



Charter Schools Institute
State University of New York

ROOSEVELT CHILDREN'S ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL
THIRD YEAR INSPECTION REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

The third year inspection is part of a comprehensive accountability system for New York State charter schools sponsored by the State University of New York Charter Schools Institute. The visit during the school's third year of operation provides an independent assessment of the school's progress toward its academic and organizational goals as defined in its accountability plan.

The third year inspection complements the yearly reviews conducted by CSI staff and corroborates the school's annual reports of its progress toward the targets defined in its accountability plan. The visit provides an independent assessment of the school's progress and provides recommendations to the school as it 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 third year inspection to Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School was conducted on January 13 & 14, 2003 by an independent team of experienced educators contracted by SchoolWorks, Beverly, MA.

- Dr. Karen Laba, Project Manager, SchoolWorks: former middle and high school science teacher, preservice science teacher educator and supervisor, and consultant in accountability system design and implementation for SchoolWorks.
- Janet Schulze, Associate and Project Manager, SchoolWorks: former middle school English Language Arts teacher, high school assistant principal, and superintendent intern; candidate for an Ed. D. in the Urban Superintendents' Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.
- Harrington Gibson, Consultant with SchoolWorks: former fourth grade teacher in Chicago and elementary teacher-coach and administrative intern in the Boston Public Schools; pursuing an Ed. D. in the Teaching and Learning Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

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

academic and organizational goals. The team offered a brief oral summary of its findings and recommendations to school leaders and invited them to ask for clarification as needed.

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 the same three categories as the school's other documents: academic program, organizational viability, and unique programmatic areas. The framework for the progress report discussion is shown in **Appendix A**.

The second part of the report, *School Accountability Plan: Assessment and Recommendations*, reports the team's assessment of the quality of the school's own 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

Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School opened in September 2000 and is mid-way through its third year of operation. The school occupies two sites in Roosevelt, a church basement divided into four classrooms for grades K and 1, and a new one-story facility constructed of portable classroom structures housing grades 2, 3 and 4. At the time of the inspection, the school reported an enrollment of 246 students, composed of two classes each of grades K, 1 and 3, three classes for grade 2, and one section of fourth grade. Each classroom is staffed by a degreed teacher and a cooperating teacher, both of whom are engaged in delivery of instruction throughout the school day. All but one of the Roosevelt teachers is certified.

The Roosevelt Board of Trustees consists of nine members who represent various civic, business, religious and educational organizations. One member of the Board is the president of the Parent Teacher Organization. The administrative organization of the school includes a principal and administrative assistant at the upper grades building, and a "lead teacher/ student support services director" at the K-1 building who serves as an acting administrator for that building. The current interim principal is the third leader in the school's history.

Roosevelt contracted with Victory Schools, Inc. to provide management services for the school. Victory is responsible for curriculum materials, professional development, instructional monitoring, budget development and personnel. Victory curriculum personnel are regular visitors

to the school to conduct their instructional oversight functions and maintain close connection with building liaisons responsible for day to day operations.

The literacy and mathematics curriculum at Roosevelt is developed around the Direct Instruction program. For science and social studies, the school uses a modification of the Core Knowledge sequence. The DI language program has been supplemented with instructional materials in writing and expanded literature resources. In mathematics, the school has purchased the Scott Foresman text as an additional reference source.

A facility to house the planned expansion of their program remains a major challenge for the Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School. The subdivided church basement is a difficult arrangement for four classrooms, and construction is underway to add two classes to the main facility to bring first graders into the Pleasant Avenue location. Further growth in enrollment depends on the school's ability to locate suitable space or to resolve existing engineering limitations at the current site.

PART I: SCHOOL PROGRESS REPORT

I. ACADEMIC PROGRAM

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

1. **According to the results on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), most groups of Roosevelt Academy Charter School students are at or near the national mean (50th percentile NCE)***

The chart below shows the ITBS results for the May 2002 administration of the test at Roosevelt. Normal curve equivalents range from a high of 62.77 for the third graders on the Reading portion of the test, to a low of 35.85 for the second graders on the mathematics subtest sections. In general, Roosevelt students approach the national mean on this assessment.

TABLE 1: Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School, ITBS, May 2002 (NCE scores)

	N	Language	Mathematics	Reading	Total Test
Grade 1	57	50.39	46.72	58.53	49.53
Grade 2	40	47.95	35.85	48.95	43.78
Grade 3	22	53.73	45.50	62.77	54.09

2. **No data is yet available to assess whether Roosevelt students are achieving proficiency in state standards for expected skills and knowledge.**

The New York State Assessments are administered to fourth grade students and Roosevelt has enrolled its first class of fourth graders this year (2002-2003). Data on the achievement of the first group of Roosevelt students on the state assessments will be available at the close of the 2002-2003 school year.

3. **Internally, the school assesses students regularly using Direct Instruction mastery tests. While the results for each classroom is gathered and analyzed to monitor appropriate progress toward mastery, it is not collected and reported in a way that can offer an additional assessment of overall school-wide growth and progress.**

Classroom teachers administer the Direct Instruction (DI) mastery tests at regular intervals in the reading/ language arts program. The DI Coordinator collects the results weekly and monitors the progress of individual students to prepare for regrouping, as well as monitoring teachers for evidence of a need for coaching or mentoring. At the present time, the DI progress of "second graders" or "third graders" are not captured in a way that would allow the inspection team to assess whether students overall are making satisfactory progress.

