



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Renewal Report:

Our World Neighborhood Charter School

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INTRODUCTION

The Charter Schools Act of 1998 (the “Act”) authorizes the State University of New York Board of Trustees (the “Board of Trustees”) to grant charters for the purpose of organizing and operating independent and autonomous public charter schools. Charter schools provide opportunities for teachers, parents, and community members to establish and maintain schools that operate independent of existing schools and school districts in order to accomplish the following objectives:

- improve student learning and achievement;
- increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at-risk of academic failure;
- provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system;
- create new professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators and other school personnel;
- encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods; and
- provide schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance based accountability systems by holding the schools accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.¹

In order to assist them in carrying out their responsibilities under the Act, the Board of Trustees authorized the establishment of the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York (the “Institute”). Among its duties, the Institute is charged with evaluating charter schools’ applications for renewal and providing its resulting findings and recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

This report is the primary vehicle by which the Institute transmits to the Board of Trustees its findings and recommendations regarding a school’s renewal application, and more broadly, the merits of a school’s case for renewal. This report has been created and issued pursuant to the “Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University Board of Trustees” (the “State University Renewal Practices”).² More information regarding this report is contained in the “Reader’s Guide” that follows.

Statutory and Regulatory Considerations

Charters may be renewed, upon application, for a term of up to five years. There is no limitation upon the number of times that a charter may be renewed. The Act prescribes the following requirements for a charter school renewal application, whether such application be for an initial renewal or any subsequent renewals:

¹ See § 2850 of the Charter Schools Act of 1998.

²The *Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University Board of Trustees* (revised December 13, 2005) are available at www.newyorkcharters.org.

- a report of the progress of the charter school in achieving the educational objectives set forth in its charter;
- a detailed financial statement that discloses the cost of administration, instruction and other spending categories for the charter school that will allow a comparison of such costs to other schools, both public and private;
- copies of each of the annual reports of the charter school including the charter school report cards and certified financial statements; and
- indications of parent and student satisfaction.³

The Institute's processes and procedures mirror these requirements and meet the objectives of the Act.⁴

As a charter authorizing entity, the Board of Trustees can renew a charter so long as the Trustees can make each of the following findings ("Required Findings"):

- the charter school described in the application meets the requirements of the Act and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations;
- the applicant can demonstrate the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner; and
- granting the application is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act.⁵

Where the Board of Trustees approves a renewal application, it is required under the Act to submit the application and a proposed charter to the Board of Regents for its review.⁶ The Regents may approve the proposed charter or return the proposed charter to the Board of Trustees with the Regents' comments and recommendation(s). In the former case, the charter will then issue and become operational on the day the current charter expires. In the latter case (return to the Board of Trustees), the Board of Trustees must review the returned proposed charter in light of the Regents' comments and respond by resubmitting the charter (with or without modification) to the Regents, or by abandoning the proposed charter. Should the Board of Trustees resubmit the charter, the Regents have thirty days to act to approve it. If they do not approve the proposed charter, it will be deemed approved and will issue by operation of law; as above, it will become operational upon expiration of the current charter.⁷

Process for Initial Renewals

While the initial renewal process formally commences with submission of a renewal application, a school must work to make the case for renewal from the time it is chartered. From its inception, the

³ § 2851(4) of the Act.

⁴ Further explication of these policies and procedures is available on the Charter Schools Institute's website. See www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsRenewOverview.htm.

⁵ See § 2852(2) of the Act.

⁶ See § 2852(5) of the Act.

⁷ See §§ 2852(5-a) and (5-b) of the Act.

school must build its case for renewal by setting educational goals and thereafter implementing a program that will allow them to meet those goals.

Under the State University's accountability cycle, a school that is chartered enters into a plan (the "Accountability Plan")⁸ setting forth the goals for the school's educational program (and other measures if the school desires) in the first year of the charter. Progress toward each goal is determined by specific measures. Both goals and measures, while tailored in part to each school's program, must be consistent with the Institute's written guidelines. When the Accountability Plan is in final form, it receives approval from the Institute.

Thereafter, the charter school is required to provide an annual update on its progress in meeting its Accountability Plan goals and measures (the "Accountability Plan Progress Report").⁹ This permits the school not only the ability to provide all stakeholders with a clear sense of the school's progress, but forces the school to focus on specific academic outcomes. In the same vein, both the Institute and the State Education Department conduct visits to the school on a periodic basis. The main purpose of the Institute's visits is to determine the progress the school is making in implementing successfully a rigorous academic program that will permit the school to meet its Accountability Plan goals and measures and to provide feedback to the school on the Institute's conclusions. Reports and de-briefings for the school's Board or leadership team are designed to indicate the school's progress, its strengths and its weaknesses. Where possible, and where it is consistent with its oversight role, the Institute identifies potential avenues for improvement. To further assist the school in this regard, the Institute may contract with third-party, school inspection experts to conduct a school visit to look specifically at the strength of the school's program and the evidence it is accumulating to support the school's case for renewal. The number, breadth and scope of visits that the Institute conducts depend primarily on the school's performance on standardized assessments.

By the start of the last year of a school's charter (as set forth above), the school must submit an application for charter renewal, setting forth the evidence required by law and the Board of Trustees. Applicant charter schools are asked to formulate and report evidence of success in answer to four renewal questions:

1. Is the school an academic success?
2. Is the school an effective, viable organization?
3. Is the school fiscally sound?
4. What are the school's plans for the term of the next charter and are they reasonable, feasible and achievable?

⁸See <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsAccountability.htm> for detailed information on Accountability Plan guidelines.

⁹See <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsAccountability.htm> for a model Accountability Plan Progress Report.

The application is reviewed by Institute staff. The staff also conducts a desk audit to both gather additional evidence as well as verify the evidence the school has submitted. This audit includes examination of the school’s charter, including amendments, Accountability Plan, Accountability Plan Progress Reports, Annual Reports and internal documents (such as school handbooks, policies, memos, newsletters, and Board meeting minutes). Institute staff also examines audit reports, budget materials, and reports generated over the term of the school’s charter both by the Institute and the State Education Department.

Thereafter, the Institute conducts a multi-day site visit to the school. Based on a review of each school’s application for charter renewal, the leader of the Institute’s renewal visit team works with the school’s leadership to design a visit schedule and request any additional documentation the team may require to ensure that analysis of the school’s progress is complete. Renewal visit team members conduct a variety of activities to get a sense of the educational program and determine if there are material deficiencies. These activities include: visiting classes, observing lessons, examining student work and other documents, observing school meetings, interviewing staff members and speaking informally with students. In addition, the team conducts extensive interviews with the school’s board of trustees and administrators.

The evidence that the Institute gathers is structured by a set of *Qualitative Education Benchmarks*, often referred to as the “Renewal Benchmarks,” that are grouped under the four renewal application questions listed above. These benchmarks are linked to the Accountability Plan structure and the charter renewal requirements in the Act; many are also based on the correlates of effective schools.¹⁰

Following the visit, the Institute’s renewal team finalizes the analysis of all evidence generated regarding the school’s performance. The Institute’s renewal benchmarks are discussed and the lead writer uses the team’s evidence and analysis to generate comments under each renewal benchmark. The team members’ completed benchmark comments present a focus for discussion and a summary of the findings. The benchmarks are not used as a scorecard, do not have equal weight, and support—but do not individually or in limited combination provide—the aggregate analysis required for the final renewal recommendation. The Institute then prepares a draft report and provides a copy to the school for its review and comment. The draft contains the findings, discussion and the evidence base for those findings, as well as a preliminary recommendation.

The following renewal outcomes are available to schools that are in their first charter period.¹¹ Each outcome contains specific criteria that a school must meet in order to be eligible for that outcome. These criteria are keyed to one or more of the Required Findings. In addition to any specific criteria set forth in a particular outcome, a school, to be eligible for any type of renewal, must be able to provide evidence that permits the State University to make *each* of the Required Findings:

- *Early Renewal*: available to a school that after three years of operation has accumulated three years of data in multiple grades on all or nearly all of the standardized assessment measures set forth in its Accountability Plan and for the last two years has met or come

¹⁰ See <http://www.effectiveschools.com>

¹¹ A school that is awarded a Short-Term Planning Year Renewal is still considered a school in its initial charter period when it comes again to renewal in its fifth full year of operation.

close to meeting its Accountability Plan academic goals based on its performance on those measures. In addition, the State University must find that the educational program, as assessed by the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, is sound and effective. Early Renewal will be for a full-term of five years only.

- *Short-Term Planning Year Renewal:* available to a school that has taken one or more planning years and has yet to be renewed. The renewal term will be equal in length to the number of planning years the school has taken. The State University must be able to determine that the educational program will be sound during the next charter period based on the available outcomes on the standardized assessment measures and any data available as gathered using the Qualitative Education Benchmarks.
- *Full-Term Renewal:* available to a school in its fifth year, Full-Term Renewal is for the maximum term of five years. In order for a school to be eligible for Full-Term Renewal, a school must at the time of renewal either (a) have compiled a strong and compelling record of meeting or coming close to meeting its Accountability Plan academic goals, and have in place at the time of the renewal review an educational program that, as assessed by the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, is effective or (b) made strong overall progress towards meeting its Accountability Plan academic goals and have in place at the time of the renewal review an educational program that, as assessed by the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, is particularly strong and effective.
- *Renewal with Conditions:* available to a school that (a) meets the standards for Full-Term Renewal or Short-Term Renewal as regards its educational program, but that has material legal, fiscal or organizational deficiencies that cannot be fully corrected by the time of renewal — so long as such deficiencies are not fatal to making each and every other required finding, or (b) meets the standards for Full-Term Renewal or Short-Term renewal as regards some portion of its educational program, but requires conditions to improve the academic program. Such conditions may include, but are not limited to, restrictions on the number of students and grades served. Conditions may also be imposed that are consonant with the requirements of NCLB as to schools requiring corrective action. Where appropriate, conditions may be imposed which if not met by the school shall be deemed a substantial and material violation of the school's charter and therefore expose the school to probation or charter revocation.
- *Short-Term Renewal:* available to a school in its fifth year that (a) has compiled an ambiguous or mixed record of educational achievement as measured by the school's progress toward meeting its Accountability Plan academic goals, but that has in place and in operation at the time of the renewal review an academic program of sufficient strength and effectiveness, as assessed by the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, that will likely result in the school's being able to meet or come close to meeting those goals with the additional time that renewal would permit or (b) has compiled an overall record of meeting or coming close to meeting its Accountability Plan academic goals but that at the time of the renewal visit, has in place an educational program that, based on its assessment pursuant to the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, is inadequate in multiple and material respects. Typically, but not always, Short-Term Renewal will be for two years. Short-Term Renewal may also be coupled with conditions relating to educational, organizational, fiscal or legal deficiencies.

- *Restructuring Renewal*: available to a school that does not meet the standards for any type of renewal but which submits plans to the Board of Trustees for a restructuring of the school that legally commits the school to implementing a wholesale restructuring of the education corporation, including, but not necessarily limited to, a new board of trustees, administrative team, academic program, organizational structure, and such plans, if implemented, would lead to the school likely meeting its standardized assessment measures set forth in its Accountability Plan during the next charter period. Whether to permit a school to submit an application for a Restructuring Renewal is at the discretion of the State University.
- *Non-Renewal*: where a school does not present a case for any kind of renewal, the charter will not be renewed and the charter will be terminated upon its expiration.

Upon receiving a school's comments on the draft report, the Institute reviews its draft, makes any changes it determines are necessary and appropriate and renders its findings and recommendations in their final form. The report is then transmitted to the Committee on Charter Schools of the Board of Trustees, the other members of the Board of Trustees and the school itself. This report is the product of that process.

