



## **ARK COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL THIRD YEAR INSPECTION REPORT**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

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

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

### **II. CONDUCT OF THE VISIT**

The inspection of Ark Community Charter School was conducted on March 9-10, 2004 by an independent team of experienced educators from SchoolWorks, Beverly, MA.

- Emily Peña, School Quality Review Consultant, SchoolWorks: Emily worked for Boston Public Schools for 10 years as a bilingual special needs teacher for grades K-6, a literacy specialist at the middle school level, and at the high school level as Assistant Headmaster in charge of Teaching and Learning. Mrs. Peña has been involved as a teacher and principal of numerous summer programs targeting students who wish to gain entrance into Boston Exam Schools. She has worked as a consultant for SchoolWorks for over 3 years conducting charter school inspections in Massachusetts and New York, as well as reviews of underperforming and exemplary district schools.
- Aretha Miller, Project Manager, SchoolWorks. Aretha, an eight year veteran special education teacher in the Boston Public Schools, has developed and supported implementation of programs for at risk students through traditional and alternative settings.
- Zita Samuels, Consultant, School Works. Zita is a professional grant writer and program evaluator. She conducts charter school inspections and reviews of underperforming and exemplary schools for SchoolWorks. Formerly, she had a long career as an administrator in the public schools of Somerville, MA.

- Dominique Astier, Consultant, SchoolWorks. Dominique is a former middle and high school French and Spanish teacher and administrator. She now works as a consultant, conducting Charter School inspections and DOE reviews of underperforming and exemplary schools, as well as developing and guiding the execution of new curricula and programs.

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 SUNY Charter Schools Institute. At the school, the team interviewed school administrators, Board representatives, staff, parents and students, and visited classes to understand the efforts the school is making to achieve its academic and organizational goals.

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

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

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

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

### III. SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

Ark Community Charter School of Troy, New York, commenced operations in September 2001, with an enrollment of 96 students in grades K-5, evenly divided with 16 students per grade in multi-age grade groupings (two classes each of K-1, 2-3, 4-5). In June 2003, these groupings were replaced with a looping approach with individual grade groups remaining with a single

teacher for a two-year cycle. Enrollment continued at the same level in 2002-2003 and is now 97 students in 2003-2004. There is a waiting list of nearly 90 students.

The school's original faculty included thirteen teachers and five other professional staff. The staff now includes six K-5 classroom teachers, each of whom has one full time teaching assistant, two art teachers, two part time reading specialists, one part time music and drama teacher, and one part time creative movement teacher. A special needs consulting teacher from the city of Troy is assigned to the building. Academic consultants in the areas of literacy, math, science, and social studies were hired this year to support classroom instruction in these content areas. Another consultant is working on assessment and the development of rubrics.

The school is currently led by the director supported by a coordinator of counseling services, a coordinator of records/office manager and a consultant who is providing support for many of the school's change efforts. The director and most of the teaching and support staff have been present since the school's inception. Originally, a three-person team of co-directors managed the school. In June 2003, the Board of Trustees voted to appoint a single director whose chief responsibility is to oversee the educational program. The other two co-directors assumed the student services and human services functions; however, one has since left the school and the other is out on extended sick leave, leaving the director in charge of all administrative tasks.

The Ark Community Charter School is located in an eight-room building that formerly served as a parochial school. There is no internal access to the cafeteria, which is located in the adjoining church basement. The facility is small and crowded to accommodate the 97 students enrolled for the 2003-2004 school year. Reading and other support services are carried out in hallways. The school plans to move to a larger facility in September 2004 and is in the process of completing the necessary renovations. According to the Board, funding for this initiative has come from a number of grants from New York State and from private foundations. With the exception of the parent representative and one other Board member, six of the eight members of the Board of Trustees are founding members. Non-voting members include the director and a teacher representative selected by the faculty.

The school's enrollment has been stable at 96-97 students since its inception. However, plans to expand to include a second K-5 strand will come to fruition in September 2004 when a second kindergarten will open at the new site adding an additional sixteen students. As this group moves up through the grades, a new kindergarten will be added annually until this second strand is fully established.

The academic program at Ark Community Charter School has recently strengthened the alignment with the New York State standards in literacy, mathematics, social studies and science. The Rigby Reading Program with its balanced literacy approach was introduced this year accompanied by ongoing staff training and support. The math program, *Everyday Mathematics* (University of Chicago), is under examination and may be replaced. The school has a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary learning in which science, social studies and art are frequently integrated with literacy and mathematics.

Although the school has not shown the gains it had anticipated during its first two years of operation, recent changes in curriculum and administrative structure including greater accountability and staff oversight, which, along with the projected move to the new facility have made stakeholders optimistic for the future development and improvement of the school.

## PART I: SCHOOL PROGRESS REPORT

### I. ACADEMIC PROGRAM

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

1. At the Ark Community Charter School, average student test scores on the Stanford Reading Achievement Test, 9<sup>th</sup> edition (SAT 9) have been substantially below national norms in both reading and math for the past two years. The only exception is in grade 5 Reading, spring 2003, with an average score of 43 NCEs,<sup>1</sup> which is closer to the national average than all other scores.

**Ark Community Charter School  
SAT9 Reading Test Scores in NCEs for Grades 2, 3, and 5**

Grades	2	3	5
Spring 2002	29	39	27
Spring 2003	33	30	43

**Ark Community Charter School  
SAT9 Math Test Scores in NCEs for Grades 2, 3, and 5**

Grades	2	3	5
Spring 2002	24	21	29
Spring 2003	26	24	39

The Ark Community Charter School administered the SAT9 tests in reading and math in grades 2, 3, and 5 in spring 2002 and spring 2003. Except for grade 3 reading, which showed a decline, scores were higher for each group in 2003 than in 2002. All scores, however, were well below the national average NCE score of 50. (These were consecutive groups, not cohort groups.)

2. The majority of fourth graders are not meeting New York State standards for proficiency in English language arts, mathematics, and science. Fifth graders do not meet the state standards in social studies.

