



Charter Schools Institute

The State University of New York

KIPP Sankofa Charter School Third-Year Inspection Report

I. INTRODUCTION

The third-year inspection is part of a comprehensive accountability system for charter schools authorized by the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York. The inspection during the school's third year of its charter provides an independent assessment of the school's progress toward its academic and organizational goals.

The third-year inspection complements the yearly reviews conducted by Charter Schools Institute staff and corroborates the school's own annual reports of progress toward the targets defined in its Accountability Plan. The visit provides an independent assessment of the school's progress and provides recommendations for gathering and presenting valid and reliable evidence to the authorizer as the school prepares to apply for charter renewal in its fifth year of operation. The recommendations represent the experienced opinions of the inspection team and are intended to offer the school guidance for enhancing the evidence base for its renewal application.

II. CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

The inspection of KIPP Sankofa Charter School (KIPP Sankofa) was conducted on March 21-22, 2006 by an independent team of experienced educators from SchoolWorks, Beverly, MA.

Aretha Miller, Director of Marketing, SchoolWorks: Aretha has five years' experience leading charter school renewal and site visits. Prior to joining SchoolWorks, Aretha worked as a special education teacher in Boston Public Schools for eight years and spent three years developing and implementing programs that support at-risk youths in traditional and alternative educational settings.

Ferdinand Fuentes, Consultant, SchoolWorks: Freddie is the former Director of Champion Charter School, has been a school administrator for 15 years and a former 6th grade bilingual teacher. Most of his work has been in redesign and re-conceptualization of schools and educational institutions serving secondary students.

Mihran Keoseian, Project Associate, SchoolWorks: Mihran brings 30 years of leadership experience to SchoolWorks. As a former principal of both middle and high schools, he consistently improved reading and mathematics scores and college placement rates. As a superintendent, he developed procedures and systems that resulted in his school district achieving within the top one percent of schools in Massachusetts.

Susan Jambeck, Consultant, SchoolWorks: Sue has K-12 experience in both rural and urban settings. Her professional assignments have included principalships in four public elementary and middle schools, founding Director of Murdoch Middle Public Charter School in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, and Director of Lowell Community Charter Public School in Lowell, Massachusetts.

The team used the school's Accountability Plan goals as the guide for their examination, along with the set of framework questions included in the Institute's school visit protocol to assess the school's academic and organizational effectiveness. Prior to the one-and-a-half-day visit, the team reviewed a broad sampling of the school's documentation, including its annual *Accountability Progress Report*, its original charter application and reports from previous site visits by the Institute. At the school, the team interviewed school administrators, Board representatives, staff, parents and students, and visited classes to understand the efforts the school is making to achieve its academic and organizational goals.

This report is organized into two parts. *Part I: School Progress Report*, offers the team's judgments about the school's effectiveness at meeting the broad goals defined in the charter school law (Education Law §2850(2) [a-f]):

- improving student learning and achievement;
- increasing learning opportunities for all students (particularly students at risk of academic failure);
- encouraging the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- creating new professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators and other school personnel;
- expanding parental choice in public schools; and
- moving from a rule-based to performance-based accountability system by holding schools accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.

The judgments of the team are organized into three categories: academic program, organizational viability and unique programmatic areas. The framework for the progress report discussion is shown in **Appendix A**.

The second section, *Part II: School Accountability Plan – Assessment and Recommendations*, reports the team's assessment of the quality of the school's measures of its progress, and offers suggestions for enhancing the evidence base on which renewal decisions will be made at the school's fifth year of operation. A brief rationale for the inspection team's recommendations is presented in narrative form, along with a summary table, in **Appendix B**.

III. SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

KIPP Sankofa opened its doors in September 2003 and enrolled 90 fifth graders only during its first year of operation. The school added a grade each successive year and currently enrolls 207 students in grades 5-7. KIPP Sankofa will add an eighth grade in summer 2006, thereby becoming a fully operational grade 5-8 middle school, as stipulated in its charter.

KIPP Sankofa is located in a renovated leased space that was formerly a gymnasium. The school plans to expand into abutting space over the next three years until it adds a gymnasium. The school facility is warm and welcoming, with student work displayed in the hallways. The classrooms are spacious and comfortably accommodate students, approximately 23 in each class. The classrooms are decorated with commercial and teacher-made posters. They are well-resourced with enough books and materials for each student.

The academic program at KIPP Sankofa is based on the KIPP educational model, developed by the KIPP Foundation. The school's mission is to ensure that all students develop the knowledge, academic skills and character traits needed to succeed in college preparatory high schools, colleges and the competitive world beyond. The school subscribes to the KIPP credo: "If there is a problem, we look for a solution. If there is a better way, we find it. If a teammate needs help, we give. If we need help, we ask."

As a member of the KIPP network, KIPP Sankofa is committed to: upholding KIPP's Five Pillars; implementing a rigorous curriculum designed to meet and exceed the New York State Board of Regents standards; and, utilizing many of the best practices used in KIPP schools nationwide. The curriculum at KIPP Sankofa is loosely based on Core Knowledge for English Language Arts, Saxon Math and Delta Science. The teachers use a variety of instructional materials to support teaching and learning in the school.

There are currently 13 full-time teachers on staff at KIPP Sankofa. Eight of the 13 teachers (or 62 percent) have either a provisional or professional certificate. In addition, they are all teaching in their area of content expertise. The school's administrative team includes the school leader, nurse, guidance counselor, business manager and dean of faculty. The guidance counselor, business manager and dean of faculty also have some teaching responsibilities.

The school is governed by a five-member Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees has experienced significant turnover in its membership since the opening of the school. School leaders and Board members are currently in the process of recruiting potential new members to the Board of Trustees.

PART I: SCHOOL PROGRESS REPORT

I. ACADEMIC PROGRAM

QUESTION 1: To what extent have the students attained expected skills and knowledge?

1. KIPP Sankofa does not have results for student performance on the New York State assessments.

KIPP Sankofa did not administer any of the New York State assessments to its students because the school did not have students who were eligible to take the tests. Consequently, there are no data to conduct an analysis of student performance on statewide assessments.

