



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Renewal Report

Family Life Academy Charter School

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

REPORT INTRODUCTION	1
RECOMMENDATION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	1
SCHOOL DESCRIPTION.....	5
RENEWAL BENCHMARKS AND DISCUSSION	9
APPENDIX.....	36

The final version of Institute renewal reports should be broadly shared by the school with the entire school community. This report will be posted on the Institute’s website at: www.newyorkcharters.org/pubsReportsRenewals.htm.

REPORT INTRODUCTION

This report is the primary vehicle by which the Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) transmits to the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the “State University Trustees”) its findings and recommendations regarding a school’s Application for Renewal, and more broadly, details the merits of a school’s case for renewal. This report has been created and issued pursuant to the *Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University Board of Trustees* (the “State University Renewal Practices”).¹

Information about the State University’s renewal process, as well as an overview of the requirements for renewal under the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (as amended, the “Act”), are available in the [Appendix](#) of this report. Note too that the Institute’s website provides additional details and resources regarding renewal, including: the Institute’s comprehensive Charter Renewal Handbook, at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsRenewOverview.htm>.

RECOMMENDATION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendation

Full-Term Renewal

The Charter Schools Institute recommends that the State University Trustees approve the Application for Subsequent Renewal of the Family Life Academy Charter School (“Family Life Academy”) and renew its charter for a period of five years with authority to provide instruction to students in Kindergarten to 5th grade with a maximum projected enrollment of 290 students and consistent with the other terms set forth in its Application for Renewal.

Required Findings

Based on all the evidence submitted in the current charter term and as described in or submitted with the Application for Subsequent Renewal, the Institute makes the following findings required by the Act. Family Life Academy, as described in the renewal application, meets the requirements of the Act and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations. Family Life Academy has demonstrated the ability to operate in an educationally and fiscally sound manner in the next charter period. Finally, given the programs it will offer, its structure and its purpose, approving the school to operate for another five years is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in Education Law subdivision 2850(2).

Consideration of School District Comments

In accordance with the Act, the Institute notified the school district in which the charter school is located regarding Family Life Academy’s Application for Subsequent Renewal. No comments were received in response.

¹ The *Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University Board of Trustees* (revised December 13, 2005) are available at www.newyorkcharters.org.

Summary Discussion

Academic Success

By the end of the current Short-Term Renewal charter period, Family Life Academy met the mathematics goal and came close to meeting the English language arts goal set forth in its Accountability Plan. In mathematics, Family Life Academy came close to meeting the goal in 2006 and exceeded it in 2007. Family Life Academy far outperformed the local school district and performed better than predicted in comparison to similar schools state-wide. Cohorts of students met their targets in year-to-year gains. In English language arts, Family Life Academy came close to meeting its goal during the second year of the charter period, demonstrating consistent gains in the goal's specific outcome measures. Students who were in the school longer performed better on the English language arts assessment; students in each test grade scored higher than students in the same grade the previous year. Family Life Academy again far outperformed the local school district and performed better than predicted in comparison to similar schools state-wide. While cohorts of students did not meet all of their targets in year-to-year gains, overall the cohorts showed substantial progress. In addition, the school is likely to meet its 2007 Accountability Plan goals in science and social studies. Finally, in 2007, the New York State Commissioner of Education named Family Life Academy a High Performing/Gap Closing School.

Family Life Academy has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and is in the process of learning how to use it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning. The school regularly administers assessments and systematically collects data from such assessments. Teams, comprised of teachers and instructional support staff, meet regularly to discuss these assessment results. However, while these teams are in the process of developing a common understanding of the data's meaning and consequences, they do not yet systematically monitor and make improvements to curriculum and instruction based on these analyses.

Family Life Academy has adopted and implemented a clearly defined curriculum which it uses to meet state performance standards. The curriculum has been stable during the current charter period. At the time of the subsequent renewal visit, the school continued to use the same texts that were in use at the time of the initial renewal visit. Family Life Academy has a series of curricular pacing guides to direct teachers in using the curricular programs, although they vary in quality and comprehensiveness. Classroom teachers are fully aware of the curricula for which they are responsible and have access to guidelines for developing lesson plans. Teachers develop lesson plans that are in alignment with the guidelines and follow those plans. The assistant educational administrator reviews lesson plans each week and communicates her feedback electronically to both teachers and the principal.

Family Life Academy has strong instructional leadership. Its priorities are responsive to, and consistent with, achieving the school's academic Accountability Plan goals and addressing deficiencies; these priorities are communicated to, and understood by, the school's instructional staff. The leadership has taken concerted and consistent action in line with these priorities. Family Life Academy's leadership provides coaching and support as well as structured opportunities for teachers to plan for the delivery of the instructional program. With the leadership's support, the school is able to retain an experienced teaching staff to help the school achieve its academic goals. The school's principal has deployed a leadership team whose members, in executing their roles and responsibilities, are able to support the effective delivery of the instructional program.

