



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Subsequent Renewal Report

South Buffalo Charter School

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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.

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 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 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendation

Full-Term Renewal

The Charter Schools Institute recommends that the SUNY Trustees approve the Application for Subsequent Renewal of the South Buffalo Charter School and renew its charter for a period of five years with authority to provide instruction to students in kindergarten through 8th grade with a maximum enrollment of 900 students, and consistent with the other terms set forth in its Application for Subsequent Renewal.

Background and Required Findings

According to the SUNY Renewal Practices:

In subsequent renewal reviews, and in contrast to initial renewal reviews, the State University Trustees evaluate the strength and effectiveness of a school’s academic program almost exclusively by the degree to which the school has succeeded in meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals during the Accountability Period. This approach is consistent with the greater time that a school has been in operation and a concomitant increase in the quantity and quality of student achievement data that the school has generated. It is also consistent with the Act’s purpose of moving from a rules-based to an outcome-based system of accountability in which schools are held accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.

South Buffalo Charter School (“South Buffalo”) has applied for a Subsequent, Full-Term Renewal of five years. In its tenth year of operation, the SUNY Renewal Practices provide only two possible renewal outcomes for South Buffalo Charter School: Full-Term Renewal or Non-Renewal. In order to earn a Full-Term Renewal, South Buffalo Charter School must demonstrate that it has met the criteria for such a renewal as described in the SUNY Renewal Practices. Specifically, the school

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: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/documents/renewalPractices.doc>.

must demonstrate that it “has met or come close to meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals during the Accountability Period,” or it must face Non-Renewal. Based on the Institute’s review of the evidence that it gathered and that South Buffalo Charter School has provided including, but not limited to, the school’s Application for Subsequent Renewal, evaluation visits conducted during the charter period, a renewal evaluation visit conducted during the final year of the charter period, and the school’s record of academic performance as determined by the extent to which it has met its academic Accountability Plan goals, the Institute finds that the school is meeting or close to meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals during the Accountability Period.”²

Based on all the evidence submitted in the current charter term and as described in, or submitted with, the Application for Renewal, the Institute makes the following findings required by the Act. The South Buffalo 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 Subsequent Renewal found in the SUNY Renewal Practices, the Institute recommends that the SUNY Trustees approve South Buffalo Charter School’s Application for Charter Renewal and renew the charter for a full-term of five 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

Academic Success

South Buffalo Charter School is close to meeting its key Accountability Plan goal in English language arts and is meeting its respective mathematics goal. In 2005-06 and 2007-08, the school was close to meeting its mathematics goal and has met the goal in the two subsequent years of the Accountability Period. With regard to the English language arts goal, the school was not close to meeting its goal in 2005-06 or 2006-07, but improved its performance in 2007-08 and 2008-09, coming close to meeting the goal in both years. In addition, the school has met its science and social studies goals during the Accountability Period. According to the state’s No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system, the school is deemed to be in good standing.

During its second charter term, South Buffalo has improved its performance on the state’s English language arts exam. In 2005-06, the school was not meeting its overall goal and fell well short of its absolute target. The same year, South Buffalo outperformed its local community school district but performed lower than expected in comparison to demographically similar schools state-wide. In 2006-07, the school again fell short of its absolute target, outperformed its local school district but performed worse than predicted in comparison to demographically similar schools state-wide. With

² SUNY Renewal Practices, Full-Term Renewal standard (9).

respect to growth, none of the school's cohorts met their targets that year and overall performance declined. In 2007-08, the school showed moderate improvement, performing just below its absolute target, but performing better than predicted in comparison to demographically similar schools state-wide, and showing the requisite growth in all but one of its cohorts. In the most recent year, the school first exceeded its absolute performance target³ during the Accountability Period, outperformed the district and demographically similar schools state-wide and demonstrated significant cohort growth, with four out of five cohorts achieving their targets.

Throughout its current Accountability Period, South Buffalo has improved its performance on the state's mathematics exam. In 2005-06, the school failed to meet its absolute performance target and performed lower than predicted in comparison to demographically similar schools state-wide. In 2006-07, the school first achieved its absolute performance target and its comparative performance target when matched with demographically similar schools state-wide. With respect to growth, the school demonstrated some growth, though not all cohorts achieved their targets. In 2007-08, performance improved substantially and the school first met its overall goal having far exceeded its absolute performance target, outperformed its local school district and demographically similar schools state-wide by a large margin, and enabling all but one of the school's cohorts to achieve their growth targets. In the most recent year, the school improved again and met its overall goal⁴.

