



### 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 benchmarks<sup>1</sup>:

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

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.

<sup>1</sup> 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>

Other evaluation reports for this or other schools can be found on the Institute's website at [www.newyorkcharter.org](http://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](mailto:simeon.stolzberg@suny.edu) or 212-221-6332.

# **External Evaluation Report of Harlem Day Charter School**

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**Conducted by RMC Research  
on Behalf of  
the SUNY Charter Schools Institute**

**2008-09**

**June, 2009**



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## *1. Executive Summary*

Harlem Day Charter School was visited by an external school inspection team from RMC Research on behalf of the Charter Schools Institute on May 27 and 28, 2009. Harlem Day was in its eighth year of operation, having opened in 2001. At the time of the visit, there were 251 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Harlem Day had a plan for administering assessments to students in kindergarten through fifth grade. However, there was no comprehensive system for gathering all assessment data or for using the data to improve teaching and learning. There was no evidence that the school used data to inform the curriculum. Staff did not have a common understanding about the implications and applications of the data.

There were a variety of commercial programs in use at Harlem Day. Team members observed that teachers implemented the programs, or parts of the programs, with which they felt most comfortable. There was no defined curriculum. Most teachers developed lesson plans, but they were not collected or reviewed. There were no common expectations for staff around planning for instruction.

Rigorous and competent instruction was observed in some classes. However, in most classes, teaching was not effective. Students in those classes were unfocused and off-task, resulting in classroom management issues that negatively affected teaching and learning. Instruction was delivered in both whole class and small group formats. There was either a full-time or shared associate teacher in each classroom to support small group instruction; however, differentiated instruction was not observed in all classes.

Harlem Day did not have strong instructional leadership. There was an executive director who had held the position for three years. She was responsible for establishing a high expectation for student achievement and teacher performance. Parents reported that there were five principals in five years. The last principal left mid-year, and the existing director of assessment and accountability assumed the role of director of accountability and instruction in January 2009. The former assistant principal had become the director of discipline and family support. Harlem Day was not able to provide overall consistency and stability to the school's instructional program. There was little accountability for teachers and other staff. Teachers did not feel supported to grow professionally. The administrators articulated a long-term plan but did not demonstrate a sense of urgency in establishing common expectations and systems to provide oversight and support for high quality instruction.

Although inspectors observed many resources at the school to provide academic interventions to struggling students, it was not clear whether all at-risk students were actually receiving adequate support. There was no system for coordinating services to at-risk students or for providing sufficient time and support for articulation between classroom teachers and service providers.

Teachers, students and parents viewed discipline as a priority issue at Harlem Day. Despite having created the position of director of discipline and family support and creating a discipline team, the school's discipline code was observed not to be enforced uniformly and a common behavior management system did not exist. Some Responsive Classroom training was provided to teachers, but the associated strategies were not used consistently in all classes. Teachers

reported that they needed more training. Ineffective classroom management and discipline practices negatively impacted instruction in many classes.

Harlem Day had developed a calendar for professional development. Inspectors observed that most of the training was episodic and was not linked to classroom observations or student achievement data. Teachers unanimously reported that Harlem Day did not provide sufficient support for their pedagogical growth or help them to meet students' academic needs.

Parents interviewed were not satisfied with many aspects of Harlem Day, including discipline, the communication between school and home, and the curriculum. They also expressed concern about the many changes in leadership that had occurred.

School inspectors observed that the day-to-day operations at Harlem Day were effective. There were also sufficient resources allocated to meet academic and non-academic needs. However, the team did not observe that all resources were being used effectively to achieve Harlem Day's goals. Parents and staff were confused about administrators' roles and responsibilities, and team members found evidence of ineffective communication between school administrators, the staff and the board of trustees. Further, inspectors did not find evidence that Harlem Day had the capacity to train and retain teachers.

The board of trustees was developing a strategic plan to achieve the academic and non-academic goals at Harlem Day. The trustees were committed to the success of the school and were prepared to engage outside consultants to support their development of a targeted, comprehensive plan of action that would remediate the current deficiencies and fast-track school improvement.