READER'S GUIDE

This renewal report contains the following sections: Introduction, Reader's Guide, School Description, Recommendations and Executive Summary, and Renewal Benchmarks. As this guide, the Introduction, and School Description speak for themselves, no guidance is provided for these sections. Guidance as to the remaining sections is set forth below.

Recommendations and Executive Summary

The Institute's recommendations are the end result of its review process. In this section, the Institute provides not only its recommendation as to whether the charter should be renewed, but the recommended terms of any renewal, *i.e.*, grades and number of students it is recommended the school be authorized to serve, conditions under which the charter is renewed, *etc.* Following the recommendations themselves is a short executive summary that lays out in abbreviated form reasons for the recommendation as well as the findings that support the recommendation.

In addition to discussing the recommendations themselves (and any conditions made part of those recommendations), the executive summary also discusses the findings required by subdivision 2852(2) of the Education Law, including whether the school, if renewed, is likely to improve student learning and achievement.

Renewal Benchmarks

The Renewal Benchmark section contains the renewal benchmarks that the Institute uses in initial renewals, together with a review of the pertinent evidence gathered during the renewal process.

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approved the charter of Our World Neighborhood Charter School (“OWN”) in January of 2001, and the Board of Regents voted to approve the charter in March of that same year. The school used the 2001-02 school year as a planning year, and opened on September 30, 2002 (slightly delayed due to issues regarding the completion of its facility) with 382 students in Kindergarten through 5th grade. Since that time the school has added one grade per year and grown to include Kindergarten through 8th grades. The school served 650 students in 2005-06 and currently enrolls 670 students (2006-07).

In April of 2006, the Board of Trustees granted OWN a one year short-term planning year renewal effective through July 31, 2007 with the provision that the school provide detail on its desired devolution of its relationship with Mosaica Schools Inc., the school’s management company since its inception.

Since 2005, OWN has operated from two locations: the elementary school, serving Kindergarten through 5th grades, is housed at 36-12 35th Avenue in Astoria (Queens); and the middle school, serving 6th - 8th grades, is located at 31-20 37th Street in Astoria. The buildings are within walking distance of each other which helps to minimize the challenges associated with operating separate locations. The school is located in Western Queens, an area it describes as “the most ethnically diverse neighborhood in the United States.”

OWN’s mission statement as it appeared in its initial charter application is as follows:

The mission of Our World Neighborhood Charter School is to provide kindergarten through 8th grade students with the foundation of a rigorous liberal education. Students will develop a historical perspective on our own time and place through an integrated study of history, geography, literature, the social sciences science, math, art and music. Students will in this way receive the broad education needed to thrive in today’s world. We are committed to preparing all students to meet the academic challenges of the best New York City High Schools.

In its Application for Initial Renewal, the school proposes a slight modification:

It is the mission of Our World Neighborhood Charter School to educate our students to become independent-thinkers and lifelong learners. We are committed to an educational philosophy based on inquiry, active and experiential learning, and social justice. Through a literacy-based, integrated and standards-driven curriculum that encourages community and honors diversity, OWN students receive the broad education they will need to meet the academic and social challenges of the best New York City High schools, and indeed, to thrive in today’s world.

Key design elements, as outlined in OWN’s original charter, include:

- An extended school year of 200 student days;
- An extended school day of 7 hours, 30 minutes;
- Open enrollment for all students;
- A maximum classroom capacity of 25 students ;

- Disruption free morning basic skills program: reading, writing, arithmetic, reasoning, research and foreign language;
- Foreign language—Spanish—for all students beginning in Kindergarten;
- Pre- and post-testing for all students annually;
- The availability of extensive technology: 1:3 computers per students; and
- An extensive parent and community volunteer program.

On the whole, Our World Neighborhood has not had major changes in curriculum or key design elements over the term of its first charter. Note that:

- Initially the school planned for a 200 day school year; an effort determined to provide too much of a hardship to parents as transportation was not available for the extended calendar days. As noted below, OWN proposes an annual calendar year of 190 days; nine days longer than that of the average New York City traditional public school calendar.
- Since its inception, OWN has used the Paragon social studies curriculum provided by Mosaica. The planned termination of the school's relationship with its management company required the adoption of a replacement curriculum. The school began utilizing History Alive! in the 2006-07 school year.

School Year (2006-07)

190 days.

School Day (2006-07)

Elementary Grades: Periods 0-9 running from 7:50 a.m. through 3:10 p.m.

Middle School Grades: Periods 1-8 running from 8:30 a.m. through 3:30 p.m.

Enrollment

	Original Chartered Enrollment	Approved Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment	Original Chartered Grades	Approved Grades Served	Actual Grades Served	Complying
2001-02	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	--
2002-03	249	450	382	K-5	K-5	K-5	No
2003-04	475	525	530	K-6	K-6	K-6	Yes
2004-05	550	600	575	K-7	K-7	K-7	Yes
2005-06	600	675	650	K-8	K-8	K-8	Yes
2006-07	700	670	670	K-8	K-8	K-8	Yes

The above enrollment numbers are per the CSI enrollment binder. In its Application for Initial Renewal, the school cites the following as end-of-year enrollment figures for each academic year:

2002-03: 377 2003-04: 486 2004-05: 578; 2005-06: 645 2006-07: 667

The 2004-05 School Report Card from the NYS Education Department, the numbers upon which the Free and Reduced Lunch numbers are calculated, lists the following enrollment numbers as of October 30th of each academic year:

2002-03: 368 2003-04: 501 2004-05: 583

Race / Ethnicity	2002-03		2003-04		2004-05	
	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.
American Indian, Alaskan, Asian, or Pacific Islander	40	10.9%	55	11.0%	28	4.8%
Black (Not Hispanic)	107	29.1%	121	24.2%	139	23.8%
Hispanic	86	23.4%	168	33.5%	212	36.4%
White (Not Hispanic)	135	36.7%	157	31.3%	204	35.0%

Source: NYSED 2004-05 Report Card

Free / Reduced Lunch	2002-03		2003-04		2004-05	
	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.
Eligible for Free Lunch	285	77.5%	237	47.3%	195	33.5%
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	5	1.4%	71	14.2%	67	11.5%

Source: NYSED 2004-05 Report Card

School Charter History

Charter Year	School Year	Year of Operation	Evaluation Visit	Feedback to School	Other Actions Taken
Planning Year	2001-02		Yes	Informal Visit;	
1 st Charter – 1 st Year	2002-03	1st	Yes	Informal Visit;	
1 st Charter – 2 nd Year	2003-04	2nd	Yes	Evaluation Report (SchoolWorks)	
1 st Charter – 3 rd Year	2004-05	3rd	Yes	Evaluation Report (Institute)	
1 st Charter – 4 th Year	2005-06	4th	No	Short Term Planning Year Renewal Report	Granted Short-Term Planning Year Renewal to run through 2007
1 st Charter – 5 th Year	2006-07	5th	Yes	Initial Renewal Report	Initial Renewal Application Submitted August 2006 Recommended for Full-Term, Five-Year Renewal

RECOMMENDATION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendation: Full-Term Five-Year Renewal

The Charter Schools Institute recommends that the Board of Trustees approve the application for renewal of the Our World Neighborhood Charter School, renewing the charter for a period of five years with authority to provide instruction to students in Kindergarten through eighth grade, with a maximum enrollment of 725 students, and consistent with the other terms set forth in its renewal application.

Required Findings

Based on all the evidence submitted in its past record and as described in the application for renewal, the Institute makes the following findings required by the Charter Schools Act. Our World Neighborhood Charter School as described in the renewal application meets the requirements of the Charter Schools Act and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations. The school is an educationally sound entity and has demonstrated the ability to operate in an educationally and fiscally sound manner in the next charter period. Finally, given the programs it will offer, its structure and its purpose, approving the school to operate for another five years is likely to improve student learning and achievement in the next charter period and materially further the purposes set out in Education Law subdivision 2850(2). Accordingly, the Institute recommends the charter be renewed for a full term of five years.

Summary Discussion

Academic Success

During the *charter period*,¹² Our World Neighborhood Charter School (“OWN”) has generally met the academic program goals in its Accountability Plan. The school has for the most part met the plan’s measures in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics pertaining to state examinations, but has not met its value-added measures showing year-to-year gains of students on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). Nevertheless, in 2005-06 students continued to score above grade level overall in reading and mathematics on the ITBS test. OWN has met its goals for science and social studies, and by the end of the charter period, was outperforming the local district by a large margin in both subjects. The school has also been deemed to be in good standing under the state’s No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.

Aside from 2005-06, school-wide ELA and mathematics results on both the state and ITBS exams, seventh- and eighth-grade performance was notably divergent from the other grades. These two grades were the only grades to score below grade level on the ITBS tests. On the state mathematics

¹² The *charter period* constitutes the four years that the school has been in operation (including the one year gained by the short-term planning year renewal granted in 2006), and covers the four annual data reporting cycles from when it began operating up to this initial renewal decision.

exam, both of these middle school grades scored markedly lower than the other OWN grades and their respective grades in the local community school district. On the ELA exam, while the seventh grade showed relatively strong results, the eighth grade results were notably lower than the other OWN grades and lower than the eighth grade in the district.

Over the life of its charter, Our World Neighborhood Charter School has established a variety of key resources that provide a solid foundation upon which to build. These resources include: an elaborate administrative support network, a system of curriculum review and planning, and a variety of internal assessments. Over the past year, the school has established an administrative team that teachers view as resources for support and professional development. In particular, the new middle school principal, with a strong focus on teaching quality and interpreting and using assessment data, has the potential to serve as a model instructional leader within the administrative team and the school. The administrative team has supported piloting and developing a system of social studies curriculum review that included carefully choosing a text and support materials and developing a scope and sequence for each grade level with corresponding assessments and lessons. Members of the administrative team have also supported teachers across disciplines and grade levels in aligning their lesson plans to state standards. Teachers in the school utilize a variety of different internal assessment strategies including quarterly assessments, portfolios, writing assignments, and rubrics.

Furthermore, the school has developed and promoted a warm and collegial climate among teachers, students, and staff members. In grade level teams and informal conversations, teachers discuss and help each other with lesson planning, locating resource materials, and problem solving. Teachers also reported feeling comfortable approaching administrative team members for help with curricular, instructional, and classroom management issues. Students were generally engaged and eager to learn. Teachers and administrators had great rapport with students, and there was a general sense of safety and well-being in the school.

While areas of challenge remain, including the varied delivery of instruction, lack of clinical supervision of teaching including coaching and formative feedback, and uneven use of existing internal and external assessment data to inform instructional decisions, the school has sufficient strengths and resources, if approved for renewal, to address these weaknesses and to raise the rigor of the existing academic program.

Organizational Effectiveness and Viability

OWN has demonstrated faithfulness to its mission and charter, and has generally implemented its key design elements. Parents and students have indicated satisfaction with the school, as measured by the school's daily attendance rate, persistence rate from year to year, and family surveys in which parents and guardians demonstrated strongly positive attitudes about the school.

For the life of the charter, the board of trustees has carried out its responsibilities with dedication, has identified organizational needs and supported the school during its expansion to a new site and ultimate separation from its management company.

With certain exceptions, the school appeared to be in general and substantial compliance with applicable law, rules and regulations and the terms of its charter at the time of the renewal visit and during the term of its charters (original and short-term planning year renewal). The school improved its record of submitting items to the Institute in a timely manner and resolved early communications

issues. The school generally has maintained and had in place effective systems and controls for legal compliance.

Fiscal Soundness

Our World Neighborhood Charter School completed the 2005-06 school year in stable financial condition and has been generally stable throughout its existence. The school has manageable long-term debt associated with the build-out of its leased facility. The school recently refinanced this debt at a substantial net savings. Throughout its initial charter period the school generated adequate cash flow to support operations and fund expansion into a second facility. The school has not needed private support to meet operating expenses, although it has demonstrated some capacity for fundraising.