Grade 4 students were tested on the New York State Assessments in ELA, math and science in 2003; grade 5 students were tested at the same intervals in social studies. In all cases the majority of Ark Community Charter School students were well below level 3 (proficiency) in ELA, math and social studies and below the state standard of 30 in science. The school also

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<sup>1</sup> \* 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. NCEs 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.

compared itself to two local elementary schools on the state fourth grade assessments in ELA and math and found that it had fewer students in Levels 3 and 4 in both areas.

**Ark Community Charter School  
New York State Assessments – Grade 4  
(2002-2003 School Year)**

Subject Area Assessed	Number of Students Tested	Number and Percent of Students at Levels 1 and 2 (failing to meet the state standard)		Number and Percent of Students at Levels 3 and 4 (meet the state standard)	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
English Language Arts	N = 14	N = 12	86%	N = 2	14%
Mathematics	N = 15	N = 10	67%	N = 5	33%
		Number and Percent of Students Failing to Meet the State Standard		Number and Percent of Students Meeting the State Standard	
Science	N = 15	N = 11	73%	N = 4	27%

**Ark Community Charter School  
New York State Assessments – Grade 5  
(2002-2003 School Year)**

Subject Area Assessed	Number of Students Tested	Number and Percent of Students at Levels 1 and 2 (failing to meet the state standard)		Number and Percent of Students at Levels 3 and 4 (meet the state standard)	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Social Studies	N = 15	N = 10	67%	N = 5	33%

- 3. Fifty-six percent of first grade students met the goal of reaching stanines 7, 8 and 9 on the school's internal measure, the Marie Clay observation survey, as compared to the school's goal of 100% attainment of this level.**

In the spring of 2003, all first grade students were assessed individually on the following subsets of the Marie Clay Observation Survey: alphabet recognition, word knowledge, timed number of words written, dictation, and concepts of print. No year-to-year comparison data are available as this was the initial administration of this survey. As indicated by the results, the first group of Ark students assessed with this measure did not meet the school's defined target.

**Ark Community Charter School**  
**Marie Clay Observation Survey – Percent of Students at Stanine Levels 7, 8, and 9**  
**First Grade – N = 16**  
**(Spring 2003)**

Met Levels 7, 8, and 9		Did Not Meet Levels 7, 8, and 9	
N = 9	56%	N = 7	44 %

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

- 1. The school did not meet its goal to improve student performance on the SAT9 by three NCE points over time in both ELA and math from spring 2002 to spring 2003. Although NCE scores in reading did improve by two NCE points, they declined in math.**

**Ark Community Charter School**  
**Average SAT9 NCE Scores for Reading and Math Cohorts Over Time**

Testing Date and Grade	Reading Cohort N = 11	Math Cohort N = 11
Spring 2002 – Grade 2	NCE = 26	NCE = 21
Spring 2003 – Grade 3	NCE = 28	NCE = 19

The cohort whose scores are reported above are the only group of continuing students who were tested over time. The fourth grade was not tested on the SAT9 in 2002 or 2003, and the fifth graders tested in 2002 were no longer in attendance at the school. The performance of the continuing students does not meet the school's targets, but the number of students tested is too small to make accurate inferences about the effectiveness of the school's academic program, particularly since only one year's data is available. Analysis of the patterns following the test results from the current year will be a stronger base of data on which to make reliable judgments about school programs.

- 2. The school does not provide cohort data on measures other than the standardized tests described above.**

With the help of consultants, the school is in the process of creating a number of interdisciplinary projects with scoring rubrics that have the potential to be used as measures over time if they are implemented consistently. The absence of additional assessment of student performance is a significant limitation to making judgments about the impact of the school's programs.

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

- 1. Overall, the curriculum is flexible enough to meet the needs of diverse students.**

**This school year, 2003-2004, the school has focused on structuring the curriculum and better aligning it to the New York State standards in ELA, science and social studies. The school is still reviewing the current math curriculum to ensure that students' needs are being met. Art is connected to all content areas, e.g., science, social studies and ELA.**

In June 2003, the Board approved the hiring of a number of curriculum consultants to work with teachers to create interdisciplinary units of study including assessments and rubrics. The consultants have also modeled instruction in classrooms and they have worked with teachers individually to provide coaching on curriculum implementation. First year teachers have indicated that they know what and when to teach. Each unit is benchmarked so that teachers know what skills and content knowledge students need to attain by the end of the unit. In literacy instruction, teachers implement assessment tools that are part of the Rigby Reading Program. Status of the Class reports are used in every subject area, although mainly in literacy and math, to identify skills individual students are attaining or lacking in order to adjust instruction and make decisions about grouping. That data is not designed to be used for school-wide performance assessment.

In ELA the classroom focus is on guided reading groups and leveled reading books that meet the needs of diverse students through a balanced literacy program. In social studies and science, the interdisciplinary units inherently provide flexibility for diverse students. Staff has been concerned that the *Everyday Mathematics* program is not meeting the needs of individual students. At present, lessons are taught to the entire class and teachers offer little differentiated instruction for individual students. The school is in the process of reviewing the math curriculum to ensure that student needs are being met effectively.

## **2. The school uses a variety of instructional strategies to address the needs of diverse students.**

Through classroom observations, interviews and examination of school documents, the team noted the following strategies (other than in mathematics) that differentiated instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners:

- Use of the writers' workshop model of instruction: mini-lessons, individual work and sharing.
- Interdisciplinary projects, with scoring rubrics, which integrate art with content areas.
- A balanced literacy approach using reading groups and guided reading.
- Learning centers in each classroom.
- Push in and pullout services in special education and reading that included small group as well as 1:1 instruction. A parent volunteer tutors English language learners (ELL).
- In most cases teachers and/or teacher assistants are bilingual in Spanish, making it possible to repeat instructions or provide explanations in Spanish for ELL students. Classroom objects and areas are also labeled in Spanish.
- Daily schedules, more often generic than specific, were posted in classrooms.
- In some cases the team noted that lesson objectives were communicated to students.

