



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Brooklyn Dreams Charter School

School Evaluation Report 2010-11

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Charter Schools Institute
State University of New York
41 State Street, Suite 700
Albany, New York 12207
518/433-8277, 518/427-6510 (fax)
<http://www.newyorkcharters.org>

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INTRODUCTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the “State University Trustees”), jointly with 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:

- **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.
- **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, the Institute can play a role in helping the school identify 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.

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 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. A summary of conclusions from previous school evaluations is also provided, as background and context for the current evaluation. The second section, titled 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. Finally, in a third section entitled School Evaluation Visit, this report presents the analysis of evidence collected during an evaluation visit conducted in the current school year, with an italicized paragraph that introduces each specific benchmark and provides a summarizing conclusion.

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 Charter Renewal Benchmarks. To the extent appropriate and useful, we encourage school boards to use this evaluation report in ongoing planning and school improvement efforts.

Background

Institute evaluations of SUNY authorized charter schools are organized into 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. Entitled the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks, 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 is an analysis of the observations and conclusions from this year's evaluation, along with supporting evidence. Some benchmarks are covered in greater detail than others in an effort to highlight areas of concern at the school and provide additional feedback in these areas. Finally, information regarding the conduct of the evaluation, including the date of the visit and information about the evaluation team, is provided.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF CURRENT SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

The Charter Schools Institute conducted a school evaluation visit to Brooklyn Dreams Charter School (“Brooklyn Dreams”) on March 22, 2011. While Brooklyn Dreams is in its first year of operation, the Institute holds all schools accountable for the Renewal Benchmarks with consideration given to its point in the charter period. A school in its first year should have begun to build systems and procedures that would provide a platform for delivering effective instruction in order to improve student learning and achievement.

Based on an analysis of evidence from this evaluation visit, Brooklyn Dreams has made progress toward establishing the systems and procedures in its educational program. The systems and procedures are sufficient to put the school on a trajectory toward meeting the Qualitative Educational Benchmarks (a component of the Renewal Benchmarks) when the school is scheduled for renewal. 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:

Use of Assessment Data (Benchmark 1.B)

Brooklyn Dreams has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and is beginning to use it to improve student learning. The school regularly administers assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum. Teachers use assessment results to identify areas for re-teaching and grouping students, as well as identifying students for academic intervention.

Curriculum (Benchmark 1.C)

Brooklyn Dreams has a comprehensive curriculum framework with a year-long pacing plan from National Heritage Academies, its management company. Teachers report knowing what to teach and when to teach it; nevertheless, the school is developing more detailed pacing guides for teachers.

Pedagogy (Benchmark 1.D)

Some classes show evidence of adequate instruction. Lesson objectives align with the school’s curriculum, but many teachers do not check for student understanding. While many students do not meet stated lesson objectives, they are cognitively engaged. Instruction is grade-appropriate; some observed lessons promote higher order thinking and problem solving skills.

Instructional Leadership (Benchmark 1.E)

Brooklyn Dreams has strong instructional leadership with systems for supporting teachers. Instructional leaders conduct regular evaluations, however only struggling teachers are accountable for instructional improvement. In addition, teacher-reported strengths and weaknesses do not always match the visit team’s observations.

Organizational Capacity (Benchmark 2.C)

The school has established a well-functioning operational structure with staff, systems, and procedures that allows the school to carry out its academic program.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	September 15, 2009
Date Initial Charter Approved by Operation of Law	March 4, 2010
School Opening Date	September, 2010

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades	District
2010-2011 to Present	259 Parkville Avenue, Brooklyn, NY	K-3	NYC CSD 22

Partner Organizations

	Partner Name	Partner Type	Dates of Service
Current Partner	National Heritage Academies, Inc.	Education Management Organization	2010-Present

Current Mission Statement

To offer the families of Brooklyn a school with a culture that values integrity, academic excellence, and accountability, where all students are given the opportunity for success in high school, college and beyond by offering an academically rigorous and challenging K-8 educational program.

Current Key Design Elements

• Well-developed curriculum framework;
• Moral focus curriculum;
• Parental involvement;
• Preparing all students for college; and
• Strong support or teachers.

School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ¹	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2010-11	196	192	K-3	K-3	180

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.)

