

Independent School Evaluation Visit Reports

Attached is a school evaluation report based on a school visit conducted by an external vendor on behalf of the Charter Schools Institute. School evaluation visits are a key component of the Institute’s comprehensive oversight and evaluation system. They provide an assessment of the school’s academic program and, to a more limited degree, its organizational and governance capacity. The objectives of the school evaluation visit are to:

1. Collect and document evidence of the school’s progress toward meeting the academic and organizational standards found in the Institute’s Renewal Benchmarks; and
2. Provide the school with feedback on its current achievement of the Renewal Benchmarks that may be helpful to the school as it determines how best to improve its program in anticipation of renewal.

The Institute engages external vendors to conduct an independent school evaluation visit and write an evaluation report at least once during a school’s first charter term, and occasionally in subsequent charter terms. These evaluations provide the Institute with additional information about a school’s program from an objective external perspective and serve to inform, corroborate or challenge conclusions drawn from the Institute’s ongoing evaluation and oversight.

The vendors are selected through a competitive bidding process, and must demonstrate the capacity to conduct rigorous and reliable qualitative evaluation of a school’s academic program and organizational capacity. The vendors are contracted to specifically collect and analyze evidence pertaining to the following SUNY renewal benchmarks¹:

Academic Success	Organizational Effectiveness and Viability
1B. Use of Assessment Data 1C. Curriculum 1D. Pedagogy 1E. Instructional Leadership 1F. At-Risk Students 1G. Student Order & Discipline 1H. Professional Development	2A. Mission & Key Design Elements 2B. Parents & Students 2C. Organizational Capacity 2D. Board Oversight 2E. Governance

While specific evaluation methodology is left to the discretion of the vendor, the school evaluation visits typically include classroom observation, interviews with teachers, parents, school leaders and board members, and review of relevant documents. The attached report was written by a vendor based on evidence collected during a school evaluation visit, with the school description section provided by the Institute. The school had an opportunity to review a draft of this report and provide factual corrections and comments prior to the finalization of the report.

Other evaluation reports for this or other schools can be found on the Institute’s website at www.newyorkcharter.org. For questions or concerns about this report or the Institute’s school evaluation procedures, please contact Simeon Stolzberg, Director of School Evaluation, at simeon.stolzberg@suny.edu or 212-221-6332.

¹ These reference version 4.0 of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks; the latest version can be found on the Institute’s website at: <http://newyorkcharters.org/documents/renewalBenchmarks.doc>

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

GREEN DOT NEW YORK CHARTER SCHOOL

Visit Date
March 22–23, 2010



CONDUCTED BY CLASS MEASURES
ON BEHALF OF THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE



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EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

GREEN DOT NEW YORK CHARTER SCHOOL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Green Dot New York Charter School (Green Dot) was visited by an external school inspection team from Class Measures on behalf of the SUNY Charter Schools Institute on March 22 and 23, 2010. The school opened in 2008 and at the time of the visit served 214 students in grades 9 and 10.

The team observed a well thought out and effective assessment program that included summative state assessments as well as benchmark assessments that were in place for social studies, English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science. Benchmark assessments were reported by the principal to be administered four times each year, with two administrations having taken place to date at the time of the evaluation. Benchmark assessments were aligned with the state standards. In addition, assessments were also in place for assessing basic student skills in mathematics and reading, which were used for placement in support programs such as tutoring and Read 180. This information was also used by classroom teachers to scaffold instruction for struggling students. There is a process in place that includes teachers in the analysis of student data. Student data results are communicated to all members of the school community effectively.

The team observed an established and well documented curriculum aligned to the state standards for all subject areas. Teachers use the written curricular documents to design their instruction and maintain curriculum binders with lesson plans and materials. These binders are monitored by the principal and vice principal as well as used reflectively by the teachers and leaders to modify instruction from year to year. The curriculum is rigorous and supports the school's mission.

During classroom observations, all teachers were observed to have good subject matter and grade level competency in the grades they teach and teachers maintained high expectations for student performance. There was evidence of instruction that promoted higher level thinking in some classes. Although the principal stated that the team would see differentiated instruction, there was little evidence of differentiation in most classes observed; however, most classes had high levels of student engagement. Students were well behaved and challenged by the lesson content.

The school has solid instructional leadership, with the principal and assistant principal sharing this role. To ensure future organizational capacity, the school has implemented the beginnings of a teacher committee structure in areas such as events, hiring, academics, and community outreach. The school has also created a teacher leadership committee that focuses on instruction and policy issues.

The instructional leadership uses the California-based Green Dot Public School (GDPS) model as the foundation of their academic program. Leaders monitor student and school progress towards goals and regularly evaluate teachers using an evaluation protocol designed by GDPS.

The school has a number of supports in place for at-risk learners: all students are assessed in reading and mathematics when they enter the school in grade 9; students are monitored academically and socially by leaders, counselors, and teachers; students who are of concern are discussed in Kid Talk meetings, where plans are created to support them. Support may include participation in programs such as counseling, Read 180, tutoring, advisory, or summer school. In addition, all incoming grade 9 students participate in Summer Bridge, which provides both academic skill remediation as well as an initiation into the school culture.

The school was found to be safe with well behaved students who were, for the most part, well engaged with the lessons observed. There is a school wide behavior policy and parents and teachers interviewed in focus groups felt that the school was safe. Teachers have received professional development in behavior management.

Teachers receive abundant professional development in alignment with the GDPS philosophy. There is a week of professional development provided before the beginning of school and teachers receive internal professional development on a weekly basis, usually at late start Tuesday mornings or early release Friday afternoons. In addition, teachers reported having access to external professional development, such as attending out of school conferences upon request.