In its tenth year of operation, South Buffalo is guided by strong instructional leadership. The school implemented a new administrative team midway through the charter period, including a new head of school. This team has effectively instilled an environment of high expectations for student achievement and teacher performance school-wide. Teachers are held accountable for high levels of classroom instruction through a regular and meaningful teacher evaluation system. Each member of the leadership team—including the head of school, principal, data integration specialist, achievement coordinator, special services coordinator, and two instructional coaches—has a direct or indirect role in supporting teachers in improving their instructional practice. This support includes regular and systematic classroom observations that result in constructive feedback, modeling of instructional strategies, co-teaching lessons with teachers, and providing assistance with instructional planning.

High quality instruction was evident throughout the school at the time of the renewal visit, most notably in the middle school grades. The strength of the instructional program in these grades is a notable improvement from earlier in the charter period. Teachers at South Buffalo plan and implement purposeful lessons using consistent classroom procedures and instructional strategies. Teachers use effective questioning techniques to ensure that students are meeting lesson objectives. As a result, students are cognitively engaged in meaningful and sometimes rigorous learning activities. Further, instruction is purposefully and effectively differentiated in many classrooms to meet the needs of all students, particularly evident in kindergarten through 6th grade.

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

South Buffalo has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and uses it to improve student learning. The school regularly administers useful diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments. Student assessment data are systematically collected and analyzed during frequent “data meetings.” With support from school leaders, teachers effectively use the data to improve student learning by determining if re-teaching is necessary and/or by identifying specific students at risk of academic failure. In addition, school leaders use multiple measures of student achievement to sufficiently monitor and evaluate the academic program and to make necessary changes when warranted. The school also has processes in place to share student performance with parents/guardians and to distribute information about school-wide academic performance to the broader school community.

The school has devoted time, personnel, and resources to the refinement of its written curriculum. At the time of the renewal visit, the school was effectively transitioning toward a web-based curriculum that documents alignment to state learning standards, instructional strategies and student assessments. This process of curricular refinement was initiated after a careful analysis of the overall curriculum to identify and address curricular gaps. As a result of these efforts, teachers have access to adequate resources with which to develop their lessons.

South Buffalo is demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically. The school has clear and effective strategies for identifying students with disabilities, consisting of a multi-tiered response to intervention process. In addition, the school has adequate procedures for identifying other struggling students, such as English language learners and those generally at risk of academic failure. Further, effective interventions are used by teachers in their classrooms, as well as by ancillary staff, to support the needs of struggling students. Regular communication occurs between general education and special education teachers. All teachers demonstrate a working knowledge of the Individualized Education Programs of students with disabilities. Teachers are provided with adequate training and support to help them meet the needs of at-risk students.

The school has established a culture where learning is valued and clearly evident. Teachers, who consistently implement a documented school-wide discipline system, demonstrate effective classroom management techniques. At the time of the renewal visit observers noted a safe environment with orderly classrooms in which students clearly understood what was expected of them.

Organizational Effectiveness and Viability

South Buffalo has faithfully followed some elements of its original mission and key design elements. Many components of the original mission and key design elements were in place at the time of the renewal visit, including a core academic program aligned to New York State standards, use of the Terra Nova assessment, a clearly articulated code of conduct, use of technology within classrooms, character education, and parental involvement. Further, the school has begun to implement a new mission statement and revised key design elements, as proposed in its Application for Renewal, most notably the implementation of professional learning communities within its instructional teams.

Families at South Buffalo are satisfied with the school. The overwhelming majority of parents expressed satisfaction with their children’s education, according to annual surveys administered over the course of the charter period. However, a 19 percent response rate for the most recent survey

makes it difficult to draw reliable conclusions from such data.⁵ Parents interviewed at the time of the renewal visit indicated that they were highly satisfied with the school.

The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure with staff, systems, and procedures that allow it to carry out the academic program. Day-to-day operations are competently managed by staff with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The school's priorities are clearly aligned with its mission and Accountability Plan goals and school leaders' have taken action consistent with these priorities, which are clear to the school's faculty. The school has retained quality personnel, which has improved over the course of the charter period; most recently, teacher retention has risen to 90 percent. The school has also maintained adequate student enrollment throughout the charter period, including a student waiting list, which is a catalyst for plans, discussed below, to expand the school's enrollment. The school does backfill any student openings at every grade level throughout the year. In an interview with the renewal visit team, school board members acknowledged that this practice may present challenges due to the need to acclimate new students to the school, but viewed it as part of the school's broader mission to educate every student they can as best they can.