Internal controls can be expected to provide only reasonable, not absolute, assurance to the school's management and board that objectives will be achieved. The school has improved its internal controls over the life of its charter. For the year ended June 30, 2003, the school's independent auditors' reports on compliance and on internal control over financial reporting disclosed fifteen reportable conditions including eight items that were considered material weaknesses. Based on the results of subsequent audits, the school has addressed these issues. Each reportable condition previously disclosed was reported as corrected in the subsequent report and no new reportable conditions were disclosed in future years, except for two findings disclosed in its federal Single Audit for 2005 which have now been corrected.

With some minor exceptions and two major exceptions, the school has been timely in meeting its financial reporting requirements and such reporting has been complete and accurate. The school's audit report for 2003 was submitted more than four months late and the school's federal Single Audit for 2005 was late, despite a filing extension received from the United States Department of Education.

The school has successfully operated in a fiscally sound manner in its current grade configuration and is likely to continue to do so. The school has presented a reasonable and appropriate fiscal plan for the proposed new charter period. In addition, based on its most recent application round and waiting list, the school has demonstrated a sufficient level of enrollment demand to easily meet the projected enrollment in the plan.

RENEWAL BENCHMARKS

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.

Accountability Plan Academic Goals

In its Accountability Plan, the school established academic goals in the key subjects of English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, as well as science and social studies. For each goal there are specific outcome measures to demonstrate academic success. These outcome measures include the following three required types: 1) the absolute level of student performance on state examinations; 2) the comparative level of student performance on state examinations; and 3) the value-added to student learning according to year-to-year comparisons of student cohort performance on a school-selected standardized test (in reading and mathematics only). The following table shows the required outcome measures for each subject area goal in OWN's Accountability Plan.

Goal	Type of Measure	Accountability Plan Outcome Measure
ELA	Absolute	60 percent of students who have been enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam.
	Comparative	Each year the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and are performing at or above Level 3 on the State ELA exam will be greater than the local district.
	Value Added	Grade level cohorts of students will show an annual average increase of 3.0 from spring of the previous year to spring of the current year on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.
Math	Absolute	60 percent of students who have been enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam.
	Comparative	Each year the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and are performing at or above Level 3 on the State ELA exam will be greater than the local district.
	Value Added	Grade level cohorts of students will show an annual average increase of 3.0 from spring of the previous year to spring of the current year on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.
Science	Absolute	60 percent of students who have been enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam.
	Comparative	Each year the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and are performing at or above Level 3 on the State ELA exam will be greater than the local district.
Social Studies	Absolute	60 percent of students who have been enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam.
	Comparative	Each year the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and are performing at or above Level 3 on the State ELA exam will be greater than the local district.

Besides the outcome measures under each subject area goal and a required NCLB outcome measure, the school may also have included additional self-selected academic outcome measures as part of its Accountability Plan. As the basis for determining if a school has met its goals, the various measures provide the framework for evaluating the school's performance and addressing the sub-sections of this benchmark. The tables below indicate the specific outcomes under each of the goals and measures for the charter period.¹³

Subsequent to the adoption of OWN's Accountability Plan, the Institute established a common set of required outcome measures with specified levels of student performance which now represent the Institute's expectations for student learning and achievement at the time of renewal. Besides the outcome measures contained in OWN's Accountability Plan, the current set of required outcome measures include an additional absolute measure and an additional comparative measure for both ELA and mathematics. In the case of the renewal currently under consideration OWN is held to the measures in its original Accountability Plan. While given less weight, the Institute has also taken into account the school's performance on these two additional ELA and mathematics measures.

The measures are:

- Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.
- Each year, the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State exam by at least a small Effect Size (performing higher than expected to small degree) according to a

¹³ Bold numbers appearing in the tables are the critical values for determining if a measure was met in a given year.

regression analysis controlling for students eligible for free lunch among all public schools in New York State

English Language Arts Goal: *All students attending the Our World Neighborhood Charter School will become proficient readers of the English Language.*

Accountability Plan Measures: OWN showed consistent improvement in ELA during the first three years of the charter period on both state exams and ITBS tests. In the first year of the charter period, less than half of OWN’s fourth grade students were proficient on the state ELA exam. However, this increased to 64 percent in the second year and 71 percent in the third year. In 2005-06 the state began testing students in grades 3-8 and all but one grade scored close to or above the target level set in the absolute measure. The only exception was the eighth grade with only 34 percent scoring at the proficient level. Evidence indicates this had been a historically low performing class in the school. In the last three years of the charter period OWN outperformed the local school district.

During the first three years of the charter period, while not all individual cohorts improved, overall OWN students showed consistent growth on the ITBS test and performed above grade level. In 2005-06, although only one cohort achieved its target and overall performance declined, the school taken as a whole remained above grade level. Specifically, cohorts in grades 1-6 continued to perform above grade level while the seventh and eighth grade cohorts remained below grade level.

Absolute Measures	Results (in percents)				
	Grade	School Year			
		2002-03 ¹⁵ (N=44)	2003-04 (N=45)	2004-05 (N=69)	2005-06 (N=367)
60% of Fourth Grade students, who have been OWN students for at least two years, will score on or above level 3 on the New York State English Language Arts Examination. ¹⁴	3	-	-	-	71.3
	4	45.4	64.4	71.2	66.1
	5	-	-	-	77.3
	6	-	-	-	56.9
	7	-	-	-	54.8
	8	-	-	-	34.1
	All	-	-	-	62.9

Comparative Measures	Results (in percents)				
	Comparison	School Year			
		2002-03 (Grade 4)	2003-04 (Grade 4)	2004-05 (Grade 4)	2005-06 (Grades 3-8)
A higher proportion of students who have been enrolled for at least two years will score on or above level 3 on the New York State English Language Arts Examination than students in the local school district. ¹⁶	School	45.4	64.4	71.2	62.9
	District	57.9	59.1	67.7	58.6

¹⁴ New York State administered ELA exams to students only in grades 4 and 8 until the 2005-06 school year when it began testing students in grades 3-8.

¹⁵ In 2002-03, no students had yet been enrolled for two years. The results, which are for all students tested, provide baseline information with which to compare subsequent years’ performance.

¹⁶ The percentages compare the aggregate of all students performing at Levels 3 & 4 in tested grades who have been enrolled for two or more years in the charter school to the aggregate of all students in the same tested grades in the local school district.

Value-Added Measures	Results				
	Mean NCE	School Year			
		2002-03 ¹⁷	2003-04 (Grades 1-6) (N=277)	2004-05 (Grades 1-7) (N=391)	2005-06 (Grades 1-8) (N=501)
Cohorts of students will show an annual increase of 3.0 NCE in the Reading subsections of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills based on the spring testing cycle.	Baseline	-	48.6	53.7	55.9
	Target	-	51.6	56.7	58.9
	Actual	-	51.3	55.1	53.8
	Cohorts Made Target	-	(4 of 6)	(4 of 7)	(1 of 8)

Additional Measures: In the case of the additional absolute measure, OWN met the criterion for aggregate ELA performance under the state’s NCLB accountability system during all four years of the charter period. With respect to the additional comparative measure, the school did better than predicted on the state ELA exam in comparison to similar schools statewide during the two years that the analysis has been conducted.

Absolute Measures	Results (in percents)				
	Index	School Year			
		2002-03 (Grade 4) (N=44)	2003-04 (Grade 4) (N=62)	2004-05 (Grade 4) (N=72)	2005-06 (Grades 3-8) (N=396)
Each year, the school’s aggregate Performance Index (PI) on the State ELA exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set forth in the state’s NCLB accountability system. ¹⁸	PI	134	156	165	157
	AMO	123	123	131	122

Comparative Measures	Results (in percents)				
	Index	School Year			
		2002-03	2003-04	2004-05 (Grade 4) (N=71)	2005-06 (Grades 3-8) (N=396)
Each year, the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State ELA exam by at least a small Effect Size (performing higher than expected to a small degree) according to a regression analysis controlling for students eligible for free lunch among all public schools in New York State. ¹⁹	Predicted	-	-	67.8	59.9
	Actual	-	-	71.8	64.2
	Effect Size	-	-	0.30	0.24

¹⁷ The school began operation in 2002-03 and thus had no previous scores for comparison in that year.

¹⁸ The Performance Index (PI) is calculated by adding the percent of students in all tested grades who are performing at Levels 2, 3 & 4 to the percent at Levels 3 & 4. The PI for all tested grades is compared to a single AMO rather than comparing the PI of each tested to grade to an AMO specific to that grade.

¹⁹ Starting in 2004-05, the Institute has conducted this Comparative Performance Analysis of the school’s actual performance in relation to its predicted performance based on the performance and free-lunch statistics of all New York State schools with the same grades. This complex and fair statistical analysis provides an opportunity to see where an individual school stands compared to demographically similar schools across the state. A small Effect Size is 0.3 or greater.

Mathematics Goal: *All students attending the Our World Neighborhood Charter School will become proficient in the use of Mathematics.*

OWN's mathematics performance has fluctuated over the charter period. The school has met its absolute measure with the proportion proficient on the state mathematics exam each year ranging from 58 to 91 percent. In 2005-06 when the state began testing grades 3-8 the lower grades far exceeded OWN's targeted level of performance and essentially met the Institute's current standard of 75 percent proficient. However, only about one quarter of the seventh and eighth grade classes scored proficient in mathematics that year. In terms of its comparative measure, results parallel those of the absolute measure during the four years of the charter period with the school out-performing and then performing the same as the district in the last two years. Finally, on its value added measure OWN showed a positive gain to scoring above grade level in 2003-04. In subsequent years the school overall remained above grade level, though few cohorts made their individual targets and overall performance declined slightly. In the last year of the charter period, cohorts in grades 1-6 performed above grade level; on the other hand, both the seventh and eighth grade cohorts remained below grade level.

Absolute Measures	Results (in percents)				
	Grade	School Year			
		2002-03 ²¹ (N=49)	2003-04 (N=43)	2004-05 (N=65)	2005-06 (N=368)
60% of Fourth Grade students, who have been OWN students for at least two years, will score on or above level 3 on the New York State Mathematics Examination. ²⁰	3	-	-	-	80.8
	4	71.4	58.1	90.8	86.4
	5	-	-	-	72.7
	6	-	-	-	57.6
	7	-	-	-	26.2
	8	-	-	-	22.0
	All	-	-	-	63.3

Comparative Measures	Results (in percents)				
	Comparison	School Year			
		2002-03 (Grade 4)	2003-04 (Grade 4)	2004-05 (Grade 4)	2005-06 (Grades 3-8)
A higher proportion of students who have been enrolled for at least two years will score on or above level 3 on the New York State mathematics examination than students in the local school district. ²²	School	71.4 ²³	58.1	90.8	63.3
	District	73.9	76.7	81.9	64.8

²⁰ New York State administered mathematics exams to students only in grades 4 and 8 until the 2005-06 school year when it began testing students in grades 3-8.

²¹ In 2002-03, no students had yet been enrolled for two years. The results, which are for all students tested, provide baseline information with which to compare subsequent years' performance.

²² The percentages compare the aggregate of all students performing at Levels 3 & 4 in tested grades who have been enrolled for two or more years in the charter school to the aggregate of all students in the same tested grades in the local school district.

²³ This is the percentage of all students, not those enrolled two or more years.

Value-Added Measures	Results				
	Mean NCE	School Year			
		2002-03	2003-04 (Grades 1-6) (N=293)	2004-05 (Grades 1-7) (N=408)	2005-06 (Grades 1-8) (N=519)
Cohorts of students will show an annual increase of 3.0 NCE in the Mathematics subsections of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills based on the spring testing cycle.	Baseline	-	48.3	56.2	56.5
	Target	-	51.3	59.2	59.5
	Actual	-	51.9	54.7	54.8
	Cohorts Made	-	(4 of 6)	(1 of 7)	(2 of 8)
	Target	-			

Additional Measures: In the case of the additional absolute measure, OWN met the criterion for aggregate mathematics performance under the state’s NCLB accountability system during all four years of the charter period. In no year was the Performance Index below 150. With respect to a comparison to similar schools statewide, data were unavailable for 2004-05, the first year this analysis was conducted; in 2005-06, the school performed about the same as predicted in comparison to similar schools statewide.