2. Results of the SAT 10 show that a majority of students at KIPP Sankofa are performing below grade level (50 NCEs [Normal Curve Equivalent]).

The spring 2005 SAT 10 results for fifth and sixth graders show that students are performing below grade level on the reading, language and mathematics batteries. The performance of fifth graders on the reading and language batteries was significantly below the norm, with 33.99 NCEs and 38.74 NCEs, respectively. Their performance on the mathematics battery (46.33 NCEs) was better, even though it was still below grade level.

The performance of the sixth-grade-level-cohort is comparable to their peers in the fifth grade in that they are scoring below grade level. They scored 40.5 NCEs in reading, 42.7 NCEs in language and 47.8 NCEs in mathematics.

Table 1: KIPP Sankofa SAT 10 Results in NCEs for 5th & 6th grade level cohorts Spring 2005¹

Grade	Spring 2005		
	(N) Reading	(N) Language	(N) Mathematics
5	(45) 33.99	(47) 38.74	(46) 46.33
6	(59) 40.5	(44) 42.7	(38) 47.8

¹KIPP Sankofa does not have SAT 10 results for spring 2004 because the school's answer sheets were inadvertently destroyed by the testing company.

The spring 2005 SAT 10 results for sixth graders who attended KIPP Sankofa for two years show that they are performing below grade level in both reading (44.74 NCEs) and language (45.71 NCEs). The students, however, performed strongly on the mathematics battery, with 54.34 NCEs.

Table 2: KIPP Sankofa SAT 10 Results in NCEs for the matched cohort of sixth graders Spring 2005

	2005		
Grade	(N) Reading	(N) Language	(N) Mathematics
6	(29) 44.74	(22) 45.71	(22) 54.34

The mixed SAT 10 results for fifth and sixth graders indicate that KIPP Sankofa has yet to achieve its goal to have students demonstrate proficiency in both mathematics and English Language Arts.

QUESTION 2: What progress have students made over time in attaining expected skills and knowledge?

- 1. The SAT 10 results for matched cohorts show that students are making moderate to significant gains on all subjects, based on the fall 04 and spring 05 administrations of the test.**

The fall '04 and spring '05 SAT 10 results for fifth and sixth graders indicate that, although the students have made minimal to moderate gains on the reading, language and mathematics batteries², they are still performing significantly below grade level.

Fifth graders showed the weakest performance on the reading battery in which there was no evidence of progress. Students scored 33.63 NCEs in fall '04 and 33.99 NCEs in spring '05. Their performance on the language battery was better; they gained 3.10 NCEs. Fifth graders demonstrated the strongest performance in mathematics, with a gain of 8.98 NCEs from the fall to spring testing.

The performance of sixth graders on the SAT 10 was stronger than that of their counterparts in the fifth grade. The NCE gains made by this group of students ranged from 5.3 NCEs (language) to 7.7 NCEs (mathematics). Like their peers in the fifth grade, sixth graders performed the strongest on the mathematics battery.

Table 3: KIPP Sankofa Grades 5 &6 Grade Level Cohort SAT 10 Results in NCEs

	Subject	Number	Fall '04	Spring '05	Gain
Grade 5	Reading	45	33.63	33.99	0.36
	Language	47	35.64	38.74	3.10
	Mathematics	46	37.35	46.33	8.98
Grade 6	Reading	59	35.1	40.5	5.4
	Language	44	37.4	42.7	5.3
	Mathematics	38	40.1	47.8	7.7

The SAT 10 results of the matched cohort of sixth graders who attended KIPP Sankofa for two years are not very strong. The NCEs gains made by this group of students ranged from 1.48 NCEs (language) to 6.66 NCEs (mathematics).

Table 4: KIPP Sankofa Grade 6 Matched Cohort SAT 10 Results in NCEs

	Subject	Number	Fall 04	Spring 05	Gain
Grade 6	Reading	22	41.08	44.74	3.66
	Language	22	44.23	45.71	1.48
	Mathematics	22	47.68	54.34	6.66

As noted earlier, KIPP Sankofa does not have SAT 10 results for spring 2004 because their answer sheets were accidentally destroyed by the testing company. Consequently, the team had to rely on the SAT 10 results for fall 2004 to spring 2005 to conduct an analysis of student attainment over time.

KIPP Sankofa did not achieve its Accountability Plan measure to reduce the gap between students' baseline and grade-level performance by one-half on the SAT 10 reading and language batteries. For example, fifth graders were expected to improve their baseline score in reading by 7 NCEs, but students made no improvement on the spring test. The grade-level cohort of sixth graders was expected to improve their language scores by 6.3 NCEs but made a gain of 5.3 NCEs.

Both sixth and fifth graders either met or exceeded their improvement targets for mathematics. The grade level cohort of sixth graders, for example, were expected to improve their mathematics scores by 5 NCEs but posted a gain of 7.7 NCEs. The same is true for the matched cohort of sixth graders, who were expected to raise their baseline performance by 1.16 NCEs but posted a gain of 6.66 NCEs. While these results are encouraging, they represent fall-to-spring results. According to its Accountability Plan, KIPP Sankofa will use spring-to-spring results for the remainder of charter period, which is a more challenging interval in which to meet improvement targets.

QUESTION 3: Does the school's instructional program meet the needs of diverse students?

1. Although school leaders state that Saxon Math, Delta Science and Zaner Bloser serve as the foundation for the curriculum at KIPP Sankofa, there is limited evidence that teachers are consistently using them to drive teaching and learning.

Teachers at KIPP Sankofa informed members of the inspection team that they rely primarily on the New York State standards to guide their unit and lesson planning. When asked about their use of Saxon Math, Delta Science and Zaner Bloser, they reported that they loosely base their unit and lesson planning on these programs. They pointed out that they have the flexibility to use a variety of instructional materials to support teaching and learning in their classrooms and that they use these programs as resources to develop their unit and lesson plans. This seems to contradict statements made by school leaders who stated that, as stated in the school's charter application, Saxon Math, Delta Science and Zaner Bloser are the core of the curriculum of the school. They explained that teachers "do not have the flexibility to create their own curriculum,

but some [flexibility] as how to approach it.” Both school leaders and teachers noted that KIPP Sankofa has not formally adopted a textbook series. This enables teachers to use a variety of instructional materials and tools to support teaching and learning.