The school has benefited over the course of the charter period from a strong and stable board of trustees that has worked effectively to provide oversight to the total educational program. The board collectively has the adequate skills and expertise to provide rigorous oversight of the school. Board members are aware of, and understand the core business of the school – academic achievement – and receive regular written reports from school leaders about the progress of the school's efforts to meet the goals contained in its Accountability Plan. The school board reported that the head of school provides constant updates on various issues. The school board has also benefitted from excellent financial reporting by school staff.

The board has responded effectively to organizational and academic challenges, most significantly by hiring a new school leadership team during the charter period. Among other things, weaknesses in student achievement, a lack of effective communication with the school board, and high teacher turnover led the board to terminate the previous school leader. Although the board admitted that it could have acted somewhat sooner in this regard, it stated that it took time to offer support to the prior principal but it was not accepted. The personnel committee of the board then effectively worked with an external search firm to hire a new head of school to focus on improving the academic program. The school board reported formally evaluating the performance of the current school leader and being satisfied with her leadership. During the 2007-08 school year, the South Buffalo board was forced to deal with an egregious case of teacher misconduct involving a student that had legal ramifications and threatened enrollment. The school board responded swiftly by hiring an attorney and a public relations consultant to deal with the media and law enforcement issues. The school board also hired outside counsel to handle civil lawsuits brought by the student at issue. Another time-intensive responsibility faced by the board was the unionization of its workforce and the negotiation of a teacher contract. The school hired counsel to assist with negotiations and no major outstanding issues were reported.

The school board values strong governance as evidenced by the hiring of a consultant to focus on compliance issues and committee development, and the formation of a strategic planning committee. The school board has not focused as intently on policy development and a number of largely minor policy deficiencies were noted, including the need for an update to the code of ethics. In terms of

⁵ The Institute's expectation is that two-thirds of all parents in a school will express positive attitudes on a satisfaction survey.

compliance, the school had a generally good record except that the Institute placed the school on corrective action in April of 2008 for not having a sufficient number of properly certified teachers. The school was taken off corrective action one year later and was in substantial compliance at the time of the renewal visit. Even though the school has a large student enrollment, very few complaints were generated by the school. The school effectively manages a limited number of potential conflicts of interest on the board level. In material respect, the school has been in general and substantial compliance with the terms of its charter, applicable state and federal law, rules and regulations throughout the term of its charter and at the time of the renewal inspection.

Fiscal Soundness

South Buffalo has operated pursuant to a long-range financial plan during the charter period and has created realistic budgets that are monitored and adjusted appropriately. Annual budgets are developed by the school's business administrator with appropriate input from the head of school, principal, key staff, and school board. Budget variances are routinely analyzed and material variances are discussed with the head of school, principal and the board. The school effectively takes a strategic look at spending trends, staffing needs and state funding levels in the development of the school's budget(s).

The school has maintained appropriate 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 business administrator works with the school's head of school, principal, management team, along with the school board to ensure that the policies and procedures are documented and followed by school staff. The school's fiscal year ("FY") 2008-09 audit report of internal controls—related to financial reporting and compliance with laws, regulations and grants—disclosed no material weaknesses, or instances of non-compliance. 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 as required 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 school board reviews and approves the annual financial statement audit report.

The school has maintained adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations over the course of the charter period and has monitored and successfully managed cash flow. The school completed FY 2008-09 in very stable financial condition and has maintained significant net assets and a healthy cash reserve. The school has increased cash reserves each year over the last five years and cash reserves at the end of FY 2008-09 stood at slightly under five million dollars, primarily intended to help the school acquire an additional facility. 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 payables that are shortly due. It should be noted that from FY 2004-05 through 2008-09 revenues have far exceeded expenses and over the last three years the school's expenses per student did not exceed its allocated per-pupil funding. This suggests that the school has a strong operational model in place. The school has little

short- or long-term debt and owns the building it is located in with no associated debt. The school board reported that its participation in the Teachers Retirement System was putting significant pressure on its personnel financing due to recent increases in contributions.

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 would change its mission statement to the following:

We are a Professional Learning Community. Our focus on learning is driven by research, data, and collaborative reflection to increase student achievement. We are South Buffalo Charter School.

