



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Harlem Day Charter School

School Evaluation Report 2007-2008

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INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

Because of the inherent complexity of an organization such as a school, this School Evaluation Report does not contain a rating or a single comprehensive indicator that would indicate at a glance the school’s prospects for renewal. It does, however, summarize the various strengths of the school and note areas in need of improvement. To the extent appropriate and useful, we encourage school boards of trustees to use this evaluation report in planning school improvement efforts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

In its seventh year of operation, Harlem Day Charter School Board of Trustees met regularly and frequently and benefited from consistent leadership throughout the existence of the school. The board was generally aware of the school's recent decline in student achievement. However, the board was not aware of the school's performance as measured against the goals contained in the school's Accountability Plan and had not used the annual Accountability Plan Progress Report for purposes of making instructional improvements.

The school had devoted significant time and resources in the administration of informal and formal assessments and the collection of related data. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills and New York State Testing Program Exams were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional program and to identify students in need of additional support. Several assessments were used to monitor student progress in English language arts. The Saxon Math benchmark assessments were used in mathematics to determine student ability groups. In addition, school leaders had developed a document to compile school wide student data, including academic performance, school climate data, attendance, and demographic information. However, the school had not yet developed a cohesive and comprehensive assessment system and teachers were not yet regularly using assessment data to inform day-to-day instruction.

The Harlem Day curriculum is implemented through the use of the Urban Education Exchange framework and Lucy Calkin's Units of Study for English language arts, Saxon Math, Delta Science, and Core Knowledge for social studies. Teachers were provided scope and sequence documents and pacing guidelines, which were complete in most subject areas. However, the delivery of instruction did not appear to follow these guidelines. The inspection team noted that school leaders did not monitor the implementation of the curriculum with fidelity, and the school's instructional program lacked vertical and horizontal alignment.

At the time of the inspection visit, the school's primary instructional leader was the principal. The principal had recently been promoted from her previous post as assistant principal, and a search was being conducted to fill that position. Teachers were regularly evaluated using existing tools and had begun to complete a self-evaluation and develop individual professional goals. Some ongoing coaching was provided by external consultants for the school's program in English language arts but not in mathematics.

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. On May 15, 2001, the State University Trustees approved a revision to the school's charter changing its name to the 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 with 50 students in kindergarten and first grades, adding one grade in each of the next four years, enrolling 245 students in kindergarten through fifth grades in the 2007-08 school year. 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
- Mr. Mark Turner

The mission of Harlem Day Charter School, as stated in the school's Renewal Charter is as follows:

To use a partnership between educators, families, and community members to create a strong academic organization in which students learn skills in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, and Spanish at levels that exceed the New York state standards. Students will be expected to achieve these high levels in an environment that values respect, compassion, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

However, the school's board had recently revised the school's mission to read 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 our 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 as stated in the school's Application for Initial Charter Renewal include:

- a longer school day, strong emphasis on reading and writing skills as the academic foundation, safe environment, school uniforms, and enthusiastic encouragement from parents and guardians;
- a student-centered environment, rooted in the philosophy that all children can learn if given the right tools;
- increased professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators, and other personnel through professional seminars, workshops and Professional Days;
- a change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems;
- a rigorous and challenging curriculum;
- a Student Support Team for managing the programs and other activities for at-risk learners;
- an after school tutoring for bottom quartile K-4 students, providing small group instruction in English language arts;
- push-in and pull-out services; and
- strong parental involvement and collaboration.

The school originally planned to be housed in the 369th Regiment Armory, but because of unsuccessful negotiations, secured space formerly used by Touro College at 240 East 123rd 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.

At the time of its establishment, the school's institutional partner was Sheltering Arms Inc., a community organization which has served the Harlem community for more than 50 years, providing a wide array of early childhood programs, including day-care, special education, pre-Kindergarten, after-school and medical services. The charter indicated that Sheltering Arms would offer the following support to the school: fund-raising support; management and administrative support and services; and where appropriate, student access to its services, such as its Upward after-school program. In the fall of 2004, the school, having established systems of its own, assumed many of those functions.