- Staff received training in the techniques of the Responsive Classroom (RC) and use of the morning meeting, an important part of the RC program, was observed by the team. Teachers generally reported that this strategy has improved student behavior.
- 3. The support programs in the school allow for low student to teacher ratios and increased attention to the needs of individual learners. One gap noted was the lack, other than a small math enrichment program, of extended day services to meet the additional needs of struggling students.**

The school has a policy to limit class size to sixteen students per classroom. Each teacher has the support of a full time teacher assistant who is considered part of the staff and attends all faculty meetings. These low student to teacher ratios are aligned with the school's mission of small group and individual instruction for a low-income population. In addition, the team also saw a number of volunteers in the school's classrooms. Some of these were students at local colleges; others are parents and community members. However, it was not clear that classroom teachers were trained to derive maximal benefits from the presence of the additional adults in the classroom as it appeared during some observations that these individuals were not always productively engaged with youngsters.

Two part time Title I funded reading specialists provide support to 27 (28.42%) of the school's students. They told the team that their services are mainly pull out from the classroom literacy period to provide individual or small group attention to struggling learners. These teachers also provide in-class support part of the time. The district also sends a special education consultant to provide services, mostly in-class, to the school's fourteen (14.74%) students with disabilities according to their Individual Education Programs (IEP). An employee of Hispanic Outreach, a local community service agency, provides ELL support to 21 (22.11%) students. The school also has a counselor who has worked in the community and is familiar with families of students in the school.

A number of consultants were hired this year and staff and administration reported that they have had a significant role in improving the curriculum and helping teachers improve their pedagogical skills in support of the school's diverse learners. The consultants have supported teachers in the following ways:

- Literacy assessment to inform instruction, guided reading, interactive writing and reading centers.
- Technology tutoring in Photoshop and Microsoft Publisher for art teachers.
- Basic computer training for teacher assistants.
- Social studies curriculum development including procedures for curriculum mapping, coordination with New York State Standards and development of units of study.
- Child study and data collection.
- Team-building.
- Development of Performance Based Assessment
- Development of record keeping for formative and summative grade level assessments.

One Board member who is part of the education faculty at Sage College assists the director with teacher observations and provides support for teachers in the improvement of instructional methods for diverse learners. The director has also had consultant support on leadership issues, development of an employee handbook and preparation of the accountability report.

Other than a small math enrichment program attended by thirteen students, the school does not provide for extended time learning for struggling students beyond its longer school day (30 minutes longer than Troy City Schools). However, some children do attend the ARK community after school program, which is independent of the school and serves children who live in the Taylor Housing Project.

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

- 1. The curriculum as written is appropriate for all grade levels and is aligned to NY State Learning Standards. However, in the upper grades, the curriculum as implemented lacks rigor and challenge, as evidenced in observations and review of student work.**

Observations during the inspection offered a number of examples of activities that led inspectors to conclude that academic time does not always involve rigorous and challenging work. Students were observed playing non-educational games (checkers) in center activities as they waited their turn to meet with the teacher during the literacy period. Another option was building with toothpicks and glue. Center activities during the literacy period would be more effective if they were literacy related. The samples of student work that the team reviewed reflected low expectations for vocabulary use and math computation. Writing was not corrected for spelling errors (grade 4) and a grade 5 math paper covered simple addition and subtraction facts. There was limited science knowledge demonstrated. In some cases, teachers scored mediocre work as "above average." Despite the emphasis on writing engaged in by teachers with the consultant, the quality of student writing reviewed by the team was below grade level expectations in the upper grades. This is a particular concern given the nature of the high stakes testing that is required for students in the upper grades. These students were not asked probing questions that would encourage them to think; they were given answers rather than being urged to solve problems.

- 2. The team recognizes that this is the first year of implementing a new curriculum and accountability system, and setting high expectations for teachers. However, at the time of the visit, it was not evident to the team that the level of expectations for student academic performance was consistently high throughout the school. In general, student behavior in classrooms was appropriate and consistently supported by Responsive Classroom techniques.**

According to interview reports presented to the inspectors, when the school first opened, there was very little structure and limited accountability. This year, with the Board's appointment of a single director, there has been a new focus on high expectations and accountability. Teachers are

now receiving formal evaluations and are required to turn in lesson plans, which are expected to show relationships to the curriculum and the New York State standards.

In most classes students were not asked to go beyond literal explanations in responding to questions that did not appear to stress higher order skills. In one math class students were given answers rather than having to solve problems on their own. The team observed only limited scaffolding of ideas and concepts. In one case a teacher was observed moving forward with an introductory lesson without ensuring that students “get it” or checking for understanding. In another case, teacher content knowledge appeared questionable, as incorrect student responses were not flagged.

In examining student work the team observed that kindergarten and first grade work reflects appropriate challenge. In one project an interdisciplinary unit on Henry Hudson, the end of unit project incorporated technology as students downloaded and printed pictures of Hudson’s boat and voyages. The quality of work was not as challenging in the upper grades. The team noted a fifth grade assignment that was considered acceptable and scored at highest level on a rubric was disappointing. The student’s work about Julius Caesar’s character appeared to be copied, possibly from the Internet, and was more like a summary than a thoughtful character analysis; there was a limited volume of writing pieces for a fourth grade assignment; some work was of poor quality with poorly developed ideas. Assignments that were grade appropriate showed low expectations on the part of teachers and were below grade level standards for fourth and fifth grade. Most work samples were teacher selected and defined and did not show rigor and high expectations for students to demonstrate their comprehension at higher levels; many of the student assignments were not corrected and contained numerous spelling errors. Teachers’ use of rubrics generally reflected the work they are undertaking with a consultant and allowed for coverage of a wide range of skills although the quality of the work did not necessarily merit the scores that were given.

## II. ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY

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

- 1. Students feel safe and supported by teachers. They expressed a sense of dismay about leaving the school at the end of fifth grade and they feel the work expected of them is appropriate.**

In a focus group with students in grades two through five, there was general agreement that the school is a safe place where the teachers are fair and the work is just right. The children indicated that they “want to stay here forever” and are apprehensive about attending grade six in the Troy public schools. They are comfortable asking teachers and teacher assistants for help and reported that they receive homework almost nightly. In the student survey conducted by the school in 2002-2003 and administered to students in grades two through five, the response with the highest rating was “My teacher believes I can learn.” The response with the lowest rating was “I have choices in what I learn.” On balance, the student survey and attendant student

comments showed that the school has had a positive impact on its students. Kindergarten and first grade students were also surveyed and expressed positive feelings about the school.