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

1. Of the limited ITBS data available, changes in NCE rank from May '01 to May '02 show declines in the current grade 2 and 3 students and improvement for the current grade 4 students.

The chart below shows NCE* rank for the three administrations available: September '00, May '01, and May '02. Change in rank is shown in the appropriate columns. Within year change (September '00 to May '01) is dramatically different than change in rank from one year to the next (May '01 to May '02).

TABLE 2: Roosevelt CS ITBS Scores, Change Over Time (NCE scores)

Grade Range	Test	Sept. 00		May 01			May 02		Across Year Change
		N	NCE	N	NCE	Within Year Change	N	NCE	
K ? 1	Total	57	33.58	56	52.75	+19.17	57	49.53	-3.22
	Lang.	57	37.23	56	53.16	+15.93	57	50.39	-2.77
	Math	57	36.09	57	53.33	+17.24	57	46.72	-6.91
	Rdg.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	57	58.53	NA
1 ? 2	Total	36	28.89	41	51.46	+22.57	40	43.78	-7.68
	Lang.	38	29.05	41	58.41	+29.36	41	47.95	-10.46
	Math	40	29.15	41	49.49	+20.34	41	35.85	-13.64
	Rdg.	33	45.76	41	55.05	+9.29	40	48.95	-6.1
2 ? 3	Total	21	27.81	22	48.18	+20.37	22	54.09	+5.91
	Lang.	22	29.77	22	37.18	+7.41	22	53.73	+16.55
	Math	22	22.05	22	44.95	+22.90	22	45.50	+ 0.55
	Rdg.	21	39.76	22	60.68	+20.92	22	62.77	+2.09

Currently the school (through a consultant hired by Victory Schools, its management company) emphasizes reporting the percentage of students at or above the 50th percentile in its accountability progress reports. The reports of progress using that measure differs significantly from the declines shown in most grades/ subtests when using the NCE scores as in the chart above. Roosevelt students in the current fourth grade are showing improvement in rank, but students in prior grades are experiencing a decline.

At this point in the school's operations, most students at Roosevelt are not making expected progress against nationally normed standards. The inspection team urges the reader to be cautious about making strong judgments based on only one years' data.

* Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) is a standard score (a score that is expressed as a deviation from a population mean) with the lowest score being 1, the highest being 99 and the mean (arithmetical average) of 50. NCE's may be added, subtracted and averaged and may be used to represent how a student or group of students performed in comparison to the mean. For example, a drop in scores over time means the students are being passed by their peers nationwide and an increase in scores over time means that students are passing their peers nationwide.

2. Direct Instruction assessment information has not yet been collected or reported to show progress over time.

As noted in Finding 1.3, the inspection team is unable to assess the school's progress on its internal assessments because the data has not been reported in a way that would allow individual progress to be tracked over time.

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

1. The systems in place for the assessment of students when they enroll at the school and the availability of frequent regrouping during the year allows Roosevelt teachers and support personnel to individualize the academic program to meet the needs of both struggling and accelerated students.

By design, the Direct Instruction program offers diagnostic assessment tools for use at the start of the program as well as at every five lessons in each program level. Systematic and conscientious reporting of the results of these assessments allows the school, with the assistance of its DI Coordinator, to monitor student progress and assign students to appropriately leveled reading groups. The school's organization allows cross-grade level grouping between grades 2, 3, and 4, and between grades K and 1. The school's operation on two sites limits regrouping between grades K, 1 and upper levels. During the inspection, team members observed a number of cross-grade level as well as within grade level transitions for particular students during the reading and mathematics blocks.

2. The school has complemented the Direct Instruction curriculum in reading with a literacy component and the DI mathematics instruction with additional curriculum elements to expand the range of skills students are expected to master.

After reviewing the correlation of the skills and knowledge required in the DI program with those reflected in the New York State assessments, the curriculum leaders from Victory Schools worked with Roosevelt teachers to schedule a literacy block during which writing skills across subject areas are emphasized. Instructional strategies during the literacy block observed during the inspection included independent practice and some small collaborative group activities. Products of previous literacy block activities were posted in classrooms and included social studies and science topics. To enhance and coordinate writing instruction across the school, Roosevelt has implemented the "Write One" curriculum materials.

In mathematics, Roosevelt is making use of the Scott Foresman/Addison Wesley mathematics text as a reference for grades 2, 3, and 4 to supplement Direct Instruction (Distar) mathematics. Victory Schools reviewed the materials and determined that the Scott Foresman program was closely aligned with the New York State standards. It offers students exposure to short answer mathematics questions, problem solving, and constructed response problems. At present there is no precise pacing guide for use of the supplementary mathematics materials similar to the pacing guides for DI reading and mathematics. Victory advisors indicated that a scope and sequence with pacing recommendations was being developed.