School Year (2007-08)

180 Instructional Days

School Day (2007-08)7:45 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.¹**Enrollment**

	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ²	Original Chartered Grades	Revised Grades Served	Actual Grades Served	Complying
2001-02	80	80	50	K-1	K-1	K-1	NO
2002-03	120	120	120	K-2	K-2	K-2	YES
2003-04	160	160	160	K-3	K-3	K-3	YES
2004-05	200	200	201	K-4	K-4	K-4	YES
2005-06	240	240	233	K-5	K-5	K-5	YES
2006-07	260	260	263	K-5	K-5	K-5	YES
2007-08	260	260	245	K-5	K-5	K-5	YES

Race/Ethnicity	2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. Harlem Day	% of Enroll. CSD #4	% of Enroll. Harlem Day	% of Enroll. CSD #4
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.0 %	1.0 %	NA	NA
Black or African American	94.0 %	33.0 %	NA	NA
Hispanic	6.0 %	62.0 %	NA	NA
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0.0 %	3.0 %	NA	NA
White	0.0 %	2.0 %	NA	NA

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

¹ 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.

² 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.

Special Populations	2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. Harlem Day	% of Enroll. Community District #4	% of Enroll. Harlem Day	% of Enroll. Community District #4
Students with Disabilities	NA	NA	5.3 %	17.9 %
Limited English Proficient	0.0 %	12.0 %	0.0 %	11.7 %

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

Free/Reduced Lunch	2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. Harlem Day	% of Enroll. Community District #4	% of Enroll. Harlem Day	% of Enroll. Community District #4
Eligible for Free Lunch	57.0 %	77.0 %	56.8 %	74.8 %
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	13.0 %	7.0 %	34.1 %	5.0 %

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

School Charter History

Charter Year	School Year	Year of Operation	Evaluation Visit	Feedback to School	Other Actions Taken
1 st Charter – 1 st Year	2001-02	1 st	YES	Prior Action Letter; End-of-Year Evaluation Report	Change in Name of School
1 st Charter – 2 nd Year	2002-03	2 nd	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	None
1 st Charter – 3 rd Year	2003-04	3 rd	YES	External Evaluation Report	None
1 st Charter – 4 th Year	2004-05	4 th	NO	NONE	None
1 st Charter – 5 th Year	2005-06	5 th	YES	Initial Renewal Report	School granted full-term five-year renewal
2 nd Charter – 1 st Year	2006-07	6 th	NO	NONE	None
2 nd Charter – 2 nd Year	2007-08	7 th	YES	Annual School Evaluation Report	None

ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

Background

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

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

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

Academic Performance through 2006-07

Performance Summary: Although Harlem Day met its Accountability Plan goals in English language arts and mathematics in 2004-05, the school has not been close to meeting its goals in those subjects during the first two years of its current Accountability Plan period (2005-06, 2006-07). Limited data suggest the school is close to meeting its science and social studies goals. The school is deemed to be in good standing under the state's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system. Results for the school's optional goals are unavailable.

English language arts: Harlem Day met its English language arts goal in 2004-05 when 100 percent of students scored at the proficient level on the state's 4th grade exam. However, the school is currently not close to meeting its English language arts goal. In 2005-06, the first year of the current Accountability Plan period, when grades 3 through 5 were tested only 46 percent of students were proficient, although the school's absolute proficiency target was 75 percent. In 2006-07,

performance in this area rose slightly to 53 percent proficient. The school has exceeded the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set by the state's NCLB accountability system each year. It did not outperform the local school district in 2005-06, but did so in 2006-07. In comparison to demographically similar schools state-wide, Harlem Day performed worse than predicted in both 2005-06 and 2006-07. Finally, in terms of year-to-year growth, value added results were not available for 2005-06. Examining growth on the state exam in 2006-07, one cohort declined while the other achieved its target, but overall performance declined.

Mathematics: While Harlem Day met its mathematics goal in 2004-05 with 100 percent of students proficient on the state's 4th grade exam, at the time of the inspection visit, it was not close to achieving its mathematics goal. In 2005-06 when students in 3rd through 5th grade were tested 61 percent were proficient (the absolute target is 75 percent); in 2006-07 in those same grades 59 percent were proficient. The school has exceeded the AMO each year, but has underperformed the local school district in the first two years of the current Accountability Plan period. In comparison to demographically similar schools state-wide, Harlem Day performed worse than predicted both in 2005-06 and 2006-07. In terms of year-to-year growth on the state exam, neither cohort in 2006-07 achieved its growth target and overall performance also declined.

Science: On the 4th grade state exam 81 percent of students scored at the proficient level in 2006-07. Comparison results for the local school district were not available.