The school would continue providing instruction in kindergarten through 8th grades. Citing parochial school closures in the area and family demand, South Buffalo Charter School proposes an increase in its enrollment levels by adding one section per grade in grades K - 4 in the second year of its renewal charter term; one section of grades 5 and 6 in the third year; and one section of grades 7 and 8 in the fourth year of the charter term. Consequently, total enrollment would increase throughout the term of the renewal charter as follows: Year 1: 669; Year 2: 800; Year 3: 850; Year 4: 900; and, Year 5: 900. All plans for enrollment increases would be dependent upon the acquisition of a second school facility. The school board articulated a pay-as-you-go philosophy for acquiring additional space, which is reflected in the relatively slow projected enrollment growth.

As proposed in its Application for Subsequent Renewal, South Buffalo would revise its daily instructional schedule slightly, by adding time to the school day. Common planning time within grade levels, and an intervention period would be created using the additional time. The school would provide 195 instructional days each year.

The school would maintain most of the key design elements contained in existing charter, while adding several elements as a result of the change to its mission statement. The proposed key design elements include the following: (1) professional learning communities; (2) collaborative learning and reflection; (3) research-based best practices; (4) data-driven decision making; (5) pyramid of intervention; (6) New York State standards-based curriculum; (7) technology integration; (8) character education; (9) extended day and school year; (10) professional development; and (11) parent/guardian involvement and engagement.

Members of the current board of trustees expressed their intent to continue their service to the school, maintaining the same committee structure that has been in place. Board members have the requisite skills and understanding of their roles and responsibilities in order to adequately provide oversight to the school during the term of the proposed charter. The school board also has real estate experience to assist with additional facility needs.

South Buffalo has presented a reasonable and appropriate fiscal plan for the term of the next charter that is likely achievable, including adequate budgets that will need to be closely monitored to ensure continued fiscal stability. The school has taken a strong and 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 a working budget that shows per-pupil funding increasing three to seven percent over the next charter term. The plan projects a minor operating and cash flow surplus

in each year, contingent on the school's meeting enrollment goals which historically have not been an issue for the school. These surpluses will further strengthen the school's fiscal stability. The school acknowledged the need to develop additional operational budgets that show per-pupil funding flat at the 2009-10 allocation levels and also decreasing up to two percent to ensure the school has a contingency plan for a worst-case scenario outlook with respect to state funding. 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 continually develop and adopt annual budgets based on known per pupil amounts for the districts from which it draws enrollment.

The school plans to continue using its facility, which it purchased in 2002. Since that time, enrollment has increased and space is limited. The school plans to locate and purchase or build an additional facility in the near future, which would house the upper grades (5th through 8th grades) while maintaining the lower grades (kindergarten through 4th grades). The school believes that this structure would also allow the creation of a social and learning environment that is developmentally appropriate for the two groupings of students respectively.

To the extent that South Buffalo Charter School has achieved its key academic goals, continues to implement an educational program that supports achieving those goals, operates an effective and viable organization, and is fiscally sound, the Institute deems its plans to continue to implement the educational program as proposed during the next charter period as reasonable, feasible and achievable.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	January 25, 2000
Date Initial Charter Approved by Board of Regents	April 4, 2000
School Opening Date	September, 2000

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades	District
2000-01 - present	2219 South Park Ave Buffalo, NY	K-8	Buffalo

Renewal

Type of Renewal	Date
Date Initial Full-Term Renewal Approved by SUNY Trustees	March 1, 2005
Date Initial Full-Term Renewal Approved by Board of Regents	May 17, 2005

Current Mission Statement (for charter renewal period ending 2010)

The South Buffalo Charter School seeks to provide equitable opportunities for all students to acquire an education that links character education with rigorous academics, technology and careers to produce students who are prepared for success in the 21 st Century.

Current Key Design Elements (for charter renewal period ending 2010)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individualized Learning Plans for all students; • a rigorous academic core curriculum aligned to the NYS standards; • a primary focus on English Language Arts, including a balanced literacy approach following the Scott Foresman model; • the use of the Terra Nova norm-referenced assessment, administered to students in the spring of each year; • integration of technology into the core curriculum; • active parent involvement in the education program; • a strong focus on integrating character education into the instructional program; and • a clearly articulated code of conduct.