## 2. *School Description*<sup>1</sup>

### SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approved the application to establish the RiverView Academy Charter School on January 23, 2001. Note that on May 15, 2001, prior to the school opening, the State University Trustees approved a revision to the school's charter changing its name to: Harlem Day Charter School ("Harlem Day"); this revision was subsequently approved by the Board of Regents on June 8, 2001.

The Harlem Day Charter School opened in the fall of 2001 serving 50 students in Kindergarten and first grade. The school added one grade in each of the next four years to serve 258 students in Kindergarten through fifth grade in the 2008-09 school year. The school is located in space formerly used by Touro College at 240 East 123<sup>rd</sup> Street in Harlem. The school utilizes the first floor for administrative offices and the Kindergarten classrooms, and the fourth floor for the first through fifth grade classrooms.

Harlem Day submitted an Application for Charter Renewal in the fall of 2005 and was granted a full-term five-year charter renewal by the State University Trustees on March 13, 2006. The Board of Regents subsequently voted to approve this charter renewal on May 23, 2006.

As of the date of the current school inspection, the Board of Trustees of Harlem Day Charter School consisted of the following individuals:

- Mr. Benjamin V. Lambert, Chairperson;
- Mr. Henry A. Lambert, Vice Chairperson;
- Ms. Linda Jones Easton, Secretary;
- Mr. Frank Mahoney, Treasurer;
- Ms. Barbara C. Brody;
- Mr. Larry Cohen;
- Mr. Kevin C. Davis;
- Ms. Charmin Deloatch;
- Ms. Mary Beth Harvey;
- Ms. Nancy Heuston;
- Mr. Jerold D. Jacobson, Esq.;
- Ms. Elsie McCabe;
- Mrs. Keith Meacham;
- Mr. Rod Moorhead;
- Mr. Harvey Newman;
- Mr. Chauncey G. Parker; and
- Mr. Mark Turner.

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<sup>1</sup> This section was provided by the Charters Schools Institute for inclusion in this report.

The mission of Harlem Day Charter School is as follows:

*Harlem Day Charter School's mission is to ensure that its students are equipped with the skills and behaviors to think critically and succeed in a competitive world. We accomplish this by holding out students to high standards in a child centered and developmentally appropriate environment, where they grow academically, socially and morally. Partnerships with parents and community groups are essential to achieving these goals. In all subjects, an emphasis is placed on enhancing children's natural curiosity about the world around them.*

Key design elements for Harlem Day Charter School include:

- a student-centered environment rooted in the philosophy that all children can learn if given the right tools;
- a rigorous and challenging curriculum;
- a full-service library with a certified School Library Media Specialist in support of literacy;
- increased professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators, and staff;
- a Student Support Team to manage activities and programs for at-risk learners; and
- strong parental involvement.

The school originally partnered with Sheltering Arms Inc. for fund-raising, management and administrative support and services. In the fall of 2004, the school, having established systems of its own, assumed many of those functions.

**School Year (2008-09)**

180 Instructional Days

**School Day (2008-09)**

7:45 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.<sup>2</sup>

**Enrollment**

School Year	Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment <sup>3</sup>	Chartered Grades	Actual Grades Served	Complying
2001-02	80	50	K-1	K-1	NO
2002-03	120	120	K-2	K-2	YES

<sup>2</sup> 7:45 to 8:00 a.m. is used for arrival and transition to classrooms, while 3:10 to 3:15 p.m. is used for dismissal.

<sup>3</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.