3. In addition to leveled grouping and regrouping of students for reading and mathematics, and the additional curriculum elements, Roosevelt has in place a number of supports for students.

Roosevelt has committed to providing a variety of services to assist students. Cooperating Teachers (teacher assistants) are present in each classroom and, for the most part, serve a productive role assisting the instructional needs of the class. Roosevelt also hired a full time tutor this year to work with struggling third graders who were identified as a result of their performance on the May 2002 ITBS. The Title 1 teacher and special education coordinator provide services as needed to particular students. In addition, after school tutoring by regular teachers during the extended day program, and lunchtime tutoring by regular teachers provide students varied opportunities to get assistance when they fall behind.

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

1. For the most part, instruction in literacy classes observed during the inspection reflected high expectations of the students for achievement as well as behavior.

Members of the inspection team visited all classes for a minimum of 30 minutes each. During the literacy block, teachers were observed presenting small group reading instruction following the Direct Instruction model, frequently checking skill attainment by all members of the group. Standardized cues such as "My turn." (teacher points to and pronounces word) and "Your turn." (students respond in unison as teacher points to word and watches student's lips for correct position) structure the lesson's interactions. In several cases, observers noted a teacher inviting a single student to respond and gently correcting errors, requiring the student to repeat until mastery of the phonics skill was achieved. The blend of choral and individual assessment embedded in the lesson appeared to be an effective method for teachers to monitor progress. Reading groups ranged in size from 5 to 10 students in the Roosevelt classes allowing teachers to observe each student's performance. While there was some variation in the skillfulness of teachers in implementing the methodology, for the most part the instructional model serves to hold students to high achievement expectations.

The team was unable to visit an adequate number of mathematics block classes to make an overall generalization about teachers' expectations of students in classes other than the literacy blocks. In the observations of a small number of science and mathematics classes, teachers were employing whole class instruction methods with individual support and assistance provided by the cooperating teachers. There appeared to be greater variation in the expectations for quality work among these classes than in the more tightly structured literacy classes.

2. The modified Roosevelt curriculum provides students opportunities to gain proficiency in the range of skills and content required by the New York State learning standards.

In response to a comparison of the Direct Instruction literacy and mathematics programs with the New York State assessments, school leaders at Roosevelt and the Victory curriculum consultants supplemented the DI materials with a broader array of instructional materials for both subject areas. A writing program has been instituted and teachers have been using content area materials in science, social studies, and general purpose reading as topics for student writing exercises. To expand students' mathematics skills, the Scott Foresman/ Addison Wesley mathematics program supplements Direct Instruction mathematics. At the present time, there is not a clearly defined scope and sequence of skills and content in the supplemental areas. According to the curriculum coordinators for Victory Schools, a more precise pacing guide is in development.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY

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

1. Observations of students in the school indicate that they are excited and eager to learn.

At both Roosevelt locations, students entered the school with enthusiasm and expectation and were greeted warmly by primary teachers as well as cooperating teachers. Staff members and school leaders appeared to know many of the students by name and greeted them fondly. During class periods, most students attended to their work with interest, and maintained a level of attentiveness appropriate to their age and grade level. Kindergarten and first grade 'squirminess' was within reason during whole group "circle time," as well as independent work periods. Second, third and fourth graders worked diligently on their tasks and followed appropriate routines. The six students participating in the Focus Group confirmed the team's observations of widespread satisfaction among students with the work of the school.

2. The small sample of parents participating in the focus group declared strong support for the work of the school. Weaknesses in the parent survey information provided by the school make it difficult to judge the satisfaction of a wider sample of parents.

The five parents who participated in the focus group during the inspection were enthusiastic supporters of Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School. These representatives cited their interest in finding an alternative to the district schools as their primary motivation for sending their children to RCACS. Those with children who had learning disabilities spoke with honest appreciation for the services their children received, but, more importantly, for the attitude of expectation of success their children experienced at Roosevelt. One parent of an accelerated student complimented the school's flexible grouping which allowed her son to be placed in an instructional group

that suited his achievement level and challenged him to expand his achievement even further.

The parent survey information provided in the school's documents is incomplete and does not allow the inspection team to determine more broadly the level of parent satisfaction with the school (see further discussion in Part II of this report). The number of surveys distributed, the number of responses received, and the percent of the parent/caregiver population represented by the respondents are not included in the school's progress report. While the approval percentages appear high, it is difficult to assess whether the respondents represent a reasonable sample of the whole parent population. In addition, the range of possible responses and the phrasing of the questions on the survey limit the feedback respondents are invited to provide, further reducing the survey's usefulness in judging overall satisfaction.

QUESTION 2: Are systems in place to promote the efficient operation of school functions?

1. The governance and administrative organization of the Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School provide effective coordination of school operations.

Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School serves students at two locations approximately a five minute drive apart. The Principal provides overall administrative leadership, but relies on the assistance of the Lead Teacher/Student Support Services coordinator at the kindergarten site to carry out administrative functions at that location. Teachers report that this administrative structure functions smoothly, and neither location is neglected or privileged because of the placement of the principal's office. Attendance, discipline, parent contact and academic oversight are accomplished at each location with apparent consistency. The principal is in continual contact via cell phone with the kindergarten site and spends some time each day in that building.