Absolute Measures	Results (in percents)				
	Index	School Year			
		2002-03 ²⁵ (Grade 4) (N=49)	2003-04 (Grade 4) (N=62)	2004-05 (Grade 4) (N=70)	2005-06 (Grades 3-8) (N=397)
Each year, the school’s aggregate Performance Index (PI) on the State mathematics exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set forth in the state’s NCLB accountability system. ²⁴	PI	161	156	190	154
	AMO	136	136	142	86

Comparative Measures	Results (in percents)				
	Index	School Year			
		2002-03	2003-04	2004-05 ²⁷ (Grade 4) (N=NA)	2005-06 (Grades 3-8) (N=397)
Each year, the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State mathematics exam by at least a small Effect Size (performing higher than expected to a small degree) according to a regression analysis controlling for students eligible for free lunch among all public schools in New York State. ²⁶	Predicted	-	-	NA	65.4
	Actual	-	-	NA	63.7
	Effect Size	-	-	NA	-0.04

Science Goal: *All students attending the Our World Neighborhood Charter School will become proficient in the use of Science.*

²⁴ The Performance Index (PI) is calculated by adding the percent of students in all tested grades who are performing at Levels 2, 3 & 4 to the percent at Levels 3 & 4. The PI for all tested grades is compared to a single AMO rather than comparing the PI of each tested to grade to an AMO specific to that grade.

²⁵ In 2002-03 no students had yet been enrolled for two years; thus, the results in this year for all students tested.

²⁶ Starting in 2004-05, the Institute has conducted this Comparative Performance Analysis of the school’s actual performance in relation to its predicted performance based on the performance and free-lunch statistics of all New York State schools with the same grades. This complex and fair statistical analysis provides an opportunity to see where an individual school stands compared to demographically similar schools across the state. A small Effect Size is 0.3 or greater.

²⁷ Valid data was unavailable for this measure in 2004-05.

OWN has shown steady progress in science and met its science goal as evidenced by its performance on the state fourth grade science exam. In the first year of the charter period 67 percent of students were proficient in science; this increased each year until 2005-06 when 90 percent were proficient in science. In every year of the charter period OWN outperformed the local district.

Absolute Measures	Results (in percents)				
	Grade	School Year			
		2002-03 (N=46)	2003-04 (N=43)	2004-05 (N=65)	2005-06 (N=59)
60% of Fourth Grade students, who have been OWN students for at least two years, will score on or above level 3 on the New York State Science Examination. ²⁸	4	67 ²⁹	69.8	83.1	89.8

Comparative Measures	Results (in percents)				
	Comparison	School Year			
		2002-03 (Grade 4)	2003-04 (Grade 4)	2004-05 (Grade 4)	2005-06 (Grade 4)
A higher proportion of OWN students in the Fourth and Eighth Grades, who have been students at OWN for at least two years, will score on or above level 3 on the New York State Science Examination than comparable students in District 30. ³⁰	School	67	69.8	83.1	89.8
	District	57.4	66.3	70.6	78.9

Social Studies Goal: *All students attending the Our World Neighborhood Charter School will become proficient in their understanding of Social Studies.*

By the end of the charter period OWN met its social studies goal. In 2005-06 93 percent of OWN fifth grade students were scoring at the proficient level on the state social studies exam. While the school lagged the district in the initial years, in the end it outperformed the district by a large margin.

Absolute Measures	Results (in percents)				
	Grade	School Year			
		2002-03	2003-04 (N=30)	2004-05 (N=54)	2005-06 (N=66)
60% of Fifth Grade students, who have been OWN students for at least two years, will score on or above level 3 on the New York State Social Studies Examination.	5	-	66.7 ³¹	53.7	92.8

²⁸ In 2002-03 science results were presented as above or below the state designated level (SDL). For our purposes we use above SDL as equivalent to scoring at or above Level 3.

²⁹ This is the percentage of all students, not those enrolled two or more years.

³⁰ OWN did not have an eighth grade until the last year of the charter period and science results for that grade were unavailable at the time of this report.

³¹ Of 39 students enrolled, 9 had no score or INV reported by ATS. Only students who received a score are reported.

Comparative Measures	Results (in percents)				
	Comparison	School Year			
		2002-03	2003-04 (Grade 5)	2004-05 (Grade 5)	2005-06 (Grade 5)
A higher proportion of OWN students in the Fifth and Eighth Grades, who have been students at OWN for at least two years, will score on or above level 3 on the New York State Social Studies Examination as compared with students in District 30. ³²	School	-	66.7	53.7	92.8
	District	-	69.1	71.5	77.8

NCLB Goal

OWN is expected under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to make adequate yearly progress toward enabling all students to score at the proficient level on the state ELA and mathematics exams. In holding charter schools to the same standards as other public schools, the state issues a school accountability report indicating the school's accountability status each year. OWN is deemed to have been in good standing under the state's NCLB accountability system.

Accountability Plan Measures	Results (in percents)				
	Status	School Year			
		2002-03³⁴	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Under the state's NCLB accountability system, the school's Accountability Status will be "Good Standing" each year. ³³	Good Standing	-	YES	YES	YES

³² OWN did not have an eighth grade until the last year of the charter period and social studies results for that grade were unavailable at the time of this report.

³³ The New York State Education Department issues report cards for each school which indicate whether a school has made adequate yearly progress (AYP) as required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Schools that have not failed to make AYP for the two previous years are considered to be in "Good Standing."

³⁴ NCLB status is based on performance in prior school years. Because this was its first year of operation, OWN did not receive a status report in 2002-03.

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.
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The school has in place a variety of internal assessment measures, including quarterly assessments, portfolios, internally developed rubrics, and the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) as part of its federally funded Reading First program. These internal assessment measures have the potential to provide teachers with important tools to assess students' progress and to measure and inform the quality of instruction. However, at the time of the visit, the school had yet to implement these internal assessments to their full potential.

The school leadership uses standardized assessments to identify students in need of additional academic support. The school's Chief Administrative Officer and building principals used English language arts (ELA) and mathematics scores from state exams and the ITBS test to identify students in need of additional academic support. These students are invited to participate in the school's remedial program, and Monday and Saturday Academy.

Although members of the school's leadership team utilize student assessment data to identify students in need of remediation, with the exception of Reading First assessments they have not effectively built capacity among the teaching staff to use student data for this purpose. Notably, interviews with members of the school's leadership team revealed that the school does not focus on improving teachers' ability to understand and analyze reports of student achievement on standardized assessments. This appears to be a change in the school's practice, as it was described by the Chief Administrative Officer at the time of the Institute's inspection visit conducted in OWN's third year of instruction. At that time, the school leader reported that "Program Facilitators work with teachers regularly... at least once every three weeks to, in part, discuss and analyze student performance." In contrast, at the time of the renewal inspection visit, the school was relying instead on its teachers to develop this area of their craft for themselves. One teacher, for example, reported, "I reviewed the Iowa scores for my students from the previous year. I was told where to find their individual student scores on a web site. I had to train myself how to analyze the results...I used this data to set monthly themes where the students seem to be having difficulty: numeration, problem solving, writing, word recognition." Other teachers described designing, on their own initiative, a color coding process that would help them analyze and use the results of quarterly assessments to inform instruction.

The school has developed quarterly assessments that are aligned with state standards in science and social studies for grades K-5, and in mathematics for grades K-8. This quarterly assessment system has the potential to serve as a guide and diagnostic tool for teachers' instructional practice. The tests are developed retrospectively according to what teachers have taught each quarter. Teachers varied in how they described the usefulness of the assessments in informing their daily instructional practice. .

When asked about the schools' strategies for improving literacy instruction, the Chief Administrative Officer named the Reading First program as a key reform measure that provided systematic ways to assess and measure students' performance in literacy. As part of the implementation of the program, the Reading First Coordinator met with all K-3 teachers in September to discuss DIBELS scores,

grade level trends and state testing reports for whole grades. During this training, the coordinator taught teachers how to read results and where to go online for tests and error patterns. The coordinator stated that teachers “are accountable for doing this, and I follow-up.”

Across the school, teachers utilized student portfolios as a way to collect samples of student work. Evidence suggests that student portfolios, as currently implemented in the school, are more comprehensive expressions of students’ best work than they had been during the Institute’s last visit. Despite schoolwide progress made on the portfolio system, its purpose was unclear and inconsistent across grade levels and subjects. Portfolios are defined and used in various ways, including as opportunities for monitoring student progress, a place for reflecting on learning, an archive of best work, and a display to show parents. Additionally, sometimes the stated purposes of the portfolio did not align with the implementation practices. For example, in middle school science, the stated purpose was, “to provide a more accurate picture of students’ specific achievements and progress and the areas of needed attention” in order to support “autonomous learning, the ability to assess one’s progress and deficiencies.” However, in practice, the science portfolios were a static collection, not a dynamic monitoring of progress. Consequently, the school’s portfolio system as a tool for improving teaching and learning has not been realized.

Teachers also utilized internally-developed rubrics in their classrooms. However, it is unclear how these rubrics functioned in service of measuring or informing student learning. Rubrics were not standardized across the school within grades or across grades, and there was no evidence that rubrics were used in the service of exit outcomes.

Benchmark 1C Curriculum	1C The school has a clearly defined and aligned curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards.
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Lesson plan and curriculum development and review are both areas of strength and clear focus in the school. At the time of the renewal visit, the school was engaged in a process to further refine and develop its social studies curriculum by implementing the requirements of the state learning standards within the school’s classrooms as follows. For each grade, the school had identified central questions or topics taken from state standards. The curriculum had been divided into quarters and units, each with focus projects, geography projects, cross curriculum connections, texts, and resources. Furthermore, across the school, teachers said that they had adequate training for implementing the new social studies curriculum. Preliminary documents in social studies indicated the presence of a coherent scope and sequence, defined unit plans, and aligned assessments. The school intends to follow this process in refining its curriculum for all content areas.

School leaders acknowledged the challenges of moving toward explicit standards-based instruction and of developing teacher capacity over time to effectively implement curriculum. The school’s elementary principal stated that curriculum development is “a major commitment of time and money and it never ends. It takes many years to develop the capacity [to implement] it well...it starts with the staff, they have to buy in and take ownership. We also need to bring in professional development, consultants, and offer training...it’s a commitment.” In fact, the school has gained teacher buy-in and commitment by actively involving them in the process, and holding them accountable for documenting their transition to a standards-based teaching model. For example, the school requires teachers to explicitly align each of their lesson plans with state standards. To that end, a staff developer at the elementary school and the middle school principal routinely review teachers’ lesson plans and provide feedback on the plans to teachers electronically. Each quarter, the school has also asked teachers to prepare curriculum maps, and design assessments that are aligned to the standards identified within their lesson plans. Furthermore, the school asks teachers to submit quarterly reflections on curriculum implementation, which will serve as evidence for future curricular revision. The process of curricular refinement and revision at Our World Neighborhood Charter School is ongoing and reflective.

Throughout the term of the school’s charter, writing has been used across content areas as both a tool for, and a product of, learning. In the 2004-05 visit report, the Institute noted the school-wide focus on student writing. Since then, the school has continued to utilize a “writing workshop” or process approach to the teaching of writing across grades and disciplines. Rather than worksheets, displayed student work products consisted almost exclusively of constructed responses. This was true even for mathematics assignments where students wrote narrative responses to word problems. The work generally appeared to be close to grade level.