The school is faithful to its mission and maintains an academic program that is rigorous and designed to support students in developing the skills necessary for success in college and beyond. Parents and students expressed satisfaction with the school, both through surveys and through team interviews. Parents were not aware of role of the board or of the location of the board meetings.

The school has developed a relationship with the GDPS and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). These organizations provide support to the school in management, back office support, and in fundraising. Additionally, GDPS provides support to the school for academic issues and instructional leadership. The school has established a well functioning organizational structure that meets its current needs; however, currently the bulk of the instructional leadership as well as other leadership for the school are the responsibility of the principal and vice principal. Intermediate level support structures are not currently in place to support future growth within the school.

Although only one board member was available for the board focus group, the team reviewed board minutes and the school's by-laws and concluded the board of trustees works effectively to oversee the school. The board members are qualified and the board has developed by-laws, policies and procedures, and maintains meeting minutes as required. The board is informed about and active in monitoring the academic programs and progress at the school. Like last year, the board is in the process of developing an evaluation protocol for the principal; however, the principal had not been evaluated at the time of the team visit.

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION¹

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	October 26, 2007
Date Initial Charter Approved by the Board of Regents	January 15, 2008
School Opening Date	September, 2008

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades At Location	District
2008-09 through present	600 St. Ann's Avenue Bronx, NY	All	New York City CSD 7

Partner Organizations

	Partner Name	Partner Type	Dates of Service
Current Partner	Green Dot Public Schools	Charter Management Organization	2007 - present
Current Partner	United Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation	Non-profit Foundation	2007 - present

Current Mission Statement

The mission of Green Dot New York Charter School is to prepare students for success in college, leadership and life.

Current Key Design Elements

• Small, safe, personalized school;
• High expectations for all students;
• Local control with extensive professional development and accountability;
• Parent participation expected;
• Extended school day;
• College-preparatory curriculum;
• Faculty office hours;
• Data-driven instruction based on regular interim assessments;
• History of New York elective based on social and civil right movements;
• Formal academic intervention programs for students in ELA and mathematics;
• Professional learning plan for all faculty and staff; and
• 95-5% time allocation of key administrative staff (95% of time dedicated to work responsibilities, 5% for professional development activities).

¹ The information in this section was provided by the SUNY Charters Schools Institute.

School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Charter Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ²	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2008-09	115		121	9	9	185
2009-10	225		213	9-10	9-10	185

Student Demographics

	2008-09 ³		2009-10	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYCCSD 7 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment ⁴	Percent of NYC CSD 7 Enrollment ⁵
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	0%	0%	NA
Black or African American	34%	29%	36%	NA
Hispanic	61%	69%	61%	NA
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0%	1%	1%	NA
White	2%	1%	1%	NA
Multiracial	4%	0%	1%	NA
Special Populations				
Students with Disabilities ⁶	12%	NA	11%	NA
Limited English Proficient	9%	17%	10%	NA
Free/Reduced Lunch				
Eligible for Free Lunch	78%	83%	75%	NA
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	5%	6%	14%	NA

² 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.)

³ Source: 2008-09 School Report Cards, New York State Education Department.

⁴ Source: 2009-10 Demographics and Limited English Proficient Percentages calculated from BEDS reports submitted at the beginning of the school year. BEDS reports do not include Free/Reduced Lunch status; statistics shown were provided by the school.

⁵ Aggregated District data not yet available for 2009-10 school year.

⁶ New York State Education Department does not report special education data. Statistics given were provided by the school.

Current Board of Trustees⁷

Board Member Name	Term	Position/Committees
Steven Barr		
Burton Sacks		
Nadya Chinoy Dabby		
Charles King		
Jeffrey T. Leeds		
Deborah Levitzky		
Jesse Serventi		
Bonnie Steingart		
Randi Weingarten		

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2008-09 – Present (2009-10)	Ashish Kapadia, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2008-09	First Year Visit	Institute	March 10, 2009

⁷ Source: Institute Board records.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?

Benchmark 1B: Use of Assessment Data

Green Dot uses assessments that are aligned to the state standards. The school administers and uses the data from the New York State Regents exams. In addition, the principal stated that the school administers benchmark assessments to students in social studies and ELA.

The benchmark assessment in social studies is aligned to the content and skills identified in the state standards and is presented in chronological and thematic order. This assessment is produced and provided by an external provider. The principal also stated that the benchmark assessment for ELA, provided by Green Dot Action Learning Systems, is also aligned to the New York state standards. These assessments are administered four times per year.

The team did not find substantial information describing or identifying timing for in-class assessments in the curricular documents; however, the principal stated that all in class assessments are aligned to the curriculum, which is based on the New York standards. In addition, the principal reported that all in class assessments in mathematics and science are created by teachers using released items from the Regents exam and are aligned to the state standards.

The school uses the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) to evaluate the growth of students in reading skills. This assessment is administered only to grade 9 students and is used to identify students for placement in Read 180, a reading intervention program. Students not identified for placement in Read 180 participate in the SRI three times per year, while students who are in the Read 180 program may be assessed up to six times per year to evaluate student progress and identify knowledge gaps. The school also administers a diagnostic assessment in basic mathematics skills to incoming grade 9 students during the four week Summer Bridge program. The data from this assessment provides teachers with information to better scaffold student understanding and increase content rigor for students who are ready to move more quickly.

The team found that the school systematically collects and analyzes student data from various assessments and provides it to school staff. The principal and vice principal review and analyze data first and then teachers collaborate to look at data from both summative and formative assessments to identify weaknesses in student knowledge and skills. During the analysis process for state Regents Exams data, teachers have conversations about where students fall short of expectations, with analysis conducted on student performance on each standard as well as by item type, such as short response or multiple choice, to evaluate weaknesses in student knowledge as well as evaluate test taking abilities. An example of data use in the modification of instruction was when data from the second benchmark for ELA and social studies was found to be lower than expected. Teachers collaborated to identify general skills where students needed additional support and they developed scaffolding questions to support student comprehension.

