Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

The Academy Charter School

School Evaluation Report
2009-2010

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INTRODUCTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the "State University Trustees"), and the New York State Board of Regents, are required by law to provide oversight sufficient to ensure that each charter school that the State University Trustees have authorized is in compliance with applicable law and the terms of its charter. The State University Trustees, however, consistent with the goals of the New York State Charter Schools Act of 1998, view their oversight responsibility more broadly and positively than purely monitoring compliance. Accordingly, they have adopted policies that require the Charter Schools Institute (the "Institute") to provide ongoing evaluation of charter schools authorized by them. By providing this oversight and feedback, the State University Trustees and the Institute seek to accomplish three goals:

- **Facilitate Improvement**. By providing substantive information about the school's academic, fiscal and organizational strengths and weaknesses to the school's board of trustees, administration, faculty and other staff, this report can assist schools in identifying areas for improvement.

- **Disseminate Information**. The Institute disseminates information about the school's performance not only to its board of trustees, administration and faculty, but to all stakeholders, including parents and the larger community in which the school is located.

- **Document Performance**. The Institute collects information to build a database of a school's performance over time. By evaluating the school periodically, the Institute can more clearly ascertain trends, determine areas of strength and weakness, and assess the school's likelihood for continued success or failure. Having information based on past patterns, the Institute is in a better position to make recommendations regarding the renewal of each school's charter, and the State University Trustees are better informed in making a decision on whether a school's charter should be renewed. In addition, a school will have a far better sense of where they stand in the eyes of its authorizer.

The Institute regularly collects a range of data about each school's performance over the course of its charter period, which ultimately contributes to that school's renewal decision. These data include student performance results, financial audits, any legal records of issues addressed, board meeting minutes, and reports from regular evaluation visits conducted by the Institute (or external experts contracted by the Institute) and other agencies with oversight responsibilities.

This annual School Evaluation Report includes three primary components. The first, Executive Summary of School Evaluation Visit, provides an overview of the primary conclusions of the evaluation team regarding the current visit to the school, summarizing areas of strength and areas for growth. The second, School Overview, provides descriptive information about the school, including enrollment and demographic data, as well as summary historical information regarding the life of the school. The third section, School Evaluation Visit, presents the analysis of evidence collected during an evaluation visit conducted in the current school year. A summary of conclusions from previous school evaluations is also provided as background and context for the current evaluation.

Because of the inherent complexity of an organization such as a school, this School Evaluation Report does not contain a single rating or comprehensive indicator that would indicate at a glance the school's prospects for renewal. It does, however, summarize the various strengths of the school and

note areas in need of improvement with respect to the school's performance as compared to the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks (the "SUNY Renewal Benchmarks") (available at: http://www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsRenewOverview.htm. To the extent appropriate and useful, we encourage school boards to use this evaluation report in ongoing planning and school improvement efforts.

<u>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT</u>

Based on the analysis of evidence from the evaluation visit to The Academy Charter School (the "Academy") the school appears to be making adequate progress towards achieving its mission and meeting the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks considered during this evaluation. Although this conclusion is drawn from a variety of indicators which are discussed more fully later in this report, some of the more salient indicators include the following:

Academic Success

Areas of Strengths:

The Academy's administers of a variety of assessments aligned to the school's curriculum and standards. The school systematically collects and analyzes English language arts assessment results and analyzes them.

The school has a clearly defined curriculum based primarily on commercial programs. School leaders have created a comprehensive and organized framework that allows teachers to know what to teach and when to teach it.

During the time of the visit, observed teachers implemented generally purposeful lessons with objectives aligned to state standards and the school's curriculum.

Overall, the Academy's approach to helping at-risk students is relatively comprehensive, though its effectiveness could not yet be determined. The school provides significant resources to meet the needs of at-risk students and has clear procedures for identifying at-risk students and monitoring their progress.

The school's staff is composed primarily of novice teachers, and school leaders have created a comprehensive professional development program appropriate for these teachers. The program helps teachers meet student academic needs and school goals, and is also beginning to develop the competencies and skills of all teachers.

Areas for Growth:

In subjects other than English language arts, there is limited collection and analysis of assessment data. In all subjects, assessment results are primarily used for creating student groups with limited adjustment to instruction.

While the Academy's curriculum is strong, the school does not yet have a formal process for reviewing and revising the curriculum.

During the Institute's visit, instruction was generally grade appropriate but cognitive engagement varied widely and instruction generally did not promote higher-order thinking or problem solving skills. There was a significant amount of small-group instruction observed, but in general this instruction was not differentiated to meet the needs of students.

Overall, the school's instructional leadership at the time of the visit was competent, though there were areas for improvement. School leaders had high expectations for teacher performance and student achievement, but these expectations were not clear to all teachers. Additionally, while leaders conduct regular evaluations teachers were not clear on the process or criteria.

The school was not providing appropriate instruction to English language learners (ELLs). While a certified TESOL teacher is not required, the person responsible must have appropriate qualifications to instruct ELLs, gauge the effectiveness of the ELL programming and evaluate the school's ELL program year to year.

The amount of support provided to classroom teachers to meet the needs of at-risk students was not sufficient.

Organizational Capacity

Areas of Strengths:

The Academy has been faithful to its mission and has implemented many of the key design elements included in its charter.

Based on limited evidence, including the maintenance of sufficient enrollment, parents are generally satisfied with the school.

The school's board of trustees has adequate skills and structures with which to govern the school. The board is focused on holding school leaders and the school's for-profit management company, Victory Schools Inc. ("VSI"), accountable for student achievement.

Areas for Growth:

The school's day-to-day operations are sufficient to allow the school to carry out its academic program. However, there is a not clear separation between the board's oversight and its management of day-to-day school operations. There is a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities. There had also been a breakdown in communication between the board and school principal at the time of the visit, limiting the school's effectiveness and blurring lines between governance and management.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	September 18, 2008
Date Initial Charter Approved by: Operation of Law	February 23, 2009
School Opening Date	September, 2009

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades At This Location	District
2009-10 through present	94 Fulton Avenue Hempstead, NY	All	Hempstead Union Free School District

Current Mission Statement

The Academy Charter School will offer an exceptional interdisciplinary curriculum in a technology-rich environment that challenges students to explore connections across subjects and use experiential learning to bridge the gaps between theory and practice. In addition to core subjects, our students will benefit from high expectations in physical education, health, and the arts. Our focus on character development and community service will cultivate a student body poised to be active, engaged and responsible members of the community. We will employ a committed staff whose teaching and high academic and behavioral expectations will promote the excellence we know our community's children can achieve.

Current Key Design Elements

- Two hours of daily literacy instruction;
- Ninety minutes of daily mathematics instruction with an extensive use of manipulative;
- Strong family involvement; and
- Character education, leadership development, and community awareness through service learning projects.

School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Charter Enrollment	Actual Enrollment[1]	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2009-10	168	N/A	167	K-2	K-2	180

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[1] Source: SUNY Charter School Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

Student Demographics

	2009-10[2]	
	Percent of School Enrollment	**Percent of Hempstead UFSD Enrollment**
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	0%
Black or African American	93%	40%
Hispanic	5%	58%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0%	0%
White	0%	0%
Multiracial	2%	1 %
Special Populations		
Students with Disabilities[3]	2%	17%
Limited English Proficient	2%	28%
Free/Reduced Lunch		
Eligible for Free Lunch	58%	69%
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	12%	7%

Current Board of Trustees[4]

Name	Term Expires	Position/Committees
Wayne Haughton	2014	Board Chair, Treasurer, Finance Committee, Academic Committee
Barrington Goldson	2014	Vice-Chair, Finance Committee, Grievance Committee
Tanya Hobson-Williams	2014	Grievance Committee/ Legal
Robert Stewart	2014	Finance Committee, Grievance Committee
Marcel Deans	2014	Academic Committee
Hazelin Williams	2014	Secretary

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2009-10	Nykeisha Jenkins-Rycraw, Principal

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[2] Source: This information is not yet publicly available and all statistics given are provided by the school.

