



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Icahn 2 Charter School

School Evaluation Report 2009-2010

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INTRODUCTION

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

- **Facilitate Improvement.** By providing substantive information about the school’s academic, fiscal and organizational strengths and weaknesses to the school’s board of trustees, administration, faculty and other staff, the Institute can play a role in helping the school identify areas for improvement.
- **Disseminate Information.** The Institute disseminates information about the school’s performance not only to its board of trustees, administration and faculty, but to all stakeholders, including parents and the larger community in which the school is located.
- **Document Performance.** The Institute collects information to build a database of a school’s performance over time. By evaluating the school periodically, the Institute can more clearly ascertain trends, determine areas of strength and weakness, and assess the school’s likelihood for continued success or failure. 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 evaluation visits conducted by the Institute (or external experts contracted by the Institute) and other agencies with oversight responsibilities.

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

Based on the analysis of evidence from the evaluation visit to the Icahn 2 Charter School (“Icahn 2”), the school appears to be making adequate progress toward achieving its mission and meeting the SUNY Charter Renewal Benchmarks considered during this evaluation. Although this conclusion is drawn from a variety of indicators which are discussed more fully later in this report, some of the more salient indicators include the following:

Academic Success

Areas of Strength:

- The school has in place a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and uses it to improve student learning.
- The school has a clearly defined curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards.
- The school’s targeted assistance program provides substantial opportunities for differentiated instruction, and some instruction is differentiated within the regular classroom.
- School leaders instill high expectations for teacher performance and student achievement and instructional leaders provide teachers with a variety of supports.
- The school is demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically.
- The school promotes a culture of learning and scholarship.
- The school provides substantial professional development resources.

Organizational Capacity

Areas of Strength:

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

Areas for Growth:

- The school is intending to move to a new district and is developing ties to the community.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

School Name

	Name	Date
Chartered Name	Carl C. Icahn Charter School Bronx North	January, 2006
Revised Name	Icahn Charter School 2	March, 2009

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	January 24, 2006
Date Initial Charter Approved by: Board of Regents	
Operation of Law	September 12, 2006
School Opening Date	September, 2007

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades At this Location	District
2007-08 through present	1535 Story Avenue Bronx, NY	All	New York City CSD 8

Partner Organizations

	Partner Name	Partner Type	Dates of Service
Current Partner	Foundation for Greater Opportunity	Non-profit	2006 through present

Current Mission Statement

Icahn Charter School 2, using the Core Knowledge curriculum developed by E.D. Hirsch, will provide students with a rigorous academic program offered in an extended day/year setting. Students will graduate armed with the skills and knowledge to participate successfully in the most rigorous academic environments, and will have a sense of personal and community responsibility.

Current Key Design Elements

• Core Knowledge curriculum
• Small class size
• Extended school day and year
• High standards for instruction through ongoing professional development
• Encouraging strong parental involvement
• Offering after-school as well as Saturday Academy classes in English Language Arts and Mathematics

School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Charter Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ¹	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2006-07	Planning Year					
2007-08	108	N/A	109	K-2	K-2	187
2008-09	144	N/A	147	K-3	K-3	188
2009-10	180	N/A	177	K-4	K-4	190

Student Demographics

	2008-09 ²		2009-10	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 8 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment ³	Percent of NYC CSD 8 Enrollment ⁴
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0	0	0
Black or African American	46	27	47	27
Hispanic	49	62	47	63
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	1	4	1	4
White	0	6	1	6
Multiracial	5	0	1	0
Special Populations				
Students with Disabilities ⁵	2	N/A	5	N/A
Limited English Proficient	4	12	3	12
Free/Reduced Lunch				
Eligible for Free Lunch	52	76	54	77
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	19	9	19	8

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

² Source: 2008-09 School Report Cards, New York State Education Department.

³ Source: 2009-10 Demographics and Limited English Proficient Percentages calculated from BEDS reports submitted at the beginning of the school year. Free/Reduced Lunch status provided by the school.

⁴ Aggregated district data not yet publicly available for 2009-10.

⁵ New York State Education Department does not report special education data. Statistics given were provided by the school.

