The school leader reviews all of the narratives and provides feedback and suggestions for changes in language. The faculty agreed to use a template which included an overview of the first (or second) half of the year with specific examples of activities the class and individual student was successful in. The reports also highlighted an individual child's strengths and enumerated goals for the remainder of the year. According to the school leader, every teacher in the building wrote a narrative statement for the children he/she was working with. Teachers reported that parents liked the narrative format.

Teachers are using formal and informal assessments such as commercial assessments and teacher-made assessments but follow-up is not yet systematic. Individual teachers use a variety of informal assessments including written response to prompts, projects and presentations; chapter tests; document-based questions (DBQs) for social studies, writing folders, teacher-made math assessments and student-teacher conference notes. Teachers did not generally find the results of the previous year's Terra Nova testing very useful.

Inspectors did not see evidence of assessment informing instructional practices. None of the classroom teachers interviewed discussed a relationship between state assessments or special education testing to the instructional program. One of the coaches talked about a future goal (next year) of developing quarterly assessments tied to the state standards in mathematics, reading and writing, and matching those with the IEP goals.

To the school's credit, the teachers have been trained in alternative assessments and, with only a few exceptions, all students are taking state examinations in all subject areas. This is a substantial improvement over what was observed in the previous visit – teachers not knowledgeable about alternate assessments and their appropriate use.

### Curriculum

This year the school has developed a curriculum framework based on the state standards for language arts, but not yet in mathematics or other subject areas. Some teachers still believed that the Student Centered Plan (SCP) was the curriculum for each child. Since the SCPs were not developed in aligned with the state standards for each content area (see Summary of Previous Evaluation Visit above), the practice of using SCPs as the curriculum does not ensure holding students to the same high performance standards at each grade level. A few individual teachers are developing curriculum maps aligned to the standards for their own grade level but the SPCs are given to the teachers at the beginning of the year and they reportedly have to determine the scope and sequencing of those objectives as well as pacing. The SCPs are the focus on the report card as well as the narratives.

The school has adopted a common lesson plan format and teachers are submitting the lesson plans to the school leader but this form is not utilized to drive instruction in the classroom. Additionally, at the time of the school visit, teachers' lesson plans were not yet closely tied to the curriculum framework. Some teachers do their own daily lesson plans while others do unit plans but not daily plans, and the quality of the lesson plans varied from teacher to teacher. The school leader does review lesson plans regularly (four times annually) and provides written feedback.

### Pedagogy

CDCH takes pride in using the student centered planning process with its focus on an individual student's academic strengths and deficits to guide instruction. Student Centered Plans (SCPs) are written yearly and updated several times during the year. The plans address the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and give the classroom teacher a framework upon which they can build an instructional program. However, after a review of several plans and discussions with classroom teachers, the inspectors found that most teachers seem to continue to teach to the SCPs rather than addressing the scope and sequence of curricula for every subject at the child's designated grade level. This focus on SCPS rather than state standards in every subject area seems to divert the teachers' attention from differentiating the mainstream curricula to shoring up individual student skill deficits in very small increments. As was the case during last year's visit, differentiation was not observed in any classroom. This pedagogical approach (based on SCPs) is not supporting high academic achievement on state standards or state assessments for all children, special education notwithstanding, a requirement under the No Child Left Behind legislation.

Inspectors did not observe students with special needs completing the same assignments as their non-disabled peers. Many students with disabilities were working with an aide (1:1) on different and lower level (easier) concepts and skills as well as on busy-work tasks. Thus, the academic work of the special needs students appeared less rigorous than that for the regular education students. This was especially the case in the various pull-out support classes. The practice of providing different

work to special needs students, not differentiated work or support, will not, in all likelihood, prepare special needs students for a high degree of success on required state exams. What has not yet been implemented is a pedagogical approach that requires classroom teachers to work with all students on the same curriculum with special needs students receiving additional support and intensive teaching to achieve grade level competencies.

The middle school program in grades 6-8 is a departmentalized approach with students grouped by ability. At the time of the school visit there were three eighth graders in attendance, two who were new to the school this year and one who arrived in February. It is likely that the students will repeat eighth grade again next year since they do not appear ready to go on to a high school program. The current staffing pattern is a certified English language arts teacher, a science teacher, a part-time math teacher who is the math consultant and a former high school teacher, and a social studies teacher who was hired in January. Currently there is a lack of a well-articulated sequence of courses due to the fluctuations in student enrollment and lack of a stable student population through the middle grades as well as many staffing changes over the years. There was no evidence of a well-articulated scope and sequence or curriculum maps for the middle school core subjects aligned to the state standards and performance assessments. As one middle school teacher stated, “Everything is very fluid; things are not set in stone. There should be a curriculum map – it would be a great idea – but no one has given me that direction. I took home the textbook and outlined the whole course using the sequence in the textbook.” At the current time, the middle school program is weak and in need of closer scrutiny and development to ensure that all students are being adequately prepared for the rigor of high school coursework and success on state examinations.

