



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Initial Renewal Report

Oracle Charter School

January 4, 2010

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The final version of Institute renewal reports should be broadly shared by the school with the entire school community. This report will be posted on the Institute’s website at: www.newyorkcharters.org/pubsReportsRenewals.htm.

REPORT INTRODUCTION

This report is the primary means by which the Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) transmits to the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the “SUNY Trustees”) its findings and recommendations regarding a school’s application for renewal, and more broadly, details 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 “SUNY Renewal Practices”).¹

Information about the SUNY’s renewal process, including the Institute’s comprehensive Charter Renewal Handbook and an overview of the requirements for renewal under the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (as amended, the “Act”), are available on the Institute’s website at: www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsRenewOverview.htm.

RECOMMENDATION AND SUMMARY DISCUSSION

Recommendation

Short-Term Renewal

The Charter Schools Institute recommends that the SUNY Trustees approve the Application for Renewal of Oracle Charter School and renew its charter for a period of three years with authority to provide instruction to students in ninth through twelfth grades in such configuration as set forth in its Application for Renewal, with a maximum projected enrollment of 360 students.

Background and Required Findings

In initial renewal reviews, the SUNY Trustees evaluate the strength and effectiveness of a school’s academic program by the degree to which the school has succeeded in meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals during the Accountability Period² and by the quality of the instructional program in place at the school during the charter period, as assessed using the Qualitative Education Benchmarks (a subset of the Renewal Benchmarks). In giving weight to both student achievement and the emergent program, this approach provides a balance between an outcome-based system of accountability in which a school is held accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results, and a determination of the likelihood that the educational program will improve student learning and achievement going forward.

The Oracle Charter School (“Oracle”) has applied for an initial, Short-Term Renewal of three years. The SUNY Renewal Practices provide three possible renewal outcomes for Oracle: Full-Term Renewal; Short-Term Renewal; or Non-Renewal. In order to earn a Short-Term Renewal, Oracle must, in brief, either have compiled: 1) an ambiguous or mixed record of educational achievement but have in place an academic program of sufficient strength and effectiveness which will likely result in the school’s being able to meet its academic Accountability Plan goals with the additional

¹ The *Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University Board of Trustees* (revised September 15, 2009) are available at: www.newyorkcharters.org.

² For the purpose of reporting student achievement results, the Accountability Period is defined in the SUNY Renewal Practices as the time the Accountability Plan was in effect. In the case of an initial renewal, the plan covers the first four years that the school was in operation during the charter period.

time that renewal would permit; or 2) an overall record of meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals but have in place an educational program that is inadequate in multiple and material respects.³

Based on the Institute's review of the evidence it gathered and Oracle Charter School provided including, but not limited to, the school's Application for Renewal, evaluation visits conducted during the charter period, a renewal evaluation visit conducted in the last year of the charter period, and the school's record of academic performance as determined by the extent to which it has met the academic goals in its Accountability Plan, the Institute finds that the school has compiled an ambiguous or mixed record of educational achievement in meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals, but has in place (a) an academic program of sufficient strength and effectiveness, as assessed using the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, that will likely result in the school's being able to meet or come close to meeting its Accountability Plan goals with the additional time that renewal would permit, and (b) a governing board and organizational structures that have demonstrated the capacity to meet the school's academic Accountability Plan goals and to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound fashion.

Based on all the evidence, the Institute makes the following findings required by the Act. Oracle Charter School as described in the Application for Renewal meets the requirements of the Act and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations. The school 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 and materially further the purposes set out in Education Law subdivision 2850(2).

Therefore, in accordance with the standard for Short-Term-Renewal for Initial Renewal found in the SUNY Renewal Practices, the Institute recommends that the SUNY Trustees approve Oracle Charter School's Application for Charter Renewal and renew the charter for a period of three years.

Consideration of School District Comments

In accordance with the Act, the Institute notified the school district in which the charter school is located regarding the school's application for renewal. As of the date of this report, no comments were received in response.

Summary Discussion

Oracle meets the standard for a Short-Term Renewal of three years to the extent that its limited record of high school student achievement indicates that it has made progress toward meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals and, given the trajectory of achievement amongst current cohorts moving through the school's program, is on track at least to come close to meeting future Accountability Plan goals in the time that a Short-Term Renewal would permit. This progress coincides with the school's beginning in the last two years to gain traction in the establishment of a college preparatory program, given its leadership structure, curriculum, and professional development program. Further, Oracle's governing board has taken decisive action over the last two years to hold the school leader accountable by focusing on student outcomes and the effectiveness of the educational program, and by restructuring the academic program to phase out middle school grades 7 and 8.

³ See the SUNY Renewal Practices for a full explanation of both short-term renewal options.

Academic Success

Oracle Charter School is making progress toward meeting its Accountability Plan goals in English language arts and mathematics. The two goals are based on both middle school and high school measures. While Oracle has had limited success in achieving most of its middle school English language arts measures, the school has demonstrated promising fourth-year Accountability Cohort results in the corresponding high school English language arts measures. Based on limited data, Oracle has made progress toward achieving its mathematics goal, meeting its absolute target for middle school grades in the most recent year and far-surpassing targets for its first high school fourth-year Accountability Cohort. Additionally, based on limited data, the school is close to meeting its science and social studies goals. With regard to the school's high school graduation goal, while the school fell short of the Institute's graduation target this year, preliminary data suggest that the school is on track to meeting this goal with subsequent graduation cohorts. The school met its college preparation goal. According to the state's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system, the school is deemed to be in good standing.

Throughout its Accountability Period, Oracle Charter School has improved its performance on the state's middle school English language arts exam and posted a strong fourth-year cohort proficiency rate on the Regents English exam for its first high school Accountability Cohort. In the most recent year, the school outperformed its local school district at the middle school level and, based on historical district proficiency rates, is expected to do so at the high school level as well. In relation to demographically similar middle schools, Oracle has performed lower than expected to a large degree. With respect to cohort growth, Oracle's performance has varied; however, over the past two years overall middle school performance has improved.

During the current Accountability Period, Oracle Charter School has steadily improved its performance on the state's middle school mathematics exam and the school's first fourth-year high school Accountability cohort achieved its absolute target on Regents' mathematics exams. In addition, with the exception of the 2006-07 academic year, the school has outperformed its local school district on middle school mathematics exams and the school's first fourth-year high school cohort is expected to exceed the local school district's fourth-year Accountability Cohort proficiency rate. In relation to demographically similar middle schools, Oracle has generally performed lower than expected to a large degree including the most recent year, despite having met its absolute middle school mathematics measure. In terms of growth, since 2007-08, while the school has had varied success in achieving middle school cohort targets, overall cohort performance has improved.

With regard to the school's graduation and college preparation goals, based on results from its first graduating student cohort, with 64 percent of the cohort graduating, Oracle did not meet its target, but did have a substantially higher percent graduating than that of the surrounding Buffalo City School District. Further, preliminary evidence suggests that the school is on track to meeting its goal with subsequent high school cohorts. Oracle did meet its college preparation goal: 34 of the 37 students graduating from Oracle in the 2008-09 school year, were accepted into a two- or four-year college or university. While data on college enrollment are unavailable, assuming that accepted students enrolled into a college or university, the school exceeded its target.