Current Board of Trustees²

Board Member Name	Term Expires	Position/Committees
Richard Conti	June 2013	President
Matthew Daus	June 2013	Secretary
Sara Doar	June 2013	Trustee
Michael Melendez	June 2012	Trustee
Chris Nugent	June 2014	Trustee
Joanne Oplustil	June 2014	Vice President
Michael Pedone	June 2014	Treasurer
Katherine O'Neil	June 2014	Trustee

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2010-Present	Yvette Wilds, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2010-2011	First Year visit	Institute	March 22, 2011

² Source: School renewal application and Institute board information.

SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

Benchmark Conclusions and Evidence

Use of Assessment Data (Benchmark 1.B)

Brooklyn Dreams has a system to administer and gather assessment data and is beginning to use it to improve student learning.

Brooklyn Dreams regularly administers assessments aligned to the school's curriculum, although not all of these assessments align to state standards. The school administers the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) assessment three times annually in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics as part of the school's education management organization (EMO)*. The NWEA, a nationally-normed assessment, does not align with New York State's testing program. The dean of instruction also oversees the development of classroom assessments, modifies versions of commercial program assessments, administered by teachers. Teachers are encouraged to use regular formative assessments, but do so inconsistently. The dean of instruction monitors the number of formative assessments administered but not their quality.

The school conducts a structured analysis of NWEA and mock state test results, but leaves the analysis of other assessment data to teacher discretion. NWEA provides a variety of data analysis options online including item, strand, and wrong answer reports which are further analyzed at a grade, class and student level. The dean of instruction analyzes the mock state test results and reviews them with teachers.

The school uses a writing rubric, provided by the EMO, which clearly outlines student grade level expectations. Teachers and the dean of instruction discuss expectations for specific writing assignments and determine the application of the accompanying rubric. Despite these efforts, the school has not yet established specific procedures to norm the use of the rubrics.

Teachers use assessment results to identify areas for re-teaching and grouping students, as well as identifying students for academic intervention. Teachers report using data to identify areas where students struggle and creating homogenous groupings in the classroom to focus on particular concepts during a daily workshop period. Struggling students often get additional support from academic specialists during this time; the specialists also work with small groups during other academic subjects based on identified needs.

School leaders have introduced additional interventions for 2nd and 3rd graders based on recent low performance on the NWEA and mock state tests. These interventions include a daily test preparation block, an afterschool program, and a Saturday academy. Leaders acknowledge that students arrive at school further behind than originally anticipated. As a result, leaders have made necessary program changes to prepare students in the higher grades for the state testing program.

* Brooklyn Dream's EMO is National Heritage Academies.

Curriculum (Benchmark 1.C)

Brooklyn Dreams has a comprehensive curriculum framework with a year-long pacing plan from the school's EMO. Teachers report knowing what to teach and when to teach it; nevertheless, the school is developing more detailed pacing guides for teachers. The school uses commercial programs aligned to its curriculum.

Brooklyn Dreams uses a comprehensive curriculum framework developed by the school's EMO. The framework covers grades K-8 in all subject areas. Administrators and teachers report that the EMO has completed a systematic comparison to ensure full coverage of New York state standards; however, this analysis was not provided to the visit team.

Along with the curriculum framework, the EMO provides the school with a sample year-long scope and sequence document referred to as a "pacing guide." The school follows this document closely, but makes adjustments to it throughout the year based on student needs. The dean of instruction discusses the relationship between the year-long guide and student performance with teachers at each grade level. As a result of these discussions, teachers along with the dean of instruction create quarterly documents in alignment with the school's commercial programs similar to curriculum maps (also referred to as 'pacing guides') to guide teachers on planning instruction. Teachers report that these documents provide sufficient information to ensure they know what to teach and when to teach it.

School administrators select commercial materials from a list of suggested instructional programs provided by the EMO. This pre-screening ensures that the materials cover the topics in the curriculum framework and scope and sequence. Teachers also have the freedom to select supplementary materials and have access to a variety of resources on the EMO's website. The school's dean of instruction monitors the use of these supplementary materials through her weekly meetings with teachers and lesson plan reviews. She reports giving autonomy in selecting materials to teachers who can demonstrate how these supplements meet curriculum framework objectives.

Pedagogy (Benchmark 1.D)

Some classes show evidence of adequate instruction. Lesson objectives align with the school's curriculum. Many teachers do not check for student understanding. While students often do not meet objectives, they are cognitively engaged.