Currently, KIPP Sankofa does not have a curriculum scope and sequence that clearly outlines the skills and concepts that students need to acquire at the end of each grade level. It was not clear from conversations with teachers and school administrators that the school has a process in place for ensuring that the curricula that they are using and/or developing are truly aligned within and across grade levels, as well as to the New York State standards. By not having a school-wide curriculum scope and sequence, school leaders have not provided their staff – most of whom are fairly new to teaching – with a resource that they could use to learn about effective instructional strategies designed to address and support the various learning styles of the students in their classroom.

2. Classroom instruction at KIPP Sankofa does not consistently meet the needs of diverse learners, although school leaders have modified the academic program to support student learning.

Conversation with school personnel and review of school documents indicate that school leaders are committed to finding ways to support and enhance teaching and learning for all students. Teachers are required to administer weekly assessments as a way of monitoring student progress toward statewide standards. Both teachers and the dean of faculty stated that the teachers are expected to use the data from the weekly assessments to identify those students who will need additional instructional support. A review of the school’s assessment binder shows that teachers at KIPP Sankofa are administering weekly assessments to students in their classes. Struggling and at-risk students receive support in study hall, which is built into students’ schedules. This was confirmed by students who informed team members that they receive academic support in study hall. Additionally, an examination of school documents reveals that school leaders have created dedicated time in the school schedule for students to participate in study hall. School leaders also created advanced classes in mathematics and English language arts for seventh graders. According to the dean of faculty, sixth graders who performed strongly on the SAT 10, who earn good grades and who are recommended by their teachers, are selected to take the advanced classes. The creation of the advanced classes reflects the effort of the leadership team to address the needs of high-performing students at KIPP Sankofa.

The special education teacher provides services to students in a resource room setting. The special education teacher reported that she conducts consultations with classroom teachers to inform them of students’ progress and to help them identify strategies that they can use to reinforce the skills that students are working on in the resource room. According to the special education teacher, strategies for supporting students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) include the use of visual aids, preferred seating, word bank, breaking instructional strategies into discrete tasks and activities and additional time on task. Notwithstanding the special education teacher’s assertions, team members did not observe teachers’ consistent use of these strategies to support student learning in the classes they visited. When asked, the special education teacher replied that she could not describe the referral process that the school uses to

identify students with special needs. School leaders have also enlisted the services of a consulting group – Interactive Therapy Group (ITG) – to provide speech and language support.

Classroom observations show that the overall quality of instruction at KIPP Sankofa is uneven, with a few teachers demonstrating effective practice and others not consistently doing so. The teachers who demonstrate effective instructional practice work hard to create classroom environments that address the diverse learning needs of all students. For example, they implement strategies that activate students' prior knowledge of the topics and skills that are being addressed in the class. By doing this, these teachers create the scaffold that students need to access skills and concepts – especially new ones – that are being taught. These teachers frequently check for students' understanding of concepts and skills by asking students to explain their answers. They also provide students with adequate wait time to answer questions and create opportunities for students to learn from their peers. Effective teachers at KIPP Sankofa diligently check in with each student to ensure that everyone in the classroom is on track with the lesson and re-teach a concept when there is evidence of confusion among the students. These teachers create opportunities to provide one-on-one support to struggling learners.

In the classrooms in which teachers did not consistently demonstrate effective practice, teaching was usually teacher-led whole group instruction, with some independent work. These teachers use the “thumbs-up, thumbs-down” approach to monitor students' grasp of concepts and skills. Members of the inspection team questioned this approach to checking for understanding because it did not appear to provide teachers with specific information about the things that students actually understand about the topic being covered in the class. By failing to effectively monitor students' understanding of skills and concepts, these teachers were unable to adjust their instructional approach to better support students. Team members also observed that these teachers rarely provide students with adequate wait time to answer questions. Instead, they quickly move on to the next student. There were instances in which some of these teachers did not re-teach concepts and skills, even though there were students in their classes who gave incorrect responses to the questions that were posed.

There is ample evidence that teachers are implementing elements of the instructional approach outlined by school leaders. Class observations revealed that every teacher at KIPP Sankofa requires students to complete a “Do Now” activity at the start of the class, uses interactive activities (such as games to get students actively engaged in the lesson) and checks for understanding. Members of the inspection team, however, did not observe teachers consistently closing their lessons with a wrap-up activity or using a variety of instructional strategies that appeal to students' learning styles. Team members also noted that very few teachers integrated the use of literacy strategies in their lessons. This is particularly noteworthy since students at KIPP Sankofa performed poorly on the SAT 10 reading battery for two consecutive years.

Although efforts are being made to improve and refine instruction at KIPP Sankofa, teachers and school leaders have yet to address the issue of assessment in the school. A review of at least 70 student work samples shows that teachers at KIPP Sankofa rely primarily on worksheets to assess and evaluate student academic progress. All the worksheets required students to engage in rote learning and did not engage them in higher-order thinking and advanced problem solving.

Team members observed that, in all classes, every student is required to complete the same assignment, with no evidence of modification for those with special needs or who are advanced learners.

In general, instruction at KIPP Sankofa does not consistently address the needs of all students. Not all teachers employ sound instructional strategies designed to help all students acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for them to attain academic success. Also, school leaders have yet to establish clear guidelines to help teachers improve the overall quality of teaching and learning in the school. Nevertheless, school leaders are making modifications to the instructional program to help students achieve academic success – the creation, for example, of the advanced mathematics and ELA classes for high achieving seventh graders and, as well, the integration of study hall in students' schedules.

QUESTION 4: Do the school's standards reflect the implementation of high academic expectations?

1. KIPP Sankofa does not have defined school-wide standards for curriculum and instruction. Consequently, there is no coherence to the overall academic program.