- 2. The school has provided a viable option for Troy families with children in grades K-5. Families expressed overwhelmingly positive appreciation for the school and what it has done for their children by providing a “home away from home.”**

The dozen parents who participated in the parent focus group were in agreement about the positive impact the school has had on their children. Some, who had connections with the founders at the Ark Community Center, told the team that the school had lived up to their expectations, tapped into their children’s creativity, and instilled self-esteem and responsibility. They expressed concerns about having their children return to the Troy Public Schools after fifth grade. They value the school’s open door policy, small class size, individualized attention and family feeling. They also noted the school’s diversity, opportunities to learn Spanish as a second language, and appreciated the dedication, hard work and commitment of the teachers.

Although fewer than half the school’s families responded to the parent survey, there was general agreement among respondents that the school is meeting the needs of students academically and socially. One parent commented, “ACCS has wonderful, caring, loving, understanding staff who will do anything for the needs of the students for them to succeed academically.”

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

- 1. A system for assessing the effectiveness of the new curricula and assessments has not yet been developed to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning. For example, the school has not determined how Rigby assessment data or status of the class reports can be used to describe overall progress in literacy.**

The school has been using assessment data, particularly in ELA, to identify students who need additional support and in order to group students for literacy instruction in classrooms. Since September 2003, a consultant is on site several days a week to develop methods of data collection and assessment. She initiated the *Status of the Class* reports in ELA and math and is in the process of creating a schoolwide database. As yet, however, there has not been any test item analysis of either the standardized tests (SAT) or the New York State Assessments to help identify gaps in the curriculum and student needs. The school plans to replace its current Early Literacy Profile as an internal measure of reading progress with the Rigby PM Benchmarks in the 2004-05 academic year. The school examines its assessment results to monitor student performance, but does not yet have a plan in place to use this data to determine whether the academic *programs* are serving the student population as desired.

- 2. The school’s low test scores in its first two years resulted in dramatic changes in program and focus.**

At the end of the school's first two years, the school's poor test scores resulted in development of new curricula with the help of a number of consultants and a greater focus on accountability and governance. The curriculum has been better aligned with the New York State Learning Standards. The school moved from three directors with shared leadership to one director who, with the advice and support of the Board, has instituted a number of changes that hold out promise for improved achievement. Teachers are now required to submit lesson plans for the director's inspection and feedback and there is a new staff evaluation system. A new literacy program was adopted and the math program is in the process of review. There is an emphasis on collecting data that will be analyzed to pinpoint instructional needs. Teachers have a list of goals to work on and are expected to differentiate instruction to meet student needs. Assessment of the impact of these new policies and procedures will require examination of future test results.

**3. The school used data to make structural changes and to determine the need for consultants in the areas of literacy, assessment, curriculum alignment, differentiated instruction and science integration.**

The most significant change that was made was in the school's structure. When the school first opened, it was organized into mixed grade classes: K-1, 2-3, and 4-5. As a result of poor achievement on standardized tests and the New York State Assessments, a decision was made to reorganize into single grade classes and to provide a more focused curriculum. This initiative has been underway all this year with the assistance of a group of capable consultants who reframed curricula in literacy, social studies, and science with a focus on balanced literacy and interdisciplinary learning in the content areas. They also provided training and coaching for staff in implementation. The math program, as indicated above, is undergoing examination this year.

### **III. UNIQUE PROGRAMMATIC AREAS**

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

**1. Based on interviews with parents, teachers, administration, Board members, and students it is clear that all stakeholders have a shared perception of the school's mission.**

In interviews with all stakeholders, the team repeatedly heard that the goals of the school include recognition of individuals, creation of a school community with a supportive and challenging environment and academic achievement aligned with standards. It is clear that the perception of the school's mission is shared by all.

The Ark Community Charter School targets a low-income population with a focus on students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. The school recruits students by holding meetings in public housing neighborhoods in Troy as well as in neighborhood community organizations. Notices are also posted in public places including government offices for public assistance and unemployment insurance. Students are admitted by random lottery with preference to Troy

students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. Midyear vacancies are filled from a waiting list to keep classes at capacity levels of sixteen.

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

- 1. Ark Community Charter School is making progress toward meeting the commitment to an interdisciplinary and arts based approach to learning promised in its charter. Students are participating in interdisciplinary units and teachers are becoming proficient in creating and using rubrics to assess student performance. The art teachers are in the process of identifying art pieces to be included in students' portfolios and creating rubrics that will measure improvement in students' artistic skills.**

The school's two unique program goals (achievement through participation in interdisciplinary projects and improvement in artistic skill) are closely related in that interdisciplinary units often include an art component. Teachers are either creating interdisciplinary units with rubrics on their own or with the help of one of the consultants. The team observed a number of completed interdisciplinary units with rubrics in its inspection of student work. Art teachers work with classroom teachers to integrate art into literacy, math, science and social studies. Art has been vertically aligned with the curriculum. The school included two samples of interdisciplinary units with rubrics in its progress report: Three Worlds Meet in the Americas (grade 4) and Building Classroom Community (grade 1). Both units integrated a number of subject areas with artistic expression. The school indicated that assessment results for its special programs would be available at the end of the 2003-2004 school year. For art, the school plans to have a developmental review for each student every two years.

## PART II: SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN: ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### I. ACADEMIC PROGRAM GOALS

Note: For this report, the team has referenced the goals and measures as written in the 2002-2003 Progress Report, which, in many cases, are different from those listed in the Accountability Plan approved on September 25, 2002

The Ark Community Charter School lists six academic program goals:

#### **Goal 1: All students will become competent readers, writers and speakers of English.**

**Measure 1:** Each year, each cohort of students will improve their scores on the Reading section of the Stanford Achievement Test, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, by 3 percentage points per year. This means we expect a gain of 3 percentage points between second and third grade and a 6-percentage point increase between third and fifth grade.

**Measure 2:** All first grade students will achieve stanine level 7, 8, or 9 on each subset of the Marie Clay Observation Survey as the end of first grade.