The principal reported that teachers receive professional development on analyzing assessments, in particular in the use of the SRI assessment and its use in informing the Read 180 program. Teachers develop rubrics to provide consistent evaluation of student performance of student work. The principal and assistant principal monitor student grades through the software program PowerSchool to ensure they

are representative of student performance as measured by the Regents Exams and benchmark assessments. In one case, the principal coached a teacher on grading practices when an abnormally high percentage of students were failing a course as compared to assessment results. The principal and assistant principal reported that they use Regents Exam data to monitor student performance towards Accountability Plan goals and that a report on this and other student data is provided to the school board, with particular emphasis on data from the Regents exam.

The academic performance of students is provided to students, parents, and guardians through several methods. Students receive information on their grades through their grade 9 technology class where they receive instruction on how to monitor their own grades through PowerSchool. The advisors for both grade 9 and 10 also provide grade information to students on a regular basis. PowerSchool access information is mailed home to parents at the beginning of the year. Parents also receive progress reports before each break and are encouraged to attend parent teacher conferences three times a year. Parents receive data on student performance on the Regents Exam through state mailings and school wide performance on Regents assessments are provided to the school community through the parent teacher organization and student assemblies. No newsletter is produced on a regular basis.

Benchmark 1C: Curriculum

Through a review of curricular documentation, the team determined that a clearly defined curriculum framework exists for each grade and core academic subject. The principal stated that teachers use the curriculum to guide lesson development and to provide instruction aligned to the state performance standards. The team reviewed curriculum documents, including the teacher curriculum binders, which included pacing charts, the scope and sequence, lesson plans, and the New York state standards. These documents included learning objectives and activities for each unit.

As teachers developed their units and designed activities, lesson plans were routinely submitted to the principal and assistant principal for review and filing. The team reviewed classroom observation reports conducted by the principal and found in some cases feedback was provided to the teacher on the quality of the delivered curriculum. Teachers are required to maintain curriculum binders with the year's lesson plans and lesson materials. These curriculum binders were reviewed by the principal and the assistant principal both during and at the end of the school year and, in collaboration with the teacher, formed the basis for planning the course curriculum for the next year. The principal and teachers stated that they were minimally involved in any formal curriculum review process, though they could provide input on gaps, overlaps, and the timing of unit lessons.

The curriculum, as documented in the curricular materials, was reviewed by the team and was found to be organized, cohesive, and aligned from grade to grade. Teachers reported working together during common planning time, but stated that long-term curricular planning was an area that needed improvement. Texts and curricular materials used at the school included the following: Prentice Hall materials for science, social studies, and Spanish, and AMSCO Publications materials for mathematics. For ELA, literature and composition, the curriculum was not primarily text book based; instead, content was taught using novels, short stories, and poems. Teachers developed and used lesson plans that identified objectives aligned to the state's learning standards. Teachers reported that they were fully aware of the curricula they were required to teach and that they were also free to augment the curriculum as necessary.

The curriculum supported the school's stated mission: college preparation and high standards. Curriculum content in observed lessons was rigorous and set high expectations for student learning. The

current professional development program on backwards design was seen as an important step in improving curriculum design skills by teachers and school leaders.

Benchmark 1D: Pedagogy

All teachers demonstrated subject matter and grade level competency in the grades they teach. In addition, all of the teachers observed presenting academic lessons held high expectations for student learning. For example, Spanish classes were conducted almost completely in Spanish with students engaging well, even understanding the humor within the lesson. Students were expected to analyze and apply knowledge. In one classroom studying the feudal system, students were asked to produce a fictional first person account from the point of view of the king, noble, knight and peasant.

Learning objectives were observed on the board for each lesson. The principal reported that the teachers must consider the following components when creating the objective: the topic, the inferred level of cognition and the proving behavior, although he stated that only the topic and proving behavior were appropriate to be in the posted objective on the board. All lessons were aligned with the identified learning objective.

Teachers create a curriculum binder yearly that contains their lesson plans, list of resources, and a curriculum map. Team members reviewed samples of lesson plans submitted to the principal, and noted that teachers submitted plans using a uniform format that included areas lesson objectives and the state standards, which were completed and appropriate for all lesson plans. Teachers also included information on the overview and purpose and identified each component of the lesson, including the warm-up, activities, closing, homework, and resources. Missing components within the lesson plan template were those for assessment or differentiation.

The principal stated that the team would see lessons that would be differentiated by content, process, and product. The team did not see extensive differentiation throughout the lessons observed; most teachers delivered instruction to the whole class, with no evidence to the classroom observers that differentiated practices or materials were in use. There were a few incidences of varied grouping during lessons; PE and technology lessons were delivered through whole class instruction, although in technology students were working on individual film projects. One advisory session was observed and found to be highly interactive and clearly designed to address the individual academic needs of the group; however, the social studies test preparation portion of the lesson was taught to the entire class. In addition, the school provides intervention in ELA through Read 180, and the lesson observed in this program provided highly differentiated instruction.

Most students were observed by team members to be well engaged during instructional time and classroom activities. The students were cognitively engaged and challenged by the content and expectations of the teachers. In the some classes, however, students were observed to be primarily passive listeners for much of the lesson, although, in most cases, students were involved through questioning. Where student activities associated with the instruction were observed they, for the most part, required thought and analysis on the part of the students and did not represent simple retrieval of facts. In a few classes, lessons were rich, challenging, and intended to promote higher level thought processes, but students did not receive scaffolding to fully engage with the material as intended. Pacing was appropriate for most lessons, student behavior was good, and the lessons were focused and addressed the objective identified for the lesson.