[3] New York State Education Department does not report special education data; all statistics given are provided by the school.

[4] Source: Board Information provided by the school.

Background

Regardless of the type of visit, Institute evaluations of SUNY authorized charter schools are organized around a set of benchmarks that address the academic success of the school, including teaching and learning (e.g., curriculum, instruction, and assessment), and the effectiveness and viability of the school as an organization, including such items as governance and management. These established criteria are used on a regular and ongoing basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

While the primary focus of the visit is an evaluation of the school's academic program and organizational capacity, issues regarding compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations may be noted (and subsequently addressed); where the Institute finds serious deficiencies in particular relating to student health and safety, it may take additional and immediate action. However, monitoring for compliance is not the principal purpose of the visit.

This section of the School Evaluation Report begins with a summary of the observations made and the conclusions drawn during previous visits to the school. This information is used by evaluation teams in preparation for the visit and assists the observers in understanding the accomplishments and challenges the school has faced. Similarly, this information provides the reader with insight into the Institute's inspection of the school's academic program and conclusions from prior visits, including those conducted by external experts on behalf of the Institute. Following this summary is a detailed analysis of the observations and conclusions from this year's evaluation, along with supporting evidence. Finally, information regarding the conduct of the evaluation, including the date of the visit and information about the evaluation team, is provided.

Evaluation Visit Benchmark Analysis and Evidence

Use of Assessment Data (Benchmark 1.B)

Overall, the Academy has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and administers a variety of assessments, with these systems strongest in English language arts. The data collected is beginning to be used for instructional decisions, though at the time of the visit it was largely limited to grouping students.

The Academy administers a variety of assessments that serve a variety of purposes. These assessments are aligned to the school's curriculum and state standards. At the time of registration, all students were administered a baseline assessment that was created by the school based on past versions of commercial exams and administrators' knowledge of the curriculum, which was used to determine students' incoming levels. In English language arts, teachers regularly administer Dynamic Indicator of Basic Literacy Skills ("DIBELS") to monitor students' progress; the assessment frequency varies depending on students' risk level. The school has adopted the MClass system of administering DIBELS electronically, allowing teachers to monitor student progress throughout the year. They also administer the Text Reading and Comprehension ("TRC") exam three times per year as a benchmark assessment of student reading level, and sometimes more often in kindergarten if students are progressing more quickly. In mathematics, teachers administer the end-of-unit assessments from the Everyday Mathematics program as a summative assessment of

material covered. As planned in their charter, the school also recently administered the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, though the school had not yet received the results.

Teachers also use a variety of formative assessments to measure student understanding of daily lessons. Teachers reported using questioning, impromptu spelling tests, and observations as formative assessments. Additionally, the use of anecdotal records was evident in many classrooms, with clipboards hanging in the classroom with notes on student performance during that day's guided reading lesson. In kindergarten, the Everyday Mathematics unit assessments are less formalized, and teachers reported relying on observations and anecdotal records as their primary form of assessment.

The Academy has systems in place for collecting and analyzing results from the formal assessments administered, though these are more developed in English language arts than in other subjects. The DIBELS results are analyzed electronically using the MClass software and made available to all staff members online. This data is then analyzed with the staff developer (and sometimes the principal) at grade team meetings, where they develop action plans based on the data. These action plans are required after each benchmark assessment (three times per year) but are sometimes done more often if there are identified trends that need to be addressed. Mathematics unit exam scores are entered into PowerSchool, but the data is not systematically analyzed and rarely discussed by staff developers; teachers instead rely largely on anecdotal evidence in mathematics when making instructional decisions in mathematics.

In writing, social studies, and science, teachers reported using rubrics to assess student work. These rubrics are generally teacher designed, though the staff developer worked with one 2nd grade teacher to develop writing rubrics for specific assignments. The staff developer also works with grade teams to norm their use of rubrics, but there has not yet been any communication around this issue across grades. However, this work was limited and teachers generally worked independently in grading writing assignments.

Teachers and school leaders are beginning to use assessment data in adjusting instruction; at the time of the visit, this was primarily limited to the creation of student groups based on assessment results. Guided reading groups are created based largely on TRC data, though one teacher indicated that "children are moved to another group if I notice a level of frustration on their faces." Some of these groups are cross-grade groups based on student reading level. Students use leveled texts during guided reading. Students not working with the teacher in guided reading either work in centers or with the assistant teacher on phonics; there was limited evidence that these activities were differentiated based on assessment data. In observed classes, all students not engaged in guided reading with the teacher were completing the same activity without any differentiation.   In mathematics, students are sometimes grouped based on end-of-unit exams, though results indicated that students' ability did not range as widely so there was less differentiation.

As a first year school, the Academy has developed policies and procedures for the use of student performance data, but is just beginning to implement these and their effectiveness remains to be seen. Student grades are based on assessment results, which are recorded in PowerSchool; these are used to help formulate report card grades, which are ultimately decided upon by teachers using their professional judgment. Promotion decisions will be based on a number of criteria, including reading level and behavior. Parents/guardians are kept informed of their child's progress through formal measures including report cards three times per year and daily behavior and academic checklists. Teachers also reported a great deal of informal communication with parents, through phone calls and discussions at dismissal. Additionally, for those students whose promotion is in doubt, meetings

were held with parents in March where teachers discussed the students' performance as well as ways to help the student meet grade level goals and be promoted. Student performance is also regularly communicated to the board, both by the school's management company, VSI, and the principal.

Curriculum (Benchmark 1.C)

The Academy has an organized curriculum in most subjects, which is based largely on the commercial programs they have selected to use in the core academic subjects. This framework guides teachers' instruction at both the unit and daily planning levels.

The Academy has a comprehensive and organized curriculum framework developed by school administration and based on commercial programs in most subjects, with writing being the notable exception. While there was a curriculum framework that laid out the state standards and performance indicators, it was the curriculum maps that teachers and administrators consistently referred to in interviews. These curriculum maps exist in mathematics English language arts, science, and social studies. They lay out objectives and key content (e.g., stories, vocabulary, etc.) by week in English language arts and by month in all other subjects. These maps were developed by the staff developer and principal prior to school's opening, using the charter, commercial program scope and sequences, and the school's calendar as resources. They generally follow the scope and sequence of the commercial programs. Teachers follow Everyday Mathematics very closely, though more time is spent on some topics in the upper grades to familiarize students with the language. Scott Foresman is the basis of the school's reading curriculum, which is also supplemented with Mondo phonics and trade books. In writing, teachers said they were largely left on their own to plan curriculum, and the staff developer acknowledged this as a priority moving forward. The Scott Foresman program has some writing components, but only some teachers use these lessons.

Teachers at the Academy reported knowing what to teach and when to teach it, relying on both the curriculum maps and the commercial programs, with writing again serving as a notable exception. Teachers use the objectives laid out in the maps to determine if they are on track with pacing. They then work with their grade teams and the staff developer to develop lesson plans based on commercial materials that will meet the objectives laid out in the curriculum maps. While teachers were all familiar with the maps, some teachers raised issues about using them to plan instruction, including being inappropriate for students at low levels. At weekly meetings, the staff developer and grade teams discuss where they are in the curriculum map, and make any necessary adjustments. The administration referred to the maps as living, evolving documents.