**Measure 3:** At the end of the year, K-5 students will demonstrate grade level or above mastery in reading on the New York State Early Literacy Profile by the staff ensuring inter-rater reliability measures.

**Measure 4:** At the end of the year, K-5 students will demonstrate grade level or above mastery in writing on the New York State Early Literacy Profile by the staff ensuring inter-rater reliability measures.

**Measure 5:** Using the New York State 4<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Arts Exam, ACCS 4<sup>th</sup> graders will meet or exceed the prevailing State standard (Proficiency) set forth by the Regents as measured by the School Accountability Performance Index, currently set at an index of 150.

**Measure 6:** A greater percentage of students at the ACCS will attain proficiency on the 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELA than students attending similar schools, namely School 2 in the Troy City School District and Giffen Memorial Elementary School in the Albany City School District.

#### **Goal 2: Students will demonstrate steady progress in understanding and applying mathematical skills and concepts.**

**Measure 1:** Each year, each cohort of students will improve their scores on the math section of the Stanford Achievement Test, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, by 3 percentage points per year.

This means we expect a gain of 3 percentage points between second and third grade and a 6-percentage point increase between third and fifth grade.

**Measure 2:** Using the New York State 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Mathematics Test, ACCS 4<sup>th</sup> graders will meet or exceed the prevailing State standard (Proficiency) set forth by the Regents as measured by the School Accountability Performance Index, currently set at an index of 150.

**Measure 3:** A greater percentage of students at the Ark Community Charter School will attain proficiency on the 4<sup>th</sup> grade Mathematics Test than students attending similar schools, namely School 2 in the Troy City School District and Giffen Memorial Elementary School in the Albany City School District.

**Goal 3: Students will demonstrate understanding of scientific process and principles.**

**Measure 1:** Using the NYS-4<sup>th</sup> Grade Science Exam, 75 percent of ACCS 4<sup>th</sup> grade students will meet or exceed the prevailing State standard, receiving performance scores of 3 or 4.

**Measure 2:** A greater percentage of students at the Ark Community Charter School will attain proficiency or advanced on the NYS Science Test than students attending similar schools, namely School 2 in the Troy School District and Giffen Elementary School in the Albany School District.

**Goal 4: Students will use technology and its applications to communicate effectively and creatively, access, retrieve, interpret and evaluate visual and auditory information, and maximize their productivity and skill development.**

**Measure 1:** All students will demonstrate appropriate computer literacy as determined by ACCS's checklist of technology skills. The checklist has a three-point scale with expectations of skills and level of skill (which point on the three-point scale) for each grade. These skills will be demonstrated through technology projects and measured by the ACCS staff ensuring inter-rater reliability.

**Goal 5: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the society we live in.**

**Measure 1:** Using the NYS-5<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies Exam, 75% of ACCS 5<sup>th</sup> grade students will meet or exceed the prevailing State standard, receiving performance scores of 3 or 4.

**Measure 2:** A greater percentage of students at the Ark Community Charter School will attain proficiency or advanced on the NYS Social Studies Exam than students attending similar schools, namely School 2 in the Troy School District and Giffen Elementary School in the Albany School District.

**Goal 6: In order to ensure that the academic achievement of at-risk students meet ACCS performance measure levels, ACCS will secure resources and provide needed programs**

**and activities that follow federal entitlements – “No Child Left Behind” and “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)” – guidelines.**

**Measure 1:** ACCS will increase each year the amount of time and financial and support services that appropriate community based organizations provide to our at-risk population.

**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. One overall recommendation is to eliminate wording that occurs throughout the Progress Report that indicates that reasons for low achievement on the part of students are due to prior education and lack of preparation in their previous schools. The team generally found the “What have we learned?” section effective and recommends that this section be more individualized and specific for each subject in future years. Action Plans should focus on measures, methods of measurement and results, including timelines when relevant, and the activities mentioned should be implemented.

*For Goals 1 (ELA), 2 (Mathematics), 3 (Science), 4 (Technology) and 5 (Social Studies):*

1. The language of measure 1 for both ELA and math should be changed to indicate that scores on the SAT-9 will increase by 3 NCE (normal curve equivalent) points each year, not percentage points. This will also be consistent with the tables that reference NCE scores. NCE scores are required by the *Accountability Plan Guidelines* published by the Charter Schools Institute.
2. The school is now administering the SAT-9 in grades 2, 3, and 5. Grade 4 is skipped because of the state assessment. It is important, for accountability purposes, that students in all grades be tested annually on the same assessment in order for progress to be tracked from grade to grade and the performance of cohorts tracked. Other tests that the school might wish to consider include the Terra Nova (multiple subjects) and the GRADE and G-MADE assessments for reading and math respectively.
3. It is not statistically appropriate to compare scores on the SAT-9 Reading Battery for Spring 2002 with scores on the New York State ELA Test for Spring 2003; table 1.1c should therefore be eliminated.
4. For both ELA and math (measure 1), the data for the entire grade should be presented first, followed by the cohort data. The titles of all tables should be clearly labeled on the outside of the table, and distinctions should be made between grade or cohort analysis. This was done more clearly on the math table (2.1b) than on the ELA table (1.1b).
5. For measure 2 (ELA), the narrative does not indicate clearly that all students need to score at stanines 7-9 on all five subtests of the Marie Clay Observation Survey. The school might also wish to consider whether this measure might be too stringent.
6. Members of the team were told that the school is planning to change measure 3 (ELA) from the New York State Early Literacy Profile to the Rigby Reading Assessment. Future narrative should explain the change and describe the steps the school will take to ensure testing reliability and comparability from year to year.