Despite the emphasis on writing, the school does not have a formal writing curriculum, in which written work is evaluated consistently in each grade and grade level expectations are vertically aligned. There was little evidence of deep training for teachers in this area of pedagogy. A lack of understanding about how this approach should be implemented so as to develop student writers was apparent across the school. Writing improvement from rough to final drafts seemed to be usually about neatness and mechanics (“watch your spelling”) rather than revision of meaning or idea

development. Rubrics used to evaluate writing tended to be generic and unrelated to the teacher comments written on post-it notes. (e.g., ‘Nice job, but you get sloppy towards the end’; ‘you should use complete sentences.’). In general, neither the rubrics nor teacher comments focused on a particular lesson or writing concept. It also was not clear that corrections on one assignment translated into expectations for the next one. Despite these shortcomings, the strong presence of writing across content and grade levels suggests that teachers value writing as an instructional tool.

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.

OWN’s leadership team consists of approximately ten individuals. The top three administrators include the Chief Administrative Officer, who oversees both schools, and two principals, one at the lower school and one at the upper school. Other supporting administrators include a literacy coordinator, special education coordinator, middle school dean of students, middle school guidance counselor, middle school reading specialist, and two staff developers. Since the 2004-05 school year, OWN has had an elaborate administrative support network in place. In the report summarizing the Institute’s conclusions after the school’s third year of instruction, inspectors noted, “2004-05 marks the first academic year that OWN’s administrative leadership is staffed at the level indicated in the charter application. Therefore, this academic year should be seen as a period in which OWN’s instructional leadership is in development.”

The school’s instructional leadership team has established school priorities in aligning lesson plans to state standards, curriculum revision, and the development of quarterly assessments. Over the course of the renewal visit, members of the school leadership team, teachers, and other staff members spoke at great length about the school’s emphasis on aligning lesson plans with state standards. Every other week, in both the upper and lower schools, administrators (a staff developer and middle school principal) reviewed and commented on teachers’ lesson plans. Most teachers described and had examples of lesson plans developed in these two-week cycles. They referenced this process of lesson plan review as the primary instructional support they received from administration.

However, at the time of the renewal visit, inspectors noted that the school’s top administrators did not articulate a common vision and expectations for the *delivery* of instruction. For example, the school’s Chief Administrative Officer cited “kid-centered” and different modes of lesson delivery as top priorities. The middle school principal identified establishing “a sense of order so that we can drive rigorous instruction,” and the school’s elementary school principal cited the classroom atmosphere, teacher-student relationships, and student engagement in lessons as priorities. The lack of common expectations regarding quality instruction was also evident when administrators and teachers talked about classroom observations. Because all three top administrators focus on slightly different aspects of the delivery of instruction, the vision for instruction, on which basic expectations for lesson structure and student learning objectives are based, are unlikely to be clear to teachers or other administrative staff.

In addition, the school's leadership team provides little formative feedback to its teachers, and there is limited evidence that the school adheres to its teacher evaluation system. In its report dated September 19, 2005, the Institute noted that the "frequency and intensity of in-classroom coaching diminished" as the school year progressed. There is no indication that this trend has been reversed, given the absence of a systematic process of teacher supervision, including coaching and formative feedback, across the school. Although the school has had a formal teaching evaluation process in place, evidence collected at the time of the renewal visit revealed that school administrators unevenly adhere to the policy and its timeline.

Staff developers reported that they either did not initiate teacher coaching or rarely provided written feedback, so as not to disrupt classroom activity. Teachers reported having administrators "drop in" their classrooms, but few said they got oral or written feedback after informal observations. As a result, teachers did not have a clear idea, aside from having an orderly classroom and a print-rich environment, of how their teaching effectiveness could be improved or would be evaluated.

In contrast to the deficiencies in instructional leadership noted above, the school's new middle school principal has the potential to become a driving force for instructional leadership at Our World Neighborhood Charter School. The new principal's proactive approach was apparent from interviews with the principal, members of the middle school leadership team and the Chief Administrative Officer, and middle school teachers. For example, members of the leadership team clearly articulated their roles and responsibilities in relation to other staff members. Supports included frequent informal observations, conversations about instruction, and a focus on school-wide practices, including word-walls and peer observation. At the time of the visit, the middle school principal was actively engaged in a variety of leadership activities, including reviewing and commenting upon lesson plans, analyzing student achievement data, and observing and providing feedback to teachers. In her interview, the principal described plans for model lessons targeted to specific teaching skills for some teachers. The school's Chief Administrative Officer summarized, "They [the instructional leaders based at the middle school] are working really hard to make a small community of learners over there." Consequently, the school's middle school principal promises to be an asset to the school's instructional leadership over time.

Within and across the upper and lower schools, the quality of instruction varied, because of a range of teacher skill. Most lessons observed by renewal team members had been planned carefully, reflecting state standards and the appropriate curriculum. In addition, classrooms were orderly, friendly, and centered on various tasks the students needed to complete. In some classes, teachers focused their lesson on a specific learning objective, and informally assessed student learning towards that learning objective throughout the class. For example, in one skillfully implemented mathematics lesson, in which the learning objective was 'elapsed time,' the teacher assessed student learning through informal classroom discussions throughout the class, making adjustments and untangling student confusion. At the end of the class, the teacher did a brief summary of what they had learned.

At the other end of the spectrum, in some classes, the learning objectives of the lesson were not clearly communicated to students, and there was little or no ongoing assessment of student comprehension or learning that would allow teachers to adjust instruction to meet their students' needs. For example, in another mathematics lesson, the stated goal was 'to improve our subtracting' while more specific learning objectives, like 'how to borrow numbers,' were unstated. At the end of the lesson, the teacher transitioned to another subject area without checking to see how well the students had understood the task, or if they had specific difficulties completing the problems.

Although the climate of the class was friendly and orderly, the lesson was clearly aligned with state standards, and students were clearly engaged with the work, the teacher had not identified a specific subtraction skill as a learning goal and the teacher could not tell how many students had mastered the lesson. Despite the school's focus on aligning lessons with state standards, teachers' delivery of the educational program, particularly in the areas of checking for understanding and differentiating instruction, requires further refinement to improve student learning.

The school's leadership is aware of the need for professional development initiatives to support differentiated instruction at the school, and reviews lesson plans accordingly. However, the school has not created a sense of ownership and accountability among classroom teachers for providing differentiated instruction and targeted interventions within the regular education program. This may be due to the fact that, although the school has a variety of structures in place for students in need of academic support, the majority of these supports are delivered outside of the regular education classroom. The school relies on services delivered outside the regular classroom day, including school-sponsored after-school and Saturday tutoring programs, a classroom "pull-out" program, and private tutoring paid for by parents.

While teachers reported limited support from supervisors in addressing the needs of struggling students, some classroom teachers have received professional development related to special education. Professional development has included how to identify children who may be in need of special services and/or counseling, and how to construct and implement behavioral intervention plans and other classroom interventions. Teachers reported using the special education team members as resources to tailor instruction for special education students. At the time of the visit, special education students received services in the resource room, and through resource teachers "pushing in" to help in classrooms.

Notwithstanding teachers' lack of experience, the school has taken steps to meet the needs of students with disabilities (identified by the Committee on Special Education), students who are English language learners, and students who have been identified as at-risk for not meeting state performance standards. The school's programs for students with disabilities and students who are English language learners (ELLs) appeared sufficiently staffed and resourced.

The school has a full-time teacher to provide services to approximately 41 English language learners and an approved process to identify students who may need such services, which begins with a home language questionnaire. Most services are provided on a pull-out basis, with the ELL Coordinator working closely with the classroom teachers. The school also has in place a student support team, facilitated by the special education coordinator. In addition to the full-time special education coordinator, who is also a certified social worker, the team includes two full-time special education teachers, two speech teachers and two occupational therapists. The team monitors and provides ad hoc support for individual students who need special emotional or academic interventions. Interventions include "pulling out" students to receive help on academic tasks and "pushing in" to classrooms to support classroom teachers.

Finally, a Child Study Team makes referrals to the district Committee on Special Education (CSE), with which the school has a working relationship. The school's special education program served 49-51 students with IEPs during the 2005-06 school year, up from 40 students during the 2004-05 school year. As of the 2006-07 school year, Our World Neighborhood also provides Section 504 (federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973) modifications through a push in/pull out model for one student.

The school's Monday and Saturday program was created to meet the needs of the school's "at-risk" student population. During interviews with Institute staff, teachers generally associated "at-risk" with students who participate in the school's Monday and Saturday Academy program. This program is targeted for students who generally fall below the 40th percentile in reading on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and who are identified for additional support by the school's elementary and middle school principals based upon their scores on state English language arts and mathematics exams.

While the school has in place multiple programs to serve students who are at-risk of academic failure, it has yet to collect data on and formally evaluate the effectiveness of these services, despite the Institute's having noted this lack of program assessment in its visit report dated September 19, 2005. At the time of the renewal visit, the school did not measure the effectiveness of its Monday and Saturday Academy programs. Although in previous years and at the time of the visit, the school collected measurable data, including student attendance and pre-and post-tests aligned with the STAR curriculum of the academies, there were no plans to systematically analyze the data to evaluate the success of the program or to inform instructional practices. In terms of attendance, all school stakeholders acknowledged that Monday and Saturday programs are poorly attended, and expressed regret that they could not make the program mandatory. Despite this concern, the school had no formal system in place to track which of the identified students were "falling through the cracks" and not being served by the academies. Because the school has not evaluated the effectiveness of this program or polled parents³⁵ and students about how to better improve attendance, it cannot be sure that it is making an efficient use of its resources to support students at-risk of academic failure.

³⁵ Note that in a brief conversation with a parent group held during the renewal visit, parents had various reasons for the low attendance and were able to suggest improvements to the program to maximize attendance, such as holding the program after school to eliminate transportation issues and avoid conflicts with other family activities based on students' religion and / or culture.

<p>Benchmark 1E</p> <p>Student Order & Discipline</p>	<p>1E The school’s culture allows and promotes a culture of learning.</p>
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Overall, the school climate is orderly, and there is a sense of community, respect and mutual regard between students and adults. Students and teachers warmly greeted one another in the hallway, and in classrooms, students were attentive and responsive to the teacher and to other students. One teacher described the school as a close knit community where students get “wrap-around attention” from teachers who know them well. The school had a general discipline policy for severe infractions, but with support from administrators, teachers tailored day-to-day discipline policies to their individual classrooms. It was clear from student engagement and behavior within classrooms that most teachers and students had common understandings of behavioral expectations. In a few classrooms, teachers struggled with classroom discipline. While administrators were available to talk to teachers about classroom management, and the school has developed a library of resources to support teachers, some teachers expressed a desire to have more in-class supervision and support regarding classroom management.

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.
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Teachers draw from multiple resources that support their professional development, including weekly staff meetings, weekly grade level team meetings, and access to in-house curriculum support. At weekly staff meetings, school administrators have led mini-workshops on topics that include implementing the new social studies curricula developed by the Teachers’ Curriculum Institute (TCI), involving parents in the school, working with ELL students and students with disabilities, and organizing field trips. Administrative staff, including the literacy coordinator, special education coordinator, and staff developers, generally lead the weekly meetings. In addition, the school devotes resources to external professional development workshops.

There exists a collegial and supportive atmosphere among teachers and between teachers and administrators. Teachers remarked that administrative staff was available to meet outside of classroom time to problem-solve curricular and managerial issues. One teacher described the administrative support structure as an “Open Door Policy,” “Someone is always there, and if they can’t help, they find someone else. The attitude [of the administration] is always, ‘How can we help?’” Teachers also said that they looked to their peers as a source of professional support and learning. Teachers generally stated they could approach various colleagues for help and ideas. One teacher said “in this school there is no shame, no blame here with other teachers.” Moreover, teachers described grade-level team meetings as providing rich opportunities to plan curricula with colleagues, select materials, and to discuss lessons. The open and supportive culture among staff members provides fertile ground for future embedded, instructionally-focused professional development opportunities like a planned peer-observation initiative in the middle school.