The Academy generally has adequate instructional materials, which are aligned to the school's curriculum. The curriculum maps are aligned to the commercial programs being used in the school, with room for supplementary materials in reading. The need for supplementary materials has arisen because the principal made the decision to use a balanced literacy model, with centers, guided reading, mini-lessons, etc., but the Scott Foresman program laid out in the charter did not include all of these elements. The school has purchased remediation and phonics programs, as well as trade books, to supplement the Scott Foresman in order to assist all students in meeting the objectives laid out in the framework within a balanced literacy model. Additionally, as students' reading levels improved the school has invested in additional trade books to maximize the program's effectiveness for all students.

The Academy followed a clear process for the development of its curriculum framework and resources. While teachers and administrators have begun to think about the review and revision of

these materials, at the time of the inspection visit a formal process was not yet in place. The curriculum maps had been developed by the principal and staff developer over the summer, based on commercial programs, and provided to teachers at pre-service training. These documents have been informally revised throughout the year based upon students' incoming levels, which were an unknown at the time of development. When asked about how the curriculum would change going forward, the principal reported that based on informal feedback from teachers there would not be major changes in the curriculum itself, but rather in the support teachers receive. They have seen it as a living document that they have adapted as needed, but these changes have not been formally recorded. The development of curriculum for future grades had not yet begun; though, the school plans to use the same commercial programs they are currently using in future grades. The school has collected lesson plans throughout the year, but has not developed a formal system for reflecting on the plans to improve the curriculum going forward.

Pedagogy (Benchmark 1.D)

Adequate instruction was evident throughout the school. Instruction was generally well-planned to meet objectives aligned with state standards and the school's curriculum.

All lessons had clear objectives identified in plans and often visible in classrooms. Activities were generally designed to help students meet these objectives. Teachers completed detailed lesson plans containing grade-level objectives and followed these plans faithfully during observed lessons. Teachers reported that they craft objectives based on the school-created curriculum maps, indicating alignment. The objectives were often vague (i.e., "students will make connections" and "students will be able to understand polygons"), which limited their effectiveness. Lesson activities were generally designed to meet the objectives and the majority of observed lessons met the objectives laid forth in the lesson plan, though in certain instances not all students were able to meet the objective due to a lack of differentiation or scaffolding at their instructional level.

Instruction was grade-appropriate in observed classes but the rigor and cognitive engagement of students varied widely as a result of a number of factors, most notably questioning and lesson pacing. Students used grade-appropriate vocabulary and covered grade level topics during observed lessons. The questioning was generally low-level; students were often not asked to explain their answers or discuss strategies used to solve problems. For example, in one 2nd grade class where students were generally engaged, the teacher missed the opportunity to further student understanding by not asking for elaboration or explanation of short answers. In a kindergarten reading class, one teacher answered questions rather than giving students an opportunity to answer. One teacher made a point of calling on all students to answer as a means of encouraging engagement, but when an individual student did not respond she moved on to the next student without any encouragement. Overall, students were being taught grade-appropriate material, but there were missed opportunities for further engagement and developing higher-order thinking in students.

The lack of engagement was exacerbated by teachers' use of time; in many classes teacher-led instruction took up the majority of the lesson such that students did not complete the independent work assigned. In one mathematics class, 50 minutes were teacher-led instruction with five minutes for independent practice. In another observed class students were asked to "turn and talk" about what good readers do; students did this for 30 seconds but were given an extra minute for the activity during which they became unengaged.

The Academy is focused on small group instruction, especially in reading, but there was limited differentiation across these groups during the team's visit. During reading students rotate between centers, guided reading, and teacher-led phonics instruction. While the guided reading stations used leveled texts, all groups rotated through the same additional centers without any differentiation of materials or tasks during observed lessons. These groups were originally created using DIBELS, but at the time of the visit one teacher noted that students frequently rotate groups based upon teacher observation. There was less small group differentiation in mathematics, with teachers reporting that they only used small groups once per week. Small group instruction was observed in one mathematics class, with the teacher working with a small group to create polygons (the day's objective) while other students worked independently on other topics. Additionally, while whole class instruction was generally not differentiated, many teachers did give additional support to allow struggling students to complete the activity. While limited differentiation was observed, the school administration was focusing on it and highlighting it during professional development sessions and common planning.

Instructional Leadership (Benchmark 1.E)

At the time of the visit, the school had generally competent instructional leadership. The instructional leadership team is largely composed of the principal and the staff developer; their roles are generally discrete though there was some overlap in their roles during the school's first year.

Administrators spoke of high expectations for both student achievement and teacher performance, but teachers generally struggled to articulate those expectations. When asked what they expect of their teachers, school leaders gave a variety of responses, including: planning, classroom management, organization, using clear objectives, working effectively with the teaching assistant, data driven instruction, and being open to feedback. When teachers were asked what the administration expected of them many were unclear and gave vague responses, including: "getting our classrooms under control," the social part of being a teacher, and differentiation.

Administrators also spoke of high expectations for students, with an emphasis on reading levels and continued growth throughout the year. The levels are tracked in the staff lounge so that all teachers can see students' performance. Nevertheless, teachers were unable to articulate similar expectations for their students. Teachers gave responses that indicated a lack of focus on continued growth and high academic achievement including, "I am ok being socially inclined rather than academically inclined" and, "My class is all on green [grade-level] so it's ok."

Instructional leaders provide teachers at the Academy with sustained support through a variety of methods, although this support is not always systematic in nature. Teachers are given substantial collaborative planning time; 1st and 2nd grade teachers have time daily, while kindergarten teachers have allotted time multiple times weekly as the schedule allows. Kindergarten and 1st grade use this time to share lesson planning, often splitting the subjects up between team members. The 2nd grade team works together less closely, and has chosen to not meet as a grade team. The staff developer attends these meetings once per week (meeting separately with each 2nd grade classroom pair weekly) to assist with lesson planning, as well as discuss other issues of concern. Teachers are also required to submit lesson plans, though they were only given feedback on these plans at the beginning of the year.

The principal conducts regular walk-throughs of classrooms, which result in written feedback in the form of "Wows-Now What" that are generally placed in teacher mailboxes. Teachers reported that

the principal's feedback is generally focused on classroom management. The principal indicated that she has also given feedback on lesson planning, most notably crafting specific objectives.

The majority of ongoing support for teachers comes from the staff developer. She observes teachers regularly (one or two times a week at the beginning of the year and as needed later in the year) and provides written feedback. This feedback takes the form of strengths, weaknesses, and next steps, though teachers reported no continuity between observations. It is worth noting that teachers were unaware of any coordination of observations between the staff developer and principal, though the principal reported regular informal conversations about what they were seeing in classrooms. Teachers reported feeling comfortable going to the staff developer with any questions or requests. The staff developer noted that she would model or co-teach by request, as well as arrange for targeted peer observations. The staff developer also works with teachers to develop action plans based on benchmark assessment data. Teachers repeatedly stressed the availability of the staff developer and the constant support they receive from her, although there was little evidence of coordination among the various supports she provides (planning, observations, professional development, etc.)

Teachers are also provided with support from VSI staff, who visit the school regularly. The staff observes classes and provides teachers with feedback in particular content areas. Teachers felt that this feedback was generally not useful, because it was based on very limited evidence. The special education instructional specialist from VSI has provided more intensive support, including review of lesson plans, observation of whole classes and small groups, and attending Pupil Personnel Committee meetings. The special education teacher felt that this was where she received a large amount of her support, as well as from an additional special education consultant who works with VSI.