Current Board of Trustees⁶

Board Member Name	Position/Committees
Carl C. Icahn	Chair
Gail Golden	Vice-Chair
Julie Goodyear	Secretary
Edward Shanahan	Trustee
Seymour Fliegel	Trustee
Robert Sancho	Trustee
Karen Mandelbaum	Trustee
Tamara Delgado-DeJesus	Parent Representative

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2007-08	B. Silen – Carrasquillo, Principal
2008-09	B. Silen – Carrasquillo, Principal
2009-10	B. Silen – Carrasquillo, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2007-08	First-Year Visit	Institute	February 26, 2008
2008-09	Second-Year Visit	External	May 19-20, 2009
2009-10	Third-Year Visit	Institute	February 25, 2010

⁶ Source: Institute Board Records.

SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE

Background

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

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

This section of the School Evaluation Report begins with a summary of the observations made and the conclusions drawn during previous visits to the school. This information is used by evaluation teams in preparation for the visit 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 inspection of the school's academic program and conclusions from prior 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 evaluation, along with supporting evidence. Finally, information regarding the conduct of the evaluation, including the date of the visit and information about the evaluation team, is provided.

Summary of Previous Evaluation Visit

An independent evaluation of Icahn 2 was conducted by RMC Research on May 19-20, 2009. The evaluation team observed classrooms; interviewed administrators, board members and teachers; and reviewed student work and other documents. As a result of the evaluation visit, a report was provided to the school's board of trustees outlining the major conclusions from the visit; these conclusions are briefly summarized below.

Icahn 2 had replicated the academic program of the school after which it was modeled, Icahn 1 Charter School, with a curriculum based on the Core Knowledge program. The school relied on commercial programs to implement its curriculum, which was aligned to state standards. High quality instruction was observed in most classes; however, more rigorous instruction was needed by new teachers. The principal provided strong instructional leadership and had established high expectations for staff and students. A system was in place for evaluating teacher effectiveness and providing professional support to improve teachers' practices. The program for at-risk students was well-developed; students were supported in classrooms through flexible grouping based on data and small pull-out groups by targeted assistance teachers. Interventions were also provided after school and on Saturdays. The school environment was safe and orderly, and behavioral expectations were high. The school was piloting a behavior system in kindergarten and 1st grade. Professional development was primarily individualized to meet the needs of teachers; a literacy staff developer

had been hired that year and outside consultants also provided support in literacy and mathematics. The school was found to be faithful to its mission and had implemented its key design elements. Parents and students expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the school, which had effective daily operations and ample resources. The board was experienced and knowledgeable about its role and responsibility to provide oversight and governance.

Current Evaluation Visit Benchmark Analysis and Evidence

Use of Assessment Data (Benchmark 1.B)

The school has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and uses it to improve student learning.

Icahn 2 regularly administers assessments aligned to the school's curriculum and state standards. A year-long assessment calendar is in place, including diagnostic, formative and summative assessments. The school relies on a combination of teacher-created and standardized assessment tools as well as those provided with commercial curriculum programs. For example, teachers have created benchmark diagnostic tests for all grades in reading, mathematics and science. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is used to evaluate the skill level of incoming students. Last year the school piloted the use of MClass assessments using palm pilots to determine reading levels; it has fully implemented it this year. Student progress is monitored using standardized assessments such as ITBS, DIBELS and TRC. Teachers use a variety of formative assessments including: weekly quizzes and tests; leveled reader quick checks; Do Nows; and assignments and observation. One-on-one conferencing was observed during the evaluation visit. Summative Unit and chapter tests are administered regularly. The school also administers monthly practice state exams in 2nd through 4th grade.

The school systematically collects valid and reliable assessment data and analyzes the results. Teachers maintain assessment binders containing copious information about student performance. Color coded charts are used to identify students below level and in some cases specific skills or content areas are highlighted. Copies of weekly assessment results, distributed to targeted assistance teachers and school leaders, are analyzed by skill and item. Grade teams then meet weekly with targeted assistance teachers to discuss results and identify skill deficits. Teachers reported using their commercial writing program's rubric to evaluate student work and indicated that they sometimes collaboratively evaluate student work to norm their grading. A consultant generally meets monthly with grade teams to look at student work together.

Teachers and school leaders effectively use results to identify students for remediation and to a more limited extent to differentiate instruction within the classroom. Groups of students are identified for push-in and pull out services provided by targeted assistance teachers; these groups change weekly based on need. Assessment results are also used to group students within classes for reading with groups reportedly changing throughout the year. Teachers indicated that they occasionally use results to identify topics for re-teaching.