School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Charter Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ⁶	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2000-01	234	234	220	K-4	K-4	195
2001-02	432	305	304	K-5	K-5	195
2002-03	504	383	384	K-6	K-6	195
2003-04	576	458	458	K-7	K-7	195
2004-05	648	533	531	K-8	K-8	195
2005-06	582	N/A	598	K-8	K-8	192
2006-07	607	643	641	K-8	K-8	195
2007-08	632	680	631	K-8	K-8	195
2008-09	657	705	644	K-8	K-8	195
2009-10	657	705	659	K-8	K-8	195

Student Demographics

	2006-07 ⁷		2007-08 ⁸		2008-09	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of Buffalo CSD Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of Buffalo CSD Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment ⁹	Percent of Buffalo CSD Enrollment ¹⁰
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1.5%
Black or African American	16%	57%	18%	57%	17%	57.7%
Hispanic	8%	14%	9%	15%	12%	13.9%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1.4%
White	73%	25%	70%	25%	68%	23.0%
Multiracial	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2.5%
Special Populations						
Students with Disabilities ¹¹	8%	23%	15%	18%	15%	N/A
Limited English Proficient	0%	7%	0%	8%	0%	6.2%
Free/Reduced Lunch						
Eligible for Free Lunch	52%	70%	50%	55.6%	57.2%	N/A
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	25%	8%	23%	16.5%	18.0%	N/A

⁶ Source: SUNY Charter School Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. Figures may differ slightly from NYS Report Cards depending on date of data collection.)

⁷ Source: 2006-07 School Report Cards, New York State Education Department.

⁸ Source: 2007-08 School Report Cards, New York State Education Department.

⁹ 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." Free/Reduced Lunch status is provided by the school.

¹⁰ Aggregated district data not yet available for 2008-09. School provided information presented.

¹¹ New York State Education Department does not report special education data. School data is school-reported from charter renewal applications. District data from NYSED Special Education School District Data Profile.

Current Board of Trustees¹²

Board Member Name	Term	Position/Committees
James Neimeier	July, 2009-July, 2012	President
Ann Marie-Tryjankowski	July, 2009-July, 2012	Vice-President
Kathy Linhardt	July, 2009-July, 2012	Secretary
Benedict DiLorenzo	July, 2008-July, 2011	Treasurer
Steven Nigrelli	July, 2008-July, 2011	Trustee
William Brinson	September, 2006-September, 2009	Trustee
Matthew Enstice	July, 2007-July, 2010	Trustee
Angel Piazza	July, 2009-July, 2010	Trustee (PTA Parent Rep)
Kristie Maggio	July, 2007-July, 2010	Trustee

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2000-01	Donald Graff, Director
2001-02 through 2004-05	Gregory Speranza, Director
2004-05	Larry Gustina, Director
2005-06 through 2007-08	Cederick Ellis, Director
2008-09 through 2009-10	Carrie Dzierba, Head of School

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2000-01	First-Year Visit	Institute	May 25, 2001
2001-02	Second-Year Visit	Institute	April 9, 2002
2002-03	Third-Year Visit	External (SchoolWorks)	January 7-8, 2003
2003-04	None	N/A	N/A
2004-05	Initial Renewal Visit	Institute	October 13-15, 2004
2005-06	None	N/A	N/A
2006-07	Seventh-Year Evaluation Visit	Institute	March 29, 2007
2007-08	None	N/A	N/A
2008-09	None	N/A	N/A
2009-10	Subsequent Renewal Visit	External and Institute	November 10, 2009

¹² Source: School renewal application.

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. 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.

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				

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.¹³ 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.

¹³ 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: Students will become proficient in the ELA skills of Reading, Writing and Listening and will make continuous yearly progress toward mastery of their ELA skills.

Outcome: South Buffalo Charter School is close to meeting its English language arts goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures:

Absolute Measure: For the 2005-06 through 2009-10 school years, 75 percent of 3 rd through 8 th graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State ELA examination.				
Results (in percents)				
School Year				
Grade	2005-06¹⁴ (Tested: 383)	2006-07 (Tested: 354)	2007-08 (Tested: 380)	2008-09 (Tested: 389)
3	57.4	60.0	82.5	77.8
4	58.3	64.7	61.8	63.9
5	62.6	61.8	74.3	80.6
6	62.4	50.7	66.2	75.4
7	46.7	52.3	61.0	85.7
8	30.7	38.1	67.6	69.7
All	54.8	55.9	68.6	75.6

South Buffalo has improved its performance on the state English language arts exam during the current Accountability Period. In 2005-06, 55 percent of students were proficient and the school was far from its 75 percent Accountability Plan target. In 2006-07, performance remained nearly level and 56 percent of students were proficient. In 2007-08, the school improved its performance yet still performed below its target. In 2008-09, when 76 percent of students were proficient, the school first exceeded its target.