In addition to efficient administrative management, the governance structure at Roosevelt appropriately balances the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees and Victory Schools, Inc., the management provider. According to Board interviews, a brief survey of Board minutes, and comments from Victory personnel, the Board of trustees sets overall policy direction and Victory is responsible for implementation of the academic program and management support. Discussions are frequent and open when new plans are proposed, and the Board chair states that Victory performance is measured by the student assessment results compiled regularly by Victory Schools and reported by the Principal. It was clear that both Victory and the Board are struggling with the school's greatest challenge, finding a facility to support growth of the school's enrollment to serve the considerable demand of parents in the Roosevelt area.

Currently, the interim Principal at Roosevelt is on leave from his previous position as a regional director for Victory. Petitions have been presented to the Board to retain him at Roosevelt, but to date plans for hiring a full time principal are unclear, creating a slight sense of dismay among active parents and some veteran teachers. The school has had three principals in its three-year history, and during interviews with the inspection team parents and teachers praised the sense of stability and order conveyed by the current leader.

QUESTION 3: Are systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of the academic program and adjust it as needed?**1. The school's systems for monitoring instruction provide frequent and productive feedback and support to teachers as they implement the academic programs.**

As noted earlier, the Director of Curriculum Development and the Director of Direct Instruction employed by Victory Schools serve as the key monitors of the instructional program, along with the principal and other building level coordinators. For the DI literacy program, teachers report weekly progress information for the class as well as for individual students to the DI Director. She reviews and responds with recommendations for changes in student placement, remediation strategies for whole class or small group assistance, or pacing adjustments for acceleration or re-teaching based on the level of mastery evident in the regular assessments results. Once a month, the Director of Direct Instruction along with two other Victory personnel visit each classroom teacher and provide her with specific feedback about her instruction. The teachers receive written feedback from these visits with areas of strength and areas to work on for the next visit. Teachers reported that this ongoing support is presented and received as helpful and essential to maintaining their skill in implementing the DI strategies.

Similarly, the Director of Curriculum Development visits Roosevelt weekly to provide assistance, advice and feedback on the quality of instruction in the other subject areas – the expanded literacy materials, Core Knowledge science, Core Knowledge social studies and the expanded mathematics program. At regular intervals, the Director organizes visits by staff members from other Victory schools to observe instruction at Roosevelt and offer feedback from their own classroom perspectives to Roosevelt faculty.

Additional professional development to maintain the quality of the academic program is offered during two weeks before school opens each year. The summer sessions address introductory through advanced training in Direct Instruction, generalized training in classroom management, support systems, as well as in school policies and procedures. Teachers reported that they attend conferences and seminars during the year supported by school funds. While head teachers praised the depth and breadth of curricular support they receive, several cooperating teachers expressed an interest in additional opportunities to expand their involvement in the curricular training because of their integral role as instructional providers.

2. Appropriate modifications to the curriculum have resulted from careful analysis of the alignment between the school's original program design and emerging and evolving state requirements.

The management team from Victory undertook a review of the academic program in literacy and mathematics at Roosevelt and its other charter schools to determine if sufficient opportunities existed for students to develop mastery of the essential skills and concepts required by the New York State assessments. Topics recommended by Core Knowledge for science and social studies were realigned to match the sequence defined by the NYS Learning Standards. Problem solving and mathematics writing experiences were added to the Direct Instruction (Distar) mathematics program by integrating materials from the Scott Foresman/ Addison Wesley materials. Writing

instruction to support students' success in open response and essay segments of the NYS assessments was scheduled into the school day and materials provided to teachers to guide their lesson planning. In the judgment of the inspection team, these modifications have been thoughtfully selected and smoothly implemented to enhance the original academic program.

3. Systems to make effective use of all student performance data to inform classroom instruction have yet to be initiated. Some systems to refine and enhance the quality of the academic program are in progress.

As far as the inspection team could determine, analysis of student performance on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is limited to serving the reporting needs of the school for the annual Accountability Progress Report. While school leaders indicate that they share the ITBS results and trends with teachers before school opens each year, teachers remarked that they rely primarily on the internal Direct Instruction assessments to measure student achievement and guide their instructional decisions. As indicated in the response to Question 1 in this report, Roosevelt students have demonstrated little progress in national rank on the ITBS, but teachers and Board members indicated they were unaware of this decline, despite reports from school leaders that suggest the results were shared at appropriate meetings. The focus of interest for curricular purposes is the internal measures and teacher developed assessments.

In response to questions about the coordination of the new elements of the Roosevelt academic program, the Director of Curriculum Development described her ongoing development of a "pacing chart" for the science and writing components to guide teachers in the selection and design of lesson activities and student performance benchmarks. Common internal assessments are also being developed to correlate with the pacing charts and curriculum lessons.

III. UNIQUE PROGRAMMATIC AREAS

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

1. Common elements among stakeholders' statements describing the mission of Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School include its value as an alternative to the Roosevelt Union Free School District.