Benchmark 1E: Instructional Leadership

The team found that the school has strong instructional leadership. The school leadership consists of a principal and an assistant principal who share responsibilities, including distributed instructional leadership in the various subject areas. The principal and assistant principal manage the daily operations of the school with the principal responsible for science, mathematics, and social studies and the assistant principal responsible for ELA, Spanish, and special education.

The school also has a developing committee structure that the principal stated is being implemented to help support the school's needs for future increased capacity as it grows. There is a teacher leadership committee in its beginning stages with representatives from each major academic area. Although this committee is currently primarily concerned with instruction and policy issues, the principal stated it is now more focused on policy issues and he wants to refocus it on instruction issues. Additionally, there are teacher committees for hiring, professional development, calendar and programming, stipend and budget. There are also other teacher committees such as academic achievement, events, community outreach, advisory and rewards.

The principal serves as the instructional leader of the school and has established high expectations for student achievement based on the GDPS model. Every student participates in a college preparatory program and is expected to meet the New York State Regents requirements. Students take seven classes plus advisory. Classes are 90 minute blocks and the school has extended hours, with classes ending at 4 p.m.

The team found that there are high expectations for teachers. GDPS has six standards for the teaching profession. These standards are: engaging and supporting all students in learning, developing a professional educator, assessing student learning, creating and maintaining effective environments for learning, understanding and organizing subject matter for student learning and planning instruction and designing learning experiences for all students. These standards form the basis for the design and delivery of instruction. Information on these expectations is provided to teachers through the summer professional development program.

The principal reported that he bases his goals on the Accountability Plan. Teachers stated that the principal shares these goals with teachers and they challenge themselves to meet those goals by setting high standards, using data, and adjusting instructional practices so that all students understand the material. Each grade also has a strategic plan in place for guiding grade level instructional practices. Both the 9th and 10th grade plans are focused on Regents examination preparation and include activities for all staff, goals, measurements for success, and impact.

The school has a teacher evaluation system in place to support instructional practices. This system is one that was developed by GDPS. The school also follows the GDPS two-track evaluation system which requires that all teachers be evaluated using a process of system appraisal of performance based on the GDPS standards for the teaching profession: engaging and supporting student learning; creating and maintaining effective environments for student learning; understanding and organizing subject matter for student learning; planning instruction and designing learning experiences for all students; and assessing student learning and developing as a professional educator. This evaluation system is built on the premise that GDPS is committed to developing committed teachers, but all teachers should be held accountable.

There are currently no teachers at the school on tier two of the system because the school is only in its second year. The leadership team monitors classrooms weekly and provides teachers with feedback on

their instruction. The principal reported that feedback may be written or provided informally in conversations. The team reviewed the school's walkthrough sheet used in informal observations and the formal summative observation tool, as well as both formal and informal evaluations of the faculty. The walkthrough form used by the principal has four categories: when I entered I saw; one thing I really liked was; one question I have is; and one thing I would like to see next time is. Several teachers said that the informal observations, which included immediate feedback, were more helpful than the formal observation, which was perceived to be more summative in nature. Teachers said they liked the informal walkthrough because it focused on what they could work on to get better such as trying more differentiated instruction strategies.

The principal stated in interviews he follows the GDPS hiring and firing procedures, and has implemented development and improvement plans for struggling teachers. This information was confirmed through a review of the May 13, 2008 board meeting minutes, where it was reported the principal was following the hiring process used by GDPS in Los Angeles, which, in the first phase of the face-to-face meeting, includes an interview procedure developed by Dr. Martin Haberman who has developed and refined research in the area of teacher and principal selection known as the "Haberman Interview."

Benchmark 1F: At-Risk Students

The school is responding to the needs of the at-risk learner. There is a four week Summer Bridge program held for all entering students to establish and clarify expectations and provide instruction to boost basic academic skills in incoming students. In addition, all students are assessed for participation in the Read 180 program, which provides support for students who are struggling in reading. Students are supported by summer school, faculty office hours for extra help, the advisory program, and a tutorial program.

The school deployed many resources to provide academic intervention services to struggling students. The school stated that 26 students were on individual education programs (IEPs). The school also indicated about 20 students were identified as English language learners (ELL) and identified approximately 30 students as "at-risk." There is some overlap in these identified groups. All of these students were being monitored, mentored, and supported.

The team identified a clear screening procedure for identifying incoming grade 9 at-risk students. Diagnostic reading tests are given to all incoming grade 9 students to determine eligibility for the READ 180 program. A bi-weekly meeting called Kid Talk, which included the two guidance counselors, the assistant principal, who also serves as the special education director, and teachers, provided a forum for the discussion of students who were potentially at-risk as well as for the design of student assistance plans. Following these meetings, classroom strategies were implemented and performance was monitored by parents, students, and school staff through the use of PowerSchool. The school provided the Read 180 program for students who tested low in reading or who were recommended by teachers for reading support. Grade 9 students comprised the majority of the students enrolled in Read 180, but the program was also made available for grade 10 students who required additional support in reading.

Advisory sessions provided all students with small-group opportunities to work on academics, social-emotional issues, test preparation, and team building. The special education teacher provides special education services during advisory sessions. Specific special education service requirements are included on the student's IEP. Students may be pulled out of class for services, or services may be delivered during special education sessions from 4-5 PM. In addition, students on IEPs have their

advisory period with the special education teacher. These advisory periods were typically used for academic support. ELL students received their language support through the Read 180 program in grade 9. ELL students were also required to enroll in a second English course first semester of grade 10.