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	2005-06¹⁵ (Tested: 383)	2006-07 (Tested: 412)	2007-08 (Tested: 409)	2008-09 (Tested: 428)
PI	146	152	167	174
AMO	122	122	133	144

South Buffalo has surpassed the English language arts Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) established by the state's NCLB accountability system during each year of its Accountability Period. In the most recent year, the school surpassed the AMO by 30 points.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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: <i>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 exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of the Buffalo City School District.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06 (Grades 3-8)	2006-07 (Grades 3-8)	2007-08 (Grades 3-8)	2008-09 (Grades 3-8)
School	54.8	55.9	68.6	75.6
District	30.1	34.5	42.5	54.5

South Buffalo outperformed its local community school district on the state English language arts exam during each year of the current Accountability Period. In the most recent year, the school widened the performance gap and exceeded the proficiency rate of the district by over 20 percentage points.

Comparative Measure: <i>Each year, the school will exceed to a specified degree (as set by CSI) its expected level of performance on the State ELA exam, as determined by the performance of other schools that have a similar proportion of students eligible for free lunch among all charter and public schools in districts with charter schools.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Index	2005-06 (Grades 3-8) (Tested: 383)	2006-07 (Grades 3-8) (Tested: 412)	2007-08 (Grades 3-8) (Tested: 409)	2008-09 (Grades 3-8) (Tested: 428)
Predicted	54.2	58.2	64.7	72.0
Actual	55.9	57.0	68.2	75.2
Effect Size	0.08	-0.07	0.23	0.23

In comparison to demographically similar schools, South Buffalo performed about the same as expected from 2005-06 through 2008-09 and has yet to achieve its 0.3 Effect Size target. In 2005-06 and 2006-07, the school performed about the same as expected with Effect Sizes of 0.08 and -0.07, respectively. In 2007-08 and 2008-09, the school's relative performance remained level with an Effect Size of 0.23.

Growth Measure: <i>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 on the previous year's State ELA exam and 75 percent at or above Level 3 on the current year's State ELA exam. If a grade-level cohort exceeds 75 percent at or above Level 3 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Percent Level 3 & 4	2005-06	2006-07¹⁶ (Grades 4-8) (N=297)	2007-08 (Grades 4-8) (N=322)	2008-09 (Grades 4-8) (N=322)
Baseline	-	59.3	61.8	67.7
Target	-	67.2	68.4	71.4
Actual	-	55.6	66.1	75.5
Cohorts Made Target	-	(0 of 5)	(1 of 5)	(4 of 5)

¹⁶ 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.

In 2006-07, when two years of state test English language arts test data first became available for growth analysis, none of the school's 4th through 8th grade cohorts achieved their targets and overall performance declined. In 2007-08, while overall performance improved, only one of the school's five cohorts achieved its target. In the most recent year, four out of five cohorts achieved their targets and overall performance again improved.

Optional Measure:

Growth Measure: <i>For the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between their average NCE in the previous Spring on the Terra Nova, a nationally-normed Reading test, and an NCE of 50 (i.e., grade-level) in the current Spring. If a grade-level cohort exceeds an NCE of 50 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Mean NCE	2005-06	2006-07 (Grades 2-8) (N= 379)	2007-08 (Grades 2-8) (N=423)	2008-09 (Grades 1-8) (N=NA)
Baseline	-	53.0	52.9	54.5
Target	-	53.1	53.0	54.6
Actual	-	53.1	54.2	54.9
Cohorts Made Target	-	(3 of 7)	(5 of 7)	(3 of 8)

Throughout the current Accountability Period, on the Terra Nova reading assessment, South Buffalo has performed above the national norm, but has not consistently achieved its growth targets. In 2006-07, three out of the schools' seven 2nd through 8th grade cohorts achieved their targets and overall performance remained level. In the following year, five out of seven cohorts achieved their targets and overall performance improves slightly. In the most recent year, three of eight cohorts achieved their targets and overall performance improved slightly.

Mathematics

Accountability Plan Goal: Students will become proficient in the Mathematics skills of problem solving and computation and will make continuous yearly progress toward mastery of their Mathematics skills.