Teachers plan purposeful lessons as a grade team using backwards design with close oversight from the dean of instruction. Grade teams work together during common planning periods. Some grades divide the planning by subject, while others co-plan all subjects. The dean of instruction supports teacher plan development by meeting with them weekly and providing written feedback. The dean of instruction also meets with grade teams at the beginning of each unit to discuss big-picture ideas and assessments.

While all classes have the objective written on the board in the form of "I can..." not all teachers check for student understanding or mastery of the goal. In some cases, teachers choose immeasurable objectives such as "I can listen" or "I can visualize." For example, in one classroom, the teacher chose the objective "I can use context to understand vocabulary words," but failed to provide students with an opportunity to show actually demonstrate their ability to do so. Furthermore,

teachers often do not circulate throughout the class to check student work and assist those who do not understand.

Most teachers cognitively engage students, using a variety of strategies including cold calling, asking students to respond in unison and asking students to share answers with a partner. Some teachers have their class participate in choral responses, raising hands excitedly to answer questions. Teachers select materials and objectives aligned with standards and generally expect students to demonstrate grade-appropriate knowledge. Some teachers push students to a deeper level of understanding on these topics through follow-up questioning and peer-to-peer interaction.

The school applies differentiated instruction through the use of small groups. Based on student needs, the school has a daily workshop block for small group work in math and ELA taught by specialist teachers who push into classrooms for this purpose. Teachers report providing differentiated activities based on assessment data; nevertheless, in many observed classes all groups completed the same center activities on a rotation.

Instructional Leadership (Benchmark 1.E)

Brooklyn Dreams has strong instructional leadership with systems for supporting teachers. Instructional leaders conduct regular evaluations; however, only struggling teachers are accountable for instructional improvement. In addition, teacher-reported strengths and weaknesses do not always match the visit team's observations.

School leaders instill high expectations for teacher performance and student achievement. Student achievement results are visible on student desks and throughout the building, showing student progress and goals for growth. At weekly staff meetings, the principal provides feedback on the overall quality of teaching and sets weekly expectations for teachers.

Instructional leaders provide teachers with sustained and systematic support through a variety of mechanisms including weekly observations, regular check-ins, grade level coaching and peer observations. The dean of instruction provides primary teacher support with aid from the principal in residence. The dean of instruction also meets with grade teams weekly to provide planning support and to discuss any other grade-specific issues.

Teachers report that all administrators regularly conduct pop-in classroom visits. The school uses a well-defined observation protocol from the school's EMO; it spirals through all components of good teaching to ensure that teachers receive feedback in their areas of need. School leaders archive observation feedback to teachers and discuss the feedback at regular leadership team meetings.

Teachers whose instructional techniques are not improving receive coaching plans that include specific goals, strategies for reaching goals and timelines. To date, only two teachers have received a coaching plan. One teacher has met her goals with considerable support from administration and exited from the plan. The other teacher has not and the administration has yet to determine whether to place her on an improvement plan. If improvement plan goals are not met, employment can be terminated.

Instructional leaders conduct regular evaluations, although the identified teacher strengths and weaknesses do not match the visit team's observations in every case. At the time of the visit, administrators had completed mid-year evaluations for all teachers using a EMO template that covers

a wide variety of teaching standards. Administrators present this rubric to teachers before the school year and complete it using cumulative evidence from the first half of the year. The reviewed evaluations are largely positive with concrete next steps for improvement. Administrators explain this by reporting their use of these evaluations to emphasize improvements rather than focus on teachers' objective performance.

At-Risk Students (Benchmark 1.F)

Brooklyn Dreams adequately monitors the progress and success of at-risk students. The school is beginning to develop systems for identifying and serving at-risk students, but services are not well-coordinated and the special education teacher has a large caseload.

The school uses an Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) as the primary means for identifying at-risk students. The special education coordinator/teacher, school leaders and self-selected teachers attend the weekly IAT meetings. Teachers looking for support strategies for a particular at-risk student or students themselves come to the meetings for advice. Since meeting participation is voluntary, not all struggling students are brought to the team's attention.

Teachers report that the IAT provides teachers with student specific strategies for improvement and then holds follow-up discussions about the students' progress. If, after trying several strategies, students do not improve, the IAT recommends the student for a special education referral. Teachers have knowledge of the referral process and the role of the special education coordinator in leading it.