Most advisories are heterogeneously grouped, with the exception of students requiring special education services and students at-risk for failure on the Regents Exam in social studies, who receive more intensively targeted instruction in those areas. Advisories met for 30 minutes four days each week and were led by teachers as well as the principal and assistant principal. Additional tutorial assistance was available and provided by teachers, peers, and five volunteers from New York University; all teachers had office hours and attendance was mandated for some students. The school provided an after-school Homework Club with academic support. The school mandated attendance for some students such as those who had not completed homework assignments. Student participation in all support services was closely monitored. The school tracked attendance daily at office hours, homework help sessions, and advisory classes. The school monitored and evaluated support interventions, with passing grades in courses and on the state Regents Exams as criteria for discontinuing student participation in the support program. All students and parents reported that the quality and variety of supports were effective and contributed to student success on the Regents Exams and on school tests.

Two guidance counselors, one for each grade, provided counseling services. Counselors monitored their assigned groups of “at-risk” students, providing weekly feedback on progress and concerns to parents and students. Areas monitored by counselors included homework compliance, course grades, attendance, and behavior. Sufficient time was provided for counselors, special educators, and classroom teachers to collaborate and discuss student progress and IEPs; this usually occurred during weekly subject area meetings. School leaders reported that teachers were expected to differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of all students in the regular classroom and the school had held several professional development sessions on differentiated instruction. However, during classroom visits, the team observed limited evidence of differentiation.

The school required students to attend a four week Summer Bridge program before entering grade 9. Admission to the school only occurs at the beginning of the grade 9 year. In addition, a seven week summer school session was required for students who did not earn passing (70 or above) grades in any subject. Approximately 75 percent of grade 10 students attend summer school, according to school leaders.

Benchmark 1G: Student Order and Discipline

The school has implemented a documented disciplinary policy. The policy is a progressive one that starts with the teacher, moves to the administration, and ultimately to a disciplinary review board. The consequences for policy infractions are also progressive in nature. The teacher infractions allow for detentions of either 30 or 60 minute length. Consequences for infractions requiring administrative intervention require a call home and may lead to either an in- or out-of-school suspension. The disciplinary board handles issues that may result in extreme consequences such as expulsion. Serious offenses, especially those that are safety issues, are referred immediately to the appropriate level. The assistant principal is responsible for discipline and makes home visits when warranted. According to the assistant principal and the teachers, consistency is the key to discipline at Green Dot. Students are expected to be responsive, responsible, and respectful – this behavior was observed by the team during classroom observations.

All stakeholders interviewed stated that the school is a safe, and they were particularly proud that there had not been a fight since the opening of the school. Expectations for behavior are clear and policies that are school-wide are consistent from classroom to classroom. For example, students do not carry book bags into the classroom. In addition, each teacher sets their classroom rules and often students participate in the development of those expectations. Students say the rules are fair. Teachers and students also credit the Summer Bridge program with helping to establish cultural norms.

The staff has had professional development in classroom management, and the team did not observe any behavioral problems during classroom observations or elsewhere during the visit. The team found that Green Dot has established a culture of learning and respect.

Benchmark 1H: Professional Development

The school has committed sufficient time and resources to professional development. One of the six tenets of the GDPS model is “extensive local control with extensive professional development and accountability.” The school routinely holds a professional development week for teachers before school opens in September. The week focused on the 2009-2010 school year on the core values of the GDPS model, teacher expectations, how to support students who enter high school below grade level, analyzing data, as well as a variety of other topics.

Additional professional development is held weekly throughout the year. The planned topics for this year, outlined on the professional development calendar, are: lesson plan study and data study, differentiated instruction, Understanding by Design (UBD), developing an increasingly positive school culture, and checks for understanding. Professional development time in May and June is reserved for teacher presentations. Each teacher is required to assemble a content area portfolio for review and reflection. The portfolio must contain a unit plan, each lesson in the unit, summative assessment data for that unit, and sample student work. Teachers must also video tape a lesson in the unit, watch the video with a peer or administrator of their choice, and then reflect on that unit. Several teachers during the interview said that they would like more professional development on differentiated instruction.

There is a professional development committee, made up of teachers and administrators, which guides and oversees the selection of topics for professional development sessions. Professional development is usually delivered by the principal and assistant principal. The principal and assistant principal visit GDPS California twice each year for professional development—once during February vacation and once in the summer. On one recent visit they had professional development on curriculum issues, according to the representatives from GDPS. Representatives visiting from GDPS stated the organization’s cluster director spent a substantial amount of time in New York supporting the opening of the school and worked with the principal and board members in the development of the school’s Accountability Plan.

Teachers interviewed said that they feel they have access to external professional development programs and stated that they feel that when they make a request to attend a conference it will be honored. As an example, two teachers stated that they were planning to attend the upcoming National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) conference in California.

The school provides substantial blocks of time for teachers to meet and for the delivery of professional development. Every week there is one early release day as well as a late start day scheduled for teacher meetings. This time is used on a rotating basis for a variety of purposes including committee meetings, Kid Talk, grade level meetings, and the weekly delivery of professional development to teachers by administrators. Teachers also have access to a professional development center through the UFT.

Renewal Question 2

Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?

Benchmark 2A: Mission and Key Design Elements

The mission of the school is included in the educator, student, and staff handbook:

“The mission of Green Dot New York Charter School is to prepare students for success in college, leadership, and life.”

The mission was clear to all stakeholders, and was driven by a vision that graduates would attend college and return to revitalize their communities. All administrators, teachers, staff, students, parents, and board members interviewed were able to talk about the mission with some level of understanding. The mission is being supported through a rigorous curriculum and substantial supports that are in place to ensure student academic growth and performance. Examples of programs supporting student growth are the Summer Bridge program, Read 180, tutoring programs, advisory programs, and summer school. The advisory program also promotes the healthy growth and development of students’ social skills.