Outcome: South Buffalo Charter School has met its mathematics goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures:

Absolute Measure: For the 2005-06 through 2009-10 school years, 75 percent of 3rd through 8th graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Mathematics examination.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Grade	2005-06¹⁷ (Tested: 406)	2006-07 (Tested: 350)	2007-08 (Tested: 379)	2008-09 (Tested: 381)
3	80.7	93.8	100.0	96.7
4	71.1	73.5	79.4	79.7
5	68.0	71.6	77.1	92.5
6	77.5	86.2	83.8	94.1
7	29.7	61.9	96.1	95.2
8	18.4	51.2	85.1	86.2
All	62.1	75.1	87.0	90.8

South Buffalo has consistently improved its performance on the state mathematics exam during the current Accountability Period. In 2005-06, 62 percent of students were proficient and the school fell short of its 75 percent target. In 2006-07, 75 percent of students were proficient and the school first exceeded its target. In the following year, performance again improved and 87 percent of students were proficient. In the most recent year, 91 percent of students were proficient and the school exceeded its target.

Absolute Measure: Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State math 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	2005-06¹⁸ (Tested: 384)	2006-07 (Tested: 406)	2007-08 (Tested: 409)	2008-09 (Tested: 429)
PI	154	171	187	188
AMO	86	86	102	119

During the current Accountability Period South Buffalo has consistently exceeded the Annual Measurable Objective established by the state as part of its NCLB accountability system. The school's Performance Index has improved by over 30 points over the past four years. The school's current Performance Index exceeds the AMO by nearly 70 points.

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 exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of the Buffalo City School District.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06 (Grades 3-8)	2006-07 (Grades 3-8)	2007-08 (Grades 3-8)	2008-09 (Grades 3-8)
School	62.1	75.1	87.0	90.8
District	28.6	35.9	50.0	63.3

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ 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.

South Buffalo has consistently outperformed its local community school district by a wide margin on the state mathematics exam. In the most recent year the school’s proficiency rate exceeded that of the district by nearly 30 percentage points.

Comparative Measure: <i>Each year, the school will exceed to a specified degree (as set by CSI) its expected level of performance on the State Math exam, as determined by the performance of other schools that have a similar proportion of students eligible for free lunch among all charter and public schools in districts with charter schools.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Index	2005-06 (Grades 3-8) (Tested: 384)	2006-07 (Grades 3-8) (Tested: 406)	2007-08 (Grades 3-8) (Tested: 409)	2008-09 (Grades 3-8) (Tested: 429)
Predicted	60.3	69.5	77.9	82.8
Actual	61.7	74.9	87.3	89.3
Effect Size	0.07	0.31	0.61	0.49

In comparison to demographically similar schools statewide, South Buffalo has improved its performance. In 2005-06, the school performed about the same as expected and the school fell short of its Effect Size target. In the following year, the school performed better than expected to a small degree and its 0.31 Effect Size first exceeded its Accountability Plan target. In 2007-08, the school performed better than expected to a medium degree and again achieved its target. In the most recent year, while relative performance declined somewhat, the school again exceeded its targeted level of performance.

Growth Measure: <i>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 on the previous year's State Math exam and 75 percent at or above Level 3 on the current year's State Math exam. If a grade-level cohort exceeds 75 percent at or above Level 3 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Percent Level 3 & 4	2005-06	2006-07¹⁹ (Grades 4-8) (N=297)	2007-08 (Grades 4-8) (N=319)	2008-09 (Grades 4-8) (N=319)
Baseline	-	66.7	78.1	87.8
Target	-	70.9	78.2	87.9
Actual	-	71.7	85.0	90.0
Cohorts Made Target	-	(1 of 5)	(4 of 5)	(3 of 5)

In 2006-07, when two years of state test data first became available for growth analysis, one out of five of the school’s 4th through 8th grade cohorts achieved their targets and overall performance improved. In 2007-08, overall performance again improved and four out of five cohorts achieved their targets. In 2008-09, three out of five cohorts achieved their targets and performance again improved.

¹⁹ 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.