Late in the charter period, Oracle Charter School has begun to provide visible and ongoing instructional leadership with leaders taking steps to establish a culture of high expectations built on an emerging college preparatory program. In contrast to the first three years of operation when there was limited direct ongoing support of teachers, instructional leaders – including a curriculum

coordinator and an instructional coach – now have in place a variety of systems for evaluating teacher quality and effectiveness and providing critical feedback, coaching and modeling. The school provides structured opportunities, resources and guidance for teachers to plan instruction within and across grade levels. Its current clear focus on providing a comprehensive college prep program has evolved during the course of the charter period. The emergence of the new vision is manifest in the school’s grading and promotion policy, as well as its educational programming.

The school leadership structure has evolved over the course of the charter period such that its instructional support has begun to solidify curriculum development and the provision of focused lesson planning. Teachers plan and implement purposeful lessons with objectives generally aligned to standards. In most classrooms at the time of the renewal visit, lessons were targeted to address a stated or written objective and observed lessons were aligned to the stated purpose, providing meaningful, although not always efficient, learning opportunities for students. Nevertheless, at the time of the renewal visit, with a few notable exceptions, students were not cognitively engaged by rigorous instruction. In most classes, given their inexperience, teachers provided whole-group instruction and used questioning techniques that did not promote higher-order thinking but instead required students to recall basic facts. While opportunities for stimulating discussion were available, they were often not taken. Instead, students spent the majority of class time watching the teacher lecture to the class. Despite the introduction of the school’s Differentiation Initiative in 2008-09, teachers are now only at the beginning stages of implementing this model effectively.

Teacher planning and implementation of purposeful lessons focusing on specific learning objectives is attributable to Oracle’s now having a clearly defined curriculum, which is aligned to state standards in most subjects. Overall, teachers are sufficiently supported in what to teach and when to teach it. The school’s departments are actively engaged in developing and reviewing curriculum. While the school followed a formal curriculum development process during the 2008-09 school year as part of the implementation of its Differentiation Initiative, teachers had not yet systematically revised the curriculum in the current year; rather, teachers were at the time of the renewal visit modifying specific unit plans as they deemed necessary. These efforts provided teachers with standards-based content and a focus on student performance.

Oracle has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and is beginning to use it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning. The school regularly administers useful assessments and has introduced procedures to collect systematically assessment results and to analyze those results. The school did not have a formal assessment system early in the charter period and teachers were left to their own devices to develop assessments, as well as to collect and analyze results. Because procedures for collecting and scoring assessments has varied by department and in recognition of the importance of teachers’ developing their own competence in analyzing results, a new instructional coach has taken the lead to improve the teachers’ collection and analysis of assessment data. To the school’s credit, these efforts are the focus of this year’s professional development program, as well as its weekly departmental planning meetings.

Over the course of its first three years of operation, the school’s professional development program did not address identified shortcomings in teachers’ pedagogical skills and content knowledge. During this time, professional development activities were not strategic and supportive of school priorities. Late in the charter period, the school has provided sufficient time, personnel, and funding to support a sustained professional development program derived from staff interests. In addition, some content-specific opportunities have been afforded to teachers, providing varying support depending on teachers’ level of expertise.

While there is currently only one school-wide professional development meeting per month, there are numerous other development opportunities for teachers. The coaches attend departmental planning meetings each week to offer guidance and support. In addition, the school's instructional leadership team conducts regular observations of its teachers and meets regularly to share information about teacher performance. All teachers, regardless of how long they have been at the school, have participated in the same in-school professional development sessions each summer, including a similar presentation on school culture and routines.

Oracle has procedures in place for identifying at-risk students, including those with disabilities and others who are struggling academically. The school has deployed sufficient resources and a variety of interventions to address the range of student needs. Teachers are provided with adequate guidance and support to help them meet the needs of at-risk students. Sufficient strategies have been utilized to meet the needs of students at risk of academic failure, including after-school tutoring, summer school, increased instructional time for English language arts and mathematics, and in-class flexible student groupings. Oracle Charter School has a clearly defined procedure for screening students that may have disabilities and for providing these students with the appropriate level of support. Regular education teachers regularly communicate with special education teachers and are generally aware of Individualized Education Program goals and the instructional accommodations needed for identified students.

At the time of the renewal inspection visit and in contrast to earlier inspection visits when common areas were found to be disorderly, Oracle has put a number of procedures in place to promote a safe and orderly environment. However, despite these efforts, a school-wide culture of learning and scholarship has not yet been established throughout the school. Classroom management practices continue to vary with many teachers exhibiting ineffective techniques and low-level misbehavior continuing to be tolerated in many classrooms. The school has a documented discipline policy; however, it is not consistently applied, nor does it meet the needs of the school.

Oracle's suspension and expulsion rates are fairly high. While the school has been vigilant in its efforts to minimize the effects of gang affiliations and altercations inside the school, it is still struggling with the internal impact of these conditions existing outside of the school. Members of the school leadership and the board of trustees stated that the situation is reflective of the Buffalo City School District as a whole.

Organizational Effectiveness and Viability

Oracle Charter School has generally been faithful to its mission and has implemented some of its key design elements in pursuit of this mission. Near the end of the charter period, the school has begun to develop a college preparatory culture and all stakeholders are well aware of this aspect of the school's mission. Aside from this focus, the school has not demonstrated full implementation of other key design elements contained in its original charter. Over the course of the charter, there was limited evidence that the school implemented an academic program with arts and technology integration; project-based learning, cooperative learning, cross-curricular instruction, and discussion-based learning. The dominant instructional strategy observed during evaluation visits throughout the charter period has been teacher-directed instruction.

Based on limited available data, parents are satisfied with the school. While the school does not have a process in place for evaluating parent satisfaction, at the time of the renewal visit, a group of interviewed parents expressed general satisfaction with the school, citing an appreciation of the school environment,

its emphasis on meeting standards and its college preparatory focus. The parents reported that teachers had good connections with each child and that the after-school activities enabled them to feel like members of the school community. They indicated that they receive immediate information from the school, including regular progress reports and report cards. While the parents were well informed about their own child's performance, they were unaware of that of the entire school. In spring 2009, 16 students were on the waiting list, 11 of whom have since been admitted; and 90 percent of the students who attended Oracle in the spring returned for the 2009-10 school year.

The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure with staff, systems, and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program. Day-to-day operations are competently managed; the organizational structure supports distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The current structure is a clear departure from the original distribution of responsibilities that included three co-equal school leaders. Faculty and staff have been uniform in their assessment of the improvements to the organizational structure over the course of the charter period.

Teacher turnover has inhibited the school's ability to retain quality personnel. While turnover has recently improved in comparison to the early years of the charter period, it remains high. As such, because only 75 percent of the teachers returned in each of the last two years, only 60 percent of the current teachers were on staff during the 2007-08 school year. Such high rates of teacher turnover have impeded school leaders' efforts to develop a high-quality faculty, and to raise the level of the academic program. Nevertheless, several teachers interviewed commented that a number of quality teachers were hired for the 2008-09 school year and are still with the school which is a sign that at least the school is moving in the right direction. Further, the college prep focus and cohesiveness of the leadership suggests that the staff is stabilizing.

In the last two years, Oracle's board of trustees has focused on achieving the school's mission and has worked effectively to provide oversight to the educational program. The board has an adequate skill set, structures, and procedures in place to govern the school. The school board understands the core business of the school – academic achievement – in sufficient depth to exercise its oversight responsibilities. The board regularly receives written reports and a variety of hard data from the head of school to support its oversight. Based on a review of recent board-meeting minutes, the head of school provides a dashboard of indicators, including: school performance, enrollment, supervisory activity, attendance and discipline data, faculty-staff demographics, as well as information regarding school leader activity such as number of teacher and leadership evaluations completed. Some members of the school board have participated in governance training in an attempt to increase the capacity of the board to fulfill its responsibilities.