7. The school needs to begin assessing student skills in writing (content, usage and organization) on the New York State Early Literacy Profile content, usage (ELA measure 4) and explain how faculty will be trained to administer this assessment with inter-rater reliability.
8. The team recommends that the school set an ambitious but more realistic goal of 80% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders meeting or reaching level 3 in ELA and math as opposed to the goal of 100%. Include an explanation of the State Accountability Performance Index of 150 (ELA measure 5 and math measure 2).
9. When comparing the achievement of ACCS students with students in target public schools in all content areas, specify how much greater a percentage of Ark students will attain proficiency rather than simply stating that a “greater percentage” would do so.
10. When the school completes its planned technology checklist, the relevant data should be included in the 2004-2005 Progress Report along with narrative connecting the work done toward its development during the current school year.
11. For science, please assist the reader by explaining the meaning of the standard of greater or less than 30.
12. Ark Community Charter School considers itself at year one because of the change in focus to increased academic rigor. However, it is in fact year three and it has not yet implemented many of the activities spelled out in its action plan, e.g., individual learning plans, art portfolios, interdisciplinary rubrics (in process), early literacy assessments in reading and writing. The school is cautioned to remain alert to the short time remaining before it must make a compelling case for receiving renewal of its charter.

## II. ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY GOALS

### **Goal 7: The Ark Community Charter School will maintain strong viability by achieving parent support and commitment to the school.**

**Measure 1:** In a yearly administration of the Victoria Bernhardt “Attitude Towards School Survey” for parents, 75 percent of respondents will indicate satisfaction, meaning an average at or above the top two points on a five point scale, with the education program.

**Measure 2:** The percentage of parental attendance at Parent-Teacher conferences and other meetings related to the academic and behavioral needs of their child (e.g., IEP meetings) will increase, as measured by total parental attendance out of total requested parental attendance.

**Measure 3:** The percentage of parental attendance at PATT meetings, student performances, school celebrations and other school events demonstrating student success will increase, as measured by parental attendance at events out of students participating in the event.

**Goal 8: ACCS will maintain strong organizational viability by maintaining a safe and supportive educational environment for students, staff members, parents and community members where students, parents and staff will demonstrate increase confidence and commitment to the mission of the school.**

**Measure 1:** In a yearly administration of the Victoria Bernhardt “Attitude Towards School Survey” for students, 75 percent of respondents will indicate satisfaction, meaning an average at or above the top two points on a five point scale, with the education program.

**Measure 2:** In a yearly administration of the Victoria Bernhardt “Attitude Towards School Survey” for staff members, 75 percent of respondents will indicate satisfaction, meaning an average at or above the top two points on a five point scale, with the education program.

**Measure 3:** Students who attend the Ark Community Charter School will achieve an increased attendance rate from 85 percent in year one to 95 percent in year three, using the formula for attendance by the NYS Education Department.

**Measure 4:** ACCS will maintain full enrollment at 96 students and will report student turnover rates and waiting list information as required.

**Measure 5:** There will be a 10 percent decrease in behavioral referrals for In-School Suspension for students after attending the school for one year.

**Measure 6:** Incidence of fighting and persistent disruptive behaviors such as disrespect, destruction of property, bullying, inappropriate language that warrant the attention of the Director and other school administrators, will average less than 5 percent of the student population per month at the conclusion of the 2003-2004 school year.

**Goal 9: The Ark Community Charter School will maintain strong organizational viability by demonstrating sound financial practices and effective, responsible planning and decision-making.**

**Measure 1:** Yearly submission of an independently audited financial statement will demonstrate responsible and prudent expenditure of per pupil allocations.

**Measure 2:** ACCS will meet all required reporting deadlines.

**Measure 3:** ACCS will maintain a positive fund balance.

**Goal 10: ACCS will guide and support all staff members with professional development resources as they implement changes so that instruction and assessment are dimensions of a common standardized system-wide education process.**

**Measure 1:** Teachers’ personnel files will reflect short- and long-term goal planning.

**Measure 2:** The professional development calendar will reflect ongoing interventions that are aligned with teachers' short- and long-term goals.

**Measure 3:** Student assessment data will reflect appropriate teaching and curricular response to student academic needs.

**Goal 11: ACCS will maintain will maintain strong organizational viability by increasing the effective collection and use of student academic, behavioral and demographic data in order to inform the instructional program.**

**Measure 1:** The ACCS will develop a cohort database of all students in order to track meaningful changes in student achievement.

## ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY GOALS—RECOMMENDATIONS

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

### *For Goal 7: Parent support and commitment*

1. The parent survey used by Ark Community Charter School is brief and limits the range of topics available to respondents for rating. The school might consider expanding the range and number of questions on the survey to elicit a broad range of feedback to guide decision-making. One item might be: "How welcome do you feel to volunteer?" "The school succeeds at preparing children for future work" is an inappropriate item for a K-5 school. In addition, the school should indicate in its measure what an acceptable rate of return should be for the surveys. Because the rate of return was so low (only 34 surveys were returned for 73 families), the school might also consider various means (other than sending them home with students) of ensuring that the surveys actually reach parents, such as mail, completion at school meetings, or distribution directly to parents at drop-off and pick-up time. Chart the responses on the parent survey over time to show how parent satisfaction increases or decreases from one year to another.
2. The school needs to develop measures for sufficient family attendance at various events and develop satisfaction surveys that can be charted over time. Parental feedback about the type of event that would be attractive should be elicited.

### *For Goal 8: Safe and supportive environment*

3. The questions on the K-1 student survey appeared too sophisticated for these grade levels. Moreover, administration by the children's teachers of all the student surveys was not seen as appropriate by the team. More candid responses might have appeared if students had been given the surveys to complete at home and return in sealed envelopes.
4. For the staff survey, fewer, less generic questions should be asked and they should be more appropriately targeted to specific staff groups, e.g., teachers, teacher assistants, non-teaching staff.

5. List an acceptable rate of return for all staff, student and parent surveys; including comments from respondents added a lively dimension to the statistical results.
6. A fuller explanation of the calculation of the attendance rate would be helpful for the reader. The school should also include charts for year-to-year attendance and enrollment/retention.
7. Ark Community Charter School has begun to track behavior referrals and incidence of fighting and disruption with a new data tracking system. Reports in the coming years should establish a baseline and then track decreases in student infractions.

*For Goal 9: Sound financial practices*

8. The Charter School Institute will assess the school's financial practices.

*For Goal 10: Professional development*

9. A template for individualized learning plans that reflect assessment data and needs for each student should be included in subsequent Progress Reports once it is created. The team felt, however, that the wording for this measure (Goal 10, measure 3) was awkward and not necessarily well placed with the professional development measures.