Parents, teachers, Board members and administrators described the mission of Roosevelt to offer a "choice" or an "option" for parents and students perceived to be poorly served by the Roosevelt school district. The recent imposition of state control over the district in response to persistently poor student performance affirms parent's contention that the alternative offered by Roosevelt is critically needed at this time. In several cases, parents, Board members and teachers mentioned the goal of Roosevelt to be "better" than traditional public schools. Few parents or Board members mentioned the details of the academic program – focus on core skills, extended day, and innovative curriculum – as clearly understood elements of the school's mission.

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

- 1. The Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School's mission statement mentions an extended day and a research-based academic program as key elements. It appears that the school has made strong progress toward meeting this goal.**

The after school program at Roosevelt is funded by a 21st Century grant and serves approximately 80% of the student population. The program is a blend of academic and enrichment/ recreational activities and employs a number of Roosevelt faculty members as instructors. The Direct Instruction program is the 'innovative, research based' curriculum intended in the school's design, and, as indicated in previous findings, appears to be faithfully implemented and serving the students needs well.

- 2. The Roosevelt Accountability Plan mentions development of knowledge and appreciation of art and music. To date, these areas are not part of the regular academic program.**

At the present time, there is no specific program for arts and music for students at Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School. Art is integrated into class projects under teacher direction. Students in the after school program have more frequent experiences in art and music.

- 3. Roosevelt has made some efforts to meet its goal of promoting student responsibility through participation in community-based civics projects.**

The students at Roosevelt are involved in a number of field trips to local sites of community interest during the course of the year. While the accountability plan describes student logs and portfolios as evidence of student learning from these experiences, the school has not consistently required or collected this documentation (see further discussion in Part II of this report).

The recent initiation of a student government organization at Roosevelt promises to enhance the school's efforts to engage students in civic experiences. Also, student work is now incorporated into a special insert in the monthly community newspaper, the *Community Journal*, as a means of communicating and engaging with the larger Roosevelt area.

- 4. While not an explicit component in either the RCACS mission statement or accountability plan, the open climate for communication between parents and the school is a positive and distinctive characteristic of the culture of the school.**

Parents in the focus group praised the frequent communication between teachers and the home. They cited instances where the principal would call a child's home to express praise or concern. The principal initiated a monthly newsletter to the home which includes an outline of upcoming lessons as well as special events and activities. The principal includes his cell phone number on the newsletter and makes himself accessible to parents with few limits. Parents reported great pleasure at feeling welcome to the school whenever they have the opportunity to visit or serve as a volunteer.

In contrast, parents expressed concern that the Board of Trustees is less available to hear their concerns than school personnel. Board members do not publish their phone numbers, and accept input typically only at bi-monthly Board meetings, which may be inconvenient for parents with non-standard job hours. Only one parent is represented on the Board, and parents worried that Board decisions do not always give sufficient consideration to the physical and social needs of early elementary children. It is not clear whether the views of the focus group parents were representative of the parents as a whole or of what significance these concerns were.

PART II: SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN: ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. ACADEMIC PROGRAM GOALS

The Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School lists four academic program goals in its accountability plan.

Goal 1: "All students will become proficient in reading and writing of the English language."

Measures proposed by the school:

measure 1: Each cohort of RCACS students will increase national rank by 3 percentiles on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) reading battery. (*cohort* will include all eligible students).

measure 2: RCACS "performance index" on NYS ELA assessments will meet or exceed state standards, including only those students at Roosevelt for two or more years.

measure 3: A greater percentage of RCACS students enrolled for two or more years will perform at or above level 3 on NYS ELA assessment than students in the Roosevelt Union Free School District.

Goal 2: "All students will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of mathematics computation and problem solving."

Measures proposed by the school:

measure 1: Each cohort of RCACS students will increase national rank by 3 percentiles on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) mathematics battery. (*cohort* will include all eligible students).

measure 2: RCACS "performance index" on NYS math assessments will meet or exceed state standards, including only those students at Roosevelt for two or more years.

measure 3: A greater percentage of RCACS students enrolled for two or more years will perform at or above level 3 on NYS math assessment than students in the Roosevelt Union Free School District.

Goal 3: "All students at RCACS will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of scientific reasoning."

Measures proposed by the school:

measure 1: 60% of students at RCACS for three years or more will perform at or above grade level on the Core Knowledge Curriculum Referenced tests administered every other year.

measure 2: RCACS students will meet or exceed state standards on the NYS Science assessment.

measure 3: A greater percentage of RCACS students enrolled for two or more years will perform at or above level 3 on NYS science assessment than students in similar schools.