<b>2003-04</b>	160	160	K-3	K-3	YES
<b>2004-05</b>	200	201	K-4	K-4	YES
<b>2005-06</b>	240	233	K-5	K-5	YES
<b>2006-07</b>	260	263	K-5	K-5	YES
<b>2007-08</b>	260	245	K-5	K-5	YES
<b>2008-09</b>	240	258	K-5		

**Demographic Data**<sup>4</sup>

	<b>2005-06</b>		<b>2006-07</b>		<b>2007-08</b>	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of CSD #4 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of CSD #4 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of CSD #4 Enrollment
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>						
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	1	0	1	0	1
Black or African American	94	33	89	33	87	32
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0	3	0	3	0	4
Hispanic	6	62	9	62	12	62
White	0	2	0	2	0	2
Multiracial <sup>5</sup>	N/A	N/A	2	0	0	0
<b>Special Populations</b>						
Students with Disabilities	N/A	N/A	5	18	N/A	N/A
Limited English Proficient	0	12	0	12	0	13
<b>Free/Reduced Lunch</b>						
Eligible for Free Lunch	57	77	57	77	68	74
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	13	7	34	5	11	6

<sup>4</sup> Source: 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08 School Report Cards (New York State Education Department)

<sup>5</sup> Multiracial enrollment data were not collected statewide in the 2005-06 school year.

### **3. Benchmark Analysis**

#### Use of Assessment Data

Harlem Day Charter School had a program in place for administering assessments including: Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS); Rigby Benchmark assessments; the New York State testing program (NYSTP); and Acuity periodic assessments, published by Macmillan/McGraw Hill, which were used as interim measures to predict progress toward proficiency on the New York State assessments; and the Test of Early Reading Ability (TERA) for incoming students in kindergarten and first grade. DIBELS and Rigby Benchmark assessments were administered three times a year to monitor students' progress in kindergarten through third grade. The interim assessments were initiated in the 2008-09 school year to replace the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), which was not judged to be predictive since it was not aligned to New York State standards. The interim assessments were administered six times a year in third through fifth grades and twice in the spring for second grade to prepare them for the state assessments for the following year. These assessments were scored at the school using a scanner, and school administrators provided printouts to teachers that reflected results by class and individual student. These results were sent to parents. At the time of the visit, school administrators expressed their satisfaction with the predictive nature of the interim assessments. They indicated that, based on the results of the interim assessments which predicted that 53% of students in third through fifth grades would score at or above proficiency levels on the New York State English language arts (ELA) examination, they were not surprised that 51% of students actually scored at or above proficiency.

The teachers scored the DIBELS and Rigby assessments and presented their results to the administrators three times a year. During 2008-09, teachers in kindergarten through second grade reported one meeting with the administration to discuss the results of the DIBELS and Rigby assessments and their implications for instruction. Teachers in third through fifth grades reported that they met with administrators after each administration of the interim assessments. Both groups of teachers reported that these meetings resulted in some analysis of the data by skill but that no suggestions, guidance or support for developing strategies to address instructional deficiencies and strengths were provided. Further, teachers maintained assessment data in their classrooms, some in data binders and some electronically. However, the data binders were not consistently updated and many teachers created their own formats for recording assessment data and progress.

The use of rubrics for writing was observed. Each of the rubrics was developed by individual teachers and did not appear to be aligned to the New York State writing rubrics.

All evidence suggested that a comprehensive system for gathering assessment data and using them to improve instructional effectiveness and student achievement had not yet been developed. The inspection team did not find a common understanding among all teachers and administrators about the implications and applications of assessment data. Similarly, there was no evidence that the school used data to inform the curriculum. Teachers were often aware of the data but did not know what to do with the information.

## Curriculum

Harlem Day did not have a clearly defined curriculum in ELA, mathematics or in any core academic subject. Teachers had begun some curriculum mapping in the past and had developed different formats and documents on various grade levels. For example, for literacy in first grade, a rudimentary scope and sequence that spanned September through December 2008 had been created. There was a listing of topics to be taught by month in reading and writing. Additionally, a basic curriculum map for writing instruction from September through December 2008 was available. No further work had been completed at the time of the visit. There were similar sets of incomplete documents in all grades. While the administrators' curriculum binder contained a yearlong curriculum document for Core Knowledge as the school's social studies curriculum, teachers reported that they had not received nor did they use this curriculum. The curriculum for science was the New York City Department of Education's scope and sequence. There was no evidence of a defined procedure for allocating time and resources for ongoing review of existing curriculum documents or for further curriculum development. School administrators expected that outside consultants would be engaged to work with the school, starting in June 2009, on the development of curriculum documents that would be vertically and horizontally aligned.