The uneven quality of instruction seems to limit the KIPP Sankofa staff's ability to establish a truly rigorous academic program that supports students' acquisition of the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in selective high schools. As noted earlier, KIPP Sankofa does not have a formally developed school-wide scope and sequence by which the school implements its curriculum that unifies teaching and learning in the school. As a result, many teachers do not appear to have a common understanding of the learning outcomes that they should be working toward with students.

Teachers participate in weekly grade-level meetings to share ideas on how to support student learning and discuss strategies for implementing interdisciplinary lessons. According to the teachers, they sometimes implement the strategies that are discussed at the grade-level meetings, but do not know if their colleagues implement any of the strategies discussed during the grade-level meetings. At the time of the visit, team members did not observe lessons that were interdisciplinary. Nevertheless, the team was informed that at least one mathematics teacher works closely with the science and art teachers to reinforce certain concepts and skills with students. The mathematics teacher, for example, taught a lesson on scale factor to help students complete a project on scale drawing. Also, the mathematics teacher taught scientific notation to reinforce this concept and skill that was being addressed in the science class. With such limited information, it was difficult for the team to conclude that teachers across the school are systematically working together to complete interdisciplinary lessons.

The environment at KIPP Sankofa is conducive to learning. There are well-established routines in each class. Each class, for example, has an agenda that outlines the activities/lesson for the day. Students complete a Do Now activity at the start of each class, hand in homework assignments and respond well to a series of cues that teachers use to get their attention. Student behavior is not an issue and, as such, time on learning is a strength in the school. For the most

part, the pacing for instruction is very good and students are actively engaged in learning. They raise their hands to answer questions and transition smoothly between each planned activity.

The overall quality of instruction is mixed. As mentioned earlier, there are teachers who demonstrate sound practice and others who do not. Teachers who demonstrate sound practice create opportunities for students to apply and extend their learning beyond the classroom. They also make sure that students have the appropriate tools and strategies designed to help them achieve and maintain academic success. In the classrooms in which teachers did not consistently demonstrate effective instructional practice, there were limited opportunities for students to engage in advanced problem solving and higher-order thinking. Teachers reported that the dean of faculty and school leader conduct numerous informal class observations and provide them with feedback about their instructional practice. The teachers felt that the feedback they receive is constructive. The inspection team, however, could not determine to what degree the teachers were incorporating the feedback from the dean of faculty and the school leader into their daily practice.

The overall quality of student work at KIPP Sankofa is usually low. Students hand in assignments that have numerous spelling and grammatical errors and give one-word answers to comprehension questions. Their writing samples do not indicate that they are familiar with the writing process. Despite this, there was no feedback on the work samples reviewed by the inspection team. Three of the four parents who were interviewed by the inspection team complained about this. They believe that, by not correcting students' work and providing them with constructive feedback, teachers and school leaders are not being true to the KIPP educational model. In addition, student work samples do not reflect grade-level-appropriate benchmarks. More specifically, the work for students in grades six and seven seems to be aligned to the state standards and benchmarks that are outlined for the elementary grades. As a result, the inspection team concluded that students at KIPP Sankofa are not acquiring all the skills and knowledge necessary for their successful transition to the next grade level.

Teachers and administrators have done a good job of establishing a positive school climate that promotes teaching and learning at KIPP Sankofa. Students and adults go about their daily tasks in a very purposeful manner. Despite this, there is limited evidence of academic rigor. Teachers and school administrators do not seem to have a common understanding of high expectations for student performance. Class observations and a review of student work samples show that the quality of work that students are expected to produce differs for each teacher. As noted earlier, some teachers accept one-word responses from students, while other teachers expect students to answer in complete sentences and to demonstrate that they have a good grasp of the materials that are being covered in the class. In terms of the use of rubrics to evaluate student writing, there are teachers who have included academic performance-base criteria such as, "Student used descriptive language to convey his/her idea." and "Student used grammatical correct language and punctuation." to assess students. Others use non-academic performance criteria, e.g., "Neatness." "Puts Name on Paper." to determine if students have met grade-level benchmarks.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY

QUESTION 1: Are students and parents satisfied with the work of the school?

1. Parent and student satisfaction with KIPP Sankofa appears to be mixed.

The parents (4) and students (15) who participated in the focus groups with members of the inspection team did not express complete satisfaction with KIPP Sankofa as a school. It should be noted, however, that with such a small sample, the generalizability of these comments is extremely limited. There were a few aspects of the school that they liked, such as the focus on African-American culture and the fact that the school is a safe place for students. While students expressed concerns about the length of the school day and the implementation of the school's discipline policy, three of the four parents interviewed spoke candidly of their dissatisfaction with the academic program, the lack of effective communication by school administrators and teachers and some teachers' apparent inability to build positive relationship with students.

In interviews with members of the inspection team, students clearly stated that they believe that some teachers at KIPP Sankofa have high expectations for their academic and behavioral performance. They believe that these teachers are accessible and are always available to help them complete difficult assignments. The students noted, however, that some teachers were aggravating and are not as nurturing towards students as they thought teachers should be. As such, the students do not find these teachers to be approachable.

The length of the school day was a big concern for most of the students interviewed by the school. They complained that the length of the school day, combined with the volume of homework assignments they receive every day, makes it difficult for them to have down time during the day. Also, some students mentioned that the volume of homework they receive each day has negatively impacted their sleep pattern. They are forced to stay up late to complete their homework assignments.

The students believe that some teachers' implementation of the school's behavior management system is punitive. More specifically, they informed team members that students who are "benched" are often times pulled from their art and/or drumming classes to complete academic assignments. This was confirmed by a few teachers, even though the dean of faculty and school leader informed the inspection team that this should not be happening in the school. The students are very upset about this. They truly enjoy the art and drumming classes, which provide them with a different learning experience in the school.

In general, students feel safe at KIPP Sankofa and that the teachers are constantly monitoring their behavior. They expressed strong concerns, however, about the general location of the school. The students do not think that the school is located in a safe neighborhood. They see this as a negative aspect of the school.