The school follows clear policies and procedures for the use of student performance data. The school provides parents with six detailed progress reports per year. The palm pilot assessment allows the school to quickly evaluate reading levels before meetings with parents to discuss progress and intervention strategies. Promotion discussions begin by the third progress report and involve

teachers, administrators and parents. Promotion is based primarily on performance on state assessments; few students are reported to have been retained.

Curriculum (Benchmark 1.C)

The school has a clearly defined curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards.

The school has a comprehensive and organized curriculum framework that relies heavily on commercial programs. Icahn 1 Charter School (“Icahn 1”), the school after which Icahn 2 is modeled, provides syllabi that contain monthly topics by grade and subject. In English language arts and mathematics the syllabi are based on commercial programs. In science and social studies the syllabi pull topics from the Core Knowledge framework. While there was little documented evidence of alignment to state standards, interviewed teachers.

Teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. They are provided with scope and sequences with monthly topics. In reading teachers reported following the textbook closely, while in mathematics they follow a pacing guide developed by a consultant. A consultant is also working with teachers to develop and refine the school’s writing programs. Icahn 1 teachers have provided the science syllabus. Within grades most classes are paced the same and identical lessons were observed across most classes in core subjects. Teachers stated they can adjust their pacing to meet student needs. To help with vertical alignment, overlapping grades attend each other’s weekly data meetings, approximately once per month to ensure the correct skills are being covered.

The school has adequate instructional materials aligned to its curriculum framework, with the selection of resources left to teacher discretion in science and social studies. Commercial programs in English language arts and mathematics provide textbooks, workbooks, teachers’ editions and unit tests. Some teachers noted the need to find or develop supplemental materials to address standards that were not covered in the textbook. Targeted assistance teachers use a variety of supplemental materials to provide students with additional practice. The science teacher indicated that he uses a textbook as a resource and selects or develops other materials as needed. Some teachers noted a scarcity of Core Knowledge curriculum materials.

The school relies heavily on the Icahn network for its curriculum framework and resources. Teachers can raise suggestions for changes to the curriculum, which are then transmitted through the principal to the Icahn 1 staff for consideration. Some teachers were unaware of the curriculum development process and opportunities for input.

Pedagogy (Benchmark 1.D)

Adequate instruction is evident throughout the school.

Teachers implement purposeful lessons, though the clarity of objectives varied. Lessons were designed to cover specific topics with relevant learning activities. Objectives were typically posted in classrooms and in many cases discussed with students.

Student engagement and the rigor of instruction varied widely, both in general education and targeted assistance classes. In some classes students were actively responding to questions and focused on learning activities. Students were observed working in pairs or small groups, effectively addressing

topics that had been covered in whole-class discussion. The use of manipulatives was also observed to engage students. In other classes, however, students were passive and distracted except when called upon; they were observed not working on or completing assignments during the time allotted.

In some classes the preponderance of teacher questions and student activities were at the level of recall and rote learning. Students were observed copying examples provided by the teacher and then struggling to independently apply the concept themselves. In some cases teachers continued to lecture with no checks for understanding. In other cases higher order questions were asked, but students were not held accountable for answering them. However, in some classes students were asked to explain their answers, articulate multiple solutions to problems, make predications and use content specific vocabulary. In one class after reading a short story students were required to justify their answers with evidence from the text. Teachers spoke to developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills through journals, projects and lab investigations.

The school's targeted assistance program provides substantial opportunities for differentiated instruction; some instruction is differentiated within the regular classroom. With weekly assessments used to identify specific skills and students for remediation, the targeted assistance program provides individualized attention to meet the needs of struggling students. Moreover, targeted assistance is coordinated with instruction in the general education classrooms.

Instructional Leadership (Benchmark 1.E)

The school has generally strong instructional leadership.

School leaders instill high expectations for teacher performance and student achievement. Teachers were able to clearly articulate both what was expected of them as good teachers, as well as the standards to which students are held. They pointed to the checklist used by the principal as part of her monitoring of teacher performance and cited the school's promotion policy based on student proficiency. The school's regular use of data and related goals and action plans also demonstrates high expectations for student performance.