Lesson plans were observed in most classes. However, the plans were not collected by administrators. The director of accountability and standards-based instruction, who had assumed the role of instructional leader in January 2009, reported that she did not require teachers to submit lesson plans because she "wanted to take a soft approach and not lay on a bunch of rules so as not to overwhelm the teachers." Those teachers who chose to complete lesson plans used their own formats and included different instructional components. Most lesson plans did not contain measurable objectives or an indication of assessments to be used. Further, teachers who voluntarily submitted their plans did not receive any feedback. There continued to be no common expectations around planning for instruction.

Harlem Day continued to identify common curriculum materials through which instruction could be delivered. Since the prior external report was issued, Harlem Day made several changes in the instructional programs used in the school. The school did conduct some analysis of commercial programs used in the past. Working with an outside mathematics consultant, the teachers decided that the Saxon Math program involved "too much drill and kill" and required "too much supplementation." As a result, they elected to purchase the Scott Foresman/Addison Wesley textbook-based mathematics program. However, school administrators reported that Harlem Day inadvertently purchased the Investigations inquiry-based mathematics program, also published by Scott Foresman. No one at Harlem Day ever returned the incorrect program and, in fact, began to use it by default throughout the school in 2008-09. Teachers reported that they found Investigations difficult to implement. As a result, school administrators decided that in 2009-10 they would purchase the originally intended textbook program as the basic mathematics program and would use Investigations for enrichment. They also planned to continue the use of the Saxon Math program for remediation.

There were a variety of commercial programs and materials being utilized throughout the school, including Reading A to Z, Rigby guided reading materials, Mondo reading materials, the Scholastic guided reading program and the Explode the Code phonics program to implement a

balanced literacy framework. Additionally, Delta science kits were available for teachers. Teachers used the materials with which they were most comfortable and felt were more useful. Some teachers continued to use Urban Education Exchange (UEE) materials and resources, which had been used more extensively in the school in prior years, to support instruction. Administrators indicated that they had purchased the Harcourt Storytown program as a new literacy series for use in first, second and third grades for the 2009-10 school year. They also told the inspection team that kindergarten, fourth and fifth grades would continue to use trade books and receive support from a Mondo consultant.

### Pedagogy

High quality instruction was observed in some classes, but in most classes instruction was less than rigorous and less than effective. In some classes, students were focused and involved. However, in many classes, students were not engaged, resulting in classroom management and behavioral issues that negatively affected instruction. Additionally, the pacing of instruction delivered was also observed to be problematic in many classrooms.

In most classes, instruction was observed in both whole class and small group formats, which had been reported by administrators to be the expectation throughout the school. Teachers introduced a lesson with the entire class and often continued instructional activities in smaller groups. Associate teachers were either assigned to a class or shared between two classes to support small group instruction. In kindergarten through second grade, the associate teachers were responsible for teaching science and social studies and the classroom teachers taught English language arts and mathematics. In third through fifth grades, which were departmentalized, one teacher was responsible for English language arts and social studies for both classes in the grade. The other teacher taught mathematics and science for both classes in the grade. Differentiation of instruction was evident in some classes. In several classes, associate teachers were observed to be teaching subjects other than those for which they were responsible. Administrators reported that, beginning in 2009-10, teachers would be responsible for teaching all of the subjects in K-2 and departmentalization would be discontinued in third through fifth grades because of behavioral management issues.

As indicated previously, lesson plans were not always observed to be aligned to New York State standards and performance indicators. In some classes, instruction appropriate to the grade level and to students' needs was observed. In those classes, the learning objectives were clear and the activities implemented were obviously supportive of the goal of the lesson. Those teachers were observed using thought-provoking questions to focus students' thinking on new learning and providing students with strategies to access new information. During those observations, instructional routines were evident and negative student behavior was minimal. However, in many classes literal questioning and low-level activities, such as coloring, were observed. Further, in some classes, teachers were providing incorrect information to students.