Like the students, the parents who were interviewed were not completely satisfied with their children's experience at KIPP Sankofa. All four parents stated that they enrolled their children in the school because of its promise to implement the KIPP educational model, which they all believe will help their children acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in

high-performing college preparatory high schools. These parents believe that the school's commitment to teach students about their individual culture and heritage is an attractive and strong aspect of the educational experience at KIPP Sankofa. They acknowledged that the small class size and one-on-one attention their children receive are two key strengths of the school. One parent spoke enthusiastically of how KIPP Sankofa has helped her daughter to develop the poise and confidence that she needs to be a successful student. She also noted that her daughter's commitment to her learning has resulted in a drastic improvement in her behavior and attitude toward school.

Three of the four parents who were interviewed by the inspection team were adamant that KIPP Sankofa is not fulfilling the KIPP model. These parents were disappointed by what they perceive as teachers' and administrators' failure to implement KIPP's Five Pillars – high expectations, choice and commitment, more time on task, power to lead and focus on results. For them, this is evidenced by the fact that their children receive high marks for work that the parents believed was of poor quality. They spoke candidly about their children receiving good grades on writing assignments that had numerous spelling and grammatical errors. One parent claims that she is teaching writing to her daughter at home because she is very dissatisfied with the quality of writing instruction in the school. The parents, however, expressed strong satisfaction with the quality of mathematics instruction at KIPP Sankofa.

Three parents stated that they do not believe that all teachers at KIPP Sankofa have the skills and knowledge necessary to work effectively with adolescents. According to them, some of the teachers get involved in power struggles with students and seem to implement the school's discipline policy capriciously. This, they believe, makes it difficult for the school to establish a learning environment that is conducive for learning. Members of the visiting team did not see evidence of this during the two day visit. Nevertheless, this is the perception that these parents have of the school. The parents would like to see all staff members participate in ongoing professional development designed to help them develop a deep understanding and appreciation of the social-emotional and academic development of adolescents.

All four parents noted that communication is an area for improvement at KIPP Sankofa. They claimed that school leaders and teachers do not consistently share information with families about key events in the school. They stated that they get information about the school from the KIPP Parent Association. According to the parents, there is no school-wide newsletter that is distributed throughout the year. They informed the inspection team that parents receive a school-wide calendar that highlights key events (e.g., testing, field trips) at the start of the school year but complained that they are rarely told about the changes that are made to the calendar. They find this frustrating because they plan their schedules based on the school's calendar. In addition, the parents mentioned that teachers call them 'for foolishness.' For example, they alleged that teachers call them to report disciplinary infractions that their children have committed but rarely do they call to discuss their children's academic progress.

There is consensus among the parents that KIPP Sankofa is safe. They would like the staff, however, to monitor more closely the horseplay that students sometimes engage in during the school day. Three of the four parents stated that they are not sure if they will have their children

return to KIPP Sankofa for the 2006-2007 year. They say that they are waiting for the results from the SAT 10 and state assessments before making their decision.

It is important to note that the information shared by the four parents is not reflected in the parent survey that school leaders administered during the 2004-2005 school year. The 52 parents who responded to the survey expressed overwhelming support for the school. According to the survey results, these parents believed that staff at KIPP Sankofa communicates well with them, that their children are making progress and that their children like the school.

QUESTION 2: Are systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of the academic program and to modify it as needed?

1. KIPP Sankofa has developed a comprehensive system for tracking daily student performance.

A review of school documents and conversations with the staff revealed that KIPP Sankofa has a sound process in place for collecting and using student performance data. Teachers administer weekly assessments that the dean of faculty collects and analyzes with teachers. Teachers are expected to use the results on the weekly assessments to monitor student progress. It was not apparent to inspection team members if teachers are using the data from the weekly assessments to re-teach the concepts that students have not grasped. Both teachers and the dean of faculty informed the inspection team that students who receive less than 70 percent on their assignments are identified for additional instructional support and that their parents are informed about their progress.

Seventh graders who scored 50 NCEs or better on the SAT 10, who received a grade of 80 percent or better and who are highly recommended by their teachers are placed in the advanced classes for mathematics and ELA. Students who consistently score below 70 percent on their quarterly report card grades, as well as on the final exam that is administered each school year, are retained. The director and dean of faculty also used the SAT 10 results to make adjustments to the academic program. Students, for example, performed poorly on the SAT 10 reading and language batteries. This led to the purchase of Zaner Bloser – a textbook series that is designed to strengthen writing instruction at KIPP Sankofa.

2. Systems for monitoring the effectiveness of the academic program are not well developed or universally applied

School leaders have put processes in place for evaluating the efficacy of the school's academic program. Both the director and dean of faculty conduct formal and informal classroom observations to assess the quality of teaching and learning. The dean of faculty reviews teachers' weekly lesson plans and collects and reviews student performance data. The KIPP Foundation hired Cambridge Educational Associates (CEA) to evaluate the school's implementation of its educational model. The Board of Trustees, however, does not have a process in place for evaluating either the director or the overall success of the instructional program.

Teachers reported that they receive numerous informal observations and two formal evaluations. This was confirmed by school leaders, who acknowledged that the teacher performance appraisal process is still being developed and refined at the school. The formal observations are scheduled mid-year and the end of the year. The dean of faculty and the school leader conduct pre- and post-observation conferences with teachers. During the pre-observation conference, teachers identify the areas on which they would like school leaders to focus during the evaluation. The teachers meet with the school leader and dean of faculty after the formal observation to discuss what took place during the lesson.

A review of the instrument that school leaders use to evaluate teachers shows that, in addition to the areas the teachers have identified, they also contain specific elements that they would like teachers to incorporate into their lessons. Some of the elements include: (1) class begins promptly; (2) class is well organized; (3) students are on task and responsive; and, (4) teacher employs various instructional strategies. Teachers are then rated as Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory or Outstanding on each element. Teachers reported that they find the feedback they receive during the evaluation meaningful.