Social studies: On the 5th grade state exam 71 percent of students scored at the proficient level in 2006-07. Comparison results for the local school district were not available.

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

Additional Goals (optional): As only 55 percent of parents responded to the school's survey, the results were inconclusive. While 80 percent of respondents felt their child's teacher keeps them adequately informed, 66 percent felt the school provides an academically rigorous curriculum. The Progress Report failed to address the student retention and professional development training measures included in the school's Accountability Plan.

SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

Background

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

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

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

Summary of Previous Evaluation Visit

The most recent evaluation visit of Harlem Day was the Institute's initial renewal inspection in the fall of 2005. The inspection team observed classrooms; interviewed administrators, board members and teachers; and reviewed documents. At the conclusion of the visit the Institute issued a report to the school's Board of Trustees outlining the major conclusions from the visit and charter term, which are briefly summarized below.

During their initial charter term, Harlem Day had notable success in meeting key academic outcomes set forth in its Accountability Plan. Although data was limited, all of the school's third and fourth grade students enrolled in the school for at least two years demonstrated proficiency in English language arts and mathematics. While the school did not meet its value-added measure using the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, students in each grade continued to perform above grade-level in both reading and mathematics.

Teachers at Harlem Day were using a variety of instruments to assess student learning at the time of the renewal inspection visit. Assessment data was used to determine in-class student groupings and to evaluate individual student learning. Teachers were not observed using a systematic practice of using student achievement data to inform instructional improvement at the school and were left to their own devices on how to evaluate student performance.

During the initial charter term Harlem Day had selected curricular materials for each core subject area, comprised of Saxon Mathematics, Urban Education Exchange framework in English language arts, and Core Knowledge for science and social studies. Teachers and school leaders were in the processes of defining with precision, through the use of curriculum maps and related materials, the skills and knowledge that students were expected to obtain at each grade level.

At the time of the renewal inspection visit, Harlem Day had reorganized its leadership structure to enable specific leaders to dedicate themselves to supervising instruction. Some systems were in place to provide strong instructional leadership, such as a system for ongoing teacher evaluation and improvement that supported individual teacher's professional growth. There was not however a unified and articulated set of academic and organizational priorities. Instruction at the school varied and included a wide spectrum of quality instruction. Some classes were engaging and interactive, while many other teachers did not use instructional time skillfully to challenge and engage students. Classroom management was poor in many classrooms, impacting the delivery of the school's curriculum. There was little evidence of a uniform and cohesive system to manage student behavior or a set of school-wide behavioral expectations.

Harlem Day had in place a student support team and related practices to assist struggling students. Student performance on some standardized assessments was periodically used to identify students at-risk of academic failure. However, the overall support structure for these students was ad hoc in nature and not systematic. The school had made progress in implementing services for special education students. However, some students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) were not receiving the services required by their IEPs.

At the time of the renewal inspection visit the school's instructional staff was mainly comprised of novice teachers. Over the life of the initial charter, the school had committed substantial resources to professional development aligned with the school mission and designed to develop teachers' instructional skills. The primary focus of these efforts was on first year teachers.

The school's board of trustees held regular and frequent meetings with good attendance during the initial charter term. The Board used an independent analysis of operational structure in their decision to reorganize the school's leadership team as described above. The board evaluated the principal annually, but this practice was not comprehensive in nature. The board planned to institute a system by which the principal would be evaluated by the newly created position of Executive Director, in conjunction with a member of the board.

Evaluation Visit Benchmark Analysis and Evidence

Board Governance and Executive Leadership

The Board of Trustees of Harlem Day Charter School continues to benefit from stable leadership, which had been the case at the time of initial renewal. The chairperson of the board has fulfilled his post since the creation of the school. The board meets regularly and frequently and reported their priority focus to be on “increasing student achievement and providing students with the best educational opportunities possible.” The board provides oversight of the school through a committee structure consisting of the following committees: finance, long-term planning, board nominations, parent communication, education, and personnel/human resources. Individual board members with expertise in these areas provide leadership and direction as appropriate. Chairpersons of these committees comprise the board’s executive committee.

The vast majority of board members participated in an interview with members of the inspection team. In addition to a focus on academic improvement, board members reported ongoing board membership and fundraising as current priorities. Specifically, one member of the board reported efforts to recruit more members from the Harlem community. Members of the board were also aware of and concerned about the school’s notable decrease in student achievement since the time of renewal. However, the board had not acted on these decreases as indicated in the Action Plan steps outlined in the school’s annual Accountability Plan Progress Report (Progress Report). In fact, the board was unaware of the contents of the school’s most recent Progress Report, and the action plan steps contained within it.