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

Measures proposed by the school:

measure 1: 60% of students at RCACS for three years or more will perform at or above grade level on the Core Knowledge Curriculum Referenced tests administered every other year.

measure 2: RCACS students will meet or exceed state standards on the NYS social studies assessment.

measure 3: A greater percentage of RCACS students enrolled for two or more years will perform at or above level 3 on NYS social studies assessment than will students in similar schools.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM GOALS—RECOMMENDATIONS

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

For both Goals 1 (ELA) and 2 (Mathematics):

1. Report actual NCE (normal curve equivalent) scores on ITBS test results as required by the Accountability Plan Guidelines published by the Charter Schools Institute (see Part I of this report). Currently, the school reports percentage of students scoring above the 50th percentile. An additional enhancement would be to correct earlier reports of ITBS results by listing NCE scores for all classes since the school's opening.
2. Report the scores of true cohorts of students each year at Roosevelt. The progress of true cohorts is a required performance measure and allows the school as well as external evaluators to assess the influence of the school's programs over time. Roosevelt may also include scores for whole grade level groups in the annual progress report, but should clearly distinguish between the results for the reader.
3. When showing ITBS results over time for true cohorts, show progress toward the “3 percentile increase in rank” defined in the RCACS accountability plan. Explicitly state whether the school has met its standard as measured by this indicator. If desired, offer an explanation for greater than expected or less than expected growth. Link the explanation closely to the performance results.
4. Since the 2002-2003 fourth graders will be the first group taking the NYS ELA, Mathematics and Science assessments, there will be approximately 21 students making up the baseline group for Roosevelt. This is a small group on which to base assessment of the school's performance in comparison to state averages or those of local schools. Caution is advised when drawing inferences about the school's achievement of its Accountability Plan goals using this data.
5. Scores achieved on the NYS assessments by fourth graders in the RUFSD are available and should be collected by Roosevelt Charter School leaders and communicated with staff and curriculum support personnel to provide an accurate target for planning and preparation tasks.

6. In addition to the measures included in its accountability plan, Roosevelt should consider complementing that data with achievement summaries for its internal assessments for the Direct Instruction program. The DI data is gathered regularly and could be summarized by absolute grade level performance as well as showing longitudinal progress for individual students. If Roosevelt school leaders and management partners can demonstrate a correlation between its DI measures and those on the ITBS or state assessments, the DI measures could be a strong source of evidence for the progress of Roosevelt students toward high standards.

For Goal 3 (science) and Goal 4 (social studies):

7. In light of revisions in the Roosevelt science and social studies curricula, the Core Knowledge examinations are no longer appropriate measures of student achievement. According to Victory curriculum directors, alternative tests are under development. The school is advised to inform the Charter Schools Institute of the proposed change in this Accountability Plan measure, and to request guidance on the development of the new measure to assure that the revised tool will be an acceptable alternative.
8. Consider raising the performance standard on the science and social studies goal above 60%. The overall goal states, "All students will demonstrate. . ." and the school would be well served to match its target passing rate to its overall expectation for excellence.
9. In the science and social studies goals, Roosevelt lists "similar schools" as the comparison group, in contrast to the Roosevelt Union Free School District students mentioned in the English language arts and mathematics goals. It would be advisable to use one comparison group, whether similar schools or RUFSD, whichever is acceptable to the Charter Schools Institute.
10. In some comparison groups, the school intends to include students at RCACS greater than two years, in other measures, only those students at RCACS greater than three years. It is unclear why the two different criteria are used in different measures, whether inadvertent or intentional. If intentional, an explanation added to the progress report would help evaluators understand the school's reasons for its choices. When using only students at the school for three years or more, the school limits the number of students included in the comparison group and reduces the robustness of the school's results. The school is advised to consider these factors when structuring its case for renewal.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY GOALS

Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School offers two organizational viability goals within its accountability plan.

Goal 1: "... demonstrate strong organizational viability by maintaining strong parental support and commitment to the school."

Measures proposed by the school:

measure 1: Greater than 70% of respondents will report "good" or "excellent" on a yearly parent survey.

measure 2: Maintain enrollment equal to or greater than 90% capacity, and a waiting list equal to or exceeding 10% of population.

measure 3: Average daily attendance rate will be 90% or better.

Goal 2: “. . . demonstrate strong organizational viability by maintaining sound financial practices.”

Measures proposed by the school:

measure 1: Yearly budgets show proper allocation of resources to ensure effective school programs.

measure 2: Yearly balance sheets show that school is fiscally sound and maintains adequate cash reserves.

measure 3: Audited financial statements will demonstrate that the school is responsible and prudent with public resources.

ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY GOALS—RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Related to Goal 1: parent support –

1. The parent survey used by Roosevelt is brief and limits the range of topics and responses available to respondents. The information gathered from the survey is of limited use to the school in making reliable inferences about parent concerns. The school might consider expanding the range and number of questions on the survey as well as the range of responses to elicit adequate feedback to guide decision-making.
2. When reporting survey results, it is customary to report the number of surveys distributed, the date and venue of distribution, the number of responses received, and the percentage of the population represented by the responses. It is helpful to solicit survey responses from a variety of venues to broaden the likely response pool (for instance, distributing at drop-off and pick-up times as well as at PTA meetings).
3. In addition to the stated measure of the parent survey, Roosevelt might consider additional sources of evidence of parent support that might include participation numbers at school events, open houses, conferences, volunteer hours and activities. If gathered faithfully, trends over time might be used to show increases in parent support.
4. A more persuasive presentation of the strength of school enrollment data would include a table showing changes in enrollment and waiting list membership over the course of the school's history. The inspection team was confused by the definition of a target of 90% enrollment along with maintenance of a waiting list. The school might want to explain its purpose in setting a target of less than 100% of capacity when a waiting list exists. In addition to gross enrollment figures, student persistence over time (continuing enrollees) can provide evidence of commitment to the school, and charts tracking reasons for student withdrawals or non-re-enrollment can enhance the school's claim of overall acceptance and support.
5. The target set by Roosevelt for its average daily attendance (90%) is the minimum state requirement for elementary schools. Since the school aims to be one of the “finest public schools in America” it might consider raising its attendance target to a higher level. Showing attendance rates over time and perhaps comparing RCACS attendance with the rates at similar schools can enhance the evaluator's understanding of the school's ability to provide a viable alternative for the Roosevelt community.