Despite these internal and external opportunities for professional development, there was little evidence that the school had a targeted, data-driven agenda that aligns the school’s instructional program, students’ learning needs, and teachers’ professional practice and goals. Professional development topics seemed to be planned in an ad-hoc manner. For example, the Chief Administrative Officer said he “passed along workshop fliers” to teachers as he received them and teachers were able to petition to attend workshops. There was no evidence that the administration or teachers systematically identified workshops that addressed specific issues identified as important by school staff. Although the administration and teachers consistently named differentiated instruction as an important professional development topic, workshops on the topic were not regularly sought out. More pointedly, without a system to identify individual goals or challenges, the school had no capacity to systematically target teachers’ individual professional development.

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
Benchmark 2A School Specific Non-Academic Goals	2A The school meets or has come close to meeting the Unique Measures of non-academic student outcomes that are contained in its Accountability Plan over the life of the charter (if any).

Besides the required outcome measures under each subject area goal and a required NCLB outcome measure, the school also included additional self-selected outcome measures as part of its Accountability Plan. The following table indicates the specific outcomes under the goal that OWN set for itself during the five years of the charter period.

Goal: *By the end of the initial charter period, the school will demonstrate that its students have exhibited positive behavior related to academic success.*

In its Accountability Plan under this goal, OWN included three measures, which are summarized in the following tables. Data reported below is taken from the school’s 2005-2006 Progress Report, as well as its Application for Initial Renewal.

	School Year	Percent Average Daily Attendance	Goal Met?
For each year of school operation, average daily attendance will improve compared with the previous year, until it exceeds 90% of the average daily enrollment by the end of the third year of the charter.	2002-2003	90	No
	2003-2004	92	Yes
	2004-2005	96	Yes
	2005-2006	90	Yes

For each year of school operation, the school will have fewer total reportable incidents than the average for all schools with the same grade configuration in the New York City schools.	School Year	Percent of OWN students involved in reportable incidents	Percent of students from “similar sized schools” in NYC Region 4 involved in reportable incidents³⁶	Goal Met?
	2002-2003	No data reported	No data reported	Unknown
	2003-2004	No data reported	No data reported	Unknown
	2004-2005	0.0%	5.45%	Yes
	2005-2006	0.0%	No data reported	Unknown

Each year, at least 75% of the non-graduating student body will return to the school the following September, excepting those students whose residence has changed.	School Year	Persistence Rate	Goal Met?
	2002-2003	86%	Yes
	2003-2004	90%	Yes
	2004-2005	95%	Yes
	2005-2006	97%	Yes

OWN has clearly met the first and third measures it has set for itself in relation to this goal. However, given the lack of reported data on the second measure concerning reportable incidents, it is difficult to determine with certainty whether the school met the second measure. However, given the total absence of reportable incidents at the school in the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years, the Institute concludes that the school is likely to have met the second measure of its goal.

³⁶ Note that OWN reported the number of reportable incidents in “similar sized schools” in NYC Region 4, as opposed to “all schools with the same grade configuration in the New York City Schools,” as stated in the measure.

Benchmark 2B Mission & Design Elements	2B The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.
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OWN’s mission statement as it appeared in its Application for Initial Renewal is as follows:

The mission of Our World Neighborhood Charter School is to provide kindergarten through 8th grade students with the foundation of a rigorous liberal education. Students will develop a historical perspective on our own time and place through an integrated study of history, geography, literature, the social sciences science, math, art and music. Students will in this way receive the broad education needed to thrive in today’s world. We are committed to preparing all students to meet the academic challenges of the best New York City High Schools.

Key design elements, as outlined in OWN’s original charter, include:

- An extended school year of 200 student days;
- An extended school day of 7 hours, 30 minutes;
- Open enrollment for all students;
- A maximum classroom capacity of 25 students ;
- Disruption free morning basic skills program: reading, writing, arithmetic, reasoning, research and foreign language;
- Foreign language—Spanish—for all students beginning in Kindergarten;
- Pre- and post-testing for all students annually;
- The availability of extensive technology: 1:3 computers per students; and
- An extensive parent and community volunteer program.

Our World Neighborhood Charter School has generally implemented the components of its key design elements, including extended learning time in classrooms of no more than 25 students, open enrollment for all students, and Spanish instruction for all students beginning in Kindergarten. Although not specified as a key design element, the school’s Pillars of a Positive Learning Community program has been successfully woven into the fabric of the school, and evidence suggests that it positively affects the school culture, community, and curriculum. Pillars themes and issues were in evidence in student work, in classroom management references, and in dedicated weekly classes. Technology was the least implemented design element. There were fewer computers per classroom than in the original plan (1:3 computers per student), and during the time of the visit, observers rarely saw teachers using computers for instructional purposes or students using computers in classrooms. The schools’ administrators and teachers referenced Success Maker as one program used school-wide, but at the time of the visit, the program had not yet been installed for the 2006-2007 school year.

In contrast, the school has not demonstrated a sense of urgency in meeting portions of its school mission, including its aspiration to prepare students to meet “the academic challenges of the best New York City high schools.” Despite Institute school inspectors’ noting in the 2005 report, “based on observations of the seventh grade, the first graduating class of OWN students will likely not be

prepared to ‘succeed at the best New York City High Schools,’ it remains that the school’s academic program is not sufficiently rigorous to prepare students to attend such high schools. In fact, student results on the state and ITBS tests in ELA and mathematics show insufficient³⁷ and at times declining student performance. This is particularly true in the middle school, where class offerings and curriculum do not challenge students to demonstrate high levels of knowledge and skill.

³⁷ The current required absolute measure of student performance on the state exams in ELA and mathematics is 75 percent at Level 3 and above, no longer 60 percent at Level 3 and above, as OWN had in its Accountability Plan.

<p align="center">Benchmark 2C Governance</p>	<p>2C.1 The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school’s mission and specific goals.</p>
	<p>2C.2 The board has implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes and has abided by them.</p>

The school board has identified and responded to the organizational needs of the school over the term of its charter. For example, as the school population continued to expand, the school board located and secured additional classroom space for its growing middle school at a school building within walking distance of its K-5 program. The facility is minimally adequate, and will provide sufficient classroom space for the school’s largest anticipated middle school population, anticipated during the 2007-2008 school year. Furthermore, the school chose to separate from its management partner in the spring of 2006 and has diligently fulfilled additional responsibilities acquired as a result of that separation, including the development of a new social studies curriculum for grades K-8. As a result, the school board has demonstrated its capacity to perform sufficient organizational oversight.

With the exceptions below, the school board has instituted and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes, and has abided by them. The school board has an adequate code of ethics that prohibits actual or potential conflicts of interest and directs employees and trustees to seek further direction from the school board, which has avoided creating conflicts of interest.

Over the term of the school’s charter, the school board generally appeared to be abiding by the provisions in its by-laws. One exception is that the quorum requirement appeared to have been disregarded on a few occasions including its May 2003 meeting, when the board voted on items even though there was an insufficient number of board members present within the meaning of the Open Meetings Law (live or video conference) to achieve a quorum.

At the time of the renewal inspection visit, the school had a comprehensive draft *2006-07 Parent and Student Handbook and Code of Civility* that contained much useful information. However, as of the time of the renewal visit it had not yet been distributed to parents (though the school expected to do so shortly thereafter). The handbook lacked certain policies of use to parents including a Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) policy, a Freedom of Information Law policy, and an Open Meetings Law policy (of which there was no evidence in the school). There also was no written policy on filling spaces from the wait list, which the Institute recommends.

The full Code of Civility is set forth in the handbook and is in addition to other information on discipline, including suspension and expulsion, which are referenced therein. Missing information regarding due process, the Gun Free Schools Act (although the discipline policy covers general weapons possession) as well as other minor, related items led the Institute to question why the school did not present this related information in one place together with a full special education discipline policy. In that vein, the summary of special education discipline provided does not describe all of the safeguards or state that the full policy is on file elsewhere at the school. In relation to crime-related discipline, there is a reference to an “administrative hearing conducted pursuant to rules of the State

Board of Education” which are not supplied or applicable to charter schools. The school’s forms, incident reports in files, and parental notice letter all appeared to be in order.

The complaint policy did not give parents and families clear direction about how to proceed should they wish to make a complaint to the school. While the policy discusses both formal and informal complaints, it appears to impermissibly set up a two-tiered appeal system before a parent could appeal to the Institute. In addition, it does not state that parents must allege a violation of law or charter in order to have the Institute review a complaint.

With respect to fire drills, the handbook stated there would be “one fire drill per month during school hours,” which is inconsistent with state requirements, which mandate that all schools have 12 fire drills during the school year with 8 occurring between September 1 and December 1, and 1 occurring during lunch; further, the school’s *Teacher Handbook 2006-2007* suggests that the school will conduct ten fire drills per year, also in derogation of the requirement.

The handbook does state that the school’s leadership team will review the Code of Civility and discipline policies at the beginning of each school year with staff and conduct a formal year end review to be presented to the school’s board of trustees within two weeks of the last day of school. This statement is in keeping with the Institute’s benchmark of periodic review of policies, but was not extended to all school policies, which showed varying degrees of review and updating.

Benchmark 2D Parents & Students	2D Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.
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In surveys and at a meeting held at the school at the time of the renewal visit, parents had strongly positive attitudes about teachers, the administration, and the school in general. During the renewal visit, the renewal team interviewed approximately 12 parents who had children in grades across the school and who had been associated with the school from less than three months to more than four years. Overall, parents expressed satisfaction with the school and felt that it was a “public school that provides a better than average private school” education. They were particularly appreciative of the commitment and responsiveness of teachers and school leaders. Parents reported that students received challenging and appropriate assignments.

In its renewal application, the school provides parent survey data for the school years ending 2003 – 2006. Each year the school has engaged a third-party company to design the school’s parent survey, collect, and analyze the results. Although the survey data shows general parent satisfaction with the school’s leadership team, individual teachers, special education and the school board, the school does not provide the survey response rate, making it difficult to determine whether the responses are representative of the school’s parents and guardians as a whole. That said, the highest rated characteristic of the school’s program in 2006 was satisfaction with the child’s teacher, receiving a rating of 9.29 out of 10; the lowest rated characteristic of the school’s program in 2006 was the school board’s performance, receiving a rating of 8.23 out of 10.

In its Accountability Plan, OWN includes a goal for strong market accountability containing three measures, which are summarized in the following tables. Data reported below is taken from the school’s 2005-2006 Progress Report, as well as the school’s Application for Initial Renewal.

Each year, the school will have at least enough students seek admission to the school to have 90% of the maximum number of students allowed by the charter enrolled in the beginning of the school year.	School Year	Actual Enrollment	School Capacity	Percent of Utilization	Goal Met?
	2002-2003	371	450	82%	No
	2003-2004	497	525	95%	Yes
	2004-2005	580	600	97%	Yes
	2005-2006	650	675	96%	Yes

Student attendance will be at least 85% of the enrollment throughout the charter period.	School Year	Percent Average Daily Attendance	Goal Met?
	2002-2003	90	No
	2003-2004	92	Yes
	2004-2005	96	Yes
	2005-2006	90	Yes

	School Year	Total Number of Students on Waitlists	Goal Met?
By the third year of school operation, the school will have a waiting list of students seeking admission.	2002-2003	184	Yes
	2003-2004	219	Yes
	2004-2005	448	Yes
	2005-2006	569	Yes

OWN has met all three of the measures it has set for itself to demonstrate strong market accountability.

Benchmark 2E Legal Requirements	2E The school has substantially complied with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.
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As part of the Institute’s legal review, compliance deficiencies noted by the State Education Department (SED) in September 2005 during its comprehensive monitoring visit and during an SED focused review of special education (SPED), were re-examined. As discussed below, in almost all cases the school had come into compliance and the issues raised by the special education-focused review were all resolved by January 2006, according to SED documentation presented by the school.