The school had implemented a leadership structure since renewal that makes the executive director responsible for all operations of the school. The school’s principal, reporting directly to and annually evaluated by the executive director, is responsible for the management of the instructional program. At the time of the inspection visit the executive director was completing her second full year at the school. The board described an extensive process by which she was selected, including the use of an external search firm. Further, the board and executive director reported a process by which an annual evaluation is conducted of the executive director by the board chairperson. A copy of this evaluation was not available at the time of the inspection visit.

The school’s board chair reported significant involvement in personnel processes related to the school’s administrative team. Recently, due to the departure of the school’s principal, the board promoted the assistant principal to that post. The board chair reported involvement in the interview process, along with other members of the board. He also plans to be equally involved in hiring a person to fill the assistant principal position that was vacant at the time of the inspection visit. The inspection team noted that this level of involvement by one member of the board, in addition to his individual evaluation of the executive director, appears to have the potential of crossing into operational management, as opposed to board oversight.

Use of Assessment Data

Harlem Day administers a variety of formal and informal assessments to monitor student learning and collects a significant amount of related data. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is administered twice annually, once in the fall and again in the spring. This assessment is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional program, as well as to identify students at risk of academic failure in mathematics and reading. The school also uses the results of the New York State

Testing Program to evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional program when available.

The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Rigby benchmark assessments are used on an ongoing basis to measure student progress in the school's literacy program. In addition, Kindergarten teachers reported using "guided reading assessments" which were later clarified as running records. One teacher reported that "based on the DIBELS we formed a support group for some kids with the reading specialist." Another teacher reported that the staff "looked at graphs and trends in that data [from DIBELS] in a professional development session." This evidence suggests that teachers are receiving some support in the use of assessment data for instructional purposes. However, when asked for specific examples, teachers could not describe ways in which they use the variety of available assessment data on a regular basis to inform literacy instruction beyond the identification of students for academic intervention.

For mathematics, the school's primary assessment for ongoing progress monitoring is the benchmark assessments provided by the school's selected textbook publisher (Saxon Math). One teacher reported the use of a spreadsheet provided by a colleague that identifies skill deficiencies based on the types of questions students are not mastering. However, this was not a systematic or school-wide practice. The primary use of the Saxon benchmark assessment data appears to be for determining student ability groupings. In one grade-level, teachers reported that students were placed into one of three ability groups, described as "above grade level, at grade level, and below grade level," based on their performance on these assessments. Associate teachers then take primary responsibility for the two highest performing groups, while the two classroom teachers co-teach the lowest ability group. Of particular concern to the inspection team was that this decision was made independently by teachers and not strategically with instructional leaders.

Overall, the school is committed to the administration of a variety of assessments and has continued to collect a robust amount of data as a result. Assessment data is used to determine students in need of academic intervention services and to group some students into ability levels. However, the school had not yet developed and implemented a cohesive assessment system that was understood by the instructional staff and supported by school leaders.

Finally, the school had developed a document titled "Instructional Leader's Tri-Mester Dashboard (the "Dashboard")." This document captures a host of student data and had the potential to become an effective holistic evaluative instrument. This document is used to communicate with school stakeholders, and importantly the school's Board of Trustees. The Dashboard includes three major sections. First, the Dashboard presents school-wide data, including most recent state testing results, yearly demographic data (ethnicity, poverty rates, special education, enrollment, etc.). Following is a section on school-wide data for the identified trimester, which includes discipline data (suspensions), student discharges, school-wide standardized assessment results if available, and a variety of school climate data. The final portion of the Dashboard includes an analysis of each class in the school, with specific information presented for each student. This student-specific information includes attendance/tardiness, intervention services provided (extended day, Title I, special education, reading specialist), and academic performance data (report card grades, informal and formal assessment results, etc.). While useful from an evaluation standpoint, teachers did not report using this document to improve their day-to-day instruction.

Curriculum

The school's teachers and leadership continue to identify common curriculum materials in use at the school. For English language arts, the school continues to use the Urban Education Exchange (UEE) framework for reading, supplemented by the Lucy Calkins Units of Study for the teaching of writing. For mathematics instruction, the school's primary curriculum is delivered using the Saxon Math program. In science, the school utilizes the Delta Science Kits. Finally, for social studies the school continues to use the Core Knowledge materials.