Instructional leaders provide teachers with a variety of supports. Teachers reported that the leaders, including the principal and a staff developer, are "very hands on" and "always involved with everything." Teachers noted the responsiveness of instructional leaders to their requests for support, either from administrative staff or consultants, who provide assistance with curriculum and lesson planning and model instructional techniques. In addition, the school provides other forms of instructional support. For instance, one staff member was assigned to mentor a new teacher; she began the year by planning lessons with him, modeling in his class, co-teaching lessons with him and providing substantial feedback and support. Teachers reported regular observations and primarily informal feedback about their performance. Teachers also noted regular meetings with school leaders such as data meetings where they could discuss strategies and next steps.

Instructional leaders conduct regular evaluations, though they do not appear to systematically inform teacher development. Evaluations are conducted twice per year based on formal observations. Evaluations are designed to identify areas of strength and for improvement at that point in time, but did not appear to reflect cumulative evidence. A review of written reports showed little evidence of follow-up from one observation to the next. Some teachers noted follow-up and said they inferred a weakness had been addressed if it was not commented upon in their next evaluation. Teachers also

reported that their development goals are not part of the evaluation process, though evaluations did comment on practices learned from the school's professional development program.

Teachers are held accountable for quality instruction and student achievement. Data collection and analysis is an integral part of the school culture, though it is not tied directly to the evaluation of teacher performance.

At-Risk Students (Benchmark 1.F)

The school is demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically.

The school uses clear procedures for identifying at-risk students, though not all teachers were familiar with the process for identifying students with disabilities. Weekly data meetings are used to identify students who are struggling and to assign them for targeted assistance. The school uses a response to intervention (RTI) model, which is managed by a pupil personnel committee. The targeted assistance program is used to try alternative strategies and remediation before consulting with parents and referring students for special education evaluation. Some teachers had difficulty articulating the function of the pupil personnel committee. The school uses a home language survey to identify potential English language learners and the LAB-R assessment to determine those who might require ESL services. At the time of the visit seven students had individualized education programs (IEPs) and two students were English language learners.

The school provides sufficient resources and support to meet the needs of at-risk students. The targeted assistance program is the primary means of meeting the needs of struggling students in English language arts and mathematics. Targeted assistance teachers pull students for lessons that often preview material students will cover in their general education classes; observed targeted assistance lessons were generally aligned to the curriculum. Small group instruction facilitated by multiple adults in a classroom is also used in all subjects to remediate, with targeted assistance and Title I teachers pushing into some classes. The school also offers Saturday school.

The school adequately monitors the progress and success of at-risk students. Using regular assessment, students are moved in and out of the targeted assistance program based on individual needs. Students' IEP goals are tracked and students are observed regularly by the school's special education coordinator. The NYSESLAT is administered to determine if students require continued ESL services.

Teachers are provided with adequate support to help them meet the needs of at-risk students. Some professional development was provided at the beginning of the year focused on assessments and interventions. Teachers noted the weekly data meetings to discuss students of concern and regular communication with targeted assistance and other intervention staff. Teachers also reported that they can ask the staff developer and consultants for advice in meeting their students' needs. Teachers were aware of students' IEP goals.

Student Order and Discipline (Benchmark 1.G)

The school promotes a culture of learning and scholarship.

The school is safe and orderly. On the day of the visit students were well-behaved and transitions in hallways were efficient.

Teachers have generally effective classroom management and routines that promote learning. Most students were attentive, followed instructions and had internalized routines. Teachers used non-verbal cues to effectively direct students. For example, a student got up to sharpen a pencil, and, after a stern look from the teacher, sat down, raised her hand, and asked to sharpen her pencil. Two late students entered an observed classroom and immediately began their work without direction from the teacher. Observed students remained very focused on their work, despite some distracting external noises. There were a few exceptions noted by the inspection team, particularly in the afternoon.

The school has a clear discipline system in place, which is documented in the school handbook. One teacher said the principal is very proactive about discipline and that discussions with parents, teachers and students about behavior are common. Teachers had behavior management systems in place, such as color coded charts, but these were rarely necessary during the classrooms observed on the day of the visit.

Professional Development (Benchmark 1.H)

The school's professional development program assists teachers in meeting student academic needs and school goals.

The school has made available multiple resources for professional development, though they have not coalesced into a coherent professional development program. Training for all teachers in the Icahn network is provided in the summer. Literacy development is provided through an on-line program called the Reading Academy. Teachers meet regularly with instructional leaders and consultants who observe, provide feedback, model, coach and co-teach. Professional development sessions are held weekly. Friday data meetings were also noted by teachers as a valuable source of information by sharing practices and strategies. Teachers were generally positive about the professional development opportunities they receive, but could not identify any priorities.