### Instructional Leadership

The inspection team recognized and acknowledged the many changes in instructional leadership that occurred over time. However, at the time of the visit, strong instructional leadership was lacking. There had been a series of principals at Harlem Day prior to this visit. Parents

interviewed reported that there were “five principals in five years.” The team was informed that one principal left because her family was relocated; however, it is unclear to team members as to the reasons for the departure of the other principals. The current executive director was hired in 2007 to take on the challenge of leading the school after one of the principals had departed. She reported that, at the time she was hired, an assistant principal was put in place who later became principal and left mid-year prior to the inspection visit. In January 2009, the director of assessment and accountability assumed the role of director of accountability and instruction, a position which had been approved by the board of trustees to replace the position of principal. At the time of the visit, the school’s instructional team consisted of the executive director, the director of accountability and instruction and the special education coordinator. The director of discipline and family support had been hired as an assistant principal with academic responsibilities, but his role and duties had been redirected by the last principal to focus on discipline and school culture. He was not included in administrative team interviews or meetings during the time of the visit.

Despite changes in some leadership roles, Harlem Day had not been able to provide overall consistency and stability to the school’s instructional program. Prior reports had repeatedly identified critical issues for remediation that impacted the quality of the entire academic program at the school.

Although the executive director and director of accountability and instruction articulated their roles to the inspection team, evidence collected during this visit strongly suggested that their responsibilities were not clear to staff. Team members observed that many teachers were confused about the current roles and responsibilities of the administrative team. When asked who supervised instruction in the school, some teachers thought that the executive director did and some indicated that the director of accountability and instruction was probably the new instructional leader. Some teachers did not know who was going to observe and evaluate them. In fact, one teacher thought that the director of discipline and family support might still observe her since he had conducted observations of her practices in the past.

Instructional expectations were not clear to staff. Teachers unanimously reported that, except for having to submit test results and timesheets, they were not held accountable for anything else. Teachers reported that they were not aware of any instructional requirements with which they had to comply. There was no evidence of high expectations for teacher performance or student performance. Teachers unanimously reported that they were largely on their own to determine what to teach and how to teach it.

Teachers unanimously reported that they did not feel adequately supported to grow and develop their instructional practices. Administrators reported that one formal observation was conducted for each teacher, which became the basis for a written performance appraisal. Some teachers reported that their formal observation was conducted by the executive director and others by the director of accountability and instruction. However, not all teachers indicated that they received feedback. The informal observations were referred to as “snapshots” during walkthroughs. Again, the feedback was reported to be inconsistent. Although observers did find evidence of a system for informal and formal evaluations, the results were not being implemented to supervise, monitor and support teachers consistently.

Administrators reported a number of improvements that they planned to make in the 2009-10 school year, such as collecting lesson plans, creating a unified curriculum, providing professional development on the use of assessment data, implementing new instructional programs, engaging consultants to help develop systems and structures, adding additional personnel to support instruction, revising the code of conduct to address low-level misbehavior, setting short- and long-term goals for professional growth with teachers and providing differentiated professional development. When team members asked why many of these improvements had not yet been initiated, the administrators cited change in leadership as the chief reason. However, the inspection team was unclear as to why these improvements could not have been initiated in the 2008-09 school year, particularly since there had been some consistency in leadership during the past three years, there had been previous inspection visits that had resulted in reports delineating these areas of deficiency, and the current administrators had recently completed a self-assessment based on the charter school renewal benchmarks in which they acknowledged that most benchmarks had not been met. While the inspection team acknowledged that administrators were engaged in long range planning, there was no evidence of a sense of urgency in establishing common expectations and systems to provide oversight and support for high quality instruction.

### At-Risk Students

Although Harlem Day had resources to meet the needs of at-risk students, evidence did not demonstrate that these resources were being used to their maximum benefit for students who were struggling academically.