Instructional leaders conduct regular evaluations, with all teachers having received mid-year evaluations at the time of the visit. However, the evaluation process was unclear to many teachers who were unaware both of its timing and criteria. Teachers reported being formally observed by the principal, with a pre- and post-meeting to discuss the lesson. These observations are supposed to occur five times per year but some teachers had only had two of these at the time of the visit (approximately three quarters of the way through the school year.) Teachers also received a formal mid-year evaluation via e-mail, which rated them as satisfactory or unsatisfactory in several key areas. Teachers were unclear about the basis of the ratings and were given short notice that they would be conducted. Despite this, most interviewed teachers felt the ratings were a fair reflection of their performance. Teaching assistants were also evaluated using the same rubric as teachers; they had been unaware they would be subject to a mid-year evaluation.

Teachers are generally held accountable for quality instruction, though as a first year school the degree to which they are held accountable for student achievement remains to be seen. The principal was able to speak in detail about the strengths and weaknesses of each teacher, and specific ways leaders have worked with each to improve their practice. Observations by the principal and staff developer give teachers next steps to work on, which teachers reported being very helpful. Goals, which have been set for teachers as part of the mid-year evaluation process, would be reviewed during end-of-year evaluations. School leaders also regularly discuss assessment results with teachers, though it was unclear how they were held accountable for student performance. Hiring decisions were made through a collaborative process involving the principal, the personnel / academic committee of the board of trustees and the management company.

At-Risk Students (Benchmark 1.F)

The Academy implements a variety of resources and strategies to meet the needs of at-risk students (including students receiving special education services, English language learners, and struggling students). As the Academy is in its first year, the effectiveness of these interventions has yet to be determined.

The Academy has established clear procedures for the identification of at-risk students. This process is coordinated by the special education teacher. If teachers have concerns about students, they refer them to the special education teacher who brings the issue up at the Pupil Personnel Committee ("PPC") meeting. These meetings are scheduled as needed and occur relatively frequently; attendees include the principal, special education teacher, VSI instructional specialist, the classroom teacher involved, and sometimes the parent as well. If the PPC determines that a special needs evaluation is the proper next step, the parents are notified and the special education teacher works with the relevant school district Committee on Special Education (CSE) to coordinate the evaluation.

The special education teacher is also responsible for the coordination of the academic intervention program ("AIS"). In September, students were identified for AIS in reading based on DIBELS scores and teacher or parent recommendation. In mathematics, referral was based on teacher recommendation; recommended students were given the Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT). Students who were a year behind grade level qualified for services. The only formal re-assessment of service provision was the mid-year DIBELS; beyond this, students moved in or out of AIS based solely on teacher recommendation.

ELL students were identified through the home language survey sent to parents. Those who checked any language other than English were administered the LAB-R to determine if they qualified for services. However, several interviewed teachers were unable to explain this process and no further interview of parents or students took place.

The Academy provides significant resources and supports to help meet the needs of at-risk students, though their effectiveness was unclear at the time of the visit. For special education services, the school relies on outside providers (for resource room, speech, and any other required services). The special education teacher was unaware of why the decision was made to use outside providers; the principal responded that it was due to budgeting needs, though the alternatives had not been fully considered. The special education teacher is responsible for organizing and scheduling all of these services. The majority of outside provider services are scheduled during breakfast or other non-academic times to ensure students do not miss out on instruction. In the case of one student, the district took several months to send a provider so the special education teacher provided resource room services in the interim. The special education teacher regularly observes these outside providers to ensure they are working towards the students' goals, and in one instance they have asked the district to send a different provider.

The special education teacher was providing services to the three ELL students enrolled at the time of the visit with pull-out instruction twice per week. She bases her lessons on classroom teacher requests, as well as what she believes is appropriate for the students' needs. This is not a best practice and may violate federal law. Lessons include a significant amount of conversation and language-based activities. There is an ELL procedure checklist provided by VSI that she uses in her planning, though there is not significant oversight or direction of her work with these students. The school must provide appropriate supports to ELLs and while a certified TESOL teacher is not

required, the person responsible must have appropriate qualifications to instruct ELLs, gauge the effectiveness of the ELL programming and evaluate the school's ELL program year to year.

The special education teacher also provides academic intervention services, primarily through push-in instruction. During English language arts this occurs during center time, so that the students requiring services have less independent work time. In mathematics, this is sometimes the case but other times she works with students in a small group during whole-class instruction. The day of the visit, team members observed her working with small groups but generally these groups were engaged in the same activities as the rest of the class.

General education teachers were able to discuss some strategies and modifications they make for at-risk students in their class; however, their knowledge on this subject was limited. Some teachers indicated that they have a teaching assistant (TA) work with the struggling students, and others indicated that they modify their instruction for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) but did not specify how.

There is some evidence that the Academy monitors the progress of at-risk students. Students who are struggling in reading are assessed weekly using DIBELS, compared to monthly for students not at-risk. As noted above, the special education teacher supervises outside providers to ensure that students are making progress towards their IEP goals.

Teachers are not provided with sufficient support to meet the needs of at-risk students. Teachers received training on the child study protocol in the beginning of the year, but that was the only training related to serving at-risk students that teachers noted. The special education teacher met with each teacher prior to the start of the school year to lay out the IEP goals and what it would mean to teachers and their instructional practice. However, teachers did not feel they had received sufficient guidance in this area; one teacher did not appear to know the details of a students' IEP while another reported that, "When it comes to special education, I don't know what to do." The special education teacher indicated that she and the staff developer try to offer strategies when teachers have questions, while acknowledging the lack of formal training.

There is regular, though informal, coordination between the special education teacher and classroom teachers. Classroom teachers provide the special education teacher with an articulation plan every four to six weeks so she knows what material will be covered, as well as touching base weekly about lesson plans. This allows her to maximize her push-in time as well as plan her pull-out lessons for the ELL students.

The special education teacher receives a great deal of support from VSI, through both an instructional specialist and a consultant focused on special education. VSI provides her with feedback on planning, diagnostic assistance, strategies, activities, and other areas where she asks for assistance. However, there have been limited opportunities for VSI to work with the whole staff, or for the special education teacher to impart the knowledge the management organization has given her to the rest of the staff.

Student Order and Discipline (Benchmark 1.G)

The Academy promotes a culture of learning through its school programs and environment. The school is generally safe and orderly. During the time of the visit, classrooms were well-organized and clean, which created a safe environment for learning. The school has also hired a security guard

to monitor the building and ensure a safe environment. Students move through the hallways supervised and generally efficiently, although there was a high noise level during transitions.

Within classrooms, teachers' skills in utilizing classroom management techniques and routines varied, and in some classrooms low level misbehavior affected student learning. Teachers were directed to create their own ladder of referral with their own consequences, with directions from the principal to "start small." In the 2nd grade, teachers had efficient transitions and routines that were internalized by students with few reminders needed. However in other classrooms, there was a fair amount of misbehavior that impacted instruction: students shouting during group time; interrupting and talking over teachers during teacher-led instruction; and students continually leaving their seats. In many cases, teachers interrupted instruction to deal with these low level misbehaviors, which significantly affected learning time.

While all teachers had some form of ladder consequence system, they varied in consistency of implementation. In one classroom that used a color system as its ladder a student received several warnings and was asked to leave the room without his color being changed. When asked why, the teacher responded that, "sometimes I change colors for students, sometimes I don't." Teachers also used different rewards and consequences, some individual, some small-group and some whole class. There were discussions among teachers about how the system should be used, but there was little consensus: one teacher said, "Classroom management is whatever we decide." Teachers do monitor student behavior over time, sending home a daily behavior log and working with the special education teacher and social worker to develop behavior modification plans if necessary.