The school has begun to develop a process for identifying teachers' professional development needs and further developing their competencies. Summer training is differentiated to a degree for new and returning teachers. During the year teachers described a system where requests for support or guidance were mostly left to their initiative with limited targeting of professional development based on needs identified by instructional leaders. Teachers do develop professional development goals, but acknowledged there is little feedback or connection to those goals in their performance evaluations. School-wide training is provided in the programs employed by the school and some additional support has been provided to individual teachers as needed.

Mission & Key Design Elements (Benchmark 2.A)

The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.

The school has faithfully followed its mission and key design elements. The school's mission statement was posted in classrooms and teachers reported that their purpose was to help students score at the proficient level on state exams and help prepare students in non-testing grades to achieve grade level proficiency. The school is using the Core Knowledge curriculum and has implemented a

longer school day and year with small class sizes. Icahn 2 also offers interventions, including the targeted assistance program and Saturday school.

Parents & Students (Benchmark 2.B)

Based on limited data, families are satisfied with the school.

A school-administered survey of parents had a 92 percent response rate and indicated that parents are extremely satisfied with the school. Specifically, the vast majority of parents were satisfied with the school's academic program, expectations for behavior and communication about student performance. The principal also reported that parents are excited about the impending move a new building.

Organizational Capacity (Benchmark 2.C)

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

The school's organizational structure supports distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Teachers were clear about the roles of administrators. The principal reports to the superintendent of the Icahn schools and the business manager reports to the principal and Icahn network's director of operations.

The school is competently managed. The school has a business manager who handles operational issues and benefits from some support from Icahn Associates. Teachers felt that they had adequate resources and a collegial environment. One teacher said he had access to whatever materials he needs and can obtain supplemental resources quickly. Teachers reported that they rely heavily on the principal who they held in high regard. Teachers feel as though the principal is available and responsive. One new teacher said, "I am able to talk to my principal about anything." The school's small size allows it to successfully utilize informal communication systems. While the facility presents challenges—Icahn 2 is currently co-located with another school, the school has adapted well and reported a good relationship with the other school in the building.

The school has hired and retained quality staff. Most teachers appeared competent in their subject area. There has been little teacher turnover since the school was founded and teaching assistants have the opportunity to grow into teaching positions once they secure certification. The school employs a robust hiring process that includes input from classroom and targeted assistance teachers as well as the staff developer.

The school has maintained sufficient enrollment. The school enrolled 168 students at the beginning of the year and at the time of the visit the school enrolled 177 students; 17 students had left since the beginning of the year and 34 students had been enrolled off the school's wait list. The school will be moving to a different community school district next year and has begun recruitment efforts in the new community in anticipation of attrition.

Governance (Benchmark 2.D-E)

Note: All Icahn charter schools are governed by a single board, which was interviewed on April 12, 2010 in connection with the evaluations of both Icahn 2 and Icahn 4 Charter School.

The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school’s mission and provide oversight.

Members of the school’s board of trustees have put in place effective structures and procedures with which to govern the school. Board members have a range of relevant skill sets, including education, business and governance. The board meets and relies on a superintendent to directly supervise school principals; the superintendent meets regularly with school leaders and staff and reports to the board about the success of program implementation. The board is familiar with each of the individual schools and their challenges, noting the diversity of incoming students and transportation issues facing Icahn 4 and the space constraints at Icahn 2. Facilities for its schools are a priority for the Icahn board; it has been working with the NYCDOE and Civic Builders to locate adequate sites for its growing schools. The board is cognizant of conflict of interest issues and reported it is extremely careful to avoid conflicts regarding its facility development plans.

The board holds school leaders accountable for student achievement. The board takes its mission seriously and is focused on preparing students for high school and college. It receives regular updates regarding student performance and other indicators, such as attendance and enrollment. The board has established a competitive culture among the charter schools it oversees and compares data across the schools. Board members indicated that they are focused on outcomes and as long as they are satisfied with the results, e.g., test scores, high school placement, teacher turnover, they do not need to micromanage the professionals running their schools.