Since the current incumbent became board chair at the beginning of the 2007-08 school year, he and other members of the board have focused on student achievement and the school's academic Accountability Plan goals. Notably in the middle of that school year, believing that too many teachers had been fired without cause, that the head of school was assuming too much administrative responsibility, and that the school leadership structure was not functioning adequately, the board contracted with a leadership consultant to determine the nature and extent of the problems (many of which had been flagged by the Institute's reports), and to determine whether the head of school should be retained. Until then, the board had not evaluated her and was not sufficiently aware of her performance or potential. As a result of this action, some board members left and new members with a more academic focus joined the board. By the end of 2007-08, the board introduced a corrective

action plan with a focus on the school leader meeting goals based on student outcomes. The consultant continues to serve the board, mostly as a coach for the head of school.

The board has established clear performance-review criteria based on individual job descriptions; regular, ongoing evaluations are in place for the head of school, all members of the school's leadership team, and teachers. The board of trustees has conducted performance reviews for the head of school twice per year over the last two years by delegating the responsibility to the consultant. At the end of the 2008-09 school year, the consultant presented his most recent evaluation of the head of school to the board. In a summary, which appears in board minutes, he discusses her leadership style and success in carrying out current initiatives. While he centers his discussion on her inputs into Oracle's program, he does indicate that the trustees have become better informed about her performance and that they now provide a higher level of support – attributable to the board's use of a set of goals tied to student outcomes.

A key decision of the board was the phasing out of the seventh grade at the end of the 2008-09 school year, and the eighth grade at the end of the 2009-10 school year. After the Institute informed the school in its fourth year of operation that its renewal outcome would likely be non-renewal or short-term renewal, the school board decided to revise the charter to eliminate the lower grades. This decision contravened the original school design and philosophy but was seen as necessary in order for the school not to be distracted from its focus on developing a college prep program.

Early in the charter term, there were a number of parent and staff complaints, centering on student discipline and the provision of alternate instruction. As the school matured and students and parents acclimated to the school culture, the number of complaints subsided. The school board hired legal counsel to handle some of the personnel issues. Underlying some of these issues was a lack of development of policies and procedures, which was noted by the State Education Department during its monitoring visit in the school's second year of operation. In this respect the school has made progress although several, largely minor, policy deficiencies were noted at the time of the renewal inspection visit.

The school generated a mixed record of compliance with various reports and deadlines with more violations occurring earlier in its charter. The school was beset by teacher certification issues, which now appear to be largely remedied. The current dean of students ensures that due process and alternative instruction are provided for suspended students. With certain exceptions, the school at the time of the renewal inspection appeared to be in general and substantial compliance with the Act, its charter and applicable state and federal law and regulations. The school also appeared to now have adequate structures in place to help keep the school in compliance.

Fiscal Soundness

Oracle Charter School has created realistic budgets over the course of the charter period that are monitored and adjusted when appropriate. Annual budgets are developed by the school's chief financial officer ("CFO") with appropriate input from the school leader, other key staff, and the school board. Budget variances are routinely analyzed by the CFO, finance staff and board treasurer and material variances are discussed with the school leader and the board. The CFO shares budget and other key fiscal reports with the head of school on a monthly basis and on a quarterly basis with the school board. Actual expenses have been equal to or less than actual revenue over the course of

the charter period with one exception occurring in fiscal year (“FY”) 2007-08 due to a decrease in student enrollment.

The school has maintained appropriate written fiscal policies, procedures and controls related to external and internal compliance for cash disbursements, cash receipts, bank reconciliations, payroll, fixed assets, grants/contributions, and the preparation of financial statements. The CFO and other school leaders work collaboratively with the school board to ensure that the policies and procedures are documented and followed by school staff. The school’s FY 2008-09 audit report on internal controls—over financial reporting and compliance with laws, regulations and grants—disclosed three areas of concern: segregation of duties due to small size of the fiscal staff, expense reports and approved vendor lists. The school has since taken actions to address each of these areas of concern. All other transactions have been accurately recorded and appropriately documented in accordance with management’s direction. The lack of other deficiencies in the reports provides some, but not absolute, assurance that the school has maintained adequate internal controls and procedures.

The school has complied with financial reporting requirements during the charter period. Budget, quarterly and annual financial statement audit reports were filed in a timely, accurate and complete manner. Each of the school’s annual financial statement audit reports followed generally accepted accounting principles and received an unqualified opinion, indicating that, in the auditor’s opinion, the school’s financial statements and notes fairly represent, in all material respects, the school’s financial position, changes in net assets, and cash flows. The reports indicate the audits were conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards as required. The school board reviews and approves the annual financial statement audit report.

The school has minimally maintained adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations and has monitored and managed stringent cash flow. The school completed FY 2008-09 in fairly stable financial condition, slightly increasing total net assets by eighteen percent and cash reserves by seventy-six percent. It should be noted that the school has increased cash reserves each year over the last four years. Oracle has very little short- or long-term debt. The school has a positive working capital ratio, indicating the school has enough short term assets to cover immediate liabilities/short term debt. The school has no major investments and all cash is left in savings and money market accounts to ensure the school has sufficient cash available to pay current bills and other shortly due payables. As noted below, there are current factors—including discussions about enrollment in the Teachers Retirement System—that could impact the school’s future fiscal standing.

Plans for the Next Charter Period

The school has provided all of the key structural elements for a renewal charter and they are deemed to be reasonable, feasible, and achievable. The school has refined its mission statement to reflect its explicit focus on preparing students for college. The revised mission statement would be:

Oracle Charter School provides a college preparatory education that empowers all students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become responsible citizens, able to meet life’s challenges and succeed.

The school will have phased out its middle school grades to focus exclusively on providing a high school educational program to students in 9th through 12th grades. The school cites poor performance within its middle school grades during the current charter period, as well as achievement successes within its high school grades and a greater local need for high school options as rationale for this

decision. Aside from the added complexity of starting both a middle school and a high school at the same time, the school has persistently faced the obstacle of operating a middle school with a different grade configuration from that of schools in the surrounding Buffalo area. Most public schools offer kindergarten through 8th grade and no others begin in the 7th grade. With the absence of a feeder pattern, Oracle's recruitment for the middle school remained ineffective throughout the charter period.

Projected enrollment in each of the three years of the proposed short-term charter renewal period would be 360 students, with 120 students admitted in new ninth grade cohorts accounting for natural attrition through twelfth grade. The school year would be comprised of between 187 and 188 days of instruction.

Oracle Charter School proposes to continue to build on the refinements to its high school program initiated in the last two years. Key design elements presented in the school's Application for Initial Renewal include the following: small class size, averaging 18 students; college preparatory education integrated with arts and technology and supported by a school-wide advisory program; cross-curricular emphasis; further implementation of its model for differentiated instruction; data-driven instructional practices; child study team; school improvement team; dress code; and character education. The school again proposes a community service graduation requirement to support its mission of enabling students to become responsible citizens.

In keeping with its college preparation mission, the school proposes a number of outcome measures to be included in an Accountability Plan for the second charter period. These measures represent a valid set of indicators of an effective college preparation program and include: graduating with Regents Diplomas with Advanced Designation; acceptance into a four year college program; and, matriculation into post-secondary college programs in the fall after their senior year,.