Policies for larger discipline issues are still evolving. The school recently hired a full-time social worker who will be taking on some of the responsibilities which previously rested with the principal. Additionally, the social worker has begun working with the special education teacher to develop behavior modification plans as well as working with parents of students with consistent behavior problems. For example, administrators believed a student was suspended after multiple incidents on the school bus but the student was present in school the next day. Such a system also has a built-in impediment insofar as the board must meet in person or by videoconference in order to make a suspension decision.

Professional Development (Benchmark 1.H)

The Academy's professional development program assists teachers in meeting student academic needs and academic goals through a program appropriate for the novice teachers who make up the majority of the school's staff. This takes many forms, and will continue to evolve as the needs of the school's teachers grow and change.

The school provides a comprehensive professional development program to meet the needs of novice teachers. A three-week summer professional development workshop focused on school culture, curriculum, management, and co-teaching. The workshop was designed to create a common understanding of classroom management through shared readings and discussions. It was also used to introduce teachers to the curriculum maps and commercial programs that they would be responsible for implementing once the year began. In addition, it was a time to build relationships among the staff, most notably between classroom pairs and explore what those relationships could look like.

There are bi-weekly professional development sessions with the whole-staff, led either by the school-based staff developer or a staff member from VSI. Professional development also takes place during weekly collaborative planning sessions attended by the staff developer. The staff developer explained that professional development planning is three-fold: giving teachers what they want; providing professional development related to the goals set forth in the strategic plan and charter; and being flexible to address concerns raised throughout the year. Topics are selected by the staff developer and the principal based on their observations, as well as reflection forms they give to teachers after professional development sessions. This form also allows administrators to assess the effectiveness of the professional development sessions. Topics covered included facilitating assessments, creating grade level goals, differentiation, and curriculum specific sessions. Teachers noted that topics are usually only covered once with little follow-up.

Staff developers from VSI, generally experts in specific content areas, provide professional development to teachers through these bi-weekly workshops as well as observing classrooms and providing feedback. Teachers generally felt that these sessions were not as helpful as those led by school staff, and the staff developer acknowledged that the VSI-led professional development sessions tended to be more big picture and not as streamlined as they could be. As the VSI staff are only in the school twice per month, their sessions are not always as relevant to immediate needs. The school plans to implement the same reflection form they use for in-house professional development after VSI-led trainings to gather better feedback and make these sessions more productive. Additionally, teachers felt that the feedback given by VSI staff is less helpful, as it is based on a single observation and is not representative of teachers' practice as a whole. One teacher stated that: "Victory Schools…just tells me what I do wrong. I wish they would model for me."

The majority of professional development is whole-school, though it is altered based on teacher interests and needs. Teachers felt that if they identified an area where they needed support they would receive it, either through a workshop or coaching. Topics are also selected based upon observations of teachers, which has led to increased professional development on reading instruction and intervention strategies relative to the original plan. Priorities going forward based on observations and teacher feedback included writing instruction and checking for understanding. The special education teacher, who receives professional development from the VSI special education consultant, believed that the school-wide professional development sessions usually had components that were applicable to her work. While the bi-weekly workshops are not differentiated, the staff developer responds to individual concerns through grade level meetings or individual coaching.

The reflection form includes a place for teachers to discuss the strategies they have recently implemented from past professional development sessions, as well as strategies learned that they plan to implement. The staff developer reported she uses this to hold teachers accountable for implementation, though this was not discussed by teachers. Teachers have also set goals for the remainder of the year as part of the mid-year evaluation process, but the staff developer indicated that these were for their own use and did not influence the planning of upcoming professional development sessions. Overall, the staff at the Academy are largely teachers new to the profession and the professional development program is suitable for their needs.

Mission & Key Design Elements (Benchmark 2.A)

The Academy has faithfully followed its mission and implemented the key design elements in its charter. The school's board and management company are very faithful to the school design laid out in their charter and have followed many elements closely, including the assessments administered

and curriculum programs used. The school's mission speaks to technology, arts, and character development. The school has begun to implement programs in all of these areas and plan to continue growing them as the school matures. Key design elements the school has implemented at the time of the visit include two hours of daily literacy instruction and ninety minutes of daily mathematics instruction.

Parents & Students (Benchmark 2.B)

Based on limited evidence, families are satisfied with the school. The board indicated that they expect all students to re-enroll next year, an indication of parental satisfaction. The school has not yet administered a parent satisfaction survey. According to the board, there have been multiple complaints made to the school board by parents about the school's leadership, largely regarding communication issues. However, none of these complaints led to students being unenrolled from the school, and the board was working to resolve all lingering concerns.

Organizational Capacity (Benchmark 2.C)

The Academy's day-to-day operations are sufficient to allow the school to carry out its academic program. However, at the time of the visit there was not a clear distinction between the board's oversight and the school administration's management of day-to-day operations.

The school's organizational chart provides clear lines of accountability, though roles and responsibilities were not clear to all staff members. In addition, the roles and responsibilities of the board and school leader were not clearly demarcated. The role of VSI's regional manager was generally well-defined, though his role was evolving throughout the year. As outlined by the management agreement, his main duties are to work with the board, principal and business manager; supervise VSI instructional staff that works with the school; and coordinate professional development provided by VSI staff members per the management agreement. He described his work with the board as primarily focused on implementation of the instructional program as it relates to what was set forth in the charter. He also serves as a conduit between the board and the instructional leadership in the school, an increasing portion of his duties as the relationship between the board and principal deteriorated throughout the year (also discussed in the governance section.)

Teachers and teaching assistants were clear on the principal being their supervisor, as was the staff developer. The principal was clear that she reports to VSI's regional manager, as the school's board delegated to him her formal evaluation. Originally, the business manager reported to the principal, but this responsibility has shifted to the board due to personality issues. This has also caused difficulties for teachers, as they receive conflicting directions from the principal and business manager and are unsure which to follow.

Each classroom has two adults assigned to it, a teacher and a teaching assistant. Interviewed teachers and teaching assistants both reported a lack of clarity on the difference between their roles. The summer training had included a workshop on different types of co-teaching relationships, but there was little direction on what it should ultimately look like. It currently is different in each classroom, based on each pair's decisions. Additionally, teaching assistants reported that when hired they had been told that they would be given lead teacher positions in the future. However, at the time of the visit, no teaching positions were available.

Aside from the noted deficiencies, the Academy is competently managed overall, though there were some lingering issues associated with start-up, most notably implementing the Waterford reading intervention program. Teachers reported that the day-to-day school operation runs smoothly and that they have the resources they need.

The school is currently in the process of developing its Accountability Plan, and the board is taking this responsibility extremely seriously. They are committed to meeting the goals laid forth in their charter and mission statement, and have worked to meet these goals. This includes administering the ITBS so that they can measure student growth as outlined in the charter.

The school is currently in a temporary facility, housed within a church building, and will remain in this space for the next year. The space generally meets the school's needs, although several rooms are small for the number of students, and other rooms—including the office shared by the social worker and special education teacher—do not have real walls, limiting privacy. The board is currently searching for a permanent facility, working with the Hempstead mayor's office and business development office, as well as several banks to secure financing.

The school has hired quality staff, though retention remains to be seen. The school had a comprehensive hiring process, including having teachers do demonstration lessons at schools throughout the city. Teaching assistants all applied to be lead teachers, and many have or are in the process of getting master's degrees. The board is under the impression that teachers are planning to return, though several teaching assistants reported that they plan to leave if not given a full time position at the Academy for the upcoming school year.

Hiring decisions were made through a collaborative process involving the principal, the academic / personnel committee of the board of trustees and the management company. However, the principal during the visit that the board made several hiring decisions prior to the school's opening without her input. This included a music teacher, as well as several members of the support staff. The visit team was unable to confirm this with the board as the issue was not raised prior to the interview; however, the board confirmed that they have taken on responsibility for the hiring of teachers for the upcoming school year. Again clear roles and responsibilities between the school board and administration, and clear policies and procedures made known to all staff were not evident.