The school provides sufficient resources and support to meet the needs of at-risk students through the special education coordinator and two academic specialists. The special education coordinator has responsibility for external service providers, student files, student evaluations, the IAT meetings and support in a variety of instructional settings of the 19 students with IEPs. The two academic specialists work with academically struggling students, students identified by assessment results and teacher recommendation. They pull small groups from classrooms during part of the day for tutoring and push into struggling classroom groups to support students and their teachers during other times. The school has no scheduled time when the at-risk service providers meet with classroom teachers to discuss student progress. Some of the service providers attend grade-level meetings when possible, but often their schedules conflict. When meetings do occur, they are *ad hoc* and often after school.

Teachers report paying particular attention to the performance of at-risk students to ensure they show sufficient progress; however, academic specialists report working with the same students since the beginning of the year (originally identified by assessment results) even though some of them no longer need support.

Student Order and Discipline (Benchmark 1.G)

While there is a school-wide classroom management system, some teachers do not effectively implement this system. In some classes, student misbehavior detracts from learning.

Observed transitions and common spaces are quiet and orderly. Teachers and school leaders supervise hallways and other common areas to ensure they remain safe. The school has a behavior management system. All classrooms display system rules – color-coded cards, a bell to quiet the class, use of “voice level zero” and “voice level one” for different activities, and The Bank of Dreams and rewards for exhibiting the school's core values.

The school has attempted to norm teachers' use of the system through professional development including a list of suggested infractions and the corresponding color chart consequences. Nevertheless, teachers implement the system inconsistently when it comes to minor infractions. While some observed teachers use the card system, others never refer to the cards despite low-level disruptions. For example, one teacher does not use the color-coded cards for the first part of a lesson despite student disruptions, then suddenly starts using the system, sending five students up to change their cards within a few minutes. In this class and others, where teachers inconsistently use the discipline system, student behavior disrupts lessons and decreases learning time.

The school has a clear discipline policy and serious infractions are handled consistently. The staff handbook contains a copy of the discipline policy which school administrators have developed based on EMO practices. Teachers have all received training on the policy and understand how to apply it in their classrooms. The school has had few suspensions, and the principal reports that all suspended students work with the social worker to develop individualized behavior plans.

Professional Development (Benchmark 1.H)

Brooklyn Dreams professional development program is not well-coordinated. School leader coaching is the most effective form of professional development, while weekly workshops have minimal impact. The school leadership does not systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

The school holds weekly staff meetings that focus on administrative issues rather than teachers' instructional needs. The meeting agenda includes professional development topics such as behavior management, science instruction and rigor, but the topics lack continuity from week to week. The leadership team selects the topics, but does not align it with issues covered during leader and teacher coaching sessions. Consequently, these weekly staff meetings have limited effectiveness. On the other hand, the coaching program addresses teachers' individual needs. The dean of instruction, who provides most of the coaching, is very familiar with the needs of teachers. The dean designs peer visitations, tailored to individual teacher strengths and weaknesses, both within the building and with a neighboring EMO-managed school.

Teachers and administrators also attend outside EMO -sponsored workshops throughout the year and train the rest of the staff upon their return. Additionally, the school leadership team attends professional development events with their peers from other EMO-managed schools.

Organizational Capacity (Benchmark 2.C)

The school has an organizational structure with staff, systems and procedures that allows the school to carry out its academic program.

The organizational structure supports distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Teachers understand the roles of each member of the leadership team. The dean of instruction supervises teachers, while the principal manages operations, strategic planning and discipline, as well as supervising support staff and members of the leadership team.

The school's staff is largely inexperienced. The school's EMO and the principal conduct the hiring process together; the EMO recruits applicants and conducts screening interviews while the principal

makes final decisions. Most teachers do not have teaching experience; however, the administrators provide adequate support to both novice and veteran teachers through the intensive coaching.

Governance (Benchmark 2.D)

The board has adequate skills, structures and procedures to govern the school. The board receives school data regularly and uses it to monitor the program. The board plans to hold the school's EMO accountable, including specific measures and processes, and relies on the EMO to evaluate the school leader.

The board meets regularly and receives reports from the principal and EMO representatives. Members receive data on a wide variety of indicators including test scores, attendance, discipline and finances. The board delegates many duties to the EMO, including staff recruitment, facility renovations and budgeting. However, the board closely monitors the work of the EMO and makes final decisions. The EMO conducts the formal evaluation of the principal with input from the board who signs off on the final document.

The board plans to hold the EMO accountable based on a variety of indicators including student performance and finances. This process, however, is not fully developed. The contract between the school and the EMO enables the school to opt out at any time without consequences, giving the board leverage with the EMO. The board reports that the EMO has been extremely responsive to requests, including additional financial commitments.