Members of the current board of trustees expressed their intent to continue their service to the school. In the next charter period, the board would eliminate the faculty member position on the board of trustees in order to tighten the school leadership's reporting structure. The board would maintain the following committees during the next charter term: academic, executive, facilities, finance, marketing, and nominations. The board would use a recently created board handbook that supports new trustees' orientation and provides an important reference for existing trustees. In addition, the board would participate in ongoing professional development related to best-practices for charter school boards. The board has the requisite skills sets and understanding of its roles and responsibilities in order to adequately govern Oracle Charter School for the term of the next charter.

Oracle has presented a reasonable and appropriate fiscal plan that is likely achievable. The school has taken a strong strategic approach in budgeting and planning for the next charter period. Due to state deficit problems, and the uncertainty of per pupil funding, the school has developed working budgets that show both per pupil funding increasing three to five percent and also remaining flat at 2009-10 per-pupil allocations. The school acknowledges that, given these deficit problems, it needed to have in place both a standard and conservative budget approach that would allow the school to remain fiscally viable while meeting all of the student and faculty needs. Both plans project a small operating and cash flow surplus in each year of the new charter period, contingent on the school meeting enrollment goals. 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, laws and state funding. The school will be required to develop and adopt annual budgets based on known per pupil amounts for the districts from which it draws enrollment.

The school in FY 2009-10 planned for roughly \$300,000 in legislative aid that will most likely not occur. The school has addressed this issue in FY 2009-10 with appropriate budget cuts and reduced spending. The school board is also seeking to improve fundraising efforts to increase cash reserves that would offset any potential deficits.

Oracle Charter School has presented a plan for implementing an educational program during the period of the proposed charter period that would likely improve student learning and achievement. Its governing board and organizational structures have demonstrated the capacity to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound fashion. With the continued implementation of its focused approach to developing instructional competence, its strengthened leadership team, ongoing evaluation of teacher performance and expectations for student college enrollment, Oracle is likely to improve the rigor of classroom instruction, as well as classroom management. In turn, these improvements to the academic program would likely result in the school's meeting or coming close to meeting the goals in its Accountability Plan that the additional time of a short-term renewal period would permit.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	January 27, 2004
Date Initial Charter Approved by Board of Regents	March 23, 2004
School Opening Date	September, 2005

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades	District
2005-06 through present	888 Delaware Avenue Buffalo, NY	All	Buffalo City School District

Current Mission Statement

Oracle Charter School provides a college preparatory education that empowers all students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become responsible citizens, able to meet life's challenges and succeed.

Current Key Design Elements

• Differentiation of instruction
• Project-based assessment
• Discussion-based learning environment
• Cooperative learning opportunities
• Arts integration
• Technology integration

School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ⁴	Original Chartered Grades	Revised Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2005-06	180	184	7-9	N/A	7-9	185
2006-07	240	240	7-10	N/A	7-10	185
2007-08	300	273	7-11	N/A	7-11	190
2008-09	360	350	7-12	N/A	7-12	188
2009-10	392	330	7-12	8-12	8-12	188

⁴ Source: SUNY Charter School Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

Student Demographics

	2006-07 ⁵		2007-08 ⁶		2008-09	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Buffalo City School District Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Buffalo City School District Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment ⁷	Buffalo City School District Enrollment ⁸
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	2%	0%	2%	0%	N/A
Black or African American	68%	57%	74%	57%	73%	N/A
Hispanic	8%	14%	10%	15%	12%	N/A
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	N/A
White	24%	25%	15%	25%	13%	N/A
Multiracial	0%	0%	1%	0%	2%	N/A
Special Populations						
Students with Disabilities ⁹	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Limited English Proficient	0%	7%	0%	8%	0%	N/A
Free/Reduced Lunch						
Eligible for Free Lunch	51%	70%	49%	72%	79%	N/A
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	11%	8%	12%	8%	6%	N/A

Current Board of Trustees¹⁰

Board Member Name	Position/Committees	Term
David Steffan	Chairman	2/28/09-2/28/11
Adrian Roselli	Vice-Chairman	2/28/09-2/28/11
Michelle Scott	Secretary	11/30/07-11/30/09
John Gibbs	Treasurer	10/31/08-10/31/10
Donette Ruffin	Trustee	2/28/08-2/28/10
Lucy Tretiack-Caruso	Trustee	2/28/08-2/28/10
Roslyn Taylor	Trustee	2/28/09-2/28/11
George Kimble	Parent Trustee	10/31/07-10/31/09

⁵ Source: 2006-07 School Report Cards, New York State Education Department.

⁶ Source: 2007-08 School Report Cards, New York State Education Department.

⁷ Source: 2008-09 Demographics and Limited English Proficient Percentages calculated from BEDS reports submitted at the beginning of the school year. This information is unverified by the schools. It also does not include Free/Reduced Lunch status, but rather categorizes students as “economically disadvantaged.”

⁸ Aggregated district data not yet available for 2008-09.

⁹ New York State Education Department does not report special education data.

¹⁰ Source: School renewal application.

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2004-05 through 2009-10	Julie Jackson-Forsberg, Head of School

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2005-06	First-Year Visit	Institute	April 6, 2006
2006-07	Second-Year Visit	Institute	March 29, 2007
2007-08	Third-Year Visit	External (SchoolWorks)	April 23-24, 2008
2008-09	Fourth-Year Visit	Institute	March 17-19, 2009
2009-10	Initial Renewal Visit	Institute	October 6-8, 2009

ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

Background

At the beginning of the charter period the school developed and adopted an Accountability Plan that set academic goals in the key subjects of English language arts and mathematics, as well as science and social studies. The plan also included an NCLB goal. For each goal in the Accountability Plan specific outcome measures define the level of performance necessary to meet that goal. Furthermore, the Institute has established a set of required outcome measures that include the following three types: 1) the absolute level of student performance on state examinations; 2) the comparative level of student performance on state examinations; and 3) the growth in student learning according to year-to-year comparisons of grade level cohorts. Subsequent to the incorporation of Oracle’s Accountability Plan into its charter, the Institute required that schools include additional high school measures in their Accountability Plans. While Oracle is still held to the measures stated in its plan, the additional measures provide additional evidence to evaluate Oracle’s performance.

The following table shows the outcome measures currently required by the Institute in each subject area goal, as well as for the NCLB goal. Schools may have also elected to include additional optional goals and measures in their Accountability Plan. After presenting the results of the measures in Oracle’s Accountability Plan, the analysis provides additional evidence including results of the measures that are now required in all school Accountability Plans.

Summary of Required Goals and Outcome Measures in Elementary/Middle School (K-8) Accountability Plans					
GOAL	Required Outcome Measures				
	Absolute		Comparative		Growth
	75 percent proficient on state exam	Performance Index (PI) meets Annual Measurable Objective (AMO)	Percent proficient greater than that of local school district	School exceeds predicted level of performance compared to similar public schools by small Effect Size	Grade-level cohorts reduce by half the gap between prior year’s percent proficient and 75 percent
English Language Arts	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
Mathematics	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
Science	✦		✦		
Social Studies	✦		✦		
NCLB	School is deemed in “Good Standing” under state’s NCLB accountability system				

Summary of Required Goals and Outcome Measures in High School (9-12) Accountability Plans			
GOAL	Required Outcome Measures		
	Absolute		Comparative
	75 percent proficient on Regents exams after four years	Performance Index (PI) meets Annual Measurable Objective (AMO)	Percent proficient after four years greater than that of local school district
English language arts	✦	✦	✦
Mathematics	✦	✦	✦
Science	✦	✦	
Social Studies	✦	✦	
Graduation	- 75 percent of students in the high school graduation cohort will graduate after the completion of their fourth year in the cohort.		
College Prep (only for college prep schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The school will demonstrate preparation of its students for college through at least one optional measure of its own design. - The school will demonstrate college attendance or achievement through at least one measure of its own design. 		
NCLB	School is deemed in “Good Standing” under state’s NCLB accountability system		

The most important criterion for renewal is academic success, which is demonstrated in large part by meeting or coming close to meeting the goals in a school’s Accountability Plan. The Institute determines the outcome of a goal by evaluating the multiple measures associated with that goal.