Related to Goal 2: sound financial practices

6. The school's chart showing allocation of budget funds in the *2002 Accountability Progress Report* is informative and helpful in identifying what the school considers "proper allocation of resources." It would be helpful to add a category in the chart for professional development, an area mentioned in the charter school law (Education Law §2850 (2) – referenced in the introduction to this report). Also, readers might be guided by a definition of items the school considers "direct educational expenses."
7. While not mentioned explicitly in the school's accountability plan, expansion of the school's facilities was a major topic of concern among school leaders. A brief mention of this topic and discussion of the financial needs for expansion would be a helpful addition to the 2003 progress report.
8. The school's *2002 Accountability Progress Report* mentions a budget shortfall due to past due payments from the RUFSD. It might be useful for the school to continue to submit regular updates to the Charter Schools Institute to clarify the status of the payment issue and budget balance.
9. Since readers of the school's accountability progress report are not always financial professionals, it would be helpful for the school to include its own definition of "responsible and prudent" in its discussion of its use of available resources.

III. UNIQUE PROGRAMMATIC AREA GOALS

Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School offers two goals for its unique programmatic areas in its accountability plan.

Goal 1: "Students at RCACS will develop knowledge an appreciation of art and music."

Measures proposed by the school:

measure 1: Greater than 70% of respondents will report "good" or "excellent" on a yearly parent survey asking whether the school has improved their child's knowledge and appreciation of art and music.

Goal 2: "Students at RCACS will demonstrate strength of character and concern for others by participation in class-wide and community-based civics projects and by demonstrating appropriate classroom and school-wide behavior."

Measures proposed by the school:

measure 1: 90% of students participate in projects and maintain logs and portfolios of their work.

measure 2: 70% of parents will report their child's growth in responsibility, self control, and concern for others is "good" or "excellent."

measure 3: 70% classroom teaches will rate classroom behavior "excellent" or "good"

measure 4: 70% of Task Force participants will evaluate overall student behavior at the school as "excellent" or "good" when conducting full day visits each Fall and Spring.

UNIQUE PROGRAMMATIC AREA GOALS—RECOMMENDATIONS

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

For Goal 1: knowledge and appreciation for art and music

1. Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School has not carried out its plans to implement structured art and music programs as part of its academic program. While the parent survey results meet the targeted goal, the responses do not reflect a systematic effort on the part of the school to promote art and music appreciation.
2. Roosevelt is advised to discuss its failure to implement an arts and music programs in its next progress report. Plans to delete, revise or modify this goal should be part of this discussion.

For Goal 2: civics projects and behavior

3. RCACS has not consistently tracked the measure cited in the goal, namely student logs and portfolios of civics projects. While the Accountability Progress Report cites a number of student projects, it does not include the sample portfolios and logs promised in its measures. To gather sufficient evidence in support of achievement of this goal, the school is advised to consider beginning a systematic collection of student reports at the earliest opportunity.
4. The target for the measure of student achievement of this goal lists 90% of students participating. A more exceptional target would be to aim for a larger percentage of student participation than currently listed.
5. The survey in current use offers limited data on which to make valid inferences about the school's progress toward achievement of its behavior goal. The school might consider additional survey items and broader response choices to gather more useful information on the growth of student character and self control. Also, as noted in an earlier recommendation, the survey results should include the number of respondents and the percentage of the parent population represented by the response pool.
6. The school has yet to gather teacher feedback on student behavior. It is advisable for the school to initiate efforts to gather teacher reports on student behavior to maintain compliance with its accountability plan. In addition to teacher reports, the school can consider reporting instances of student discipline referrals and suspensions to demonstrate improvement in behavior.
7. The Task Force described in the Roosevelt accountability plan has not been initiated. It would be advisable for the school to explain its omission and to define its plans for gathering independent evidence of its progress toward this goal.

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 needs of diverse students?	Class visits, interviews, data review, Accountability Plan Progress Report
	Do the school's standards reflect implementation of high academic expectations?	Review of curriculum documents; 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 promote the efficient operation of school functions?	Interviews, observations Staffing history
	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
Financial Accountability**	Is enrollment stable and sufficient to provide the financial foundation of the school?	
	Does the school's financial management serve the needs of students?	
Legal Compliance**	Is the school in essential compliance with legal and regulatory requirements?	