In addition to the identification of curricular products, teachers generally reported that they were provided scope and sequence documents to assist in guiding the delivery of instruction. According to teachers, pacing guides were available for the UEE framework and Saxon Math programs. Document review by the inspection team confirmed that work had been done to provide such guidance to teachers in these areas. Additionally, a pacing guide appeared to be in place for the Core Knowledge program used to deliver the school's social studies program. The science program contained an incomplete pacing guide. One teacher reported that "there was a guide for September and October, and we were told we would get them for the other months later, but we never did."

While it is clear that the school has devoted time and effort to developing written curriculum documents, the implementation of the curriculum varied across the school and the inspection team discovered significant evidence to suggest that teachers were not following the school's written curriculum and pacing guides with fidelity. In terms of delivery of the English language arts program, one teacher stated that, "UEE is a guide. It's a map for expectations, pacing. I like the comprehension lessons, but the phonics and word work are a little weak." Another teacher reported that, "we like Lucy Calkins. UEE provides no instruction for writing. We don't actually have the books, but I purchased a copy for myself." Yet another teacher reported that she uses the UEE guidelines "but not in their order." This evidence suggests the school's English language arts curriculum is inconsistently implemented by the school's teachers, and may not be a program organized as a comprehensive single curriculum for the teaching of reading and writing.

Teachers similarly reported inconsistent implementation of the school's Saxon Math program. In one grade, one teacher had abandoned the Saxon program altogether while others were using it sporadically. One teacher reported that "for math we have Saxon, but we don't use it with the low level group." One inspector noted that a teacher of one group of students within a grade level was on lesson 70, while another was on lesson 125.

The school's science and social studies programs appeared to be inconsistently delivered as well. Some associate teachers were responsible for delivering these programs in some grade levels. In one grade level, a teacher reported that the school uses Delta for science and Core Knowledge for social studies, but that they do not monitor curriculum fidelity in these classes because the teachers do not share or turn in lesson plans.

Teachers across the school reported that they submit lesson plans to the principal, yet they do not receive feedback on their plans. Document review of the lesson plans provided to the inspection team revealed a variety of formats and components to lesson plans, suggesting that there is not a common expectation regarding the planning of instruction. One teacher reported that she had stopped submitting lesson plans because she did not receive feedback on them or support in developing them. Of concern to the inspection team was the lack of support for teachers in this area and the lack of a process to monitor the delivery of instruction. As the result of these factors, it

appears that teachers at the school are left to their own devices to determine what students should be able to know and do, as well as what to teach, when to teach it, and how to teach it.

As a result of the ad hoc nature in which the curriculum is being implemented, it appears that there is a lack of vertical alignment. School leaders and some teachers reported the existence of a Curriculum Committee in which alignment decisions were made. One teacher also reported that a primary goal of the school “is to make sure that children leave each grade at grade level.” However, the inspection team noted the absence of clearly understood exit skills in each core area at each grade, as well as exit skills and content knowledge for students leaving the school after the fifth grade.

Instructional Leadership and Professional Development

The school’s principal maintains primary responsibility for instructional leadership. At the time of the inspection visit, she was new to her post after being promoted from assistant principal following the mid-year departure of her predecessor. At the time of the visit, she was fulfilling the responsibilities for the positions of both the principal and assistant principal, and the school’s instructional priorities were not clear to the instructional staff.

Some teachers reported informal observations of their teaching by the school’s principal, with feedback either coming in the form of a verbal conversation or e-mail. Other teachers reported relying on their teaching colleagues for support. In addition, the school has utilized consultants to provide professional development for the teaching of English language arts. Several teachers reported that this support included demonstration instruction, which they reported as “very helpful.” However, the inspection team noted that similar support is not available for the mathematics instruction at the school. Other teachers were not satisfied with the support they had been provided. One teacher stated that “I don’t feel that this school has fulfilled their responsibility to help me become a better teacher.”

The school has deviated from past practices that involve multiple teacher evaluations within each year following a pre – and – post lesson meeting. This type of structured evaluation was provided in the first part of the school year. However, teachers were asked to provide a self assessment according to specified teaching domains. In addition, documents shared with the inspection team revealed processes to assist teachers in developing individual professional goals. However, support structures to provide targeted specific professional development to enable teachers to meet those goals was not evident at the time of the visit.