At the time of the visit, there was one English language learner (ELL) and thirty-five students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). There was a special education teacher and a special education coordinator to provide mandated special education support services (SETSS) using push-in and pull-out models. There was a full-time counselor to provide appropriate services. In addition, other related service providers were contracted to come to the school as needed. There was a reading specialist who provided support services to a total of thirty-five struggling students. In kindergarten and first grade, she met with them four times a week for thirty minutes and in second grade, she met with them three times a week for thirty minutes. Her role was to assess and remediate their deficiencies. The librarian and the art teacher provided academic intervention to small groups in third through fifth grades twice a week for thirty minutes each session. They used a commercial test preparation workbook to practice reading and writing skills. In some classes, the teacher or the associate teacher worked individually or in small groups with struggling students.

The extended day program was primarily for enrichment in such areas as dance, visual arts, theater, music, yoga, film and video, serving students in kindergarten through fifth grades daily from 3:00 pm to 5:30 pm. During this time, academic support was provided for thirty minutes, twice a week, for students eligible for Title I services. It was reported that fewer than fifty students attended this Title I intervention program. A Saturday academy was focused solely on preparing students in third, fourth and fifth grades for the New York State assessments.

Harlem Day also had an instructional support team (IST) which was reported to meet three times a year. A procedure was described for student referral to the instructional support team, which

included the submission of a form by the classroom teacher and the scheduling of a meeting to discuss academic issues impacting on the student. However, some teachers indicated that they had followed this procedure but that there was no follow-up and, as a result, those students never received any additional support. It was unclear to the inspection team whether all at-risk students were actually receiving appropriate interventions. Based on the evidence collected, the inspection team concluded that no cohesive system had been established for coordination of services to at-risk students. Further, there was no evidence to indicate that a systematic procedure for articulation between classroom teachers and at-risk service providers existed for those children who had been identified and were receiving services.

### Student Order and Discipline

Harlem Day did not effectively implement a schoolwide discipline policy. Staff, students and parents reported that discipline was a priority issue throughout the school. During 2008-09, Harlem Day created the position of director of discipline and family support. As noted previously, the existing assistant principal was moved from his academic role to assume that position. To assist him in enforcing the discipline code, three school aides were moved from their previous positions to become part of a discipline team to “help establish a culture around discipline that is respectful and where consequences match the infraction.” Inspectors observed the discipline team at work and noted that the school did have a discipline code but that this code was not uniformly implemented either in classrooms or by the discipline team. Individual grades created their own rules of conduct and consequences. The inspection team concluded that a uniform behavior management system did not exist. Responsive Classroom training had been conducted for all teachers but was not monitored, and follow-up was not provided. Further, all teachers were trained on only the first level of program implementation, which included building community and using a morning meeting with students to set the tone in the classroom for the day. Also included were some routines and signals for use by the teachers. Only a few teachers were using the routines and signals and the tone in classrooms was not always conducive to teaching and learning. The teachers reported that they needed more training on strategies to use when students acted out and that they also needed to be trained in applying logical consequences to misbehavior. As a result, Responsive Classroom strategies were not used consistently in all classes. All teachers and parents interviewed expressed the need for further staff training. While a discipline team has been established, there has been minimal impact on the improvement of school tone and discipline. The lack of effective classroom management and discipline practices negatively impacted on instruction in many classes.

### Professional Development

Although there was a calendar for professional development, there was no indication that the training provided identified the deficits in teachers’ practices or assisted them in meeting the academic needs of students. The professional development calendar reflected eight days of training in August prior to the opening of school, three full days during the school year and every Wednesday from 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm, including a ten minute faculty meeting. The topics for professional development were largely focused on “establishing a schoolwide approach to discipline and a positive school culture.” There were three days of Responsive Classroom training. Some instructional areas, such as writers workshop, were presented by a Mondo consultant one day a month. One professional development session was provided by an outside

mathematics consultant. One training session was given by consultants from the Scott Foresman mathematics program. Other sessions focused on school organizational issues. The inspection team noted that most of the training was episodic and teachers reported that, while the Mondo consultant's training had been valuable, she was coming to the school less frequently during this school year. Most teachers reported that the most effective training occurred informally from other colleagues. There was no evidence of a connection between observations and professional development and the training provided did not have a positive impact on teacher's instructional strategies. Staff did express that if they identified opportunities outside the school, they believed that the leadership would allow them to participate. However, teachers unanimously reported that Harlem Day did not provide sufficient support for their pedagogical growth to meet students' academic needs.