**** Sections assessing the school in the areas of Financial Accountability and Legal Compliance will be provided by the Charter Schools Institute and amended to this report as available.**

**APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR
ROOSEVELT CHILDREN'S ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL**

I. Academic Program Goals

Goal 1: All students proficient in reading and writing of the English language.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
-- each cohort improve by average of 3 percentile per year in national rank on ITBS	-- report actual NCE for each grade -- report 'true' cohorts as required by CSI definition on all reports -- show calculations that directly present the growth target in your acc. plan goal -- demonstrate academic performance by presenting DI reading results for each student at the school, both absolute as well as longitudinal; show whether student achievement on DI assessments correlates with performance on ITBS
-- RCA's students > 2 years at RCA will = or + state standards on NYS ELA test	
-- greater % RCA students (enrolled > 2 years) will score > 3 on NYS ELA than in RUFSD	
Goal 2: Students will demonstrate competency in understanding and application of mathematics computation and problem solving	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
-- each cohort improve by average of 3 percentile per year in national rank on ITBS	-- report actual NCE for each grade -- report 'true' cohorts as required by CSI definition on all reports -- show calculations that directly present the growth target in your accountability plan goal
-- RCA's students > 2 years at RCA will = or + state standards on NYS math test	
-- greater % RCA students (enrolled > 2 years) will score > 3 on NYS ELA than in RUFSD	
Goal 3: Students will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of scientific reasoning.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
-- 60% students at RCA >= 3 years perform at or above grade level on Core Knowledge Curriculum Referenced Tests administered every other year	-- submit a revision or report change in measure to CSI ASAP -- continue the development of a reliable assessment of student skill and knowledge of scientific reasoning to replace CK tests (explore possibilities of assessments from curriculum programs) -- consider raising expected performance above 60% target -- specify the 'similar schools' named in the goal
-- meet or exceed state standards for public school performance on NYS Science assessment	
-- greater %age of RCA students > 2+ years perform above level 3 on NYS Assessments than similar schools	
Goal 4: Students will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of social, geographical, civic and world issues.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
-- 60% students at RCA >= 3 years perform at or above grade level on Core Knowledge Curriculum Referenced Tests administered every other year	-- submit a revision or report change in measure to CSI ASAP -- continue the development of a reliable assessment of student skill and knowledge of scientific reasoning to replace CK tests (explore possibilities of assessments from curriculum programs) -- consider raising expected performance above 60% target -- specify the 'similar schools' named in the goal
-- meet or exceed state standards for public school performance on NYS Science assessment	
-- greater %age of RCA students > 2+ years perform above level 3 on NYS Assessments than similar schools	

II. Organizational Viability Goals

Goal 1: Demonstrate strong parental support and commitment	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
-- 70% of parents surveyed will choose ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ for school performance	-- expand survey questions and aligning response choices to goal statements (see III) because inadequate as currently written -- report the number of surveys distributed, # returned, percentage of population reflected in responses -- consider additional measures of parent support, including changes in frequency over time -- provide a more detailed list of enrollment over time, wait list over time, new entrants, rates of persistence (retention), etc. -- provide own attendance report for each year of operation, give reader some context by offering comparison with rates of surrounding districts -- consider setting higher target for attendance than state minimum
-- enrollment meet or exceed 90% capacity with a waiting list = or > 10% of population	
-- average daily attendance 90% or better	
Goal 2: Maintaining sound financial practices.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
-- proper allocation of resources to ensure effective school programs	-- chart on ‘02 <i>Progress Report</i> helpful -- add category for professional development expenditures -- define items considered ‘direct educational expenses’ -- discuss financial arrangements for expansion plans – discuss current status of RUFSD payment concerns -- clarify for readers how school defines ‘responsible and prudent’ in discussion of progress on this goal
-- adequate cash reserves	
-- audited financial statements will demonstrate ‘responsible and prudent’ use of funds	

III. Unique Programmatic Area Goals

Goal 1: students will develop knowledge and appreciation for art and music.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
-- 70% parents on yearly survey report “good” or “excellent” on child’s knowledge of art and music	-- survey item does not correspond with responses described in this goal statement -- (see previous recommendations for reporting response rate and percentage of population information) -- school has not carried out its plans to implement art and music programs; amend acc. plan to delete this goal or discuss reasons for omission in next. <i>Progress Report</i>
Goal 2: students will demonstrate care and concern by participating in class wide and community based civics projects and demonstrating appropriate classroom and school-wide behavior.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
-- 90% students participate in projects and maintain logs and portfolios scored by rubric	-- RCA has not pursued this goal , no student logs or portfolios are available; discuss this omission in next <i>Accountability Progress Report</i> -- initiate plan to gather this data to provide evidence of progress toward this goal -- raise the percentage of students participating to 97% or higher -- revise survey to correct misalignment and omissions
-- 70% parents respond child’s growth in responsibility, respect and self-control is improved	
-- 70% classroom teachers rate classroom and school-wide behavior ‘excellent’ or ‘good’	

<p>-- 70% on Parent Task Force rate behavior as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ in site visits each fall and spring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- as before, note number of responses received, percentage of parents/caregivers represented by response pool -- consider other measures such as number and rate of suspensions, discipline referrals, etc., to corroborate survey data -- Task Force not initiated, discuss on next Acc. Progress Report; initiate Task Force before end this year and begin compiling data -- consider other measures of behavior such as discipline referrals to corroborate survey responses
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