The principal was originally responsible for the evaluation of all non-teaching staff. At the time of the visit she was still responsible for the evaluation of the staff developer, who had received a formal mid-year evaluation and would have an end-of-year evaluation as well. The staff developer reported receiving a great deal of feedback from the principal throughout the year as well. The business manager was originally supposed to be evaluated by the principal, but due to personality conflicts the board took over this responsibility. The special education teacher had been formally evaluated for her teaching but not for her administrative responsibilities at the time of the visit.

The school has maintained sufficient enrollment. While there were 174 students on the school's roster originally, there were several students who did not attend. In addition, the school reported that nine or ten students left the school since the beginning of the year, and that the majority of these were due to families moving out of the area. The parent coordinator is largely responsible for student recruitment, and at the time of the visit the school was expecting sufficient applications to be fully enrolled next year. The school has made concerted efforts to recruit at-risk students, most notably ELL students, but many of these students chose to attend the other charter school that opened this

year in Hempstead due to its board's relationships with the community and various community groups.

The school's daily attendance rate at the time of the visit was 89 percent (as reported by the school). The board acknowledged this was an area of concern, especially given the goal of 95 percent daily attendance set forth in their charter. The board and principal attributed this to several factors, including: parents not treating kindergarten as school, families with home issues that contributed to high absentee rates for particular students, and transportation issues. In order to address this, the board recently hired a social worker to work with parents and students to address underlying issues that are causing poor attendance, as well as to stress the importance of attending school. The social worker will also be hosting parent workshops to help parents at home and improve attendance. Prior to the social worker's hiring, the principal had also started offering rewards for high daily attendance at monthly school-wide assemblies. The board is closely tracking this metric and making changes as needed.

Governance (Benchmark 2.D-E)

The members of the Academy board of trustees have the skills necessary and have put in place structures to provide effective oversight of the academic program. However, the role and responsibilities of the board and school administration were not clearly defined, especially with respect to staff hiring and student suspensions.

The board has adequate skills, structures, and procedures with which to govern the school. Board members have expertise in education, law, finance, and real estate as well as strong ties to the local community. The full board meets regularly, and also has committees which meet regularly, including: hiring, academics, personnel, grievance, community and fundraising, and finance.

The board requests and receives very detailed information on a variety of metrics from both the principal and the management company. The management company provides a monthly progress report that includes both academic and operational metrics, as well as a quarterly dashboard that provides a big picture context regarding the school's performance. These reports are provided in the same template to all schools that contract with VSI; however, the board at the Academy has asked for several revisions to these reports to better measure what they consider important, most notably student progress over time. According to the board, VSI has implemented all of these requests in a timely manner, and has made some of these changes part of the template used at other schools.

The board monitors these metrics closely, and makes adjustments based on the data when they see issues of concern. For example, in response to low attendance figures relative to the goal set forth in their charter, they made the decision to hire a school social worker to help families deal with issues that were affecting attendance. Additionally, the school has created targeted assistance plans for students who were struggling based on performance data, which have reportedly resulted in an upward trend in student performance. They are also considering adding a summer school program for 2nd graders to ensure they are prepared for the 3rd grade exam.

VSI has worked closely with the board to help them understand their responsibilities as a board, including this distinction between governance and management. This effort has also focused largely on understanding the charter and mission statement. VSI arranged for a full-day board training on charter school governance earlier this year to help them understand their roles. The VSI regional

manager acknowledged that this focus was one of the three main areas of growth for the school moving forward.

Although hiring decisions are made through a collaborative process involving the principal the academic / personnel committee of the board of trustees and the management company the board has taken on several responsibilities that typically fall under the discretion of school leadership. This notably includes hiring decisions, for both teachers and non-teaching staff, and some student discipline decisions. Last year the board hired several staff, including some instructional staff, without the principal's input. The board, through its personnel committee, will be in charge of making all hiring decisions for the upcoming year. All teachers will be asked to return, which was also a board decision. The VSI personnel staff will be responsible for much of the recruitment of teacher candidates and initial screenings. They will work with the board's personnel committee to screen applicants and present final candidates to the board for their approval. They also plan to solicit input from teachers and parents throughout the hiring process to ensure there is stakeholder support. The board also made the decision to hire a social worker mid-year in response to issues arising in the school, and coordinated the recruitment and hiring process with limited input from school leadership.

The board also visits the school regularly, stating that they believe it is important to show parents, staff, and the community that they are invested in the school. Teachers reported that the board chair is often in the school daily, visiting classrooms and talking to teachers. The VSI representative indicated that since there had been a breakdown in the relationship between the board and the principal, board members believed this practice was necessary to ensure the school was running smoothly. However, it also has the potential to disrupt the lines of accountability between school leaders and staff.

The school's principal has the authority to make suspension decisions with final authority given to the board's judicial committee; however, the principal reported that the board, had taken full responsibility for suspension decisions. This led to a lack of clarity on the part of school leadership about when students were being suspended, as well as a lack of clarity on the decision-making process amongst school staff. Additionally, repeat offenders, most notably for bus misbehavior, were not immediately disciplined until further infractions took place. The principal felt this was largely a result of the board's focus on community reputation. However, the visit team was unable to ask the board about the reasoning behind their decisions. Moreover, the school board did not contact the Institute about this change in policy, in which case the lines of responsibility could have been clarified.

The board has worked diligently to develop an evaluation system for VSI, and clearly communicated their expectations to them. VSI provided board members with an evaluation of their services to complete individually, as they do with their other schools. However, they decided that it was important for them to tailor the evaluation to their particular relationship with VSI, as well as to complete it as a group. At the time of the visit, they were in the midst of developing this evaluation based on the management agreement as well as a chart created by the school's business manager of the services provided by VSI. This attention to detail in regards to their relationship with VSI began before signing of the management agreement, making changes tot his to protect the board, and want to ensure these issues are part of the evaluation as well as future extensions of the management agreement.

However, the board has not communicated effectively with school leadership, delegating much of this communication the VSI regional manager. The regional manager indicated that one of his primary responsibilities was the development of the principal, and the principal reported that in the beginning of the year he was largely a go-between between her and the board. The principal wanted to be more directly involved, but due to tensions there was little communication. She was unaware of the board's plan for hiring going forward, their reasoning for hiring a social worker, and the reasoning behind their discipline decisions. The board on the other hand felt that she was not a good communicator with school stakeholders including parents and teachers based on complaints received. However, it was unclear how much the two parties worked together to solve these problems, or how much was left to the VSI regional manager to work with the principal to solve any issues the board saw. He was also responsible for her formal evaluation, which he completed in January, but reported being unable to get the principal to meet with him to review the evaluation and develop an action plan for the improvement of her performance. As a result, the board made the decision not to re-hire the principal for the upcoming school year. At the time of the evaluation visit, this decision had not yet been communicated to the principal. Overall, the board has many skills and structures in place to be successful but its lack of communication with school leaders and blurring of the line between governance and management has impeded its ability to be fully effective.

Conduct of the Visit

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the school evaluation visit at The Academy on April 14, 2010. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit:

Simeon Stolzberg (team leader) is Director of School Evaluation at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. He is responsible for the coordination of school evaluation visits by Institute staff and external consultants, the development of reporting tools/protocols and the production of reports, and he also coordinates internal staff training with regard to school evaluation visits and reporting tools. Prior to joining the Institute, Mr. Stolzberg managed his own consulting practice, advising charter schools across the country in their application and planning phases. He also served as Middle School Director for the Beginning with Children Charter School in Brooklyn, New York. In 2002, as a Building Excellent Schools Fellow, Mr. Stolzberg wrote the prospectus and application for the Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter School (BArT) in Massachusetts; the school was one of only five schools approved by the state that year. Mr. Stolzberg served as the school's founding principal. Mr. Stolzberg received his Master's Degree in Public Policy from Georgetown University and his Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy, with independent studies in education and political economy, from Williams College.