Optional Measure:

Growth Measure: For the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between their average NCE in the previous Spring on the Terra Nova, a nationally-normed Math test, and an NCE of 50 (i.e., grade-level) in the current Spring. If a grade-level cohort exceeds an NCE of 50 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Mean NCE	2005-06	2006-07 (Grades 2-8) (N=372)	2007-08 (Grades 2-8) (N=423)	2008-09 (Grades 1-8) (N=NA)
Baseline	-	52.0	54.2	52.0
Target	-	52.1	54.3	52.1
Actual	-	54.2	52.8	53.8
Cohorts Made Target	-	(4 of 7)	(3 of 7)	(6 of 8)

With respect to cohort growth on the Terra Nova mathematics assessment, South Buffalo’s performance has improved during the current Accountability Period and the school’s overall performance has remained just above the national norm. In 2006-07, four out of seven of the school’s 2nd through 8th grade cohorts achieved their targets and overall performance improved slightly. In 2007-08, overall performance declined slightly and three out of seven cohorts achieved their targets. In the most recent year, overall performance returned to match the 2006-07 level and six out of eight cohorts achieved their targets.

Science

Accountability Plan Goal: Students will become proficient in the knowledge, skills and concepts of Science and will make continuous yearly progress toward mastery in these areas.

Outcome: The school has met its science goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures:

Absolute Measure: In each year, 75 percent of fourth and eighth graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Science examination.				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Grade	2005-06 (Tested: 123)	2006-07 (Tested: 124)	2007-08 (Tested: 110)	2008-09 (Tested: 125)
4	93.8	96.3	94.6	93.2
8	69.0	63.6	69.4	84.8

South Buffalo has maintained a consistently high level of performance on the 4th grade state science exam and has improved its performance on the 8th grade exam during the current Accountability Period. From 2005-06 through 2008-09, over 90 percent of the school’s 4th grade students were proficient on the state exam and the school exceeded its target each year. On the 8th grade exam, from 2005-06 through 2007-08, the school did not meet its 75 percent target. In the most recent year, 85 percent of 8th graders were proficient and the school achieved its target for the first time.

Comparative Measure: <i>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 City School District.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06 (Grade 4,8)	2006-07 (Grade 4,8)	2007-08 (Grade 4,8)	2008-09 (Grade 4,8)
School	85.3	84.6	86.4	87.9
District	49.1	53.0	51.2	NA

From 2005-06 through 2007-08, South Buffalo has consistently outperformed the local community school district by a wide margin on the state science exam. While district comparison data for the 2008-09 school year is yet unavailable, South Buffalo’s 88 percent proficiency rate exceeds the district’s performance in each of the two previous years. Assuming district performance remained at a similar level on the 2008-09 exam, the school will have met its target.

Social Studies

Accountability Plan Goal: Students will become proficient in the knowledge, skills and concepts of Social Studies and will make continuous yearly progress towards mastery in these areas.

Outcome: The school has met its social studies goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures:

Absolute Measure: <i>In each year, 75 percent of fourth and eighth graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Social Studies examination.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Grade	2005-06 (Tested: 122)	2006-07 (Tested: 122)	2007-08 (Tested: 106)	2008-09 (Tested: 126)
5	88.0	84.0	90.3	91.4
8	55.0	72.0	79.4	70.1

South Buffalo has exceeded its 75 percent target on the 5th grade state social studies exam during each year of the Accountability Period. Performance on the 8th grade exam has varied and in 2008-09 the school performed slightly below its target. On the 8th grade exam, in 2005-06, 55 percent of students were proficient and the school was far from its target. In 2006-07, performance improved and 72 percent were proficient. In the following year, performance again improved and 79 percent were proficient. In the most recent year, performance declined and 70 percent of students were proficient.

Comparative Measure: <i>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 exam will be greater than that of the Buffalo City School District.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06 (Grades 5,8)	2006-07 (Grades 5,8)	2007-08 (Grades 5,8)	2008-09 (Grades 5,8)
School	76.6	79.7	86.8	81.8
District	42.0	36.0	42.0	NA

From 2005-06 through 2007-08, South Buffalo has consistently outperformed the local community school district by a wide margin on the state social studies exam. While district comparison data for the 2008-09 school year is yet unavailable, South Buffalo's 82 percent proficiency rate exceeds the district's performance in each of the two previous years. Assuming district performance remained at a similar level on the 2008-09 exam, the school will have met its target.

NCLB

In addition to meeting its specific subject area goals, the school is expected under No Child Left Behind to made 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: Under the state's NCLB accountability system, the school's Accountability Status will be "Good Standing" each year.

Outcome: The school met the goal. South Buffalo Charter School 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				
	School Year			
Status	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Good Standing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes