



Charter Schools Institute
State University of New York

**AMBER 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 authorized 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 own annual reports of progress toward the targets it 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 site visit to Amber Charter School was conducted on March 18-19, 2003 by an independent team of experienced educators from 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.

Harrington Gibson, Consultant, SchoolWorks; former fourth grade classroom teacher in Chicago; currently a doctoral student at Harvard Graduate School of Education in Learning and Teaching; consultant with Boston Public Schools

Dr. Nancy Clair, Consultant, SchoolWorks, former ESL/bilingual teacher; preservice and inservice teacher educator and supervisor, consultant in English language learner issues for the Center for Applied Linguistics

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 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 its annual *Accountability Progress Report*, its

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

Amber Charter School (ACS) opened in the fall of 2000, welcoming 120 students in grades K-2 to its second story space located in Harlem. The school has grown since its inception and currently serves 180 students with the addition of a third grade class this year (2002-2003). Amber Charter School plans to expand its student population to 280 students by the end of its five year charter with the additions of 4th and 5th grade.

The Amber Charter School curriculum employs project-based learning to meet the New York State Learning Standards. Among the goals of the school is an effort to develop fluency in both English and Spanish for all students. Students are served by eight classroom teachers, six teacher assistant, one special education teacher, three art and movement specialists, one social worker and educational consultants. During the 2002-2003 school year three new teachers and three new assistant teachers were hired to accommodate the new third grade. Support services for special needs students are provided using a quasi-inclusive model that allows the special education teacher to provide push-in and pull-out services to students. Sixty-six students are currently

receiving Title 1 services and five students have Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) qualifying them for services in speech therapy and counseling.

The school's leadership consists of co-directors, one of whom focuses on the academic program, and the other attends primarily to the operations and planning functions at the school. Both co-directors and the assistant director share responsibility for parent relations. In addition, the assistant director is responsible for monitoring consultants, transportation, special events and student recruitment among other tasks. The administrative assistant manages enrollment, tracks student and teacher attendance and the fiscal officer and fiscal administrative assistant monitor the day to day financial aspects of the school.

The school charter grew out of the vision of parents and activists in District 6 who partnered with the Community Association of Progressive Dominicans. Parents were dissatisfied with the school district's efforts to improve student achievement and initially expected to serve a student population that was predominately Dominican. Due to the necessity to change the planned location of the school, the actual student population is predominately African American English dominant students. The school continues to promote its goal of developing fluency in both English and Spanish for its student population.

The academic program in place at ACS includes the core subjects of reading/ELA, mathematics, science, social studies and special subjects in art, dance, music and physical education. Spanish is a core academic subject at the school. The school uses a balanced literacy model and the mathematics curriculum builds on the resources of *MathLand* and TERC. *Investigations*. The benchmarks for student performance are aligned to New York State standards and teachers are provided with resources to adequately implement the curriculum.

PART I: SCHOOL PROGRESS REPORT

I. ACADEMIC PROGRAM

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

1. Amber students demonstrate attainment at or near grade level expectations on the only standardized test used at the school, ECLAS (Early Childhood Literacy Assessment Survey).

According to the designers of the ECLAS, the New York City Board of Education in collaboration with McGraw-Hill, the test

“seeks to provide teachers with information pertaining to their students’ ability, thus allowing teachers to tailor instruction appropriately. The reporting of ECLAS, EL SOL and EPAL data places each child on a literacy development continuum. The use of EL SOL allows teachers to monitor the performance level of students who are proficient in Spanish. Although, results are not publicly reported nor collected by the school districts, it is designed to serve as discussion points during parent teacher conferences.” (New York City Board of Education).

While the ECLAS is designed as a diagnostic assessment, Amber school leaders use the results as an indicator of the school’s performance overall. The test is given in the fall of each year to identify students needing special assistance and for some grouping within the grade level and again in the spring to track changes within the year. Results from the most recent administration are summarized from the school’s *2002 Accountability Progress Report* and shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Amber ECLAS Results, Fall, 2002, Number (percent) of students at each level

	ECLAS levels	1	2	3	4	5	6	EO*
Reading	Grade 1 (N=18)	5(28%)	1(6%)	7(39%)	2(11%)	2(11%)	1(6%)	0(0%)
	Grade 2 (N=37)	6(16%)	0(0%)	5(14%)	7(19%)	4(11%)	7(19%)	8(22%)
	Grade 3 (N=16)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(12%)	2(12%)	6(37%)	6(37%)
Writing	Grade 1 (N=19)	2(11%)	5(26%)	1(5%)	8(42%)	2(11%)	1(5%)	0(0%)
	Grade 2 (N=37)	0(0%)	4(11%)	3(8%)	15(40%)	6(16%)	1(2%)	9(24%)
	Grade 3 (N=17)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(6%)	3(18%)	7(41%)	6(35%)

*EO = “e-classed out” demonstrated mastery at the uppermost ECLAS level

According to these results, 74 percent of the current third graders have mastered the reading skills identified by the assessment. In writing, 76 percent of Amber third grade

students are meeting or surpassing the mastery levels on ECLAS. As explained to the inspectors, the design of ECLAS was intended to represent mastery at level 6 for the 'typical' student completing second grade and entering third grade. Given this standard, 74 percent of Amber's continuing third graders can be considered to be reading and writing at or above typical levels.

Seventy-one percent of Amber students beginning second grade at the time of the fall 2002 ECLAS are diagnosed as mastering at or above level 4 in reading, and 83 percent have reached that level in writing skills. Only 28 percent of first graders mastered above level 4 in reading, but when those achieving level 3 are included, 67 percent of first graders are diagnosed as mastering expected reading skills. Fifty eight percent of those first graders are performing at or above level 4 in writing, increasing to 63 percent when including those mastering level 3 and above.

The school has disaggregated its ECLAS results to track differences between students new to Amber charter school and those continuing at the school. A comparison of results from the spring 2002 administration for both groups is shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2: ECLAS Reading Results, Spring 2002, One and Two Year Enrollees, Number (Percent) of Students at each ECLAS level

ECLAS levels	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Grade 1, 2 nd year (N=46)	0 (0%)	8 (17%)	4 (9%)	8 (17%)	11 (24%)	4 (9%)	11 (24%)
Grade 1, 1 st year (N = 9)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (12.5%)	1 (12.5%)	1 (12.5%)	1 (12.5%)	5 (50%)
Grade 2 2 nd Year (N=21)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (14%)	2 (10%)	3 (14%)	13 (62%)
Grade 2 1 st Year (N=3)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33%)	2 (67%)

As demonstrated on the spring 2002 ECLAS assessment, a majority of both continuing and new students at Amber are reaching the upper levels of attainment of reading skills. Fifty seven percent of first graders who have attended Amber since kindergarten performed at levels 4 and above on the assessment. Eighty six of the continuing second graders at Amber are approaching the top levels, attaining levels four, five or six. The newest group of second graders are very close to 'e-classing out' at the end of their first year at Amber.

2. The school has no standardized assessments in mathematics on which to base a judgment about student attainment of essential skills and knowledge.

The school proposed using mathematics portfolios to demonstrate mathematics proficiency among its students, but the method for collecting and scoring items is currently under development. There is no other standardized assessment in place at the school as required under the *Charter Schools Institute Accountability Guidelines*. The third grade CTB tests are being administered for the first time in April 2003.

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

1. At the time of the inspection, Amber Charter School had only ECLAS (and EPAL, ESOL) results on which to base judgments on the progress their students have made over time. While the use of this assessment as an aggregate measure of school-level performance is not advised, the inspectors used it as the only indicator of overall school-wide change.

ECLAS results are presented in the school's *2002 Accountability Progress Report* for within the 2001-2002 school year. Some results are available for tracking changes from the fall 01 administration of ECLAS to the fall 02 administration, but identification of individual students was insufficient to allow accurate comparison across the year. Table 3 shows the within year change in distribution of ECLAS performance levels for second year students in grades 1 and 2.

TABLE 3: ECLAS Distribution, Fall 2001 and Spring 2002, Second Year Amber Students, Number (percent) at Each ECLAS Level

	ECLAS levels	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Fall 01	Grade 1, 2 nd year (N = 46)	2 (4%)	9 (19%)	14 (29%)	9 (19%)	4 (9%)	3 (6%)	6 (13%)
Spring 02	Grade 1, 2 nd year (N = 46)	0 (0%)	8 (17%)	4 (9%)	8 (17%)	11 (24%)	4 (9%)	11 (24%)
Within Year Change %		-4%	-2%	-20%	-2%	+13%	+3%	+11%
Fall 01	Grade 2 2 nd Year (N=21)	0	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	3 (14%)	4 (18%)	5 (23%)	8 (36%)
Spring 02	Grade 2 2 nd Year (N=21)	0	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (14%)	2 (10%)	3 (14%)	13 (62%)
Within Year Change %			-5%	-5%	0%	-8%	-9%	+28%

Within their first grade year, the students at Amber demonstrate a greater percentage of students at the higher ECLAS levels at the end of the year than starting out. Similarly, second graders completing their second year at Amber showed a strong movement in their distribution within the ECLAS continuum toward the mastery levels.

While not an ideal tool for judging progress over time at the group level, the ECLAS results for Amber show positive movement of students toward the proficiency expectations defined by the ECLAS assessment.

2. As noted in question 1, Amber Charter School does not have a standardized measure for its students in mathematics on which the team could base judgments about student's progress over time.

Amber Charter School is in the process of collecting and summarizing scores as part of their newly developed portfolio assessment in mathematics. Internally, ACS is collecting

samples of student work using school developed benchmark assessments scored by teachers using a common rubric as part of its body of information indicating the quality of the school's work with its students.

The co-directors report that the school began portfolio development in 2001-2002. Samples of student work have been analyzed and a reading and writing checklist will be used to assess students' reading levels. Currently, as reported in the school's accountability plan, ACS is working in conjunction with its authorizer, the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, on the implementation of a Corrective Action Plan for portfolio assessment. At the time of the inspection, samples were not gathered or scored in a way for the team to judge attainment of specific skills and knowledge.

A sample scoring sheet was shared with the team during the visit which showed that all students stayed the same or showed improvement at the late fall 02 task over their baseline (early fall 02) scores. The scoring sheet is designed to provide teachers with an assessment that indicates skills students should demonstrate in order to reach an acceptable performance level. A record of student performance on a range of activities across grade levels will be recorded on similar sheets and added to other grade level and subject area reports which are in the process of being collected and summarized.

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

1. The written academic program at Amber Charter School is based on New York City and state standards with flexibility within the curriculum to allow grouping to address the needs of struggling and advanced students.

The curriculum allows teachers to use a range of resources and supplementary materials to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners. The school implements a balanced literacy program that requires teachers to use curriculum binders and literary materials to design and implement the scope and sequence of the English/language arts program. Some teachers report participating in a week long retreat during the summer of 2002 to create performance indicators based on New York state standards. Teachers described the goal for the retreat as a time to design benchmarks used to identify the needs of struggling and advanced students so they can better provide the necessary support. The benchmarks are designed to provide teachers with a guide for the expected skills and knowledge students demonstrate. Teachers report using the benchmarks to create lessons and track skills covered throughout the course of the year. Although, the process of collectively defining benchmarks creates a consistent framework which can be used to track student performance, some teachers report having the flexibility to create lessons to meet the benchmarks.

MathLand and *TERC Investigations* are the programs selected for mathematics instruction. *MathLand* is used in the early elementary grades and *TERC Investigations* is currently used in the upper elementary grades. Both *MathLand* and *TERC* offer opportunities for investigating math concepts using a range of materials and manipulatives. At Amber, the teacher is responsible for differentiating instruction. In

most classes visited by the inspection team, whole group instruction as well as grouping of students was observed. Although some students were grouped, they received the same instructional approach with the teacher and assistant circulating among groups to monitor their performance. While the team observed teacher assistants helping individual students and teachers report using different teaching styles, the inspection team visited only a few math lessons, providing insufficient evidence from which to draw generalizations about the level of differentiation in mathematics instruction.

The inspection team observed mathematics instruction in both Spanish and English classes. Students in the Spanish classes were expected to communicate and respond to task in Spanish. The inspection team observed the content being taught in both languages at all grade levels.

2. The inspection team observed a range of instructional practices across grade levels that appear to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Of the seven classes visited by the inspection team, there were a range of instructional practices across grade levels. In some classes, teachers asked probing questions, closely monitoring the responses of students to push their understanding of concepts and strategies. In one class the teacher did not explicitly provide students with the correct answer. Instead, he strategically used phrases such as “remember when we talked about making connections” and “what do you see?” to encourage students to reflect on past learning experiences to inform their ability to develop new knowledge. Inspectors observed equal levels of support in Spanish classes. Teachers did not switch to English to clarify concepts. Instead, the Spanish teachers used strategies such as gestures, modeling, and questioning to build on existing knowledge to facilitate classroom conversations pertaining to the lesson.

Instruction observed across grade levels included the use of learning stations, group work, independent work, flexible grouping, whole class instruction and expressing learning concepts using art and music. During informal conversations in classes, students were able to clearly articulate what they were learning while working at stations. While completing a math activity, one student stated, “We learn how to think about math” as he proceeded to finish a series of addition and subtraction problems on a computer. Generally teachers used their time effectively to instruct students as they implemented the academic program.

Teacher assistants and consultants were active in the classroom providing gentle guidance and support to individual students. Various levels of support including push-in and pull out services from consultants and the special education teacher are in place to accommodate special needs students.

3. A quasi-inclusive model for providing services to special needs students is in place at Amber Charter School, with support for special needs students offered in various settings.

According to the special services coordinator, 66 students are receiving Title 1 services and five students have Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) qualifying them for services in speech therapy and counseling. The special education coordinator reports that students can receive services in Spanish, however all students receiving services at ACS are proficient in English. Students receiving Title 1 services are grouped and receive instruction from both the special education teacher and a consultant who is a certified classroom teacher and reading recovery specialist. The special service coordinator reported meeting with the special education staff from the State Education Department to use the state's written policy to drive the coordination of Title 1 services. Students are served using a quasi-inclusive model that allows the consultant and special education teacher to provide push-in and pull-out services to small groups of students as designated by the student's IEP. This allows the special education teacher or consultant to work with students in a resource room or their traditional classroom environment when appropriate.

The support services coordinator reports the use of counselors and a social worker as a way to support some students with special needs. The counselors' role is defined by the support services coordinator as "providing weekly mental health counseling to students in need." The social worker contributes to meeting the needs of students by providing crisis intervention, and by constructing alternative behavior plan to assist teachers in dealing with negative student behavior.

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

1. The written curriculum standards at Amber Charter School include benchmarks and performance indicators that, according to the school, are based on New York State Standards. Implementation of the curriculum includes high expectations for teachers' participation in rigorous professional activities.

The school has implemented a curriculum that requires teachers to participate in weekend retreats and summer sessions where professional staff works with consultants and with the co-directors to define the benchmarks and performance indicators that will measure the performance of students toward the state standards. Teachers report using the benchmarks and performance indicators to drive instruction students receive. Some of the work samples observed by the inspectors showed high levels of creativity and evidence of student progress toward mastery of essential content knowledge.

2. The inspection team observed a range of instructional practices that appear to implement the curriculum standards in challenging ways.

As noted in previous sections of this report, the inspection team saw evidence of varied instructional practices that indicated that the curriculum standards are used to drive instruction and that students generally are held to high academic standards. Student work samples provided evidence that teachers expected students to revise their work and lessons assigned were creative. Students were enthusiastic when sharing stories and poems and were able to clearly articulate what they learned from assignments. In one

class, where stations were being implemented, students were able to articulate what they were expected to do for each task and what they learned. In several instances, teachers were probing student responses to promote deeper understanding and to encourage students to build upon existing knowledge.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY

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

1. Students in the focus group expressed an appreciation for the academic program in place at Amber Charter School.

Overall, the thirteen students in the focus group expressed an appreciation for the learning opportunities they receive at ACS. Students were able to articulate their appreciation for different cultures and were able to cite examples of topics covered in their social studies and Spanish classes. Students cited examples of science projects and learning about the history of Puerto Rico as favorite topics. Their 'favorite' activities in school include playing soccer, lunch, writing, computers and their English and Spanish classes. Students were articulate in explaining their work and what they learned from class projects. A range of written assignments appealed to the students as they enthusiastically shared work that ranged from essays wishing Rosa Parks a happy 90th birthday and assignments designed to allow children to write about things they feel and see.

2. Parents in the focus group were generally satisfied with the opportunity provided for their children by Amber Charter School.

Parents in the focus group expressed satisfaction with the work of the school. Parents described a sincere appreciation for the staff which was described as 'accessible' and 'friendly.' Some parents reported that they receive feed-back that allows them to know how their child is performing while other parents were concerned about not knowing how the school performs on external measures when compared to other schools in the district. Parents were vocal in their desire to receive more assurance that the school is performing well academically.

Key features of the school that appeal to parents were the small class sizes and the opportunities for their children to learn in two languages. As noted earlier, some parents indicated they themselves had become motivated to learn Spanish after observing their children increase their proficiency in the language. Parents commented that they felt informed about their child's performance through parent teacher conferences, personal observations of their children, and phone calls. Despite receiving information in different forms, some parents believed the school could better inform them of events in a timely manner. Some parents cited instances in which they received information about school events one or two days before the event.

Although parents expressed a high level of satisfaction in the amount of support from assistant teachers provided to teachers in lower elementary grades (1st and 2nd), they would like to see similar support provided to students in the second and third grades. Areas that need improvement as described by some parents include upgrading the physical plant, establishing an after school program more athletics for students, access to all teachers' e-mail accounts and increased parental involvement.

In Amber Charter School's *2001-2002 Progress Report*, survey results report communication as the strongest response with 91 percent of parents satisfied with the level of communication they have with their child's teachers. Seventy-one percent of parents are satisfied that their child attends ACS and 74 percent of parents report children receiving age appropriate homework. The low rate of return for the surveys limits the generalizations that can be made using these results.

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

1. Management and governance systems effectively serve the organizational needs of the students and staff at Amber Charter School.

Management of day to day operations within the building is coordinated among the co-directors, one assistant director, one administrative assistant, a fiscal officer and fiscal administrative assistant. The board reported high praise for the directors' ability to work together to build upon one another's strengths. The board describes one director as being effective in curriculum and instruction and student classroom performance while the other is adept at business administration and fundraising. The assistant director is responsible for monitoring consultants, transportation, substitutes, student recruitment, and special events planning. The administrative assistant manages enrollment, tracks student and teacher attendance and the fiscal officer and fiscal administrative assistant monitors the finances of the school. The support allows the co-directors to focus on the daily operations of the school while providing instructional leadership to staff.

The Amber School Board appears to have developed an adequate working relationship to promote school functions. Members of the board interviewed during the inspection are experienced in setting policy and addressing legal compliance issues because of their professional backgrounds. They provide both financial and in-kind support for the school. The co-directors submit regular reports on academic and related school topics to ensure that the board understands the educational issues faced by the school.

Amber also has systems in place to meet the needs of students requiring special services. The special support services coordinator manages the special services provided to students and maintains contact with the special education department in the city district to monitor and address issues and to ensure compliance. The special education coordinator recently met with staff from the State Education Department to use the school's written policy to manage and coordinate Title 1 services to meet the academic and emotional needs of students.

2. Teacher retention has been steady this year and professional development opportunities are in place at Amber Charter School.

During the 2002-2003 school year four out of seven classroom teachers returned. Three new teachers were hired; two were due to extension of grade levels which now includes 3rd grade. Two assistant teachers have remained since the founding of Amber with three new assistant teachers hired this year.

Amber Charter School provides ongoing professional development and hires educational consultants to help serve the academic needs of students. As mentioned earlier in this report, consultants support teachers in implementing the curriculum and differentiating instruction. The schedule allows for vertical meeting times and a half day staff development once a month to focus on benchmarks and portfolio assessment. Teachers reported participating in a weekend retreat and conferences that focus on the school's curriculum.

QUESTION 3: Are systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of the academic program and modify it as needed?

1. Amber Charter School uses an external standardized assessment to monitor the progress of individual students and to draw inferences about the effectiveness of the academic program. The school is in the beginning phases of using this data to modify the academic program.

The co-directors report ECLAS information in their accountability plan to provide insight into student performance. As noted earlier in this report, ECLAS is a diagnostic assessment that is not designed to be used to draw accurate inferences about student attainment of specific state or local learning standards, nor can it provide the school with sufficient information on which to base decisions about the effectiveness of its academic program. The current school year (2002-2003) will serve as the base line for the new benchmark assessments currently in development and in the early implementation stages. Teachers report some involvement in the development of benchmarks by implementing them into classrooms and scoring the assessments. The co-directors spoke of their plans to use multimedia as a way to track student performance using portfolio assessments. The inspection team was not able to observe samples of student portfolios as this effort is currently in its early stages. It is not clear how the portfolio assessments tracking individual student performance will be used to make school-wide program decisions.

Other assessments identified in the school's accountability plan are scheduled to be administered and reported for the first time this year (2002-2003) to assess the performance of the school's third graders. More reliable judgments can be made about the school's effectiveness when additional sources of achievement data become available.

2. The co-directors share roles, with one serving as the instructional leader who focuses on monitoring the curriculum and schools academic program.

Teachers interviewed during the inspection described the culture of the school as one where it is common practice for the academic co-director to informally visit classes 2-3 times a week for 20-30 minute periods. Teachers report receiving ongoing written and verbal feed back which guides them in modifying their instruction to meet student needs. Some teachers interviewed described their relationship with the co-director in charge of the implementation of the curriculum as a collaborative effort, where the sharing of ideas is ongoing and a focus on student learning is supported.

The reading recovery consultant also visits classrooms to assist teachers in their practice and to provide additional support in the implementation of the curriculum. During the time of the visit, one inspection team member observed the reading specialist working directly with teachers and students. In interviews, teachers and the reading recovery consultant reported that they work with small groups of students using a push in and pull out model. The consultant articulated a clear understanding of literacy focus for students in the early and upper grades. At the time of the inspection, the consultant was working with small groups of students to gather information about student performance to determine how she could best assist the classroom teacher.

III. UNIQUE PROGRAMMATIC AREAS

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

- 1. All stakeholder groups mentioned the bilingual language program as a central feature of the Amber mission.**

The inspection team heard reports from board, parents, teachers and students praising the bilingual design implemented at Amber Charter School. Stakeholders described the learning in two languages as a central element to the school. The three parents and one grandmother participating in the focus group supported the following claim made by one member, "Having a bilingual experience is vital to surviving in the world." All stakeholders stated their beliefs that Spanish will help students compete in society. Teachers described an effort to develop students who are fluent in not only speaking Spanish but comprehending the language on a more sophisticated level as part of the mission. Other teachers described the mission as developing leaders who are excellent problem solvers and independent thinkers by providing students with the "best education possible." Board members and administrators spoke of the importance of the language program and the effort to teach Spanish to their student population. Students explained with pride that they enjoy learning to read in English and Spanish.

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

- 1. Goal 9 as Stated in Amber Charter School's Accountability Plan:**

“All Amber Charter School students will develop proficiency in one or more of the New York State Learning Standards for the Arts”

The administrative team describes the art teachers' role in two ways. In addition to providing art instruction to students, they also serve as assistants who work with classroom teachers on thematic units to integrate arts content with the other content areas of the curriculum implemented in classrooms. The schedule provides for a 45 minute block time designated for art on a daily basis. At the time of the inspection, the school was in the process of setting up student art portfolios which would then be assessed by external observers. Art benchmarks are in the process of development. Currently teachers serve as the primary evaluators of student art work. Overall, ACS is beginning to put systems in place to bring art up to the level of quality implied in their goal.

2. Although not mentioned under the section unique programmatic areas in the school's accountability plan, the inspection team noted the language program as one of the special programs of the school.

As described in question 1 of this section, all stakeholders mention the language design as a distinctive feature of the school. The alternate day Spanish/English program is the fundamental structure of the Amber academic program. The inspection team observed seven classes where instruction was provided in either English or Spanish as appropriate for the designated lesson. Students receive instruction in math and English/language arts both languages, with social studies taught by the English speaking teacher and science taught by the Spanish-speaking teacher at each grade level.

Overall, Amber Charter School is making modest progress in implementing the art program, but has not yet fully collected portfolios that would allow the team to determine student proficiency according to the New York State art standards. The language program has been successfully implemented by competent English and Spanish speaking teachers and a curriculum and supplemental materials have been designed and provided to meet the needs of language learners.

PART II: SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN – ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. ACADEMIC PROGRAM GOALS

Goal 1: All students at Amber Charter School will become proficient readers and will make strong yearly progress towards mastery of English-language reading skills

Measures proposed by school:

measure 1: By the end of the first year, 75% of kindergartners who attend ACS for a full year will read at primer level. Students will demonstrate their reading abilities to the satisfaction of an external observer by reading primer-level material.

measure 2: All children who have attended Amber Charter School for three years will achieve Level 6 of the Early Childhood Language Arts Survey (ECLAS), a standardized test which requires students to demonstrate reading comprehension, letter recognition, expressive language abilities, phonemic awareness, and beginning writing abilities, including punctuation and grammar in or before 3rd grade. Copies of students' ECLAS exams will be shared with parents, and will be available, without personal identifying data, for external examination.

measure 3: Upon achieving ECLAS Level 6, all children will take the EPAL standardized test, which measures students' listening, writing and reading skills through producing extended written response. Ninety percent of students will achieve "medium" or "high" scores. EPAL tests will be shared with parents, and will be available, without personal identifying data, for external examination.

measure 4: All Spanish-dominant students who have attended Amber Charter School for three years will pass the English Language Assessment Battery (LAB) test in or before 3rd grade.

measure 5: Portfolio development began in 2001-02. Samples of children's reading (book reports), writing, and artwork were put in folders for August '02 analysis. In August, an adapted Mondo reading and writing checklist will be used to assess the children's level, prior to the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year. Writing included samples of work in social studies and science.

measure 6: Primary Language Record (PLR). In the first year, teachers will conduct interviews with all parents/guardians and with students. In the second and subsequent years, teachers will conduct these interviews with all new parents/guardians/students, and will conduct in-depth PLR analyses of two students.

Goal 2: All students at Amber Charter School will become proficient in math and will make strong yearly progress towards mastery of mathematics skills.

Measures proposed by school:

measure 1: Students will create and maintain math portfolios which provide evidence of what the child knows and can do in relation to specific criteria.

Goal 3: All Amber Charter School students will develop fluency in speaking, writing, and reading Spanish.

Measures proposed by school:

measure 1: By the end of one year of attendance, 100% of students will be able to know 75 Spanish vocabulary words in appropriate contexts, follow simple oral instructions, sing/recite five songs/poems, and express simple personal needs in Spanish as measured by locally designed tests and checklists, and as verified by an external observer.

measure 2: By the end of three years of attendance, students will demonstrate the use of Spanish in an academic context through a rubric or checklist based on the Arlington County Partial Immersion Program rubric.

measure 3: All children who have attended Amber Charter School for three years will achieve Level 6 of the Spanish Language ECLAS by the end of 3rd grade.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM GOALS—RECOMMENDATIONS

For Goal 1 – English Language Arts

1. The tool used to determining kindergartners' ability to read at primer level is inappropriate for measuring whole class average progress. The inspection team strongly urges the school to select an assessment tool designed to measure the average performance of whole class progress.
2. When presenting tables and charts, include clear labels which indicates cohort and whole class data.
3. When discussing the reasons for low student performance focus your discussion on factors over which the school has control.
4. When organizing charts and tables, to enhance clarity present data first followed by the schools analysis/discussion of the assessment tool used.
5. Provide additional information explaining the role and purpose of the external observer. In order to strengthen your argument that this is a valid measure, provide information detailing the qualifications of the external measure and the evaluation criteria used to assess student work.
6. Closely examine the correlation between ECLAS scores collected by the school and the third grade assessment. This information can provide insight into whether ECLAS is providing accurate measures.

For measure 2 – Students enrolled in Amber for 3 years will reach level 6 on ECLAS

1. To ensure clarity, reformat tables so that information is presented in a coherent organized way.
2. Include as part of your discussion the schools effort to clarify measures and the administration of the ECLAS assessment.

3. Be sure to explain the use of videotapes if they are part of the measures created by the school. Include how and when they are used, and how the viewers are trained to use them as an assessment tool.

For measure 3 – EPAL

1. Reformat tables including the “n” (number of students) on tables. As suggested for other tables, present your discussion and analysis after the data.
2. Include a brief description of “medium” and “high” so that evaluators not familiar with ECLAS can have a clear understanding of what these measures indicate.
3. If videotapes will be used, explain the process and purpose for the tapes and report how they were used to verify test accuracy.

For measure 4 – Spanish Dominant Students will pass the English Language Battery

1. Clarify whether or not students must be enrolled at Amber Charter School for three years or simply enrolled as a third grade student.
2. Reformat tables presented in your accountability plan so that the columns line up.
3. When presenting your discussion after tables, be sure to include information about students who did not make the target set by the school. In addition, you may want to include in your discussion the ways that students who have not met the target are being served by the school.

Other Assessment Measures

1. Explain the “mondo” reading and writing checklist including information explaining why it is a valid measure.
2. Describe the Primary Language Record interview including information that provides an evaluator with an understanding of what it is used for, what information it provides, and why that information is useful.
3. Present benchmark results and chart changes over time.

For Goal 2 – Students will display proficiency in math

measure 1 – math portfolios

1. When describing the math portfolios display the criteria for assessing the quality of student’s work as well as reporting summary tables showing the class/ grade level results.
2. Condense the anecdotal evidence for the reasons for low or high student performance.

For Goal 3 – Students will demonstrate fluency in speaking, writing and reading Spanish

Measure 1 – vocabulary

1. Provide an explanation for the school's choice of targets, distinguishing between targets included in the FLAP summary and those selected by the school.
2. Include the measures and examples of the tests and checklists used for charting student progress. It would be helpful to an evaluator to include a discussion explaining how the selected measure is determined to be reliable.
3. Condense the FLAP (grant) information and report the actual results for Amber students as derived from the assessments.

Measure 2 – Demonstrate use of Spanish in an academic context

1. Explain the relationship between the SOPA and the Arlington County Partial Immersion Rubric.
2. When reporting results, reformat and present results using a table that includes baseline measures and allows the reader to see progress over time.
3. Report the results of ESOL in a clear table that charts student performance at each administration as well as over time.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY GOALS

Goal 1: Amber Charter School will make sound decisions and effective, responsible use of financial resources to maximize student learning.

Measures proposed by school:

measure 1: The balance sheet for most recently completed fiscal year demonstrates a balance between resources and expenses.

measure 2: The budget for the next fiscal year demonstrates a balance between expenses and reasonably expected resources.

measure 3: Cash flow charts for the current year and for the forthcoming five-year period have been regularly maintained during the fiscal year and regular financial reports to the Board have included the variances in actual income and expenses compared to the approved budget.

measure 4: The Board will approve the proposed budget and five-year projections before the start of the fiscal year.

measure 5: A yearly independent audit shows that Amber Charter School has followed fiscally prudent practices and has acted in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices.

Goal 2: Amber Charter School will maintain strong enrollment and strong parent interest

measures proposed by school:

measure 1: Enrollment will be maintained within 10% of targeted enrollment, with a range of plus or minus 10%, as measured on October 31 and May 31.

measure 2: waiting list will be maintained

measure 3: Amber Charter School will keep records of all discharges and, wherever possible, the reason for exit.

Goal 3: The Board will play an active role in governing and bringing resources to Amber Charter School.***Measures proposed by school:***

measure 1: The Board will meet regularly

measure 2: Each member of the Board will make a financial contribution to Amber Charter School, the amount to be determined by the member.

measure 3: Board members will set a yearly goal for Board fundraising and will participate in reaching that goal through contributions, personal contacts, attendance at meetings with funders, and participation in organizing special events.

measure 4: The Board will produce a summary of policy decisions made during the year.

measure 5: The Board will review the performance of the Co-directors on a yearly basis or more frequently as it designates.

Goal 4: Parents will be active participants in their children's education, school decision-making and evaluation.***Measures proposed by school:***

measure 1: By the end of each year, 100% of newly-enrolled parents will participate in Primary Language Record interviews.

measure 2: The Parents Association will establish by-laws and hold regular meetings in accordance with its by-laws.

measure 3: Two parents will be elected yearly to the Board of Trustees and will participate actively, as measured by meeting attendance and participation in Board activities.

measure 4: Equal numbers of elected parents and school staff will participate in the School Planning Committee beginning in January, 2001; this committee will meet on a regular basis to plan and to advise the co-directors.

measure 5: 100% of parents will participate in a parent survey of their child's initial knowledge of English or Spanish as a second language.

measure 6: 80% of parents responding to an annual survey will indicate that they are "satisfied" or "mostly" satisfied with their child's education, responding to criteria such as "academic progress," "child's desire to come to school," "school's effectiveness in promoting child's interest in learning," "child is better able to resolve conflicts."

Goal 5: Faculty and staff will be fully engaged in partners in the development of the school and their professional development.***Measures proposed by school:***

measure 1: At least 80% of staff will indicate in an annual survey that they feel that Amber Charter School is a professionally satisfying school in which to work.

measure 2: At least 80% of staff will indicate in an annual survey that they have “good” or “excellent” opportunities for professional growth.

measure 3: 100% of faculty will state that they are will represented in school decision-making, either directly or through representation on the school planning committee and the Board of Trustees.

measure 4: Beginning in September 2001, staff absence rates will average 8 or fewer days per year.

ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY GOALS—RECOMMENDATIONS

For Goal 4 – Financial accountability

1. The school might consider defining ‘reasonable expected use of resources’ for individuals who are not financial experts. This effort will help ensure that your definition is considered by an outside evaluator reviewing your financial documents.
2. The school’s authorizer, Charter Schools Institute, performs on-going financial review, independent of this report.

For Goal 5 – Strong enrollment and parent interest

1. The school may wish to consider presenting enrollment history over time and disaggregating data by grade level. The evaluators can then view trends and the school can demonstrate persistence of interest and enrollment.
2. After presenting tables include an analysis/discussion that provides your own insights and interpretations of the data.
3. Report the number of discharges, listing the various reasons for withdrawal. Present summarized information in your accountability plan.

For Goal 6 – Board will play an active role in governing and bringing resources to Amber Charter School

1. Consider describing the contributions made by board members as “financial or in-kind” as a more accurate statement of the current procedures.
2. List the goals set by the Board for fundraising and consider presenting the goals throughout the years of the school’s operation.
3. Describe some of the policy decisions made over the course of Amber’s existence as an example of the role of the Board of Trustees.
4. Report the criteria used by the Board to review the performance of the co-directors. Describe how the evaluation of directors is carried out.

For Goal 7 – Parents will be active participants in their children’s education

1. Report the number of participants included in the Primary Language Record interviews.
2. Report the percentage of parents returning school lunch forms each year and report results by grade level.
3. Provide an explanation of the types of personal interactions parents had with school personnel. Report the results by grade level to help identify gaps.
4. When reporting information describing the parent’s association, it is helpful to include the dates of meetings, a list of the major topics discussed as well as the number of individuals in attendance as confirming the school’s ability to attract parent participation.
5. When reporting information describing the school planning committee, include the names of the members for the concluding year as well as upcoming school year. You may want to consider listing the dates of the meetings and topics of discussion.
6. Present the survey results indicating parent perceptions of their child’s initial knowledge of English or Spanish as a second language.
7. When presenting survey results define the total parent population represented by the returned surveys.

For Goal 8 – Faculty and staff will be engaged partners in the development of the school and their professional development

1. The school may want to consider reformatting the parent survey to ensure the readability of the document by respondents who may not be familiar with educational language or who may be English language learners themselves.
2. Include a definition of professional growth when reporting staff responses. This will define for the reader what you intend to be included in this measure.
3. Include a discussion of how the school plans to meet its target for staff satisfaction.
4. When reporting results of staff absence rates, include in the table the distribution as well as trends over time.

III. UNIQUE PROGRAMMATIC AREA GOALS

Goal 1: All Amber Charter School Students will develop proficiency in one or more of the New York State Learning Standards for the Arts.

Measures proposed by school:

measure 1: During the first 5-year charter period, 100% of students who have attended Amber Charter School for a minimum of two years will meet the elementary grades standards for one or more of the arts, as measured by demonstrated performance or achievement, to the satisfaction of an external expert observer.

measure 2: During each year of the charter, the co-directors and the faculty will develop and utilize interim achievement benchmarks to measure children's progress toward the arts standards.

UNIQUE PROGRAMMATIC AREA GOALS—RECOMMENDATIONS

For Goal 9 – Student will demonstrate proficiency in one or more N.Y state arts standards

Measure 1

1. Specify the New York State Learning Standards reflected in the student work that is collected and assessed. A sample or two included in the report would help the reader appreciate the quality of student work and understand the alignment between the school's assessment and the state proficiency standards.
2. Describe the criteria used for judging student performance and report the number of students meeting that criteria.
3. Provide a description of the qualifications of the 'expert external' observer.
4. When the assessment is administered, report the results by grade level.

Measure 2

1. When the benchmarks are defined show what the benchmarks are and include the results reporting student achievement.

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 modify 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 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
Amber Charter School, New York City**

I. Academic Program

Goal 1: All students at Amber Charter School will become proficient readers and will make strong yearly progress towards mastery of English language reading skills	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
measure 1: end of first year, 75% kindergartners who attend for full year will read at primer level; demonstrate reading abilities to satisfaction of external observer by reading primer level literature.	-- inappropriate tool for measuring whole class average progress -- include clear labels of charts, indicating cohort and whole class -- focus reasons for poor student performance on factors over which the school has control -- present table of results first, followed by discussion of assessment tool -- explain role and purpose of external observer, qualifications, evaluation criteria to be used (for consistency of administration) -- closely examine correlation between ECLAS scores and third grade assessment to determine if ECLAS is providing accurate measures of student proficiency
measure 2: all children attended Amber CS for three years will achieve Level 6 on the ECLAS.	-- reformat table to clearly present the information -- include discussion to clarify measures, administration -- if videotapes are part of the measure, explain their use
measure 3: after achieving ECLAS Level 6, 90% achieve 'medium' or 'high' scores on EPAL.	-- reformat tables to clearly present information, include 'n' on tables -- keep discussion after -- define "medium" and "high" to those evaluators not familiar with ECLAS -- explain use of the videotape
measure 4: all Spanish dominant students at Amber for 3 years will pass English Language Battery (in or before 3 rd grade).	-- clarify whether 3 years attendance or third grade -- reformat table to line up columns -- discussion should include number of student who did not make the target, and how being served
Other assessment measures: portfolios, scored by Mondo reading and writing checklist Primary Language Record interviews with parents/guardians and students; in-depth analyses of two students	-- define "mondo" explain why valid measure -- Primary Language Record interview describe and what used for , what information does it provide, how it adds value -- display benchmark results and changes over time
Goal 2: All students at Amber Charter School will become proficient in math and will make strong yearly progress towards mastery of mathematics skills.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
measure 1: portfolios will provide evidence of what the child knows and can do in relation to specific criteria.	-- display criteria and results -- shorten/eliminate presentation of anecdotal evidence

Goal 3: All students at Amber Charter School will develop fluency in speaking, writing and reading Spanish.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
measure 1: by end of 1 year attendance, 100% students will know 75 vocabulary words in appropriate contexts, follow simple instruction, recite five poems, express simple personal needs ; locally designed tests and checklists, verified by external observer.	-- explain choice of targets (e.g. differs from target included in FLAP summary) -- include measure (local tests and checklists) and indicate how verified as a reliable measure -- eliminate excess FLAP information, stick to reporting -- report the results as derived from assessments
measure 2: by end of 3 years at Amber, demonstrate use of Spanish in academic context through rubric or checklist based on the Arlington County Partial Immersion Program rubric.	-- clarify the relationship between the SOPA and the Arlington County Partial Immersion Program rubric -- put results in a table, including baseline measures as well as progress over time
measure 3: all children attended Amber 3 + years achieve Level 6 of Spanish Language ECLAS (by end of 3 rd grade).	-- report results of El Sol in clear table

II. Organizational Viability

Goal 1: Amber Charter School will make sound decisions and effective, responsible use of financial resources to maximize student learning.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
measure 1: balance sheet for the most recent fiscal year demonstrates a balance between resources and expenses.	(CSI will assess financial accountability)
measure 2: budget for next fiscal year demonstrates balance between expenses and reasonably expected resources.	-- define 'reasonably expected resources'
measure 3: cash flow charts for current year for forthcoming five-year period regularly maintained ; regular financial reports to the Board included variances.	
measure 4: Board approve proposed budget and five-year projections before the start of the fiscal year.	
measure 5: yearly independent audit shows that Amber CS has followed prudent practices and has acted in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practices.	

Goal 2: Amber Charter School will maintain strong enrollment and strong parent interest.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
measure 1: enrollment within 10% target; range of plus or minus 10%, as measured on Oct. 31 and May 31.	-- consider showing enrollment history over time, perhaps broken down by grade level -- follow table with analysis
measure 2: Waiting lists will be maintained.	-- suggest include number of students on waiting list beginning each year or at regular intervals
measure 3: Amber CS will keep records of all discharges and, wherever possible, reason for exit.	-- show number of discharges, list of reasons for withdrawal, summarized or classified as suitable
Goal 3: The Board will play an active role in governing and brining resources to Amber Charter School.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
measure 1: Board will meet regularly	(required by law)
measure 2: Each member of the Board will make a financial contribution to Amber CS, the amount to be determined by the member.	-- consider restating as 'financial or in-kind' contributions to Amber
measure 3: Board members will set a yearly goal for Board fundraising and will participate in reaching that goal through contributions, personal contacts, attendance at meetings with funders, and participation in organizing special events.	-- list what the goal is for current year (or just completed year) -- goals for past years and history of success
measure 4: The board will produce a summary of policy decision made during the year.	-- describe major policy decisions for each year of operation
measure 5: The Board will review the performance of the Co-directors on a yearly basis or more frequently as it designates.	-- list the criteria to be used for co-director evaluations
Goal 4: Parents will be active participants in their children's education, school decision-making and evaluation.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
measure 1: each year, 100% newly enrolled parents participate in Primary Language Record interviews.	-- report the actual number of participants in PLR
measure 2: 100% parents will submit school lunch forms each year.	-- report results by grade level
measure 3: 100% parents or guardians will participate in at least one personal interaction each year with the school.	-- classify the types of personal interactions, report by grade level (helps identify gaps)
measure 4: parent's association establish by-laws and hold regular meetings in accordance with its bylaws.	-- cite dates of meeting, major discussion topics each meeting -- number of attendees each meeting
measure 5: two parents elected yearly to Board of Trustees and will participate actively, as measured by meeting attendance and participation in Board activities.	-- not a measurable goal

measure 6: equal numbers of elected parents and school staff will participate in School Planning committee beginning in January 2001; meet on regular basis to plan and advise the co-directors.	-- name the committee members for the just concluded year, for the coming year -- dates of meetings and discussion topics
measure 7: 100% parents participate in parent survey of child's initial knowledge of either English or Spanish as a second language.	-- present the data, results
measure 8: 80% parents on annual survey indicate 'satisfied' or 'mostly satisfied' with child's education on (selected criteria).	-- define what percent of total parent population is represented by the returned surveys -- discussion is reasonable
Goal 5: Faculty and staff will be fully engaged partners in the development of the school and their own professional development.	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
measure 1: 80% staff on annual survey indicate professionally satisfying.	-- consider reformatting to make more readable
measure 2: 80% staff on annual survey "good" or "excellent" opportunities for professional growth.	-- define 'professional growth'
measure 3: 100% faculty state they are 'well represented' in school decision-making either directly or through representation on the School Planning Committee and Board of Trustees.	-- include in discussion how the school will address not meeting target for staff satisfaction
measure 4: staff absence rates average 8 or fewer days per year.	-- table showing distribution, trends over time

III. Unique Areas

Goal 1: Amber Charter School students will make develop proficiency in one or more of the New York State Learning Standards for the Arts .	
<i>Proposed Measures</i>	<i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i>
measure 1: 100% students at Amber minimum 2 yrs meet elementary grade standards for one or more of the arts as measured by demonstrated performance achievement to the satisfaction of an external expert observer.	-- reference the specific learning standard(s) reflected in the events/ activities described, and report number of students meeting the standard and by what criteria -- describe the qualifications of 'expert external' observer -- when the assessment is conducted, report results by grade
measure 2: co-directors and faculty will develop interim achievement benchmarks to measure children's progress toward the arts standards.	-- show benchmarks -- report results