Teachers are required to write reflection summaries as part of the performance appraisal process. The reflection summaries are in response to questions such as, "Do your assessments prepare students for the SAT 10?" "Do you provide students with the chance to show an understanding of the material presented?" An examination of a few reflection summaries revealed that teachers do not receive any feedback from either the director or dean of faculty on their assessment of their performance. Another key component of the teacher performance appraisal process at KIPP Sankofa is teachers' completion of the Teacher Improvement Plan (TIP), highlighting the areas in which they would like to improve and individualizing professional development for teachers.

The dean of faculty collects teachers' weekly lesson plans and provides teachers with feedback on how they can improve their lessons. School leaders reported that the information that teachers include in their lesson plans might cause them to conduct informal observations of the teachers. They stated that they expect teachers to incorporate their feedback into the lessons and that they try to monitor this.

School administrators informed members of the inspection team that the school leader is transitioning out of her role as the instructional leader of the school. The plan is to make the dean of faculty the key instructional leader at KIPP Sankofa. The school leader explained that she

made this decision because she needs the time to focus on the overall operations and management of the school. According to her, her current responsibilities as the head of school – a combination of both instructional leadership and general management – make it difficult for her to complete everything that she needs to do. While she will continue to play a role in guiding the future direction of the instructional program, the primary responsibility for doing so will be that of the dean of faculty. Both the school leader and the dean of faculty spoke about creating opportunities for the dean of faculty to participate in leadership training workshops that are organized and facilitated by the KIPP Foundation. It is not clear, however, that these professional development opportunities will be sufficient to help the dean of faculty quickly acquire the skill and knowledge she needs to bolster curriculum and instruction in the school and significantly raise overall student achievement.

At the request of the KIPP Foundation, Cambridge Educational Associates (CEA) conducted a five-day evaluation of KIPP Sankofa during fall 2005. In general, the CEA findings have been positive. At the time of the visit, the Board of Trustees had not conducted its own evaluation of the academic program. The Board seems to rely primarily on the director to tell them how things are progressing in the school. They have not done a formal evaluation of the school leader since the school's inception. The members, therefore, informed team members that they plan to use the CEA report as the *de facto* formal evaluation of the school leader.

The Board has experienced significant turnovers in its membership since the opening of the school and, as such, has not been able to govern the school effectively. Board members are currently in the process of recruiting new members to build their capacity to govern the school. At the time of the visit, there were two new members on the Board, both of whom have extensive experience in the field of higher education. In conversation with team members, the two new Trustees stated that they plan to use the resources of their respective college/university to support teachers and administrators at KIPP Sankofa. For example, they would like to use their colleges as a resource for professional development for the teachers and administrators in the school. This looks very promising. One of the new Board members is the assistant dean of the School of Education at the University of Buffalo.

III. UNIQUE PROGRAMMATIC AREAS

QUESTION 1: Are the school's mission and vision clear to all stakeholders?

1. KIPP Sankofa's mission is clear to all stakeholders. The vision, however, is not clear.

Every stakeholder interviewed by the inspection team clearly articulated the school's mission, "to prepare students for high performing high schools, college, and the world beyond." They did not, however, have knowledge of the current and long-term vision of the school. To make the mission a reality in the school, school leaders assigned each classroom with the name of a college. Also, teachers speak frequently to students about going to college. It was clear that students have internalized the school's mission because they all mentioned that they will attend college once they graduate from high school.

Inspection team members have concluded that school leaders' failure to clearly communicate their vision of the school has made it difficult for all stakeholders to internalize and own it. School leaders' inability to clearly and accurately convey their vision for the school is evident in the fact that they have not worked with their staff to establish: (1) a school-wide definition of academic rigor; (2) a common understanding of what effective instruction and assessment should look like; and, (3) specific criteria for evaluating individual teacher implementation of the KIPP Five Pillars.

By not addressing these issues, it seems that school leaders have made it difficult for individual teachers – and the staff as a collective – to develop a deep understanding and appreciation of what KIPP Sankofa should be *actually* doing to raise student achievement and to successfully prepare students for high-performing high schools. This is further compounded by the fact that the Board of Trustees has yet to work with the director to discuss the things that should be in place at the end of the school's first charter cycle. In other words, neither the Board of Trustees nor school leaders have drafted a blue print for the academic program or organizational viability for the school over the long term. As such, there is no defined or expressed vision for the school.

QUESTION 2: Are the school's special programs meeting expected targets?

1. School leaders are implementing strategies to help students and families make a successful transition to high school.

Unique Aspect Goal 1: Students who attend KIPP Sankofa Charter School will be capable of enrollment in college preparatory high schools.

Measure 1: All students who attend KIPP Sankofa Charter School for three or more years will show acceptance in either the public or private college preparatory high school of his/her choice.

The guidance counselor/high school transition specialist, with support from school leaders, has been very proactive about educating students and families about the options that are available to them in terms of quality high schools in and outside of Buffalo. Since the start of the 2005-2006 school year, the high school transition specialist has worked hard to put a comprehensive process in place to support the school's effort to help students make a smooth and successful transition to high school. Elements of the high school transition process include: identification of all public and private college preparatory high schools in and outside of Buffalo; establishment of partnerships with local college preparatory high schools; workshops on financial aid for families; and, implementation of a high school placement class that is designed to help seventh graders start the process of thinking about the type of high school they would like to attend, once they graduate from KIPP Sankofa.

Seventh graders at KIPP Sankofa are required to attend a weekly high school placement class in which they focus on preparing for high school. A review of the lesson plans for the high school placement course shows that the high school transition specialist creates many opportunities for students to think deeply about what they would like their high school experience to be. Students complete a weekly reflection activity that asks them to respond to questions, such as: What type

of high school do you want to attend? What are your academic strengths? What do you think high schools look for in their applicants?

Since this is the first year that the school is instituting this program, the high school transition specialist does not have a well-developed curriculum for the high school placement class. Nevertheless, she is able to demystify the high school experience for students and give them a head start on the planning process. She sent parents a listing of all the open houses being hosted by the selective high schools they are targeting for students. She is also collaborating with the KIPP College Committee – a committee of the KIPP Parent Association – to help families become better prepared for their children’s transition to high school.