### Mission and Key Design Elements

The inspection team observed that Harlem Day did adhere to such charter design elements as providing push-in and pull-out services, providing after school tutoring for the bottom quartile of kindergarten through fourth grade students and establishing a student support team. However, the inspection team did not find evidence that there was a longer school day for all students, increased professional opportunities for staff or a rigorous, challenging curriculum. Additionally, administrators reported that they eliminated the provision of Spanish instruction. School inspectors concluded that the school has not met its non-academic goals, including parent satisfaction and preparing highly qualified teachers for each grade level.

### Parents and Students

Parents interviewed unanimously expressed their concerns about what they perceived was the decline in discipline, in communication between parents and the school and in the implementation of a rigorous instructional program. Students interviewed also expressed their concerns that discipline problems were causing interruptions in their classes. Parents indicated that they would like to see more and better training of teachers, more responsive communication, a more challenging curriculum and a stronger school structure. They lamented that there had been five principals in five years and said that, while they were not anxious for more changes, the school needed to "get the changes right."

### Organizational Capacity

School inspectors observed effective management of day-to-day operations at Harlem Day in areas such as school scheduling and transportation. The team also noted that sufficient resources had been allocated to meet the school's academic and non-academic goals. However, teachers and parents reported that there was confusion about the roles and responsibilities of administrative and other staff. Some teachers were not sure about who was responsible for instruction in the school at the time of the visit. Further, teachers did not always know to whom they were accountable or who was responsible for observing their practices. Administrators reported to the team about many staffing changes that had occurred through January 2009. These changes included administrators and teachers leaving and the shifting of existing personnel to fill vacant or newly created positions. The administration also indicated that they had made decisions for further changes in staffing for 2009-10 and that some teachers had not

been invited to return. The team did not find any evidence that Harlem Day had the capacity to train and retain newly hired staff.

### Board Oversight

The board of trustees was committed to the success of Harlem Day. Members reported that they had raised money to renovate existing space in a housing project for the school in addition to paying rent each month for the use of that space. They also reported that they funded the extensive security system observed at the school and continued to pay for maintenance of the space and all services. There was strong evidence that the board met regularly and was comprised of members that had experience in areas necessary to support the school's development. There was also evidence that the board understood the priorities for the school's development and for student achievement. This board appeared to have taken what they considered to be appropriate actions in replacing administrators when they left and ultimately selecting an executive director who they believed could provide educational and organizational leadership for the school. At their regular meetings, they received both written information and verbal reports from the executive director and from the director of accountability and instruction as well as from the director of finance and administration. The board relied on the information presented to monitor the academic progress of the school. The board president expressed frustration about the level of achievement in English language arts and in mathematics as reflected in the results of the New York State assessments that had recently been released. The board indicated that they were developing a strategic plan to remediate the failures of the current administrators. This plan included possible replacement of the administrators and engaging the Cambridge Education group to conduct an independent benchmark assessment of the status of teaching and learning in the school and to work with the board on developing a plan for correction and positive development. As reported, a Cambridge Education consultant would also act as the school leader in the short term and the group would help to identify possible candidates for the board to select for permanent appointment. The board president also indicated that changes would be made to the education committee to ensure that the leader of that committee would be able to provide appropriate oversight on behalf of the board. The board members expressed their desire to correct the existing problems quickly and to make sufficient improvements so that the school could succeed as a viable academic organization, leading to charter renewal.

### Governance

All evidence indicated that the board of trustees had implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes consistent with their roles and responsibilities. There was evidence that regular meetings of the board were conducted and minutes were recorded.