*For Goal 11: Collection of student data*

10. Although development of a cohort database will be valuable, the school should quantify the definition of "meaningful changes in student achievement" to reflect the academic goals.

### **III. UNIQUE PROGRAMMATIC AREA GOALS**

**Goal 12: Students will demonstrate academic achievement through participation in and completion or interdisciplinary projects.**

**Measure 1:** Each year, every student will complete three interdisciplinary projects, which will be assessed using rubrics tested for reliability and validity that are linked to state standards in reading, writing and the content areas.

**Goal 13: Students attending the Ark Community Charter School will demonstrate improvement in artistic skills.**

**Measure 1:** The art teachers will assess student portfolios bi-annually, at the end of first, third and fifth grade. They will assess developmental artistic progress and skills using a teacher developed measure based on national developmental standards.

### **UNIQUE PROGRAMMATIC AREA GOALS—RECOMMENDATIONS**

*For Goal 12: Interdisciplinary projects*

1. To document attainment of the measure for this goal, the team recommends that projects be listed showing the rubrics used. Appropriate data indicating number and type of projects with rubrics attained should be charted.

*For Goal 13: Artistic skill*

2. The school needs to determine what standard will be used to select student artwork for portfolios, provide a measure to assess artistic improvement, and include rubrics that will be used.

## APPENDIX A: Framework for the Analysis of School Progress

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

## APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ARK COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL

### I. Academic Program Goals

<b>Goal 1: All students will become competent readers, writers, speakers, and listeners of English.</b>	
<b><i>Proposed Measures</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></b>
<p>-- increase 3 percentage points per year on SAT9 reading</p> <p>-- first graders achieve stanine level 7, 8, or 9 on Marie Clay Observation Survey</p> <p>-- K-5 students demonstrate grade level or above mastery in reading on the NYS Early Literacy Profile</p> <p>-- K-5 students demonstrate grade level or above mastery in writing on the NYS Early Literacy Profile</p> <p>-- 4<sup>th</sup> graders meet or exceed State standard (Proficiency) on NYS ELA .</p> <p>-- a greater percentage of students at the ACCS will attain proficiency on the 4<sup>th</sup> grade NYS ELA than students attending similar schools, namely School 2 in Troy and Giffen Memorial ES in Albany.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• measure 1 should be in NCE points not percentage points.</li> <li>• clarify cohort results and grade level results</li> <li>• not statistically sound to compare scores on SAT-9 with the New York State ELA Test</li> <li>• evaluate whether 100% target on Marie Clay is reasonable and achievable .</li> <li>• explain the change in reading assessment and describe how the school will ensure testing reliability and comparability over time</li> <li>• explain how faculty will be trained to administer this assessment to assure inter-rater reliability.</li> <li>• set more realistic goal of 80% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders meeting or reaching level 3 rather than 100%</li> <li>• explain SAPI of 150 to help the reader understand this standard.</li> <li>• specify the percentage ARK students will attain in comparison with similar schools</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 2: Students will demonstrate steady progress in understanding and applying mathematical skills and concepts.</b>	
<b><i>Proposed Measures</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></b>
<p>-- increase 3 percentage points per year on SAT9 math</p> <p>-- 4<sup>th</sup> graders meet or exceed State standard (Proficiency) on NYS math</p> <p>—a greater percentage of students at the ACCS will attain proficiency on the 4<sup>th</sup> grade Math Test than students attending similar schools, namely School 2 in Troy &amp; Giffen Memorial ES in Albany.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• measure 1 should be in NCE points not percentage points.</li> <li>• clarify cohort results and grade level results</li> <li>• set more realistic goal of 80% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders meeting or reaching level 3 rather than 100%</li> <li>• explain State Accountability Performance Index of 150 to help the reader understand this standard.</li> <li>• specify the percentage ARK students will attain in comparison with similar schools.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 3: Students will demonstrate understanding of scientific process and principles.</b>	
<b><i>Proposed Measures</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></b>
<p>-- 75% of ACCS 4<sup>th</sup> grade students will meet/exceed the prevailing State standard on the NYS-4<sup>th</sup> Grade Science Exam</p> <p>-- a greater percentage of students at ACCS will attain proficiency/advanced on NYS Science Test than students attending similar schools, namely School 2 in Troy and Giffen ES in Albany.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain meaning of standard greater or less than 30.</li> <li>• specify the percentage ARK students will attain in comparison with similar schools</li> </ul>

<b>Goal 4: Students will use technology and its applications to communicate effectively and creatively, access, retrieve, interpret and evaluate visual and auditory information, and maximize their productivity and skill development.</b>	
<b><i>Proposed Measures</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></b>
--students demonstrate appropriate computer literacy as determined by ACCS's checklist of technology skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>include relevant data from technology checklist in the 2004-2005 Progress Report along with narrative describing development during 03-04.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 5: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the society we live in.</b>	
<b><i>Proposed Measures</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></b>
-- 75% of ACCS 5 <sup>th</sup> grade students score level 3 or 4 on the NYS-5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adequate and clear as presented</li> </ul>
-- a greater percentage of students at ACCS will attain proficiency/advanced on NYS Social Studies Exam than students attending similar schools,.	specify the percentage ARK students will attain in comparison with similar schools
<b>Goal 6: In order to ensure that the academic achievement of at-risk students meet ACCS performance measure levels, ACCS will secure resources and provide needed programs and activities that follow federal entitlements – “No Child Left Behind” and “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – guidelines.</b>	
<b><i>Proposed Measures</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></b>
-- increase each year the amount of time & financial & support services that appropriate community based organizations provide to our at-risk population.	No recommendations.
Overall comments regarding academic goals and measures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>delete language regarding “ill-prepared” students and prior education.</li> <li>Add titles to tables.</li> <li>individualized “what have we learned” piece for each subject to increase utility</li> <li>describe work done by consultants in 03-04 and connect to current efforts.</li> <li>implement all activities spelled out in action plan, or explain omission</li> <li>track student progress consistently through all grades K-5, in literacy and math, e.g., Terra Nova or another test.</li> </ul>

## II. Organizational Viability

<b>Goal 7: The Ark Community Charter School will maintain strong viability by achieving parent support and commitment to the school.</b>	
<b><i>Proposed Measures</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></b>
-- 75% of respondents on yearly survey of parents indicate satisfaction, (score 4 to 5 on 5 point scale).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase return rate to provide reliable data</li> <li>• Expand range of items;</li> <li>• Report comparisons of responses year to year</li> </ul>
-- attendance at Parent-Teacher conferences /meetings related to academic and behavioral needs of child (e.g., IEP meetings) will increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• show rate of parent participation/attendance at meetings; define a standard for parental attendance;.</li> </ul>
-- percentage of parental attendance at PATT meetings & other school events increase.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chart results for each event; note trends in parental attendance at various activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 8: ACCS will maintain strong organizational viability by maintaining a safe and supportive educational environment for students, staff members, parents and community members where students, parents and staff will demonstrate increase confidence and commitment to the mission of the school.</b>	
<b><i>Proposed Measures</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></b>
<p>-- 75% of students will indicate satisfaction with academic program on yearly survey (score 4 or 5 on 5 point scale)</p> <p>-- increased attendance rate from 85% in year 1 to 95% in year 3,</p> <p>-- Maintain full enrollment at 96 students and report student turnover rates and waiting list info</p> <p>-- report a 10% decrease in behavioral referrals for In-School Suspension after attending school 1 year.</p> <p>-- Incidence of fighting &amp; other disruptive acts will average &lt;5% of student population/month at the end of 2003-2004 school year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjust to accommodate primary age students .</li> <li>• Define a desired response rate</li> <li>• Explain the attendance rate calculation; make tables for year-to-year attendance.</li> <li>• Include tables for enrollment/retention.</li> <li>• Show a baseline and then report yearly changes in referrals; document on a chart.</li> <li>• Create table for indicators listed to show monthly changes.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 9: The Ark Community Charter School will maintain strong organizational viability by demonstrating sound financial practices and effective, responsible planning and decision-making.</b>	
<b><i>Proposed Measures</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></b>
<p>-- responsible and prudent expenditure of per pupil allocations.</p> <p>-- meet all required reporting deadlines.</p> <p>-- maintain a positive fund balance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attainment of these measures evaluated by CSI.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 10: ACCS will guide and support all staff members with professional development resources as they implement changes so that instruction and assessment are dimensions of a common standardized system-wide education process.</b>	
<b><i>Proposed Measures</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></b>
<p>-- teachers will define short- and long-term professional goal planning.</p> <p>-- professional development calendar will reflect ongoing interventions that are aligned with teachers' short- and long-term goals.</p> <p>-- Assessment data will reflect appropriate teaching and curricular response to student academic needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a form to reflect teachers PD goal planning.</li> <li>• show how pd calendar is aligned with teachers' goals;</li> <li>• Include template for ILPs once created; consider wording for measure showing teaching responsive to assessments.</li> </ul>

<b>Goal 11: ACCS will maintain will maintain strong organizational viability by increasing the effective collection and use of student academic, behavioral and demographic data in order to inform the instructional program.</b>	
<b><i>Proposed Measures</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></b>
-- develop a cohort database of students to track meaningful changes in student achievement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantify “meaningful changes in student achievement” to reflect academic goals.</li> </ul>

## II. Unique Program Areas

<b>Goal 12: Students will demonstrate academic achievement through participation in and completion of interdisciplinary projects</b>	
<b><i>Proposed Measures</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></b>
-- every student will complete 3 interdisciplinary projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>show the rubric being used and determine how the data will be charted.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 13: Students attending the Ark Community Charter School will demonstrate improvement in artistic skills.</b>	
<b><i>Proposed Measures</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></b>
-- art teachers will assess student portfolios bi-annually, at the end of first, third and fifth grade. They will assess developmental artistic progress and skills using a teacher developed measure based on national developmental standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine standard for work to be included in portfolio and how artistic improvement is to be determined. Develop a means for charting progress.</li> </ul>
Other comments from team	Show progress in implementing action plans from year to year; show progress in looping over time.



# Charter Schools Institute

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## State University of New York

### ARK COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL THIRD YEAR REPORT FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

#### Scope and Methodology

CSI staff performed a desk review of the school's quarterly financial reports, budgets, annual financial statement audit reports, and other correspondence. The review covered documents received during the period from the date the school was chartered, March 20, 2001, through December 31, 2003. The results of this analysis are provided below.

#### Financial Reporting

The school has complied with its financial reporting requirements. The annual budgets, audit reports and quarterly financial reports were generally filed on time or within one week of the applicable due date. The audit report opinions for the years ended June 30, 2002 and 2003 were unqualified, indicating the financial statements were fairly presented, in all material respects, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. Audits were conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and *Government Auditing Standards* as required. The auditor's reports on compliance and on internal control over financial reporting disclosed no findings.

Management letter comments and recommendations were made in each year. The school has implemented four of five recommendations related to the June 30, 2002 audit. The comments related to the June 30, 2003 audit concerned the opening and closing of bank accounts, functional allocation of expenses, and bookkeeping services (recurring issue).

#### Financial Condition as of June 30, 2003

The school's financial condition was stable and had improved over the prior year. Unrestricted net assets totaled \$640,264 (\$6,669 per approved number of enrolled students) and the school's operating activities provided positive cash flow of \$221,869. Total net assets increased from the prior year by \$73,672.

The school has fixed assets (net of accumulated depreciation and amortization) totaling \$329,622 that consist of leasehold improvements, furniture, fixtures, equipment and software. The school has no long-term debt, but has commitments under various noncancelable operating leases to make payments totaling \$152,074 through fiscal year 2006.

The school received moderate amounts of private grants and contributions to support its program. Private grants and contributions totaled \$36,112 or 3 percent of total expenses (compared to \$267,475 or 27 percent in the prior year).

### **Recommendation**

1. Prepare and implement a corrective action plan to address the management letter comments and recommendations. Report to CSI, no later than June 1, 2004, the status and description of corrective actions taken as of that date. For any recommendations not implemented, the school should describe its planned actions including a timetable for completion. If the school does not agree with the audit findings or believes corrective action is not required, then it should include an explanation and specific reasons.