Sean Fitzsimons is a Program Analyst for the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. He supports SUNY's new charter school application process by addressing questions from applicants, reviewing and analyzing new applications, coordinating the review of applications to establish new charter schools by Institute staff and external educational experts, and drafting application summaries and other related documents. Mr. Fitzsimons most recently served as Chair of the Social Studies Department at Manassas Park Middle School in Manassas Park, Virginia where he guided curriculum sequencing and pacing to align the school's courses with state standards, trained and mentored faculty, and designed and implemented courses in Civics and Economics, American Studies, American History, and World Geography. He also taught remedial reading curriculum to special education students and English language learners. Prior to his service at Manassas Park Middle School, Mr. Fitzsimons was an Administrative and Research Assistant at the Embassy of Japan in Washington, D.C. In addition, Mr. Fitzsimons was a visiting instructor at Shanghai Teachers University in Shanghai, China, where he designed and taught curriculum for English language learners. Mr. Fitzsimons received his Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction and Secondary Education Social Studies from George Mason University and his Bachelor of Arts degrees in International Relations and Political Science from the State University of New York, College at Geneseo.

Maya Lagana is an Analyst for School Evaluation for the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. She is responsible for scheduling ongoing school evaluation visits, communicating with school team members and administrative staff regarding site visit logistics and requirements, developing and disseminating RFP documents, and coordinating the recruitment and work of consultants. Ms. Lagana worked for New Visions for Public Schools, Achievement First and Boston Collegiate Charter School while in graduate school. Previously, Ms. Lagana was an Assessment Specialist at the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence in Washington D.C., where she helped to develop teacher certification exams and analyzed item level statistics and demographics information. In addition to her extensive background as an analyst, Ms. Lagana also has experience as a third grade classroom teacher at P.S. 195 through the New York City Teaching

Fellows Program. Ms. Lagana received her Master of Public Administration degree in Policy Analysis from New York University's Wagner School for Public Service, her Masters of Education degree from Mercy College and her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Carleton College.

Ron Miller, Ph. D. is Vice President for Accountability at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. He has worked for the Institute since September 2002. Dr. Miller began his career teaching for seven years in New York City public schools and then joined the central offices of the New York City Department of Education, where he conducted evaluative research and organizational studies. As Director of the Office of School Planning and Accountability, he served as the educational accountability officer for the Department. In that capacity, he developed school accountability reports for all city schools and coordinated staff development on the use of the reports for district administrators in the high school and community school districts. In addition, he worked with school leaders to develop their capacity to use data for school improvement. In this role he developed PASS, a school performance review system which was adopted in 600 city schools. Dr. Miller has regularly presented papers at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association and has served as Adjunct Assistant Professor at Teachers College Columbia University and Pace University. He holds an A.B. degree from the University of California at Berkeley and a Ph.D. in Applied Anthropology from Columbia University.

Hope Terroade (External Consultant) is a New York City Public Charter School Teacher. Ms. Terroade began educating students on the Lower East Side of New York with the Grand Street Settlement in 2001. She served as a Head Teacher at a local Head Start program. Committed to the supporting the education reform of the Lower East Side, Ms. Terroade joined hands with the Charter School movement in 2004 and became a founding teacher at Manhattan Charter School where she currently teaches Kindergarten. Ms. Terroade serves as a peer leader at her school leading teachers in Critical Friends groups, Peer Reviews and Curriculum discussions.
Ms. Terroade holds a B.S. degree in Early Childhood Education from Nyack College and a M.S. degree in Elementary Education and Special Education (Birth-Grade 2) from Touro College. Ms. Terroade attributes her personal mission to educate all children to her unique experience growing up in Jamaica, West Indies.

Jodi Englart (External Team Member) is currently the Director of Curriculum, Learning and Teaching at Harlem Day Charter School. She is in her seventh year of working in public education. Prior to her work at Harlem Day, she was a fourth grade teacher in Manhattan's public school system for three years. She has also taught middle school Math and Science and was a K-5 Resource Room teacher in public schools in New Jersey. She received her BS from Monmouth University (Elementary Education/Special Educations) and her Masters from The City College of New York (Reading Specialist).

APPENDIX A: RENEWAL BENCHMARKS USED DURING THE VISIT

An excerpt of the State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks follows.
Visit the Institute's website at: http://www.newyorkcharters.org/
documents/renewalBenchmarks.doc to see the complete listing of Benchmarks.

Benchmarks 1B – 1H, and Benchmarks 2A – 2E were using in conducting this evaluation visit.

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
Evidence Category	**State University Renewal Benchmarks**
State University Renewal Benchmark 1B **Use of Assessment Data**	**The school has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and uses it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.** Elements that are generally present include: • the school regularly uses standardized and other assessments that are aligned to the school's curriculum framework and state performance standards; • the school systematically collects and analyzes data from diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, and makes it accessible to teachers, school leaders and the school board; • the school uses protocols, procedures and rubrics that ensure that the scoring of assessments and evaluation of student work is reliable and trustworthy; • the school uses assessment data to predict whether the school's Accountability Plan goals are being achieved; • the school's leaders use assessment data to monitor, change and improve the school's academic program, including curriculum and instruction, professional development, staffing and intervention services; • the school's teachers use assessment data to adjust and improve instruction to meet the identified needs of students; • a common understanding exists between and among teachers and administrators of the meaning and consequences of assessment results, e.g., changes to the instructional program, access to remediation, promotion to the next grade; • the school regularly communicates each student's progress and growth to his or her parents/guardians; and • the school regularly communicates to the school community overall academic performance as well as the school's progress toward meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals.
State University Renewal Benchmark 1C **Curriculum**	**The school has a clearly defined curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards.** Elements that are generally present include: • the school has a well-defined curriculum framework for each grade and core academic subject, which includes the knowledge and skills that all students are expected to achieve as specified by New York State standards and performance indicators; • the school has carefully analyzed all curriculum resources (including commercial materials) currently in use in relation to the school's curriculum framework,

| | identified areas of deficiency and/or misalignment, and addressed them in the instructional program;
- the curriculum *as implemented* is organized, cohesive, and aligned from grade to grade;
- teachers are fully aware of the curricula that they are responsible to teach and have access to curricular documents such as scope and sequence documents, pacing charts, and/or curriculum maps that guide the development of their lesson plans;
- teachers develop and use lesson plans with objectives that are in alignment with the school's curriculum;
- the school has defined a procedure, allocated time and resources, and included teachers in ongoing review and revision of the curriculum; and
- the curriculum supports the school's stated mission. |

| **State University Renewal Benchmark 1D**

Pedagogy | **High quality instruction is evident in all classes throughout the school.**

Elements that are generally present include:

- teachers demonstrate subject-matter and grade-level competency in the subjects and grades they teach;
- instruction is rigorous and focused on learning objectives that specify clear expectations for what students must know and be able to do in each lesson;
- lesson plans and instruction are aligned to the school's curriculum framework and New York State standards and performance indicators;
- instruction is differentiated to meet the range of learning needs represented in the school's student population, e.g. flexible student grouping, differentiated materials, pedagogical techniques, and/or assessments;
- all students are cognitively engaged in focused, purposeful learning activities during instructional time;
- learning time is maximized (e.g., appropriate pacing, high on-task student behavior, clear lesson focus and clear directions to students), transitions are efficient, and there is day-to-day instructional continuity; and
- teachers challenge students with questions and assignments that promote academic rigor, depth of understanding, and development of higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills. |

| **State University Renewal Benchmark 1E**

Instructional Leadership | **The school has strong instructional leadership.**

Elements that are generally present include:

- the school's leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for student achievement;
- the school's leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance (in content knowledge, pedagogical skills and student achievement);
- the school's instructional leaders have in place a comprehensive and on-going system for evaluating teacher quality and effectiveness;
- the school's instructional leaders, based on classroom visits and other available data, provide direct ongoing support, such as critical feedback, coaching and/or modeling, to teachers in their classrooms;
- the school's leadership provides structured opportunities, resources and guidance for teachers to plan the delivery of the instructional program within and across grade levels as well as within disciplines or content areas;
- the school's instructional leaders organize a coherent and sustained professional development program that meets the needs of both the school and individual teachers; |

	- the school's leadership ensures that the school is responding to the needs of at-risk students and maximizing their achievement to the greatest extent possible in the regular education program using in-class resources and/or pull-out services and programs where necessary ; and - the school's leadership conducts regular reviews and evaluations of the school's academic program and makes necessary changes to ensure that the school is effectively working to achieve academic standards defined by the State University Renewal Benchmarks in the areas of assessment, curriculum, pedagogy, student order and discipline, and professional development.
State University Renewal Benchmark 1F **At-Risk Students**	**The school is demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically.** Elements that are generally present include: - the school deploys sufficient resources to provide academic interventions that address the range of students' needs; - all regular education teachers, as well as specialists, utilize effective strategies to support students within the regular education program; - the school provides sufficient training, resources, and support to all teachers and specialists with regard to meeting the needs of at-risk students; - the school has clearly defined screening procedures for identifying at-risk students and providing them with the appropriate interventions, and a common understanding among all teachers of these procedures; - all regular education teachers demonstrate a working knowledge of students' Individualized Education Program goals and instructional strategies for meeting those goals; - the school provides sufficient time and support for on-going coordination between regular and special education teachers, as well as other program specialists and service providers; and - the school monitors the performance of student participation in support services using well-defined school-wide criteria, and regularly evaluates the effectiveness of its intervention programs.
State University Renewal Benchmark 1G **Student Order & Discipline**	**The school promotes a culture of learning and scholarship.** Elements that are generally present include: - the school has a documented discipline policy that is consistently applied; - classroom management techniques and daily routines have established a culture in which learning is valued and clearly evident; - low-level misbehavior is not being tolerated, e.g., students are not being allowed to disrupt or opt-out of learning during class time; and - throughout the school, a safe and orderly environment has been established.
State University Renewal Benchmark 1H **Professional Development**	**The school's professional development program assists teachers in meeting student academic needs and school goals by addressing identified shortcomings in teachers' pedagogical skills and content knowledge.** Elements that are generally present include: - the school provides sufficient time, personnel, materials and funding to support a comprehensive and sustained professional development program; - the content of the professional development program dovetails with the school's mission, curriculum, and instructional programs; - annual professional development plans derive from a data-driven needs-assessment

and staff interests;
- professional development places a high priority on achieving the State University Renewal Benchmarks and the school's Accountability Plan goals;
- teachers are involved in setting short-term and long-term goals for their own professional development activities;
- the school provides effective, ongoing support and training tailored to teachers' varying levels of expertise and instructional responsibilities;
- the school provides training to assist all teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities, English language learners and other students at-risk of academic failure; and
- the professional development program is systematically evaluated to determine its effectiveness at meeting stated goals.

	Renewal Question 2 **Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?**
Evidence Category	**State University Renewal Benchmarks**
State University Renewal Benchmark 2A **Mission & Key Design Elements**	**The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.** Elements that are generally present include: • stakeholders are aware of the mission; • the school has implemented its key design elements in pursuit of its mission; and • the school meets or comes close to meeting any non-academic goals contained in its Accountability Plan.
State University Renewal Benchmark 2B **Parents & Students**	**Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.** Elements that are generally present include: • the school has a process and procedures for evaluation of parent satisfaction with the school; • the great majority of parents with students enrolled at the school have strong positive attitudes about it; • few parents pursue grievances at the school board level or outside the school; • a large number of parents seek entrance to the school; • parents with students enrolled keep their children enrolled year-to-year; and • the school maintains a high rate of daily student attendance.
State University Renewal Benchmark 2C **Organizational Capacity**	**The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure with staff, systems, and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program.** Elements that are generally present include: • the school demonstrates effective management of day-to-day operations; • staff scheduling is internally consistent and supportive of the school's mission; • the school has established clear priorities, objectives and benchmarks for achieving its mission and Accountability Plan goals, and a process for their regular review and revision;

	• the school has allocated sufficient resources in support of achieving its goals;
	• the roles and responsibilities of the school's leadership and staff members are clearly defined;
	• the school has an organizational structure that provides clear lines for accountability;
	• the school's management has successfully recruited, hired and retained key personnel, and made appropriate decisions about removing ineffective staff members when warranted;
	• the school maintains an adequate student enrollment and has effective procedures for recruiting new students to the school; and
	• the school's management and board have demonstrated effective communication practices with the school community including school staff, parents/guardians and students.
State University Renewal Benchmark 2D **Board Oversight**	**The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school's mission and provide oversight to the total educational program.** Elements that are generally present include: • the school board has adequate skills and expertise, as well as adequate meeting time to provide rigorous oversight of the school; • the school board (or a committee thereof) understands the core business of the school—student achievement—in sufficient depth to permit the board to provide effective oversight; • the school board has set clear long-term and short-term goals and expectations for meeting those goals, and communicates them to the school's management and leaders; • the school board has received regular written reports from the school leadership on academic performance and progress, financial stability and organizational capacity; • the school board has conducted regular evaluations of the school's management (including school leaders who report to the board, supervisors from management organization(s), and/or partner organizations that provide services to the school), and has acted on the results where such evaluations demonstrated shortcomings in performance; • where there have been demonstrable deficiencies in the school's academic, organizational or fiscal performance, the school board has taken effective action to correct those deficiencies and put in place benchmarks for determining if the deficiencies are being corrected in a timely fashion; • the school board has not made financial or organizational decisions that have materially impeded the school in fulfilling its mission; and • the school board conducts on-going assessment and evaluation of its own effectiveness in providing adequate school oversight, and pursues opportunities for further governance training and development.
State University Renewal Benchmark 2E **Governance**	**The board has implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes, and has abided by them.** Elements that are generally present include: • the school board has established a set of priorities that are in line with the school's goals and mission and has effectively worked to design and implement a system to achieve those priorities; • the school board has in place a process for recruiting and selecting new members in order to maintain adequate skill sets and expertise for effective governance and

	structural continuity;
	• the school board has implemented a comprehensive and strict conflict of interest policy (and/or code of ethics)—consistent with those set forth in the charter—and consistently abided by them through the term of the charter;
	• the school board has generally avoided creating conflicts of interest where possible; where not possible, the school has managed those conflicts of interest in a clear and transparent manner;
	• the school board has instituted a process for dealing with complaints (and such policy is consistent with that set forth in the charter), has made that policy clear to all stakeholders, and has followed that policy including acting in a timely fashion on any such complaints;
	• the school board has abided by its by-laws including, but not limited to, provisions regarding trustee elections, removals and filling of vacancies;
	• the school board and its committees hold meetings in accordance with the Open Meetings Law, and minutes are recorded for all meetings including executive sessions and, as appropriate, committee meetings; and
	• the school board has in place a set of board and school policies that are reviewed regularly and updated as needed.