One special education issue raised by SED was that suspension notices to parents did not include information about alternative instruction or due process rights. During 2004-05, the State Education Department noted that one student with a disability was suspended and was not provided alternative instruction, which is the same as for non-disabled students during the first 10 days per 34 C.F.R. 300.520. However, at the time of the renewal visit, suspension notices included a reference to 90 minutes of alternative instruction (SED has recommended 120 minutes and is aware of the school’s policy but has not raised the issue with the school). Moreover, at the time of the renewal inspection visit, there was evidence that in practice a certified teacher performs the alternative instruction. In terms of due process for both special and general education students there were references to hearings for both long-term suspensions and expulsion, although neither policy spelled out all of the required protections. However, the school utilizes very few long-term suspensions as opposed to short-term suspensions (28 suspensions of 1-2 days during 2005-06), and as a result, no violations were evident.

At the time of the renewal visit the following issues all continued to be in compliance: Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) being given to appropriate teachers; properly referring children for updated IEP goals and objectives (34 C.F.R. § 300.343); and teachers being informed of specific IEP responsibilities (34 C.F.R. § 300.342(b)).

The State Education Department had noted that the school was remiss regarding the fingerprinting of all employees and clearances (or emergency appointments) for employment. The Institute found only a few instances of lack of printing or clearance, indicating that the issue still requires some attention. In addition, the language of the employee statement in the school’s employee handbook regarding prior criminal history does not match the language in the Charter Schools Act, which would invalidate emergency conditional appointments issued by the school board or its designee. The school indicated that it would remedy this situation.

The Institute also reviewed progress on issues identified in its files, the 2004-05 End of Year Report, and SED correspondence. In general, the school has had mixed record of submitting information on time to the Institute, particularly in the early years of its charter. However, since late 2004 the school has had an improved submission record, including submission of financial information. The Institute also had difficulty contacting school leadership early on, but the problem was remedied prior to the end of the 2004-05 school year.

The school’s original by-laws contained a then-common defect in that they allowed voting and quorum participation by conference telephone, which is acceptable for regular not-for-profit

corporations but not for education corporations. The school remedied this issue by updating the by-laws to properly allow for video-conference participation only. Another common deficiency in the school's first set of by-laws was the minimum number of members to be on the executive committee was three instead of the five required by the Education Law. Updated by-laws submitted as part of the school's application for short-term planning year renewal in 2006 also cured this issue.

The State Education Department had previously noted that all materials for one of the school's annual reports were not submitted on time. It further noted that the school had not submitted certain enrollment information as required, but it never resulted in adverse action. The school's first Safe Schools Against Violence in Education Act (SAVE) emergency plan was not complete, but the issues have been remedied according to the school's Chief Administrative Officer.

The Institute reviewed the teaching staff's qualifications for compliance with the Charter Schools Act's limits on non-certified teachers and for being "highly qualified" under the No Child Left behind Act of 2002 (NCLB). The school reported that at least five of its teachers were not NCLB highly qualified. Calculating the school's compliance with the Charter Schools Act's limit of five uncertified teachers posed a familiar problem. A strict reading of the paperwork or the record in SED's TEACH system would reveal that the school had too many uncertified teachers (in three cases prior certifications having lapsed on September 1, 2006). However, when the credentials are parsed one can determine that enough teachers to bring the school into compliance had taken all steps necessary and submitted all certification to SED for certification, but had not yet received official notice of certification. In such cases, the Institute operates expecting that all certification submissions will be approved, and does not find the school in violation of state law.

In terms of the provision of health services, the school had a nurse and with one exception, all aspects of its program appeared to be in order despite some contrary policies in its *2006-07 Parent and Student Handbook and Code of Civility* (which, as previously mentioned, was only in draft form at the time of the renewal visit). For example, the handbook stated that medical forms were to be submitted within 30 days of the start of school even though state law mandates immunization records within 14 days. In practice, however, the school nurse uses one week as a deadline and then follows up to get all records in within the 14 day limit. A medication section in the handbook states, "If medication needs to be administered when the nurse is not present, a staff member trained by the nurse will administer the medication," which would violate state law. The nurse stated that only self-directed students can receive medicine in the presence of a school administrator, and parents are usually informed of same. The Institute's criticism of the school's health program centers on the fact that there is one nurse for two facilities that are several blocks apart. The nurse and handbook stated that trained staff members administer initial treatments for first aid and then children are either sent to the elementary facility to see the nurse or 911 is called. The school was informed that it may be able to secure another nurse from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene pursuant to section 912 of the Education Law.

Despite a statement in the school's draft *2006-07 Parent and Student Handbook* that the school complies with all confidentiality laws protecting privacy of students, the publication did not reference the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) or the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and then gives an incomplete list of persons who may have access to student records without permission in violation of IDEA regulations (34 C.F.R. § 300.572(d)). The school was also not keeping appropriate logs of who accessed student files thereon as required. The required FERPA annual notice was absent from the handbook, but in the

past the school had properly notified parents regarding directory information and the required opt-out from publication.

A few minor New York Public Officers Law issues were noted. While the school was in compliance with the New York Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requirement of posting a notice regarding availability of records had a FOIL policy and a FOIL list of records, there was no evidence that it properly kept the required list of salaries and names and work locations of all school officers and employees. Also, the school did not properly respond to the New York State United Teachers' FOIL request in a timely manner in September 2005. In terms of Open Meetings Law compliance, it appeared that minutes were not being kept for all school board committee meetings, a point that now has been muted by the school board's acting as a committee of the whole. Also in one or two cases when video-conferencing was used during school board meetings, the location of the school trustee participating via video was not recorded in the minutes. Also, board minutes sometimes did not list the individual votes of members or state that a resolution passed unanimously as required, instead stating only that a motion "carried." On the other hand, there was evidence that the media was being advised of school board meetings and the parent handbook states that meetings are generally held on the last Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm.

Over the life of the school's charter, OWN generated a few complaints made by parents, mostly related to access to the Chief Administrative Officer or other staff; however, only one rose to the level of an official grievance. In that case, which involved forms needing to be returned to the school for the re-enrollment of students for the following school year, the Charter Schools Act provided little guidance, and the Institute, as an authorizer, responded to the complaint by issuing a remedial order that was followed by the school. In October - December 2003, a teacher lodged a complaint related to a health care insurance cancellation notice. The school's educational management provider, Mosaica Education, Incorporated (Mosaica), was involved in its resolution, and there was no gap in coverage, only a gap in communication with staff.

With the exceptions noted above and under Benchmark 2C.2, the school appeared to be in general and substantial compliance with applicable law, rules and regulations and the terms of its charter at the time of the renewal visit. With the foregoing exceptions, during the term of its charter, the school appears to have compiled a record of general and substantial compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable state and federal laws and regulations, including generally submitting items to the Institute in a timely manner, especially toward the end of the charter term. Also, the school generally has maintained and had in place effective systems and controls for legal compliance with the exceptions noted. The school had legal assistance when it was under management from Mosaica, and since that time it has access to legal services on an as needed basis, although some of the issues that have been resolved by the Institute could have been better handled by the school had counsel been consulted.

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
Benchmark 3A Budgeting and Long Range Planning	3A The school has operated pursuant to a long-range financial plan. The school has created realistic budgets that are monitored and adjusted when appropriate. Actual expenses have been equal to or less than actual revenue with no material exceptions.

For the term of its charter, the school has operated pursuant to long range plans. The school’s annual budgets have provided a realistic framework for the school’s spending activities and monitoring procedures are in place. However, formal approval of the budget by the board was not previously well documented in the board minutes. Also, in May of 2003, the board voted to approve the budget although there was no physical quorum present (one member participated in the meeting by telephone). For Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 the board reviewed and approved the budget at its June board meeting.

Budget to actual reports are prepared and reviewed monthly and the school has demonstrated effective overall budgetary controls. Up-to-date budget reports are presented at board meetings and are discussed as part of the financial report that is given at most board meetings. Board approval is required to exceed the approved budget. Since its inception, the school’s actual revenues have exceeded budgeted revenues as well as actual expenses. The school has not been reliant on variable financing to meet its goals.

The school’s expenses have never exceeded amounts budgeted in total. Budget modifications were made to reflect the changes not initially anticipated such as reduced enrollment in 2003 (75 fewer students or 17%). However, in its early years the school did not make budget transfers between budget lines, instead simply explaining the reasons for significant variances. The school has recently established a process whereby the board reviews and approves budgetary transfers.

<p>Benchmark 3B</p> <p>Internal Controls</p>	<p>3B</p> <p>The school has maintained appropriate internal controls and procedures. Transactions have been accurately recorded and appropriately documented in accordance with management’s direction and laws, regulations, grants and contracts. Assets have been and are safeguarded. Any deficiencies or audit findings have been corrected in a timely manner.</p>
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Based on interviews with staff and review of documentation, the school has established processes and controls related to payroll, procurement, safeguarding of assets and other financial matters. The school has a written accounting procedures manual that requires updating to reflect current practices.

Internal controls can be expected to provide only reasonable, not absolute, assurance to the school’s management and board that objectives will be achieved. For the year ended June 30, 2003, the school’s independent auditors’ reports on compliance and on internal control over financial reporting disclosed fifteen reportable conditions including eight items that were considered material weaknesses. Based on the results of subsequent audits the school has addressed these issues. Each reportable condition previously disclosed was reported as corrected and no new reportable conditions were disclosed, except for two findings disclosed in its federal Single Audit for 2005 which have now been corrected.

The management letter issued by the school’s independent auditor in conjunction with the audit of the financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2005, included several comments and recommendations intended to improve internal control and operating efficiencies. The school has addressed each of these comments to strengthen its system of internal accounting control. A management letter for the year ended June 30, 2006 had not yet been received as of the time of the renewal visit.

The school was audited by the State Education Department related to selected management practices, records and documentation for the period July 1, 2004 through November 15, 2005. The audit found that the school has many of the necessary internal controls in place, but identified improvement opportunities in several areas. The school agreed with and implemented all but two of the recommendations included in the report. One recommendation that is under consideration relates to bonding all staff with access to the financial resources and assets of the school. The school has noted that it currently has insurance coverage to mitigate any potential risk to the school. The other recommendation not implemented concerns the Chief Administrative Officer’s review of the school’s bank reconciliation. The school asserts that it has sufficient separation of duties within its cash management procedures (including bank reconciliations) that it does not need to implement this recommendation. Institute staff concluded that although the recommended procedure would strengthen the school’s controls, sufficient compensating controls exist at the school. Institute staff noted that the CAO and school staff implemented many of the recommendations before the audit was even complete.

<p>Benchmark 3C</p> <p>Financial Reporting</p>	<p>3C</p> <p>The school has complied with financial reporting requirements. The school has provided the State University Board of Trustees and the State Education Department with required financial reports on time, and such reports have been complete and have followed generally accepted accounting principles.</p>
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Financial reporting is most useful for the school’s board, the Institute and the State Education Department when it is timely. The school has met its financial reporting requirements with some exceptions. The annual budget and quarterly financial reports were generally filed on time or within one week of the applicable due date with two exceptions. The first quarterly report for the 2004-2005 school year was filed two months late. Also, the school was significantly late (more than four months) in submitting its financial statement audit report for the year ended June 30, 2003. In addition to missing the initial deadline (December 1st, which was one month later than usual), the school did not provide consistent weekly status updates to the Institute as agreed. The school subsequently developed the systems required to ensure timely submission of its audit report and as a result the school filed its 2004, 2005 and 2006 audit reports in a timely manner. The school did file its Single Audit report for 2005 late (discussed below).

The audit report opinion in each of the school’s first four operating years was unqualified, indicating the financial statements were fairly presented, in all material respects, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and Government Auditing Standards as required. A review of the school’s financial statements for the years ended June 30, 2004 and 2005 noted some anomalies. In addition, the school continues to use an unorthodox method of presentation of temporarily restricted net assets on its statement of financial position. Except for the noted anomalies and presentation issue the school’s financial reporting has been appropriate.