Conduct of the Visit

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the school evaluation visit at Brooklyn Dreams Charter School on March 22, 2011. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit:

Team Leader: Maya Lagana is an Accountability Analyst for the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. She is responsible for providing technical support related to school accountability plans and the reporting and analysis of individual school performance. Ms. Lagana joined the Institute as an Analyst for School Evaluation. In this position she scheduled ongoing school evaluation visits, communicated with school team members and administrative staff regarding site visit logistics and requirements, developed and disseminated RFP documents, and coordinated the recruitment and work of consultants. Prior to joining the Institute, Ms. Lagana served as a research intern at New Visions for Public Schools in New York City, where she performed data analysis on school performance and conducted research on a variety of educational issues. In 2008, Ms. Lagana was a Project Manager at Boston Collegiate Charter School in Boston, Massachusetts, where she was responsible for creating and implementing a data organization system as well as analyzing data. During that same year, Ms. Lagana also helped to craft grant proposals and formulate a strategic fundraising plan for Achievement First in Brooklyn, New York. 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 in New York City. 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.

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.

External Consultants

Jenn David-Lang has worked in the field of education for almost 20 years. She has had a wide range of experiences in both teaching and administration. She founded and directed Providence Summerbridge, a nonprofit to raise the academic achievement of urban middle school students. She has taught math, English, and Humanities at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. For several years she worked at the New York Charter School Resource Center providing assistance to charter school start-up groups. After receiving her administrative license and Ed.M. from the Bank Street College of Education, she served in a variety of administrative and consulting positions training new teachers, serving as a math coach, supporting principals, and helping to start a number of New York City schools. Three years ago she founded The Main Idea, a service to provide professional development for over 1400 school leaders across the country.

Cynthia Simon Millinger, M.Ed., is the founding president of Charter School Startup, an independent education consulting company that assists charter school applicants, founders, and staff in developing a standards-based Essential Curriculum. Currently Cynthia is the lead math curriculum consultant for the Newark Charter Schools Fund, as well as for several charter schools throughout New Jersey. In this role she collaborates with school leadership and staff to effectively implement data-driven instruction programs that address both external accountability and a school's unique mission. Since 2007 Cynthia has been the primary curriculum consultant for the New York City Charter School Center, the Washington, DC-based Friends of Choice in Urban Schools (FOCUS), and the Maryland Charter School Network. In this capacity she has delivered both in-person and online workshops to hundreds of charter school applicants and leaders on a wide-range of education program topics, including mission, standards, instruction, assessment and curriculum mapping. In 2009 Cynthia conducted workshops on Essential Curriculum design and new school development at the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools Master Class in Dallas and the National Charter Schools Conference in Washington, DC. Additionally, she co-authored the 2009 National Alliance Playbook on New School Development to support the startup and replication work of charter support organizations (CSOs) across the country.

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?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>State University Renewal Benchmarks</u>
State University Renewal Benchmark 1B	<p>The school has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and uses it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
Use of Assessment Data	
State University Renewal Benchmark 1C	<p>The school has a clearly defined curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
Curriculum	

<p style="text-align: center;">State University Renewal Benchmark 1D</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pedagogy</p>	<p>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;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the curriculum <i>as implemented</i> 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. <p>High quality instruction is evident in all classes throughout the school.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p style="text-align: center;">State University Renewal Benchmark 1E</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Instructional Leadership</p>	<p>The school has strong instructional leadership.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 1F</p> <p>At-Risk Students</p>	<p>teachers;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>The school is demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 1G</p> <p>Student Order & Discipline</p>	<p>The school promotes a culture of learning and scholarship.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 1H</p> <p>Professional Development</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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

	<p>mission, curriculum, and instructional programs;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
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Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?	
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<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>State University Renewal Benchmarks</u>
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State University Renewal Benchmark 2A Mission & Key Design Elements	<p>The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
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State University Renewal Benchmark 2B Parents & Students	<p>Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
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State University Renewal Benchmark 2C Organizational Capacity	<p>The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure with staff, systems, and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
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	<p>its mission and Accountability Plan goals, and a process for their regular review and revision;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2D</p> <p>Board Oversight</p>	<p>The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school’s mission and provide oversight to the total educational program.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2E</p> <p>Governance</p>	<p>The board has implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes, and has abided by them.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.