The principal reported that no non-academic goals are present in the Accountability Plan and that all school goals are related to student academic progress.

Benchmark 2B: Parents and Students

The team evaluated parent and student satisfaction through interviews with these stakeholders as well as through a review of the results of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) parent satisfaction survey. The results of this survey, as well as statements from parents in the focus group, indicate a high rate of parent satisfaction with the school. The survey showed GDCS parent results in the highest reporting category for satisfaction with academic expectations, communication, and safety and respect, and an above average rating for engagement. GDCS students showed the highest satisfaction rating for academic expectations and safety and respect, with only average scores for communication and an above average rating for engagement. These results are evaluated through comparison with all New York City public schools. Parents and students in focus groups stated that the school communicated well with them, and reported that there was an “open door” policy at the school where parents could readily contact the administration or teachers regarding concerns related to their child. Parents and students also reported that they had access to PowerSchool, which provided them with up-to-date, on-line information on student assignments and grades.

Parents expressed an interest in providing more variety of coursework for students with greater access to electives, including the possibility of a second world language. Students were positive about the school and its academic challenges. They felt that they were being held accountable for their learning, and were receiving a better education than they would receive in traditional public high schools. All stakeholders felt that the school was safe, and that the smaller class size and overall size of the school contributed to building a positive learning community. Students reported that they would recommend this school to others and parents stated that they intended for their child(ren) to remain enrolled at the school.

Parents were not aware of the role of the Board and were not aware that board meetings were open to the public. Parents stated that complaints should be discussed first with the student’s teacher and, if still unresolved, should be presented to the principal. Formal complaint processes were identified by the team in the Green Dot Educator, Student, and Family Handbook.

The school's daily attendance rate for the last recorded quarter was approximately 94 percent.

Benchmark 2C: Organizational Capacity

Located in the Bronx on the fourth floor of I.S. 162, an existing New York City intermediate public school, Green Dot is modeled after other GDPS schools that have as their foundation the "presence of a strong teacher in every classroom." The school's creation and development is the result of a unique partnership between GDPS and the UFT. GDPS is a large operator of 12 charter schools in Los Angeles and the UFT is the organization that represents over 100,000 New York City teachers. The school opened in July 2008 with a Summer Bridge Program for the incoming grade 9. The Summer Bridge program is required for all incoming students. The school added grade 10 this year, and plans to add a grade each year until the school populates grades 9 through 12.

Both the GDPS and the UFT enhance organizational capacity through provision of academic and management programs, as well as back office and fundraising support. For example, both organizations raised funds to fill budget gaps; in addition, GDPS has provided academic, principal and assistant principal support, professional development, and a student information system (PowerSchool); and the UFT has provided budget, procurement and information technology support, special education, as well as a professional development center for teachers. The center is the professional development division of the UFT and provides professional development for over 300 schools in New York City. All members of the staff have joined the UFT, but are not subject to the contract the UFT has with the NYCDOE. The school negotiated a separate teacher contract with the UFT.

The team interviewed two GDPS representatives who were visiting the school to conduct a review of the school's academic needs. They explained that through their partnership GDPS would provide academic support and the UFT support for school operations. They stated that the academic model at the school was evolving and revised ELL, special education, writing, mathematics, literacy, and credit recovery programs were being piloted at other GDPS schools in California. They anticipated some of these programs would be implemented at Green Dot if the pilot program proved successful. In addition, they stated that GDPS was developing a site visit review plan to assess how the school was progressing academically and organizationally. Other systems GDPS was planning to implement to support the school included podcasts for teachers, access to a data system that manipulates and analyzes student achievement data, and installing SKYPE to enable collaborative leadership team meetings and professional development between California and New York. The GDPS cluster director supports the principal and assistant principal who travel to California twice each year for professional development. For example, the cluster director helped with the development of the school's Accountability Plan.

A review of the school's organization chart shows that all academic staff report to the principal and non-academic staff related to business management functions report to the business manager of the school whose services are provided through the UFT. The school has two core classes for each grade 9 through 10, a principal, an assistant principal, 16 teachers, an office manager, and two school aides. All teachers were certified and all but two have Highly Qualified status. The two share responsibility for health, technology education, and physical education. The principal and the assistant principal meet every morning at breakfast in the school cafeteria to plan the day. Examples of activities they participate in include meeting with students, teaching advisory classes, checking on tardy students, conducting classroom observations, dealing with student discipline issues, and attending guidance meetings.

The principal recognized that the school will be adding two more grades and more capacity will be needed to meet the needs of more students. To meet this challenge, he plans to build capacity through a

new leadership committee comprised of six teachers, one from each department. This committee will focus on instruction, school policy, and formal curriculum review. He also plans to build on the skills of other teachers who meet on Fridays on more informal committees to discuss events, academic achievement, budget, hiring, stipends, professional development, and community outreach

The school has successfully recruited, hired, and retained personnel and made decisions about supporting struggling teachers. The school makes an effort to only hire teachers with experience, and all teachers are members of the UFT. The board voted to compensate employees represented by the UFT 114 percent of the rate of compensation that the employee would have earned as an employee of the NYCDOE effective September 1, 2009.

The school has enrollment procedures in place for recruiting new students. According to the principal, at the time of the school visit 110 students were enrolled in grade 9 and 102 students were enrolled in grade 10. The waiting list had been exhausted, and the board had a policy that no student was admitted after grade 9. A review of a January 6, 2010 update for the board showed the current enrollment at 214. Chartered and budgeted enrollment is 225. The principal stated 13 students left the school last year and four this year. The reasons for leaving vary, but most of the attrition is related to families moving. The school's charter allows for an enrollment of 425 students for grades 9 through 12 and the plan is for the school to add grade 11 next year and grade 12 the year after. The school holds a lottery for admission each April and allows sibling admission preference as well as preference for students who are residents of New York school district 7. To make the community aware of the lottery, the principal distributes brochures to all grade 8 families in school district 7 and parts of school districts 8, 9, and 12. The principal also visits middle schools and visits with guidance counselors to make them aware of the school and the lottery. Many of the parents in the focus group indicated they became aware of the school because the principal had visited their child's school and left information about Green Dot.