Conduct of the Visit

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the Seventh -Year Inspection Visit at Harlem Day Charter School on April 1, 2008. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit:

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

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

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

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

Sarah Tantillo, Ed.D., has taught high school English and Humanities in both suburban and urban New Jersey public schools for 14 years, including seven years at the nationally-recognized North Star Academy Charter School of Newark, N.J. where she most recently chaired the Humanities Dept. and where her students achieved a 100% passing rate on the Language Arts/Literacy section of the HSPA in 2006 and 2007. She founded and directed the New Jersey Charter School Resource Center from 1996-1999 and the New Jersey Charter Public Schools Associations from 1999-2003. She consults with charter schools and other public schools (esp. urban) seeking to improve student achievement. Her specialties include: school culture-building; strategic planning for charter schools; and high school literacy, with emphasis on critical reading and writing instruction, interdisciplinary curriculum development, rubric design, and how to align curriculum with standards. Sarah holds a B.A. from Princeton, a M.Ed. from Harvard, a M.A. from Johns Hopkins, and her Ed.D. from Rutgers University. Her dissertation was on culture formation in charter schools.

APPENDIX A: RENEWAL BENCHMARKS USED DURING THE VISIT

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

Benchmark 1D Pedagogy	1D.1	The school has strong instructional leadership.
	1D.2	High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.
	1D.3	The school has programs that are demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically to meet the school’s academic Accountability Plan goals, including programs for students who require additional academic supports, programs for English Language Learners and programs for students eligible to receive special education. .
Benchmark 1E Student Order & Discipline	1E	The school’s culture allows and promotes a culture of learning.
Benchmark 1F Professional Development	1F	The school’s professional development program assists teachers in meeting student academic needs and school goals, by addressing identified shortcomings in student learning and teacher pedagogical skill and content knowledge.

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

APPENDIX B: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Charter Schools and the State University of New York

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

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

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

Charter schools are public schools in every respect. They are open to all children, non-sectarian in their programs and funded with public tax dollars. Unlike district operated schools, which are run by a board of education, each public charter school is governed by an independent board of trustees, which is directly responsible for school performance. While independent, public charter schools and their boards, like traditional public schools and school boards, are subject to oversight and monitoring. Additionally, all public charter schools in New York State are jointly subject to inspection and oversight by the State Education Department (SED) on behalf of the Board of Regents. As such, charter schools, though free from many mandates, are more accountable to the public than district-run schools.

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

The Renewal Cycle and the Timing of School Inspection Visits

Because some schools take planning years before opening (during which time their five-year charter continues to run as if they had opened) and/or receive renewal charter terms of less than five years, the number of years that a school has been in operation is not always co-terminus with the number of

years that a school has provided instruction. Thus for example, a school that is in its seventh year of operation may be in its fifth year of instruction and facing initial renewal, having previously received a short-term planning year renewal for a period of time equivalent to the number of planning years the school took. It will therefore receive a renewal visit, whereas another school that did not take any planning years and was renewed for five years would be in the second year of its second five-year charter. This school would therefore not receive a renewal visit but rather an evaluation visit and inspection report, which all schools in that position receive. As such, each of the Institute's inspection reports contains a chart indicating the years the school has been in operation, the year of its present charter period, when it has been renewed and for how long, and the feedback that has been previously issued to the school.

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

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

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

³ More often, of course, schools do not succeed or fail so much as parts of the highly complex organization are working well and parts are not.

Keeping This Report in Context

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

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

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

While there is no one rating that the Institute gives as a result of a single-day visit, it is important to note that where the inspection team identifies area after area with not just room for improvement but significant and severe deficiencies, and few, if any, countervailing strengths, the difficulty that the school may have in presenting a compelling case for renewal is likely to be substantially increased and this fact may well be noted. Conversely, where the inspection team finds that strengths outnumber weaknesses in both quantity and quality, the school is likely to be better positioned to build a strong case for renewal. So, too, this fact may be noted.

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

Finally, we note that this report cannot serve its three functions (providing data to the school to use for its potential improvement; disseminating information to stakeholders; and gathering data so that

the Institute may come to renewal with a richer set of evidence) unless the report is not only unsparingly candid regarding the observations that the Institute has made, but also focused on those areas that are potentially in need of improvement rather than those accomplishments that the school has accumulated to date.

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