Conduct of the Visit

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the school evaluation visit at Icahn 2 on March 16, 2010. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit:

Institute Staff Members

Simeon Stolzberg (team leader) is Director of School Evaluation at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. He is responsible for the coordination of school evaluation visits by Institute staff and external consultants, the development of reporting tools/protocols and the production of reports, and he also coordinates internal staff training with regard to school evaluation visits and reporting tools. Prior to joining the Institute, Mr. Stolzberg managed his own consulting practice, advising charter schools across the country in their application and planning phases. He also served as Middle School Director for the Beginning with Children Charter School in Brooklyn, New York. In 2002, as a Building Excellent Schools Fellow, Mr. Stolzberg wrote the prospectus and application for the Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter School (BArT) in Massachusetts; the school was one of only five schools approved by the state that year. Mr. Stolzberg served as the school’s founding principal. Mr. Stolzberg received his Master’s Degree in Public Policy from Georgetown University and his Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy, with independent studies in education and political economy, from Williams College.

Maya Lagana is an Analyst for School Evaluation for the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. She is responsible for scheduling ongoing school evaluation visits, communicating with school team members and administrative staff regarding site visit logistics and requirements, developing and disseminating RFP documents, and coordinating the recruitment and work of consultants. Ms. Lagana worked for New Visions for Public Schools, Achievement First and Boston Collegiate Charter School while in graduate school. Previously, Ms. Lagana was an

Assessment Specialist at the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence in Washington D.C., where she helped to develop teacher certification exams and analyzed item level statistics and demographics information. In addition to her extensive background as an analyst, Ms. Lagana also has experience as a third grade classroom teacher at P.S. 195 through the New York City Teaching Fellows Program. Ms. Lagana received her Master of Public Administration degree in Policy Analysis from New York University's Wagner School for Public Service, her Masters of Education degree from Mercy College and her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Carleton College.

External Team Members

Omarla Barnett is currently working at the King Center Charter School in Buffalo, New York. She has been there for eight years, first as a 3rd grade teacher and then as the Reading First Coordinator and a Reading Intervention Teacher. Ms. Barnett currently serves as the school's Assessment/Data/Curriculum Coordinator. In this role, she develops curriculum and pacing guides for grades K-4 for Math and English Language Arts and tracks student data by creating data reports and item analysis. Ms. Barnett also conducts classroom observations of teachers and leads weekly professional development sessions as well as individual data meetings with all the teachers in the building. She obtained her Master's Degree in Elementary Education with a concentration in Curriculum and Instruction from Buffalo State College in 2006 and has a permanent teaching certificate for grades pre-K through 6

Joanne Falinski, Ph.D. is currently an educational consultant working with charter schools and charter school organizations. She is also an educational researcher who is currently studying the use of digital storytelling in elementary school classrooms. Previously she worked as the Supervisor of Instruction at the Bronx Charter School for Better Learning and the Vice President for Charter School Evaluation at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Prior to working at the Institute, Dr. Falinski worked as an Assistant Professor in the School of Education at Pace University. She has also directed a local site of the National Writing Project and worked as an elementary classroom teacher and elementary principal. Dr. Falinski earned her BS in elementary education from SUNY Oneonta and her PhD in educational administration and supervision from Syracuse University.

APPENDIX A: RENEWAL BENCHMARKS USED DURING THE VISIT

An excerpt of the State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks follows. Visit the Institute’s website at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/documents/renewalBenchmarks.doc> to see the complete listing of Benchmarks.

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

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

**State University
Renewal
Benchmark 1D**

Pedagogy

- the curriculum *as implemented* is organized, cohesive, and aligned from grade to grade;
- teachers are fully aware of the curricula that they are responsible to teach and have access to curricular documents such as scope and sequence documents, pacing charts, and/or curriculum maps that guide the development of their lesson plans;
- teachers develop and use lesson plans with objectives that are in alignment with the school's curriculum;
- the school has defined a procedure, allocated time and resources, and included teachers in ongoing review and revision of the curriculum; and
- the curriculum supports the school's stated mission.

High quality instruction is evident in all classes throughout the school.

Elements that are generally present include:

- teachers demonstrate subject-matter and grade-level competency in the subjects and grades they teach;
- instruction is rigorous and focused on learning objectives that specify clear expectations for what students must know and be able to do in each lesson;
- lesson plans and instruction are aligned to the school's curriculum framework and New York State standards and performance indicators;
- instruction is differentiated to meet the range of learning needs represented in the school's student population, e.g. flexible student grouping, differentiated materials, pedagogical techniques, and/or assessments;
- all students are cognitively engaged in focused, purposeful learning activities during instructional time;
- learning time is maximized (e.g., appropriate pacing, high on-task student behavior, clear lesson focus and clear directions to students), transitions are efficient, and there is day-to-day instructional continuity; and
- teachers challenge students with questions and assignments that promote academic rigor, depth of understanding, and development of higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills.