The process that the high school specialist is implementing at KIPP Sankofa holds a lot of promise. She is providing students and their families with the information they need to make informed decisions about where students go to high school. This is a key strength that will enable school leaders to make the mission a reality in the school.

PART II: SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN: ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. ACADEMIC PROGRAM GOALS

Goal 1: All students at KIPP Sankofa Charter School will become proficient readers and writers of the English language.

Measure 1: During the five-year period of the charter, students who have been enrolled at the school for two or more years will score at Levels 3 and 4 on the New York State English language arts (ELA) assessments at the following percentages:

- **Grade 7—65 percent in 2005-2006, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008**
- **Grade 8—75 percent in 2006-2007 and 2007-2008**

Measure 2: Beginning in the 2005-06 school year, and for each of the remaining years of its charter, the KIPP Sankofa Charter School will have a higher performance index (PI) rating than Frank A. Sedita Community School (BPS 38), Pfc. William J. Grabiarez School of Excellence (BPS 79), Buffalo Public School 43, Lincoln Academy (BPS 44) and the Buffalo City School District on the New York State ELA. The comparison for all schools at the city school district will be grades 5-8.

Measure 3: Beginning with the 2004-05 school year, cohorts of KIPP Sankofa students will reduce by one-half the gap between their baseline or prior year's performance and grade level (NCE=50) on the Stanford 10 Total Reading battery. By the end of grade 8, the cohort will be at 50 NCE. If the cohort's baseline exceeds an NCE score of 50, it will be expected to show an increase in its NCE score.

Measure 4: Beginning with the 2004-05 school year, cohorts of KIPP Sankofa students will reduce by one-half the gap between their baseline or prior year's performance and the eighth grade proficient performance level (in scale score) on the state ELA assessment. By the end of grade 8, the cohort will be at the proficient scale score (scale score equivalent to Level 3). If a cohort's baseline scaled score exceeds the equivalent of scoring at the proficient performance level on the eighth grade ELA assessment, it will be expected to show an increase of ten scaled score points.

Goal 2: All students at KIPP Sankofa Charter School will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of mathematical computation and problem solving.

Measure 1: During the five-year period of the charter, students who have been enrolled at the school for two or more years will score at Levels 3 and 4 on the New York State mathematics assessments at the following percentages:

- **Grade 7—65 percent in 2005-2006, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008**
- **Grade 8—75 percent in 2006-2007 and 2007-2008**

Measure 2: Beginning in the 2005-06 school year, and for each of the remaining years of its charter, the KIPP Sankofa Charter School will have a higher performance index (PI) rating

than Frank A. Sedita Community School (BPS 38), Pfc. William J. Grabiarz School of Excellence (BPS 79), Buffalo Public School 43, Lincoln Academy (BPS 44) and the Buffalo City School District on the New York State mathematics assessment. The comparison for all schools at the city school district will be grades 5-8.

Measure 3: Beginning with the 2004-05 school year, cohorts of KIPP Sankofa students will reduce by one-half the gap between their baseline or prior year's performance and grade level (NCE=50) on the Stanford 10 mathematics battery. By the end of grade 8, the cohort will be at 50 NCE. If the cohort's baseline exceeds an NCE score of 50, it will be expected to show an increase in its NCE score.

Measure 4: Beginning with the 2004-05 school year, cohorts of KIPP Sankofa students will reduce by one-half the gap between their baseline or prior year's performance and the eighth grade proficient performance level (in scale score) on the state mathematics assessment. By the end of grade 8, the cohort will be at the proficient scale score (scale score equivalent to Level 3). If a cohort's baseline scaled score exceeds the equivalent of scoring at the proficient performance level on the eighth grade mathematics assessment, it will be expected to show an increase of ten scaled score points.

Goal 3: All students at KIPP Sankofa will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of scientific reasoning and problem solving.

Measure 1: During the five-year period of the charter, 75% of the students who have been enrolled at the school for two or more years will score at Levels 3 and 4 on the eighth grade New York State science assessments.

Measure 2: Beginning in the 2005-06 school year, and for each of the remaining years of its charter, the KIPP Sankofa Charter School will have a greater percent of students at Levels 3 and 4 than Frank A. Sedita Community School (BPS 38), Pfc. William J. Grabiarz School of Excellence (BPS 79), Buffalo Public School 43, Lincoln Academy (BPS 44) and the Buffalo City School District on the eighth grade New York State science assessments.

Goal 4: All students at KIPP Sankofa will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of social, geographical, civic and world studies.

Measure 1: During the five-year period of the charter, 75% of the students who have been enrolled at the school for two or more years will score at Levels 3 and 4 on the eighth grade New York State social studies assessments.

Measure 2: Beginning in the 2005-06 school year, and for each of the remaining years of its charter, the KIPP Sankofa Charter School will have a greater percent of students at Levels 3 and 4 than Frank A. Sedita Community School (BPS 38), Pfc. William J. Grabiarz School of Excellence (BPS 79), Buffalo Public School 43, Lincoln Academy (BPS 44) and the Buffalo City School District on the eighth grade New York State social studies assessments.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM GOALS—RECOMMENDATIONS

The school might consider the following recommendations to enhance the quality of evidence to be used to assess progress toward its goals.

1. Clearly label all tables and charts. Include the name of the assessment on which the school is reporting, as well as the testing period. Identify if the school is reporting on grade level or matched cohort results.
2. Create tables and charts for individual grade levels. Also, write a narrative that analyzes the results for each grade level. This will make it easier for the reader to get a complete picture of overall student performance.
3. When reporting SAT 10 value-added results, create tables that include information on the target/expected results, as well as the actual results. Also, include a column to show Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) gains and/or loss. This makes it easier for the reader to understand the progress the school is making towards the goals outlined in its Accountability Plan.
4. By disaggregating test scores into subgroups, classrooms and other local criteria, a more complete picture of students' overall performance on internal assessments and standardized tests is available. Using the data, the school would be able to adjust its academic program and instructional practice to better address the needs of high achieving and struggling students.

ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY GOALS

Goal 1: The average KIPP Sankofa yearly attendance rate will exceed the Buffalo Public School (BPS) District's attendance rate.

Goal 2: Parents respond to a survey with an average satisfaction of 4 out 5.

ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY GOALS--RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create a comparison table to display the attendance data. The table should compare the attendance data for both BPS and KIPP Sankofa.
2. Clearly note the number of surveys that are distributed to families, as well as the number that were completed and returned to the school. Also, in the narrative, include the information about when the survey was administered to families.
3. Conduct a year-to-year comparison of parents' satisfaction on the survey. This will help to demonstrate that the school is a viable option for parents.

III. UNIQUE PROGRAMMATIC AREA GOALS

Goal 1: Students who attend KIPP Sankofa Charter School will be capable of enrollment in college preparatory high schools.

Measure 1: All students who attend KIPP Sankofa Charter School for three or more years will show acceptance in either the public or private college preparatory high school of his/her choice.

UNIQUE PROGRAMMATIC AREA GOALS—RECOMMENDATIONS

1. List the types of high school (that is, private, public, boarding) to which students apply. Include information on the percentage of applicants to each type of school and the percentage of eighth graders who are accepted to each type of school.
2. Include information on the number of eighth graders who take the placement exams to the college preparatory high schools and the number who passed.
3. If possible, include information on the percentage of KIPP Sankofa graduates who are still attending the selective high schools, as well as those who have graduated and gone on to college.

APPENDIX A: Framework for the Analysis of School Progress

Category	Criteria	Evidence Sources
Academic Program	To what extent have students attained expected skills and knowledge?	School's Accountability Plan and Progress Report(s)
	What progress have students made over time in attaining expected skills and knowledge?	School's Accountability Plan and Progress Report(s)
	Does the school's instructional program meet the needs of diverse students?	Class visits, interviews, data review, Accountability Plan Progress Report
	Do the school's standards reflect the implementation of high academic expectations?	Review of curriculum documents, student work samples ; confirmation of implementation by class visits
Organizational Viability	Are students and parents satisfied with the work of the school?	Interviews, survey review
	Are systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of the academic program and to modify it as needed?	Personnel evaluation policies, minutes and agendas of board, staff meetings
Unique Aspects	Are the school's mission and vision clear to all stakeholders?	Interviews, document reviews
	Are the school's special programs meeting expected targets?	Accountability Plan, Progress Reports, other docs unique to each school

APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KIPP SANKOFA CHARTER SCHOOL

I. Academic Program Goals

Goal 1& 2: All students at KIPP Sankofa Charter School will become proficient readers and writers of the English language and demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of mathematical computation and problem solving.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
<p>Measure 1: Students who have been enrolled at the school for two or more years will score at Levels 3 and 4 on the New York State English language arts and mathematics assessments.</p> <p>Measure 2: Beginning in the 2005-06 school year, and for each of the remaining years of its charter, the KIPP Sankofa Charter School will have a higher performance index (PI) rating than the following comparison public schools...</p> <p>Measure 3: Beginning with the 2004-05 school year, cohorts of KIPP Sankofa students will reduce by one-half the gap between their baseline or prior year's performance and grade level (NCE=50) on the Stanford 10 total reading and mathematics batteries.</p> <p>Measure 4: Beginning with the 2004-05 school year, cohorts of KIPP Sankofa students will reduce by one-half the gap between their baseline or prior year's performance and the eighth grade proficient performance level (in scale score) on the state ELA assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Label all tables and charts clearly. • Label charts and tables to show if they contain grade level or matched cohort data. • When reporting SAT 10 value-added results, create tables that include information on the target/expected results, as well as the actual results. Also, include a column to show NCE gains and/or loss. • Create tables and charts for individual grade level. • Write a narrative for each data chart/table. • When doing comparison to Buffalo Public School, create table that identifies the school and items being compared.
Goals 3&4: All students at KIPP Sankofa will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of scientific reasoning and problem solving and the understanding and application of social, geographical, civic and world studies.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
<p>Measure 1: During the five-year period of the charter, 75% of the students who have been enrolled at the school for two or more years will score at Levels 3 and 4 on the eighth grade New York State science and social studies assessments.</p> <p>Measure 2: Beginning in the 2005-06 school year, and for each of the remaining years of its charter, the KIPP Sankofa Charter School will have a greater percent of students at Levels 3 and 4 than the following comparison public schools ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Label all tables and charts clearly. • Label charts and tables to show if they contain grade level or matched cohort data. • Create tables and charts for individual grade level. • Write a narrative for each data chart/table. • When doing comparison to Buffalo Public School, create a table that identifies the school and items being compared.

II. Organizational Viability Goals

Goal 1: The average KIPP Sankofa Charter School yearly attendance rate will exceed the Buffalo Public School District's attendance rate.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create two types of comparison tables: one that compares the attendance data for both BPS and KIPP Sankofa and another that does year-to-year comparison of the attendance rate for KIPP Sankofa. • When doing year-to-year comparison for KIPP Sankofa, show improvement or decline in the attendance rate. • Include the specific attendance rate for each school. • Create data charts that reflect the attendance data for KIPP Sankofa and BPS for at least three years.
Goal 2: Parents respond to a survey with an average satisfaction of 4 out 5.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly note the number of surveys distributed to families, as well as the number that was completed and returned to the school. • Specify the time when the survey was administered. • Conduct a year-to-year comparison of the survey results.

III. Unique Programmatic Area Goals

Goal 1: Students who KIPP Sankofa Charter School will be capable of enrollment in college preparatory high schools.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
Measure 1: All students who attend KIPP Sankofa Charter School for three or more years will show acceptance in either the public or private college preparatory high school of his/her choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List the types of high school (that is, private, public, boarding) to which students apply. • Include information on the percentage of applicants to each type of school and the percentage of eighth graders who are accepted to each type of school. • Include information on the number of eighth graders who take the placement exams to the college preparatory high schools and the number who passed. • If possible, include information on the percentage of KIPP Sankofa graduates who are still attending the selective high schools, as well as those who have graduated and gone on to college.