The following presentation indicates the outcome of each of the school’s goals, as well as an analysis of the respective measures for each goal during the Accountability Period.¹¹ Italicized text indicates goals or measures as written in the school’s Accountability Plan; bold numbers appearing in the tables are the critical values for determining if a measure was achieved in a given year. Aside from required Accountability Plan measures, the following also presents the results of optional measures that the school may have included in its plan. Based on the Institute’s analysis, some numbers of students differ from those the school reported; these differences do not affect the interpretation of results.

¹¹ Because the renewal decision is made in the last year of a Charter Period, the Accountability Period ends in the next to last year of the Charter Period. For initial renewals, the Accountability Period is the first four years of the Charter Period. For subsequent renewals, the Accountability Period includes the last year of the previous Charter Period through the next to last year of the current Charter Period.

English Language Arts

Accountability Plan Goal: Oracle Charter School students will demonstrate proficiency in reading and writing.

Outcome: Oracle has made progress towards, but is still not close to meeting its English language arts goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures

Absolute Measure: 75 percent of 8 th grade students who are enrolled in at least their second year at Oracle Charter School will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State ELA examination.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Grade	2005-06¹²	2006-07 (Tested: 45)	2007-08 (Tested: 36)	2008-09 (Tested: 24)
3	-	-	-	-
4	-	-	-	-
5	-	-	-	-
6	-	-	-	-
7	-	0.0	25.0	100.0
8	-	32.6	26.5	56.5
All	-	31.1	26.3	58.3

In 2006-07, Oracle Charter School first administered the state’s English language arts exam to 8th grade students who had been enrolled in the school for two or more years. In the first year, 33 percent were proficient and the school fell short of its target by a wide margin. In 2007-08, the school’s performance declined and only 27 percent of students were proficient. In the most recent year, 57 percent of students scored proficient or better and the school’s performance, while improved, remained far below its target.¹³

Absolute Measure: 75% of each high school cohort will score at least 65% on the New York State English Regents exam.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Percent Levels 3 & 4	2005-06 2002 Cohort	2006-07 2003 Cohort	2007-08 2004 Cohort	2008-09 2005 Cohort (N=46)
	-	-	-	91.3

By the completion of their 4th year in high school, 91 percent of Oracle’s first high school Accountability Cohort achieved proficiency on the Regents English exam and the school exceeded its 75 percent target by a wide margin.

¹² In 2005-06 New York State implemented English language arts and mathematics exams in grades 3-8. Prior to that, the exams in these subjects were administered only in grades 4 and 8.

¹³ In interpreting a school's year-to-year changes in the absolute measure, the Institute puts the results in the context of overall state-wide changes. In general, the state-wide proficiency rate on the English language arts exam increased by five percent from 2006-07 to 2007-08 and by nine percent from 2007-08 to 2008-09. From a related perspective, the median school had a proficiency rate of 68.7 percent, 72.8 percent, and 80.9 percent during the three years respectively. These year-to year changes suggest the importance of the comparative measures included in the goal.

Absolute Measure: Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the state ELA exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Index	2005-06¹⁴ (Tested: 118)	2006-07 (Tested: 115)	2007-08 (Tested: 84)	2008-09 (Tested: 58)
PI	114	107	129	148
AMO	122	122	133	144

Oracle Charter School exceeded the English Language arts Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set by the state's NCLB accountability system for the first time during the 2008-09 school year. From 2005-06 through 2007-08, the school's Performance Index fell below the AMO set by the state.

Absolute Measure: Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the state Regents English language arts exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Index	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
PI	-	-	-	187
AMO	-	-	-	171

In 2008-09, when the school's Accountability Cohort completed its 4th year in high school, Oracle Charter School exceeded the Regents English language arts Annual Measurable Objective set by the state's NCLB accountability system.

Comparative Measure: Each year, the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State ELA exams in each tested grade will be greater than that of the Buffalo school district.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06 (Grades 7-8)	2006-07 (Grade 8)	2007-08 (Grade 8)	2008-09 (Grade 8)
School	31.4	31.1	26.3	58.3
District	23.3	33.4	27.9	42.5

In comparison to the local school district, Oracle's performance on the state English language arts exam has varied. In 2005-06, the school outperformed the district; however, in the following two years the school's level of performance fell below that of the district. In the most recent year, the school's relative performance improved and the school outperformed the district by over 15 percentage points.

¹⁴ In 2005-06 English language arts and mathematics testing began in grades 3-8, and the Performance Index was henceforth calculated based on the aggregate of all tested students.

Comparative Measure: Each year, the percent of students performing at or above a score of 65% for high school on the Regents English exam will be greater than that of the following demographically similar school: Buffalo Academy of Visual and Performing Arts.				
Results (in percents)				
School Year				
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	2002 Cohort	2003 Cohort	2004 Cohort	2005 Cohort
School	-	-	-	91.3
BAVPA	-	73.0	81.0	NA

Comparison data for the 2008-09 school year are yet unavailable. Assuming the Buffalo Academy of Visual and Performing Arts continues the pattern of performance from the previous two years on the Regents English language arts exam, by the completion of its 4th year in high school, Oracle’s first Accountability Cohort will have scored slightly above the performance of the Buffalo Academy of Visual and Performing Arts, a self-selected comparison school.

Comparative Measure: Each year, the percent of students performing at or above a score of 65% for high school on the Regents English exam will be greater than that of the Buffalo School District.				
Results (in percents)				
School Year				
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	2002 Cohort	2003 Cohort	2004 Cohort	2005 Cohort
School	-	-	-	91.3
District	-	50.0	53.0	NA

Comparison data for the 2008-09 school year are yet unavailable. Assuming the Buffalo school district performs at a level similar to its performance in the previous two years on the Regents English language arts exam, by the completion of its 4th year in high school, Oracle’s first Accountability Cohort will have exceeded the performance of the Buffalo school district by a wide margin.

Comparative Measure: <i>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 small degree) according to a regression analysis controlling for students eligible for free lunch among all public schools in New York State.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
School Year				
Index	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	(Grades 7-8)	(Grades 7-8)	(Grades 7-8)	(Grades 7-8)
	(Tested: 118)	(Tested: 115)	(Tested: 84)	(Tested: 58)
Predicted	48.3	49.6	54.9	67.1
Actual	31.4	20.9	33.4	48.3
Effect Size	-0.93	-1.70	-1.46	-1.46

In comparison to demographically similar schools statewide, Oracle performed worse than expected during each year of the Accountability Period. From 2005-06 through 2008-09, the school performed lower than expected to large degree and failed to meet its 0.3 Effect Size target each year.

Growth Measure: For the 2006-07 through 2009-10 school years, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one half the gap between their Mean Normal Curve Equivalent (MNCE) in the previous fall on the Terra Nova Reading and Language subscores, and an MNCE of 50 (grade-level) in the current fall. If a grade level exceeds an MNCE of 50 in the previous year, the cohort will show an increase in the current year.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Mean NCE	2005-06	2006-07 (Grades 8-10) (N=97)	2007-08	2008-09
Baseline	-	37.9	-	-
Target	-	43.9	-	-
Actual	-	36.5	-	-
Cohorts Made	-	(0 of 3)	-	-
Target				

With respect to growth on the nationally norm-referenced Terra Nova reading exam, the school did not report data for the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years. In 2006-07, the only year for which data are available to report on this measure, none of the school's three cohorts achieved their growth targets and overall performance declined.

Growth Measure: For the 2006-07 through 2009-10 school years, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one half the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 for middle school on the previous year's State ELA exams and 75 percent at or above Level 3 for middle school on the current year's State ELA exam.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Percent Level 3 & 4	2005-06	2006-07¹⁵ (Grade 8) (N=44)	2007-08 (Grade 8) (N=42)	2008-09 (Grade 8) (N=21)
Baseline	-	38.6	11.9	47.6
Target	-	56.8	43.4	61.3
Actual	-	31.8	28.6	61.9
Cohorts Made	-	(0 of 1)	(0 of 1)	(1 of 1)
Target				

With respect to cohort growth on the state's English language arts exam, while the school had limited success in achieving targets in previous years, in the current year, the school's 8th grade cohort achieved its target and overall performance improved substantially.

¹⁵ New York State began administering English language arts and mathematics exams in grades 3-8 in 2005-06, thus year-to-year growth could not be evaluated until 2006-07 when two years' of results were first available.

Growth Measure: For the 2006-07 through 2009-10 school years, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one half the gap between the percent at or above a score of 65% for high school on the previous year's State ELA exam and 75 percent at or above 65% for high school on the current year's State ELA exam.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Percent Level 3 & 4	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08 2005 Cohort (N=46)	2008-09 2005 Cohort (N=46)
Baseline	-	-	0.0	78.3
Target	-	-	37.5	78.4
Actual	-	-	78.3	93.5

Oracle's 2005 high school Accountability Cohort has consistently exceeded its growth target on the state's English Regents exam during the Accountability Period. In 2007-08, when students first took the English Regents Exam, 77 percent of students scored proficient or better. In 2007-08, 91 percent were proficient and the school again exceeded its growth target.

Analysis of Additional Optional Measure included in the English Language Art Goal

Absolute Measure: 15% of Oracle Charter School students will demonstrate competency by scoring a Level 2 or above on an AP English exam by grade 12.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Grade	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09 (N=12)
12	-	-	-	53.3

Oracle administered the AP English exam for the first time in 2008-09. More than half the students scored at Level 2 or above, thereby exceeding the target.

Mathematics

Accountability Plan Goal: Oracle Charter School students will become proficient in the application of mathematical skills and concepts.

Outcome: Oracle Charter school has made progress towards meeting its mathematics goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures:

Absolute Measure: For the 2006-07 through 2009-10 school years, 75 percent of 8 th grade students who are enrolled in at least their second year at Oracle Charter School will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Mathematics examination.				
Results (in percents)				
Grade	School Year			
	2005-06¹⁶	2006-07 (Tested: 45)	2007-08 (Tested: 36)	2008-09 (Tested: 23)
3	-	-	-	-
4	-	-	-	-
5	-	-	-	-
6	-	-	-	-
7	-	0.0	25.0	50.0
8	-	20.9	62.5	76.2
All	-	20.0	58.6	73.9

In 2006-07, Oracle Charter School first administered the state’s mathematics exam to 8th grade students who had been enrolled in the school for two or more years. In the first year, 21 percent of 8th graders were proficient and the school fell short of its target by a wide margin. In 2007-08, the school’s performance improved and 63 percent of students were proficient. In the most recent year, 76 percent of students scored proficient or better and the school met its Accountability Plan target.¹⁷

Absolute Measure: For the 2006-07 through 2009-10 school years, 75% of each high school cohort will score at least 65 on the New York State Math A exam. ¹⁸				
Results (in percents)				
Percent Levels 3 & 4	School Year			
	2005-06 2002 Cohort	2006-07 2003 Cohort	2007-08 2004 Cohort	2008-09 2005 Cohort (N=46)
	-	-	-	91.3

By the completion of their 4th year in high school, 91 percent of Oracle’s first high school Accountability Cohort achieved proficiency on a Regents math exam and the school exceeded its 75 percent target by a wide margin.

¹⁶ In 2005-06 New York State implemented English language arts and mathematics exams in grades 3-8. Prior to that, the exams in these subjects were administered only in grades 4 and 8.

¹⁷ In interpreting a school's year-to-year changes in the absolute measure, the Institute puts the results in the context of overall state-wide changes. In general, the statewide proficiency rate on the mathematics exam increased by nearly six percent from 2006-07 to 2007-08 and by eight percent from 2007-08 to 2008-09. From a related perspective, the median school had a proficiency rate of 79.5 percent, 86.2 percent, and 90.8 percent during the three years respectively. These year-to-year changes in absolute results suggest the importance of the comparative measures included in the goal.

¹⁸ Beginning in June 2008, the Regents Integrated Algebra exam was administered in place of the Regents Math A exam; the results are presented based on student performance on all Regents math exams including Math A, Math B, Integrated Algebra, Geometry, Algebra 2 and Trigonometry.

Absolute Measure: Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State math exams will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Index	2005-06¹⁹ (Tested: 111)	2006-07 (Tested: 121)	2007-08 (Tested: 82)	2008-09 (Tested: 59)
PI	95	93	156	164
AMO	86	86	102	119

Oracle Charter School has surpassed the mathematics Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) established by the state's NCLB accountability system during each year of its Accountability Period. The schools' Performance Index has increased nearly 70 points from 2005-06 through 2008-09.

Absolute Measure: Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on Regents math exams will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Index	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09 (Tested: 46)
PI	-	-	-	187
AMO	-	-	-	166

In 2008-09, when the school's first Accountability Cohort completed its 4th year in high school, Oracle Charter School exceeded the Regents mathematics Annual Measureable Objective set by the state's NCLB accountability system.

Comparative Measure: Each year, the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State Math exams in each tested grade will be greater than that of the Buffalo school district.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06 (Grades 7-8)	2006-07 (Grades 8)	2007-08 (Grades 8)	2008-09 (Grades 8)
School	25.2	20.0	58.3	73.9
District	19.3	25.8	33.8	57.8

With the exception of the 2006-07 school year, Oracle Charter School has outperformed its local school district during each year of the Accountability Period. In the most recent year, the school outperformed Buffalo public schools by over 15 percentage points.

¹⁹ In 2005-06 English language arts and mathematics testing began in grades 3-8, and the Performance Index was henceforth calculated based on the aggregate of all tested students.

Comparative Measure: Each year, the percent of students performing at or above a score of 65% for high school on Regents mathematics exams in each tested grade will be greater than that of the following demographically similar school: Buffalo Academy of Visual and Performing Arts.				
Results (in percents)				
School Year				
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	2002 Cohort	2003 Cohort	2004 Cohort	2005 Cohort
School	-	-	-	91.3
BAVPA	-	69.0	73.0	NA

Comparison data for the 2008-09 school year are yet unavailable. Assuming the Buffalo Academy of Visual and Performing Arts performs at a level similar to its performance in the previous two years on the Regents mathematics exam, by the completion of their 4th year in high school, Oracle’s first Accountability Cohort will have exceeded the performance of the Buffalo Academy of Visual and Performing Arts, a self-selected comparison school.

Comparative Measure: Each year, the percent of students performing at or above a score of 65% for high school on Regents mathematics exams in each tested grade will be greater than that of the Buffalo school district.				
Results (in percents)				
School Year				
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	2002 Cohort	2003 Cohort	2004 Cohort	2005 Cohort
School	-	-	-	91.3
District	-	42.0	47.0	NA

Comparison data for the 2008-09 school year are yet unavailable. Assuming the Buffalo school district performs at a level similar to its performance in the previous two years on the Regents mathematics exam, by the completion of their 4th year in high school, Oracle’s first Accountability Cohort will have exceeded the performance of the Buffalo school district by a wide margin.

Comparative Measure: <i>Each year, the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State math exam by at least a small Effect Size (performing higher than expected to small degree) according to a regression analysis controlling for students eligible for free lunch among all public schools in New York State.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
School Year				
Index	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	(Grades 7-8)	(Grades 7-8)	(Grades 7-8)	(Grades 7-8)
	(Tested: 111)	(Tested: 121)	(Tested: 82)	(Tested: 59)
Predicted	50.0	54.5	67.6	79.0
Actual	25.2	19.8	59.8	66.1
Effect Size	-1.15	-1.61	-0.56	-1.18

In comparison to demographically similar schools statewide, Oracle has consistently performed worse than expected on the state mathematics exam and did not exceed its Effect Size target any year. In 2005-06, the school performed lower than expected to a large degree. In 2007-08, the school’s relative performance improved, but the school still performed lower than expected, to a medium degree. In the most recent year, the school’s relative performance declined and the school again performed lower than expected to a large degree.

Growth Measure: For the 2006-07 through 2009-10 school years, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one half the gap between their Mean Normal Curve Equivalent (MNCE) in the previous fall on the mathematics subscore of the Terra Nova examination and an NCE of 50 (i.e., grade-level) in the current fall. If a grade level exceeds an NCE of 50 in the previous year, the cohort will show an increase in the current year.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Mean NCE	2005-06	2006-07 (Grades 8-10) (N=97)	2007-08	2008-09
Baseline	-	35.8		
Target	-	42.9		
Actual	-	37.2		
Cohorts Made Target	-	(0 of 3)	-	-

With respect to growth on the nationally norm-referenced Terra Nova reading exam, the school did not report data for the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years. In 2006-07, the only year for which data are available to report on this measure, none of the school’s three cohorts achieved their growth targets and overall performance improved slightly.

Growth Measure: For the 2006-07 through 2009-10 school years, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one half the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 for middle school on the previous year’s State Math exam and 75 percent at or above Level 3 for middle school on the current year’s State Math exam.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Percent Level 3 & 4	2005-06	2006-07²⁰ (Grade 8) (N=45)	2007-08 (Grade 8) (N=44)	2008-09 (Grade 8) (N=22)
Baseline	-	35.6	22.7	54.5
Target	-	55.3	48.8	64.8
Actual	-	22.2	61.4	77.3
Cohorts Made Target	-	(0 of 1)	(1 of 1)	(1 of 1)

With respect to cohort growth on the state’s mathematics exam, the school’s performance has improved in recent years. In 2006-07, when cohort growth data first became available, the 8th grade cohort did not achieve its target and overall performance declined. In 2007-08, the lone cohort achieved its target and performance improved drastically. In 2008-09, the cohort again achieved its target and overall performance improved.

²⁰ New York State began administering English language arts and mathematics exams in grades 3-8 in 2005-06, thus year-to-year growth could not be evaluated until 2006-07 when two years’ of results were first available.

Growth Measure: For the 2006-07 through 2009-10 school years, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one half the gap between the percent at or above a score of 65% for high school on the previous year's State Math exam and 75 percent at or above 65% for high school on the current year's State Math exam.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Percent Level 3 & 4	2005-06	2006-07 2005 Cohort (N=46)	2007-08 2005 Cohort (N=46)	2008-09 2005 Cohort (N=46)
Baseline	-	0.0	67.4	87.0
Target	-	37.5	71.2	87.1
Actual	-	67.4	87.0	91.3

Oracle's 2005 high school Accountability Cohort has consistently exceeded its growth target on the state's mathematics Regents exam during the Accountability Period. In 2006-07, when students in the cohort first took the exam, 65 percent were proficient. In 2007-08, 83 percent were proficient and in the most recent year 88 percent were proficient.

Analysis of Additional Optional Measure included in the Mathematics Goal

Absolute Measure: 15% of Oracle Charter School students will demonstrate competency by scoring a Level 2 or above on an AP math exam by Grade 12.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Grade	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09 (N=12)
12	-	-	-	0.0

Oracle has not administered an AP mathematics exam.

Science

Accountability Plan Goal: Oracle Charter School students will demonstrate competency in the understanding of scientific concepts and the application of scientific reasoning.

Outcome: Based on the limited data available, the school is close to meeting its science goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures

Absolute Measure: In each year, 8 th grade students in at least their second year at Oracle Charter School will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Science examination.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Grade	2005-06	2006-07 (Tested: 49)	2007-08 (Tested: 38)	2008-09 (Tested: 23)
4	-	-	-	-
8	-	49.0	56.2	73.9

Oracle Charter School has improved its performance on the state science exam during the Accountability Period. In 2006-07, 49 percent of students were proficient and the school was far

from its target. In 2007-08, performance improved somewhat and 56 percent of students scored proficient or better on the exam. In the most recent year, when 74 percent of students were proficient, the school essentially met its target.

Absolute Measure: 75% of each high school cohort will score at least 65% on a New York State Science Regents exam.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Percent	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Levels 3 & 4	2002 Cohort	2003 Cohort	2004 Cohort	2005 Cohort (N=46)
	-	-	-	91.3

By the completion of their 4th year in high school, 91 percent of Oracle’s first high school Accountability Cohort achieved proficiency on a Regents science exam and the school exceeded its 75 percent target by a wide margin.

Comparative Measure: Each year, the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the state science exam will be greater than that of the Buffalo school district.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
		(Grade 8)	(Grade 8)	(Grade 8)
School	-	49.0	56.2	73.9
District	-	41.0	41.0	NA

Oracle Charter school has outperformed its local school district during each year of the Accountability Period on the state science exam.

Comparative Measure: Each year, the percent of students performing at or above a score of 65% on the Regents science exams will be greater than that of the Buffalo school district.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	2002 Cohort	2003 Cohort	2004 Cohort	2005 Cohort
School	-	-	-	91.3
District	-	54.0	53.0	NA

Comparison data for the 2008-09 school year are yet unavailable. Assuming the Buffalo school district performs at a level similar to its performance in the previous two years on Regents science exams, by the completion of their 4th year in high school, Oracle’s first Accountability Cohort will have exceeded the performance of the Buffalo school district by a wide margin.

Comparative Measure: Each year, the percent of students performing at or above a score of 65% on the Regents science exams will be greater than that of the following demographically similar school: Buffalo Academy of Visual and Performing Arts.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	2002 Cohort	2003 Cohort	2004 Cohort	2005 Cohort
School	-	-	-	91.3
BAVPA	-	73.0	78.0	NA

Comparison data for the 2008-09 school year are yet unavailable. Assuming the Buffalo Academy of Visual and Performing Arts performs at a level similar to its performance in the previous two years on Regents science exams, by the completion of their 4th year in high school, Oracle’s first Accountability Cohort will have exceeded the performance of the Buffalo Academy of Visual and Performing Arts, a self-selected comparison school.

Analysis of Additional Optional Measure included in the Science Goal

Absolute Measure: 15% of Oracle Charter School students will demonstrate competency by scoring a Level 2 or above on an AP science exam by Grade 12.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Grade	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
				(N=12)
12	-	-	-	12.5

Oracle administered the AP Environmental Science exam for the first time in 2008-09. As 12 percent of the students scored at Level 2, the target was not achieved.

Social Studies

Accountability Plan Goal: Oracle Charter School students will demonstrate competency in the understanding of Social Studies and citizenship concepts and the application of historical knowledge.

Outcome: Based on the limited data available, the school is close to meeting its social studies goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures

Absolute Measure: In each year, 75 percent of 8 th grade students in at least their second year at Oracle Charter School will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Social Studies examination.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Grade	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
		(Tested: 49)	(Tested: 38)	(Tested: 23)
5	-	-	-	-
8	-	38.8	36.8	52.2

Oracle Charter School has remained far from meeting its Accountability Plan target on the state social studies exam during the Accountability Period. In 2006-07, 39 percent of the school’s 8th

graders were proficient; in 2007-08, performance declined slightly; and in 2008-09, while performance improved, the school's performance remained more than 20 percentage points below its target.

Absolute Measure: 75% of the students in each high school cohort will score at least 65 on the New York State United States History Regents exam.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Percent	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Levels 3 & 4	2002 Cohort	2003 Cohort	2004 Cohort	2005 Cohort (N=46)
	-	-	-	89.1

By the completion of their fourth year in high school, 91 percent of Oracle's first high school Accountability Cohort achieved proficiency on the Regents United States history exam and the school exceeded its 75 percent target by a wide margin.

Absolute Measure: 75% of the students in each high school cohort will score at least 65 on the New York State Global History Regents exam.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Percent	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Levels 3 & 4	2002 Cohort	2003 Cohort	2004 Cohort	2005 Cohort (N=46)
	-	-	-	89.1

By the completion of their 4th year in high school, 91 percent of Oracle's first high school Accountability Cohort achieved proficiency on the Regents global history exam and the school exceeded its 75 percent target by a wide margin.

Comparative Measure: Each year, the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the state social studies exams will be greater than that of the Buffalo school district.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	(Grade 8)	(Grade 8)	(Grade 8)	(Grade 8)
School	-	38.8	36.8	52.2
District	-	29.0	30.0	NA

Oracle Charter school has outperformed its local school district during each year of the Accountability Period on the state social studies exam.

Comparative Measure: Each year, the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above a score of 65% on the Regents United States history exam will be greater than that of the Buffalo school district.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	2002 Cohort	2003 Cohort	2004 Cohort	2005 Cohort
School	-	-	-	89.1
District	-	47.0	48.0	NA

Comparison data for the 2008-09 school year are yet unavailable. Assuming the Buffalo school district performs at a level similar to its performance in the previous two years on the Regents United State history exam, by the completion of their 4th year in high school, Oracle’s first Accountability Cohort will have exceeded the performance of the Buffalo school district by a wide margin.

Comparative Measure: Each year, the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above a score of 65% on the Regents global history exam will be greater than that of the Buffalo school district.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	2002 Cohort	2003 Cohort	2004 Cohort	2005 Cohort
School	-	-	-	89.1
District	-	45.0	40.0	NA

Comparison data for the 2008-09 school year are yet unavailable. Assuming the Buffalo school district performs at a level similar to its performance in the previous two years on the Regents global history exam, by the completion of their 4th year in high school, Oracle’s first Accountability Cohort will have exceeded the performance of the Buffalo school district by a wide margin.

Comparative Measure: Each year, the percent of students performing at or above a score of 65% for high school on the Regents United States history exam will be greater than that of the following demographically similar school: Buffalo Academy of Visual and Performing Arts.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	2002 Cohort	2003 Cohort	2004 Cohort	2005 Cohort
School	-	-	-	89.1
BAVPA	-	64.0	78.0	NA

Comparison data for the 2008-09 school year are yet unavailable. Assuming the Buffalo Academy of Visual and Performing Arts continues the pattern of performance from the previous two years on the Regents U.S. History exam, by the completion of its 4th year in high school, Oracle’s first Accountability Cohort will have scored about the same as the performance of the Buffalo Academy of Visual and Performing Arts, a demographically similar comparison school.

Comparative Measure: Each year, the percent of students performing at or above a score of 65% for high school on the Regents global history exam will be greater than that of the following demographically similar school: Buffalo Academy of Visual and Performing Arts.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	2002 Cohort	2003 Cohort	2004 Cohort	2005 Cohort
School	-	-	-	89.1
BAVPA	-	57.0	73.0	NA

Comparison data for the 2008-09 school year are yet unavailable. Assuming the Buffalo Academy of Visual and Performing Arts continues the pattern of performance from the previous two years on the Regents global history exam, by the completion of its 4th year in high school, Oracle’s first

Accountability Cohort will have scored slightly above the performance of the Buffalo Academy of Visual and Performing Arts, a self-selected comparison school.

Analysis of Additional Optional Measure included in the Social Studies Goal

Absolute Measure: 15% of Oracle Charter School students will demonstrate competency by scoring a Level 2 or above on an AP history or government exam by Grade 12.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Grade	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09 (N=12)
12	-	-	-	14.3

Oracle administered the AP US Government and Politics exam for the first time in 2008-09. As about 14 percent of the students scored at Level 2, the target was essentially achieved.

ADDITIONAL GOAL NOT INCLUDED IN THE ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN²¹

Graduation

Accountability Plan Goal: Students will graduate with a Regents diploma in a specified amount of time.

Outcome: Oracle did not meet its high school graduation goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures

Absolute Measure: Each year, 75 percent of students in the high school Graduation Cohort will graduate after the completion of their fourth year in the cohort.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Percent of Cohort Graduating After 4 Years	2005-06 2002 Cohort	2006-07 2003 Cohort	2007-08 2004 Cohort	2008-09 2005 Cohort (N=63) ²²
	-	-	-	63.5

Based on its first graduating cohort, Oracle did not meet its graduation goal. While the school did not meet its target in the current year, preliminary evidence suggests that the school is on track to meet its goal for further cohorts.

²¹ The following goal is now required in all high school Accountability Plans

²² Including 12 students without documentation of transfer; 38 students with Regents diplomas and two students with local diplomas are deemed to be graduates; 11 students transferred to a GED program, dropped out, or are still enrolled

ADDITIONAL GOAL INCLUDED IN THE ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN

College Preparation

Accountability Plan Goal: Oracle Charter School students will be capable of making meaningful choices and will therefore be able to take the next steps in their lives and careers.

Outcome: Oracle met its College Preparation goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures

Absolute Measure: <i>Students graduating from Oracle Charter School will achieve a 90% college placement rate.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
Percent of Graduates Accepted into a 2 or 4-year College	School Year			
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	2002 Cohort	2003 Cohort	2004 Cohort	2005 Cohort (N= 37)
	-	-	-	91.9

Of the 37 students graduating from Oracle in the 2008-09 school year, 34 were accepted into a two or four-year college or university. While data on college enrollment are unavailable, assuming that accepted students enrolled into a college or university, the school exceeded its target.

NCLB

In addition to meeting its specific subject area goals, the school is expected under No Child Left Behind to make adequate yearly progress towards enabling all students to score at the proficient level on the state English language arts and mathematics exams. In holding charter schools to the same standards as other public schools, the state issues an annual school accountability report that indicates the school's status each year.

Accountability Plan Goal: Each year under the state's NCLB accountability system, Oracle Charter School's Accountability Status will be "Good Standing."

Outcome: The school met the goal. Oracle was deemed to be in good standing in each of the four years of the Accountability Period.

Absolute Measure: <i>Under the state's NCLB accountability system, the school's Accountability Status will be "Good Standing" each year.</i>				
Results				
Status	School Year			
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Good Standing	-	Yes	Yes	Yes