Observed lessons were structured and purposeful, and teachers articulated clear expectations for student learning. Inspectors observed that aims and focus skills were clearly written on the board and aligned with the pacing guide, and that lessons specifically addressed those aims and skills. While students were attentive and engaged in the learning activities, overall, the lessons did not foster the development of higher order thinking skills in students. During interviews, school leaders and staff identified the development of such skills in students as an area for improvement.

Instructional leaders have identified supporting English language learners as a priority and have two full-time English as a second language (ESL) teachers in place. However, at the time of the renewal inspection visit, there was limited evidence that the classroom teachers were sufficiently prepared to use sheltered English immersion techniques in their classrooms to provide additional support to English language learners. As such, the principal has begun a mandatory whole faculty study group, in which teachers read about and discuss strategies for this target population, and then follow up the discussion by implementing appropriate sheltered English immersion techniques within their classrooms, monitored by the principal.

The school setting allows and promotes a culture of learning. Classroom management techniques and daily routines have established an environment in which learning is valued. Throughout Family Life Academy, safe and orderly conditions have been established.

Instructional leaders have established a framework for professional development based on the principles of professional learning communities. They have put in place a number of elements to support teacher learning and collaboration, including data analysis, collaborative teams and coaching. However, at the time of the renewal inspection visit, the impact of these supports on instruction and achievement had yet to be determined.

Organizational Effectiveness and Viability

Family Life Academy has fulfilled its mission with regards to establishing and maintaining an orderly and nurturing environment, as it has since the time of its Application for Initial Renewal. Now, in its seventh year, the school has made substantial progress towards another key element of its mission—preparing its students to achieve high standards. Based on the data collected, it appears that Family Life Academy has implemented the majority of the key design elements included in its charter. However, one design element, “revised approach to the instruction of English language learners,” was not in place at the time of the renewal inspection visit. Though the school leaders articulate the selected approach, teachers are not familiar with the methods.

Family Life Academy’s board of trustees understands the core business of the school—student achievement—in sufficient depth to permit it to provide effective oversight. Board members understand their role in monitoring the progress of Family Life Academy’s educational program and in holding the school leader accountable for school performance. They have established an Accountability Committee and adopted a “data-driven assessment model” through which they provide oversight of the school. One board member explained that the board’s role is to determine if resources can be allocated and then to work with the principal to push for effective implementation. While the school board has evaluated the principal at the end of the last two school years, at the time of the renewal inspection visit, they had not yet determined the criteria upon which she would be evaluated this year.

Over the life of the charter, parents of enrolled students have expressed satisfaction with Family Life Academy's performance and the school maintains a substantial waiting list. However, the evidence available is insufficient to conclude that these results are representative of the parents as a whole. The school has in place several methods for ensuring that parents are informed of their children's academic progress, including parent-teacher conferences, required signatures on all student work and translation of written documents.

With certain exceptions, Family Life Academy appears to be in general and substantial compliance with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the terms of its charter at the time of the renewal inspection visit and during the term of its Short-Term Renewal charter. With few exceptions, the school has implemented effective policies and procedures to serve the needs of parents and students, and provide compliance controls.

Fiscal Soundness

Family Life Academy completed fiscal year (FY) 2007 in stable and improved financial condition and has been generally stable throughout its existence. The school has no long-term debt and throughout its life has generated adequate cash flow to support operations. The school has been timely in meeting its financial reporting requirements and such reporting has been complete and accurate with minor exceptions. Family Life Academy has never been cited for any material financial or internal control weaknesses as part of its annual financial statement audits, although a recent audit by the Office of the State Comptroller indicates there are several areas where the school should improve its internal controls. Family Life Academy has generally established appropriate policies and procedures, although it should strengthen its budget practices and procedures, clarify its policies related to procurement and equipment inventory, and improve its compliance with established policies including the retention of appropriate related documentation.

Plans for the Next Charter Period

Family Life Academy has presented a fiscal plan which is reasonable and likely to be achievable. The school has operated in a fiscally sound manner in its current grade and enrollment configuration and is likely to continue to do so, as proposed. The school's financial position during the term of a future charter should remain stable assuming continued strong demand for enrollment in the school.

To the extent that Family Life Academy has achieved its key academic goals, continues to implement an educational program that supports achieving those goal, operates an effective and viable organization, and is fiscally sound, its plans to continue to implement the educational program as currently constituted for the next charter period are reasonable, feasible and achievable.

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

The State University Trustees approved the application for Family Life Academy Charter School on January 23, 2001; its charter (certificate of incorporation) was subsequently issued by the Board of Regents on May 15, 2001. Family Life Academy opened in September 2001 with an enrollment of 99 students in Kindergarten and 1st grades, added one grade each year thereafter during the term of the original charter, enrolling 287 students in grades Kindergarten through 5th grade during the last year of its original charter. At the time of its current renewal inspection visit in October of 2007, the school enrolled 290 students.

Since its inception, Family Life Academy has been housed in renovated space leased from the Latino Pastoral Action Center located at 14 West 170th Street in the Bronx, New York. The school's population is largely comprised of English language learners from the Highbridge section of the Bronx.