#### **4. Methodology**

The inspection of Harlem Day Charter School was conducted on May 27 & 28, 2009 by an independent team of experienced educators from RMC Research, New York, New York. The team was comprised of the following individuals:

- **Sandra Kase, Ed.D.** (Team Leader) is an educational consultant currently providing regular services for RMC Research. Dr. Kase began her career in the New York City public schools as a teacher, staff developer and district administrator. She served as principal of the Claremont Community School for 14 years before moving to the New York City Board of Education as an Assistant to the Chancellor for School Improvement and later Supervising Superintendent of the Chancellor's District. During that time, Dr. Kase focused on improving the lowest performing schools in the city and creating high quality new schools designed to provide rigorous educational opportunities for traditionally underperforming students. During 2003, Dr. Kase worked with the incoming Chancellor and his staff to support the transition to the newly created Department of Education. In March 2004, she began to work in Peekskill, New York to support the efforts of the superintendent to raise the academic achievement of the students in that community. Dr. Kase has developed a wide array of programs, including: gifted and talented programs designed to provide opportunities for underserved students; courses at museums such as the American Museum of Natural History; university based programs for K-12 students; and extended day and year programs which blended cultural experiences with demanding learning standards to raise the academic levels of all participants. Dr. Kase holds a Doctor of Education Degree in Educational Leadership, Administration and Policy from Fordham University.
- **Janice M. Imundi** is a Research Associate for RMC Research. She also serves as a member of the Adolescent Literacy Team for the New York Comprehensive Center (NYCC), a USED contracted project of RMC Research. Currently, she is working with the New York State Education Department to review the English Language Arts Standards. Her career of over 30 years in education was spent working with students in the New York City public schools. Ms. Imundi was a teacher in a junior high school, an assistant principal in both an elementary and middle school, and a principal in a middle school. During her career, Ms. Imundi also served as an Adjunct Professor in the School of Education at Mercy College and at Long Island University. Prior to joining RMC, she worked with aspiring principals and first year principals as a mentor with *New Visions for Public Schools* and the *New York City Leadership Academy*. Ms. Imundi holds a Masters Degree in Secondary Education and a Professional Diploma in Administration and Supervision.
- **Ellen Rosenbaum** is a Research Associate for RMC Research. With over 33 years of experience in the New York City schools, Ms. Rosenbaum has served as an elementary school teacher, teacher trainer and district administrator. As the Director of School Improvement for Community School District 8 in New York City, she worked with school leaders to use data to inform instruction and to develop school reform initiatives. Ms. Rosenbaum holds a Master's Degree in Education and a Professional Diploma in School District Administration.

- **Andrea Hoffman** is an educational consultant currently providing ongoing services for RMC Research. Ms. Hoffman served as a teacher, staff developer, literacy coach and academic intervention specialist for many years. She has also served as a consultant to provide support to administrators, librarians and teachers to facilitate the alignment of instruction taking place in school libraries with literacy implementation throughout the schools. Additionally, Ms. Hoffman works in the New York City Department of Education's Peer Observation and Evaluation Program for RMC Research to conduct observations of teachers in need of improvement and to create individualized professional development plans. Ms. Hoffman has had specialized training in literacy and holds a Masters Degree in Elementary Education.

The team used the Qualitative Educational Benchmarks (QEB), a subset of the State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks, as the guides for its evaluation. In addition, the team relied on a set of framework questions to structure the Benchmark Analysis section of this document. Prior to the two-day visit, the team reviewed the school's documents, including its annual Accountability Plan Progress Report and reports from previous site visits by the Charter Schools Institute or other entities, such as the New York State Education Department.

During the visit, the team used a triangulated approach to collect data, including observing classes, interviewing school administrators, board of trustees members, teachers, staff, parents and students and reviewing student work, curriculum and other school documents, such as board minutes, teacher evaluations, assessment data, school policies and school organization documents to understand the efforts the school is making to achieve its academic and organizational goals. Notes were taken by each team member during each of the activities noted above.

In order to analyze the data and generate conclusions, the team reviewed and examined the notes taken by each of the team members during classroom observations, interviews or while reviewing relevant documents for information and for data collection reliability. Team members analyzed data for patterns, correlated evidence gathered with the Renewal Benchmarks and grouped data into relevant categories. All data were verified through multiple sources.