**State University
Renewal
Benchmark 1E**

**Instructional
Leadership**

The school has strong instructional leadership.

Elements that are generally present include:

- the school's leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for student achievement;
- the school's leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance (in content knowledge, pedagogical skills and student achievement);
- the school's instructional leaders have in place a comprehensive and on-going system for evaluating teacher quality and effectiveness;
- the school's instructional leaders, based on classroom visits and other available data, provide direct ongoing support, such as critical feedback, coaching and/or modeling, to teachers in their classrooms;
- the school's leadership provides structured opportunities, resources and guidance for teachers to plan the delivery of the instructional program within and across grade levels as well as within disciplines or content areas;
- the school's instructional leaders organize a coherent and sustained professional development program that meets the needs of both the school and individual teachers;

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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual professional development plans derive from a data-driven needs-assessment and staff interests; • professional development places a high priority on achieving the State University Renewal Benchmarks and the school’s Accountability Plan goals; • teachers are involved in setting short-term and long-term goals for their own professional development activities; • the school provides effective, ongoing support and training tailored to teachers’ varying levels of expertise and instructional responsibilities; • the school provides training to assist all teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities, English language learners and other students at-risk of academic failure; and • the professional development program is systematically evaluated to determine its effectiveness at meeting stated goals.
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Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?	
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<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>State University Renewal Benchmarks</u>
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State University Renewal Benchmark 2A Mission & Key Design Elements	<p>The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stakeholders are aware of the mission; • the school has implemented its key design elements in pursuit of its mission; and • the school meets or comes close to meeting any non-academic goals contained in its Accountability Plan.
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State University Renewal Benchmark 2B Parents & Students	<p>Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has a process and procedures for evaluation of parent satisfaction with the school; • the great majority of parents with students enrolled at the school have strong positive attitudes about it; • few parents pursue grievances at the school board level or outside the school; • a large number of parents seek entrance to the school; • parents with students enrolled keep their children enrolled year-to-year; and • the school maintains a high rate of daily student attendance.
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State University Renewal Benchmark 2C Organizational Capacity	<p>The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure with staff, systems, and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school demonstrates effective management of day-to-day operations; • staff scheduling is internally consistent and supportive of the school’s mission;
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	<p>the school has established clear priorities, objectives and benchmarks for achieving its mission and Accountability Plan goals, and a process for their regular review and revision;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has allocated sufficient resources in support of achieving its goals; • the roles and responsibilities of the school’s leadership and staff members are clearly defined; • the school has an organizational structure that provides clear lines for accountability; • the school’s management has successfully recruited, hired and retained key personnel, and made appropriate decisions about removing ineffective staff members when warranted; • the school maintains an adequate student enrollment and has effective procedures for recruiting new students to the school; and • the school’s management and board have demonstrated effective communication practices with the school community including school staff, parents/guardians and students.
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<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2D</p> <p>Board Oversight</p>	<p>The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school’s mission and provide oversight to the total educational program.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school board has adequate skills and expertise, as well as adequate meeting time to provide rigorous oversight of the school; • the school board (or a committee thereof) understands the core business of the school—student achievement—in sufficient depth to permit the board to provide effective oversight; • the school board has set clear long-term and short-term goals and expectations for meeting those goals, and communicates them to the school’s management and leaders; • the school board has received regular written reports from the school leadership on academic performance and progress, financial stability and organizational capacity; • the school board has conducted regular evaluations of the school’s management (including school leaders who report to the board, supervisors from management organization(s), and/or partner organizations that provide services to the school), and has acted on the results where such evaluations demonstrated shortcomings in performance; • where there have been demonstrable deficiencies in the school’s academic, organizational or fiscal performance, the school board has taken effective action to correct those deficiencies and put in place benchmarks for determining if the deficiencies are being corrected in a timely fashion; • the school board has not made financial or organizational decisions that have materially impeded the school in fulfilling its mission; and • the school board conducts on-going assessment and evaluation of its own effectiveness in providing adequate school oversight, and pursues opportunities for further governance training and development.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2E</p> <p>Governance</p>	<p>The board has implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes, and has abided by them.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p>

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