The physical capacity of the school is limited and to expand it will need more classroom space. The school is now in discussion with the NYCDOE regarding additional classrooms at the school's present location. In addition to sharing general space with the intermediate school, housed on the same floor with the school is a classroom with approximately 40 middle school students who have been suspended from other New York City middle schools. This classroom not only takes up much needed classroom space, but causes security issues. Students from the charter school and the intermediate school do not have academic programming together and have separate breakfast and lunch times.

The school's Accountability Plan has seven academic goals relating to ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), graduation and college preparation. The principal stated the development of the Accountability Plan goals was a collaborative process with the CSI that involved numerous meetings in the spring of 2008. CSI provided a plan template to the board, which added goals and then approved the plan. Two representatives of the board worked closely with CSI in the development of the plan. Plan goals are aligned with the Regents examinations and the principal reports to the board on progress toward plan goals. Representatives visiting from GDPS stated the organization's cluster director supported the school in the development of the Accountability Plan.

The principal and the board have established communication practices for stakeholders. The principal stated that he had high parent participation at parent teacher nights. In fact, participation was so high parent visits only lasted about four minutes. The principal is developing a plan to allow the parents to visit with teachers longer. The principal also holds an enrollment meeting after the lottery and explains expectations to the parents. He discusses academic expectations and also discusses the dress code, behavior, the lateness policy, and what a school day and school week look like.

The principal also works closely with the business manager relative to the development of the annual budget and the allocation of resources. The school has operated at a deficit in its developmental stage and the budget gaps have been filled by ad hoc fundraising and in kind services provided by the GDPS and the UFT. Some concern exists relative to next year's budget per pupil allocations have been frozen. The principal and the business manager plan to meet with the board soon to discuss budget issues.

Benchmark 2D: Board Oversight

The Green Dot board of trustees has nine members; but only one member attended the board focus group. The board member interviewed had served on the board since June of 2009 and estimated that board had met three times since he became a member. A review of the by-laws showed that the board should have not less than five and no more than 11 voting members, holds an annual meeting in December and other meetings as required by the trustees. The maximum number of board members could be increased by vote of the board. The members of the board are experienced in education and have the necessary skills to direct the school. Members include the founder of the GDPS and the former leader of the UFT. The board also includes a former NYCDOE administrator familiar with school facility issues and a parent member who sits on the Executive Committee.

The board minutes provided to the team did not document any instances of financial or organizational decisions that have impeded the school in meeting its mission. Rather, board minutes documented regular discussion related to making appropriate financial decisions. The board receives financial reports from the business manager, who is employed by the UFT. The board has an executive committee and an audit committee. The board has the authority to create other special committees when needed. A review of board minutes showed that the board had discussion and took action on financial issues, such as reviewing and approving the budget, and discussing budget deficits and fundraising. The business manager provides the board with a fiscal report at each meeting. Agendas and information packets are provided to members prior to the meetings.

The board member interviewed was knowledgeable about the role of the board, the mission of the school, and the school's Accountability Plan. The team could not determine the level of knowledge of other board member in these areas because of limited attendance at the team's focus group.

The board member interviewed indicated he thought the unionized model was innovative and the teacher contract progressive. The principal stated that two board members worked with SUNY CSI to develop the Accountability Plan approved by the board. A review of board minutes showed the board received a briefing on accountability planning for charter schools from the CSI on March 16, 2009. A review of board minutes also showed that the principal provided updates on student achievement, with detailed discussion on benchmarking in English and mathematics discussed at the March 16, 2009 meeting. The principal also discussed enrollment issues and trends and attendance rates at board meetings.

The board can hire or fire but does not evaluate the principal; rather, the principal is evaluated by the GDPS; however, this evaluation has not occurred, but the board has asked GDPS to develop an evaluation tool. The issue of the lack of an evaluation of the principal was raised last year by SUNY CSI, but has not been addressed.

Representatives from the GDPS indicated they will need to include input from Green Dot stakeholders as part of the principal's evaluation. The principal confirmed he has not received a written evaluation. The board has not conducted a self-evaluation or an evaluation of the GDPS, and has not developed an assessment rubric to measure board or GDPS effectiveness.

Benchmark 2E: Governance

The board has developed a set of priorities that are rooted in the school's Accountability Plan, which has as its foundation a set of six core GDPS principles: small, safe, personalized schools; high expectations and extra-support; local control with extensive professional development and accountability; parent participation; get dollars in the classroom; and keep schools open later. The team observed that the board is working with the principal and members of the partnership, GDPS and the UFT, to implement these tenets and achieve the priorities of the school.

The team was provided undated by-laws for Green Dot. The by-laws include articles which describe recruitment and selection procedures for new members, a process for electing and removing members, and a description of the terms of office, compensation, and vacancies. The by-laws show the board has the authority to appoint or remove the principal. The board also has the authority to remove teachers and other staff members, subject to the provisions of the collective bargaining contract.

According to the interviewed board member, the board attempts to meet quarterly and had three meetings since June 2009. A review of the by-laws showed that regular meetings may be held at times fixed by the board. Additionally, the by-laws require the board to hold an annual meeting in the month of December to elect officers. The team was provided board meeting minutes from May 13, 2008, June 24, 2008, January 6, 2009, March 16, 2009, and June 22, 2009. The board meetings are held at 350 Park Avenue, N.Y., N.Y. The by-laws included a section that indicated the board adheres to the New York State public meeting law, but the interviewed board member did not know if any members of the public attended meetings. Members of the parent focus group had not attended any board meeting and were unaware of when and where they were held.