Teachers and school leaders continued to highlight the lack of a wide array of instructional resources suitable to meeting the various needs of a diverse student population. “Teachers don’t have all the materials they need,” stated one teacher. For example, one teacher talked about the lack of a textbook for the middle level grades until January, and the necessity of borrowing curriculum maps from another local school. Another talked about borrowing a few manuals and materials from another school to teach mathematics. Inspectors were told that the school is struggling to adequately finance the needs of an increasingly more diverse student body requiring regular education books and materials.

### Student Order and Discipline

Under the current leadership, CDCH has developed an orderly and purposeful school culture. Classrooms were generally controlled with relatively few student outbursts or breakdowns. The tone of the daily morning assembly was positive and productive with all adults working to manage student behavior in constructive ways. Even though students appeared to be well-behaved, teachers seemed overly focused on student behavior as opposed to a relentless focus on student academic achievement which was not yet in evidence.

### Professional Development

As was previously discussed in the Instructional Leadership section of this report, CDCH added three new staff developers this year: two English language arts mentors/coaches and one mathematics consultant. They, along with the school leader, are providing the professional development for the teachers through work with individual teachers and during faculty meetings. The staff developers did say that they were supported in attending workshops outside of the school. The teachers had been trained in alternate assessments this year. While both coaches articulated their own goals for next year, no short-term and long-term professional development plan had yet been developed.

## Governance

Similar to last year's visit, few members of the Board of Trustees were available for a meeting on the day of the visit. The two board members who attended talked about the search for additional members; qualified candidates who believe in CDCH and have some expertise in certain fields (e.g., an education background, facilities for typical and special needs students, as well as someone with a fiscal background). By design, one Board member overlaps with the Preschool Board of Trustees. The Board consists of six members who meet as a whole on a bi-monthly basis. The board members stated that their key mission is to be there for the school leader, the director of SUS and the staff. The Board has supported SUS's efforts to obtain SED and Board of Regents approval for the twelve month school year with a summer school component for those students whose IEP's dictate a twelve month educational program. There are three Board committees currently in existence – Public Outreach, Education and Strategic Development – and their members make regular reports to the full board of trustees.

With a current enrollment of 77 students, “we know we need to bring in additional students,” stated one Board member. The board is cognizant of the need to educate the community about CDCH, especially in terms of what special services the school can bring to all children not just special education students. “Districts are beginning to recognize that we are a viable alternative to BOCES placements,” according to one Board member.

Board minutes reflect the Board's commitment to understanding the educational program and assessment results through oral and written reports from the school leader. The board members have examined the results of recent assessments and appear to understand the need for monitoring assessment results throughout the year.

## Conduct of the Visit

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the Eighth-Year Inspection Visit at the Child Development Center of the Hamptons Charter School on April 17, 2008. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit:

**Joanne Falinski, Ph.D. (Team Leader)**, at the time of the visit, was Vice President for Charter School Evaluation at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Dr. Falinski previously 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.

**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.

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

**Roberta Wiener, Ed.D.**, is an Assistant Professor of Education at Pace University. Previously she spent over twenty years as a public school teacher and over a decade as a Director of Special Education. Dr. Wiener received her undergraduate degree from Mills College of Education and Master's degree from William Paterson University. She earned her Ed.D from Teachers College, Columbia University in the area of technology in special education. She has a post doctorate degree in school administration.

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

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

|  |             |   |
|--|-------------|---|
| <b>Benchmark 1D</b><br><b>Pedagogy</b>                       | <b>1D.1</b> | <b>The school has strong instructional leadership.</b>  |
|  | <b>1D.2</b> | <b>High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.</b>   |
|  | <b>1D.3</b> | <b>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. .</b> |
| <b>Benchmark 1E</b><br><b>Student Order &amp; Discipline</b> | <b>1E</b>   | <b>The school’s culture allows and promotes a culture of learning.</b>  |
| <b>Benchmark 1F</b><br><b>Professional Development</b>       | <b>1F</b>   | <b>The school’s professional development program assists teachers in meeting student academic needs and school goals, by addressing identified shortcomings in student learning and teacher pedagogical skill and content knowledge.</b>  |

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

## **APPENDIX B: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### Charter Schools and the State University of New York

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 carrying out 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. While independent, public charter schools and their boards, like traditional public schools and school boards, are subject to oversight and monitoring. 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 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 in its fifth year of instruction and 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.

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 State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks"). How these benchmarks are used (and which are used) varies, depending on the specific year of the visit as well as whether the school is in its initial renewal cycle (the first five years) or, having been renewed one or more times, in subsequent renewal cycles.

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

Over time, and particularly at the school's initial renewal (and subsequent renewals thereafter), the quantitative indicators (as defined by Renewal Benchmark 1A, 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).

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

## 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.

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.