As a recipient of federal funds, the school is required to ensure that the audits required by the federal government’s Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-133, *Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations*, are properly performed and submitted when due. Non-federal entities that expend more than \$500,000 in federal awards must have a Single Audit performed. The school’s federal Single Audit for 2005 was late, despite an extension from the United States Department of Education. The school’s Single Audit for 2006 was submitted timely with no findings or questioned costs.

Benchmark 3D Financial Condition	3D	The school has maintained adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations and has monitored and successfully managed cash flow. Critical financial needs of the school are not dependent on variable income (grants, donations and fundraising).
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The school completed the 2005-06 school year in stable and improved financial condition. The school's total net assets increased by \$364,832 and it finished with total net assets of \$2,008,918. The school increased its cash position by \$306,961. The school has fixed assets (net of accumulated depreciation and amortization) totaling \$2,715,433 that consists of leasehold improvement, furniture, fixtures and equipment.

The school has long term debt of \$805,580 related to its facility. In February 2006 the school refinanced its debt at a substantial savings by obtaining a more favorable interest rate and terms. The initial debt was a 70 month note with principal installments of \$34,448 plus interest based on the prime lending rate plus 7 percent (14.25 percent as of February 2006). The refinanced debt is now at a variable interest rate tied to the five-year Treasury security rate index plus 3.25 percent (7.875 percent) a net interest rate reduction of 6.375%.

Throughout its initial charter period the school generated adequate cash flow to support operations and fund expansion into a second facility. Spending per student (total expenses, including grant related, divided by the revised approved enrollment) in each year was as follows:

2003	2004	2005	2006
\$9,257	\$7,320	\$8,473	\$9,491

The decline in per pupil spending from 2003 to 2004 can be attributed to a combination of efficiencies related to a large (41%) increase in enrollment and reduced start-up expenses.

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	Renewal Question 4 Should the School’s Charter Be Renewed, What Are Its Plans for the Term of a Future Charter?
Benchmark 4A Plans for the School Structure (mission, enrollment, schedule)	4A Key structural elements of the school’s plans for the next charter period are reasonable, feasible and achievable.

In its Application for Initial Renewal, Our World Neighborhood Charter School proposes some modifications to its charter for the next charter period.

First, the school proposes a revised mission statement, as follows:

It is the mission of Our World Neighborhood Charter School to educate our students to become independent-thinkers and lifelong learners. We are committed to an educational philosophy based on inquiry, active and experiential learning, and social justice. Through a literacy-based, integrated and standards-driven curriculum that encourages community and honors diversity, OWN students receive the broad education they will need to meet the academic and social challenges of the best New York City High schools, and indeed, to thrive in today’s world.

The change generally reflects a further articulation of the school’s broad goals. Given the school’s performance in relation to its academic Accountability Plan goals, and the qualitative indicators regarding implementation of the school’s program at the time of the renewal visit, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the school will be able to fulfill its revised mission statement.

Our World Neighborhood Charter School also proposes a revised annual calendar and daily instructional schedules that meet state time on learning requirements. Should the school’s charter be renewed, OWN would offer 190 instructional days for students. This represents a decrease of ten instructional days per academic year from its initial charter, yet still exceeds the calendar of New York City schools by nine days.

The school does not plan to vary its grade or enrollment structure from its previous charter term, maintaining enrollment for Kindergarten through eighth grade students at 725 students for the first four years of its charter, and dropping enrollment to 700 students during the last year of its charter (a variance allowed for by the Charter Schools Act). The school’s staffing plan is essentially consistent with the previous charter term. As such, the structural elements of the school’s plans for the future charter term are reasonable, feasible, and achievable.

Benchmark 4B Plans for the Educational Program	4B The school has clearly laid out its plans for its educational program, shown that it can implement that program and such program will allow the school to meet its Accountability Plan goals.
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According to the Application for Initial Renewal, for the next charter period, Our World Neighborhood Charter School seeks to continue its Kindergarten through eighth grade education program. The school is not seeking to add additional grades or increase enrollment during this charter period.

OWN's proposed key design elements include:

- a rigorous standards-driven curriculum that provides multiple opportunities for diverse assessments;
- a balanced literacy approach to the teaching of reading and writing;
- assessments that serve as a tool to develop and adjust individual learning plans for students;
- individualized instruction through the pedagogical practice of differentiation at the elementary level, and through progressive needs-based groupings by subject in middle school;
- integrating all students into the classroom through a curriculum aimed at building community, honoring diversity and addressing multiple intelligences;
- providing opportunities to students for remediation as well as enrichment;
- fostering social and cultural awareness through an interdisciplinary, project-driven social studies curriculum;
- fully integrating technology in the classroom;
- introducing the study of a second language beginning in Kindergarten;
- a maximum of 25 students in all classes in the elementary grades, and at an average of 25 students in the middle school;
- providing each K-2 classroom with both a teacher and an assistant teacher;
- supporting teachers through extensive and continuous professional development;
- providing multiple opportunities for family involvement in the activities and governance of the school.

Based on the data collected at the time of the initial renewal visit, it appears that Our World Neighborhood has already begun to implement some of these key design elements. Notably, the school administers multiple assessments, implementation of a new social studies curriculum, and second language instruction beginning in Kindergarten. The school has built a foundation upon which it may implement other critical key design elements successfully including the use of student achievement data to inform teaching and learning, differentiated instruction, and the integration of technology in the classroom.

According to the Application for Initial Renewal, in the next charter period, the school would rely on a balanced literacy approach in English language arts, using Open Court, Kaleidoscope, and Prentice Hall as a backbone. The school implements the SRA mathematics program. The school's science program consists of Harcourt 2000 for grades K-5, and Holt Science Plus for grades 6-8. Our World

Neighborhood has developed its own social studies curriculum based on the resources provided by the Teachers' Curriculum Institute. The school states that its curriculum as implemented remains fully aligned with the New York State performance standards.

The school will no longer offer the "Portal Program" to provide services to English language learners, as described in its initial charter, due to the fact that the program is a proprietary program offered by the school's former management partner, Mosaica. However, the school will continue to provide services to English language learners.

OWN has revised the draft Accountability Plan that it submitted in its Renewal Application. The revised plan, to be in effect during a subsequent renewal period, includes five required measures to be contained within the school's ELA and mathematics goals and reflects the Institute's current renewal standards.

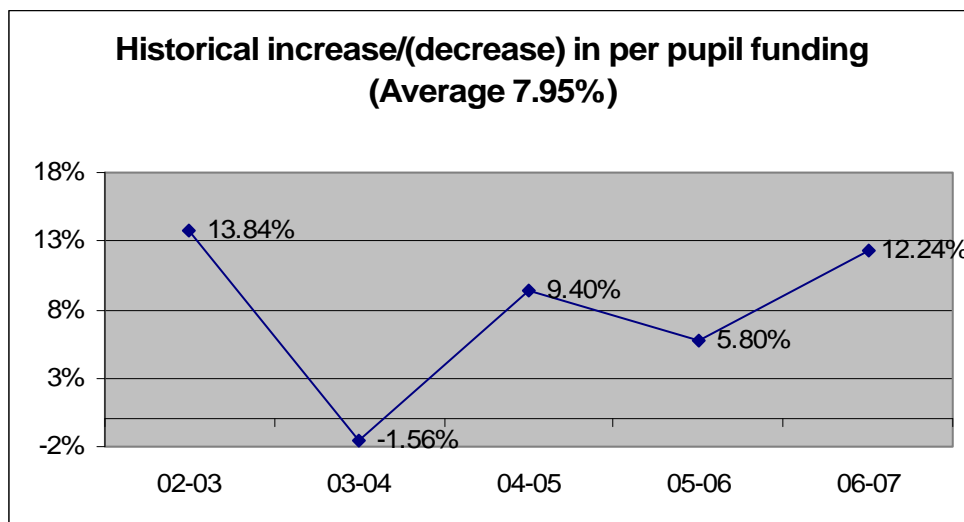
<p>Benchmark 4C</p> <p>Plans for the Governance Structure</p>	<p>4C</p> <p>The school has provided a reasonable, feasible and achievable governance structure for the term of the next charter.</p>
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In general, the school has provided a reasonable, feasible and achievable governance structure for the term of the next charter. The school provided a set of legally sufficient by-laws. The board was clear on its duties in the absence of a management company. The school has a clear Code of Ethics, which details the expected conduct of school stakeholders and sets a high standard for officers and employees. The School Board Organization Chart submitted with the renewal application is consistent with the school’s by-laws. Responses to interview questions and other evidence, including questions regarding school oversight demonstrate that the school’s governance model is sustainable for a five-year renewal term.

Benchmark 4D Fiscal & Facility Plans	4 D The school has provided a reasonable, feasible and achievable appropriate five-year fiscal plan for the term of next charter, including plans for an adequate facility.
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The school has presented a reasonable and appropriate fiscal plan for the proposed new charter period. Long-range fiscal projections are more susceptible to error than those for a single year. Such projections are subject to revision due to changes in local conditions, objectives, and laws. The school will be required to develop and adopt annual budgets based on known per pupil amounts. The plan relies on continued high demand for enrollment in the school. The school has reported a substantial waiting list (more than 500 students) and historically has had a high percentage of students return each year. Extending its current facility arrangements on similar terms would also be necessary for the plan to be successful.

The school's fiscal plan projects a surplus in each year. The projected net surplus is substantial over the proposed new charter period (\$1.7 million) and occurs with virtually no reliance on fundraising. The school's fiscal plan estimates an increase in per pupil revenue of two percent each year. While the projected increase is not assured, the increase is substantially less than the historical average increase over the life of the school (7.95 percent). Presented below is the per-pupil funding increases and decreases over the life of the school.



Personnel costs, the largest expense of the school, will increase substantially to reflect the increase in full-time equivalent employees from 62 to 75 that occurred from 2006 to 2007. Also, the plan reflects the salary structure of its instructional staff which has been configured to be more in line with the salary step scales of the NYDOE. Management believes that the proposed realignment of instructional salaries will enable OVN to be more competitive in the human resource market and enable the school to retain highly qualified staff. Likewise the school's share of taxes and benefits are forecast to grow proportionately with the growth of personnel costs.

The school currently leases facilities for its elementary school and middle school. Each lease will expire in the next two years (June 30, 2007 and August 31, 2008 respectively). The school's plan anticipates that it will be able to extend both leases with favorable terms. However, there are likely to be costs associated with extending the lease of the elementary school. The school is a sublessee and is seeking have the sublandlord removed which is likely involve additional costs. These additional costs are not accounted for in the plan as they are not known at this time. However, the plan estimates that sufficient resources are likely to be available to absorb these additional costs.

A key part of the school's future plans are its people and on this front positive indicators have been observed. The school has negotiated a two year employment contract with its Chief Administrative Officer adding stability to the school. Also, the school continues to be lead by a strong core of returning board members and has added new members bringing different organizational strengths to the board. During the renewal visit, the school's Chief Financial Officer resigned, creating a significant hole in the organization. However, the school moved quickly to find a qualified replacement and, as a result, avoided unnecessary interruptions in its fiscal operations.

Generally, the school's plan makes reasonable assumptions with a few exceptions. For example, an assumed increase in federal Title funding is at odds with the trend of less money going to New York State for federal programs. This example and other exceptions, including the lease related costs noted above, are not considered material to the overall soundness of the plan.

The final version of Institute renewal reports should be broadly shared by the school with the entire school community. The reports will be posted on the Institute's website at: www.newyorkcharters.org/pubsReportsRenewals.htm. Further, detailed information about the renewal process—from a summary overview for parents to the full set of Renewal Benchmarks (including the specific elements of each benchmark)—are available at: www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsRenewOverview.htm.