The by-laws did not include a section on conflict of interest, but did include a section which indicated the board could remove a member for cause. The interviewed board member stated that the Charter Schools Institute had strict requirements related to conflict of interest and board member conduct. The 2009-2010 educator, student, and family handbook included a complaint policy and participants in the parent focus group were familiar with the policy. Both the school and the board have policies in place. School policies are included in the educator, student, and staff handbook for school year 2009-2010. Board policies are included in the by-laws.

METHODOLOGY

The two-day renewal inspection site visit was conducted at Green Dot during the period from March 22 to 23, 2010. The renewal inspection team (“the team”) conducted interviews with the principal; assistant principal, who serves as the special education director, and one of two guidance counselors who serve at-risk students. The team used a portion of the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks to guide the evaluation process.

In addition, the team conducted the following focus groups of school community representatives:

- A board of trustees’ interview consisting of one current member. The board member interviewed was in his first year as a member of the board.
- A teacher focus group consisting of 14 teachers and one counselor. The teachers represented the following subjects and specialty areas: ELA, mathematics, science, Spanish, physical education, health, counseling, and technology.
- A student focus group consisting of 7 students representing grades 9 through 10, who had been at the school between one and two years,
- A parent focus group consisting of seven parents.
- An interview with two GDPS representatives.

The team conducted 14 classroom observations in grades 9 and 10. The observations ranged in length from 20 to 33 minutes. Three ELA lessons were observed; one health lesson, two mathematics lessons, one physical education lesson, two science lessons, two social studies lessons, two Spanish lessons and one technology lesson were observed. Every regular classroom teacher was observed. Team members kept running records of their observations using a classroom observation evidence worksheet.

The documents and data reviewed by the team before, during, and after the site visit included the following:

- Organization Chart
- School Improvement or Strategic Plan
- List and calendar of formative and summative assessments
- Copies of data analyses and summaries
- Description of student support programs
- Student and Family handbooks
- Faculty and Staff handbooks
- Professional development program documents, schedules, and course lists
- Board minutes and By-Laws
- Teacher Planning time and meeting schedules
- Teacher evaluation tools


- Classroom observation tools
- Job descriptions of school leaders and instructional staff
- School classroom schedules and map
- Teacher roster and certification, including highly qualified status
- Parent surveys and newsletters
- School data to include waiting list, enrollment, student teacher and attrition data
- Sample lesson plans
- Sample student work
- Sample evaluations of teachers, school leaders, and management organizations
- Curriculum documents

The external school evaluation was conducted by an experienced team of educators from Class Measures. Their biographies follow:

Christine Brandt has been an educator for several years, serving as a classroom teacher, special educator, administrator, and principal. She began her career as a Middle School teacher of English, French, Moderate Special Needs, and Reading. She moved into the administrator ranks as a Special Education Director at the Middle School level. For 18 years she served as principal, first in Wellesley, then in Dover, Massachusetts. In addition, she worked with the Somerville Charter School as their Lower School Coordinator. Currently, she mentors and supervises aspiring school administrators in both regular and special education. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association and is their Federal Liaison and Legislative Chair. She earned her undergraduate degree from Regis College, and her graduate degrees from the University of Massachusetts at Lowell in Reading and Learning Disabilities and from Northeastern University in Education Administration.

Jeanne Simons, Director of Educational Development. She worked previously as a high school mathematics teacher and in mathematics reform in urban school districts as a Targeted Mathematics Specialist with the Massachusetts Department of Education. She is a content and pedagogical expert in mathematics. She has experience in the development of coaching programs, effective differentiation, assessment and the formative usage of data, and in developing and providing professional development for teachers and leaders across a variety of reform topics. In addition, she has been involved in the development of a variety of technology-based educational initiatives, most recently providing educational support in the development of one of the first online teacher licensure programs in the Middle East. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from the California Institute of Technology and a Masters of Education in Mind, Brain and Education from Harvard.

James Hearn, Vice President of Professional Services Jim is the Vice President of Professional Services for Class Measures. In that capacity, he manages the Class Measures school evaluation process and all contracts, participates as a team member on site visits, and edits and writes evaluation reports. Jim has over twenty-five years of experience in state government policy and budget analysis, performance auditing, program evaluation, and University teaching. Jim served as a School District Examiner and Field Coordinator for the Massachusetts Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, completing over forty school and district reviews in Massachusetts. For almost a decade, Jim held the position of Senior Policy Analyst for the Senate Post Audit and Oversight Committee of the Massachusetts State Senate. In that capacity, he completed a number of performance



audits and policy reviews, including a comprehensive review of the Massachusetts adult correctional education programs. Jim is a former member of the Executive Committee of the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society. From 1982 to 1996, he served as an Adjunct Lecturer in Health Management at University College at Northeastern University. Jim earned his Bachelors Degree in Business from Boston College and holds a Master's Degree in Business from Suffolk University.

Melanie Gallo has been an educator for 35 years. A member of the National School Reform faculty, she has been a teacher and a school director. She has been a founder of two schools: a school in New Hampshire and a charter school in Massachusetts. She has been recognized by the College Board for excellence in teaching AP English and is the author of Senior Project in Creating the Good High School by Mackin/Silva. She is a trained Critical Friends coach and has served on the Board of the Massachusetts Drama Guild. She is currently on the graduate school adjunct faculty at Fitchburg State College. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and a Master's degree in Education from Fitchburg State College. She is at present a Leadership Consultant for Class Measures.