In the fall of 2005, Family Life Academy submitted an Application for Initial Renewal. The State University Trustees granted Family Life Academy a Short-Term Renewal for a period of two years on March 13, 2006, which was subsequently approved by the Board of Regents on May 23, 2006. In their renewal recommendation, the Institute cited the school's mixed record of performance, identifying Family Life Academy's failure to meet the academic goals set forth in their Accountability Plan as the rationale for the recommendation of a Short-Term Renewal.

The Family Life Academy's mission statement, as included in their renewal charter, is as follows:

The Family Life Academy Charter School (FLACS) in partnership with the Latino Pastoral Action Center (LPAC) and the parents, seeks to empower all New York City students in grades K-5 to achieve high standards, help them take responsibility for their own learning, and encourage them to explore and affirm human values.

Like a family – and in collaboration with each family – the school will create an orderly, nurturing and dynamic environment where learning is engaging, meaningful, and joyful. All members of the school community (students, parents, and teachers) will develop the knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm to continue learning throughout their lives, expand their understanding of what is possible for themselves and their world, and productive and satisfying lives.

Key design elements, as outlined in the school's Application for Initial Renewal, include the following:

- active school leadership;
- rigorous curriculum, including *Trophies Reading*, *Strategies for Writing*, *Saxon Math*, *Harcourt Science*, and *Horizons Social Studies* from Harcourt Brace;
- extended school day, including a 40 minute tutoring block;
- school traditions, including monthly attendance and academic achievement awards, monthly essay contests, community book projects, and December month of service;

- special structures, including: a ninety-minute literacy block; sixty-five minute math block; grade level planning period; weekly faculty conference; Saturday Academy for targeted groups; summer school and after school tutoring; and a lead teacher for each grade;
- class size of 20 to 26 students;
- shared responsibility for teaching and learning among the students, school, and parents reflected in each student's learning plan;
- expanded data-driven instructional practices;
- continued use of community resources, focusing on the Latino Pastoral Action Center;
- consistent discipline and enforcement;
- parental involvement;
- close monitoring of student attendance;
- student uniforms;
- sustained and customized professional development; and
- improved approaches to the instruction of English language learners.

School Year (2007-2008)

184 Instructional Days

School Day (2007-2008)

7:45 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.²

² 7:45 a.m. to 8:40 a.m. is utilized for breakfast, pick-up, checking in routines, and the pledge. A morning meeting is scheduled from 8:40 a.m. to 8:50 a.m., with formal instruction beginning at 8:50 a.m.

Enrollment

	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment³	Original Chartered Grades	Revised Grades Served	Actual Grades Served	Complying
2001-02	100	100	99	K-1	K-1	K-1	YES
2002-03	142	156	148	K-2	K-2	K-2	YES
2003-04	182	192	192	K-3	K-3	K-3	YES
2004-05	219	219	243	K-4	K-4	K-4	YES
2005-06	255	255	287	K-5	K-5	K-5	YES
2006-07	290	290	286	K-5	K-5	K-5	YES
2007-08	290	290	290	K-5	K-5	K-5	YES

Race/Ethnicity	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. FLACS	% of Enroll. Comm. District #9	% of Enroll. FLACS	% of Enroll. Comm. District #9	% of Enroll. FLACS	% of Enroll. Comm. District #9
American Indian or Alaska Native	0 %	1 %	0 %	1 %	NA	NA
Black or African American	21 %	34 %	28 %	34 %	NA	NA
Hispanic	79 %	63 %	71 %	63 %	NA	NA
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0 %	2 %	1 %	2 %	NA	NA
White	0 %	1 %	0 %	1 %	NA	NA

Source: 2004-05, 2005-06: School Report Card (New York State Education Department); 2006-07: New York State Education Department Database.

³ Enrollment figures per the Charter School's Institute's official enrollment table, which are reported by the school. Figures used to calculate students populations may differ depending on the date of data collection.

Special Populations	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. FLACS	% of Enroll. Comm. District #9	% of Enroll. FLACS	% of Enroll. Comm. District #9	% of Enroll. FLACS	% of Enroll. Comm. District #9
Students with Disabilities	13.8 %	NA	11.4%	NA	11.8 %	15.0 %
Limited English Proficient	21 %	23 %	45 %	24 %	41.7 %	23.2 %

Source: Students with Disabilities: Renewal Application - Statistical Overview (2004-05, 2005-06); New York State Education Department Database (2006-07). Limited English Proficient: (2005-2006) New York State Education Department School Report Card (2004-05, 2005-06); New York State Education Department Database (2006-07).

Free/Reduced Lunch	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. FLACS	% of Enroll. Comm. District #9	% of Enroll. FLACS	% of Enroll. Comm. District #9	% of Enroll. FLACS	% of Enroll. Comm. District #9
Eligible for Free Lunch	94 %	77 %	92 %	81 %	94 %	79.8 %
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	3 %	4 %	3 %	5 %	4 %	5.9 %

Source: 2005-06 New York State Education Department School Report Card (2004-2005, 2005-2006); New York State Education Department Database (2006-2007).

School Charter History

Charter Year	School Year	Year of Operation	Evaluation Visit	Feedback to School	Other Actions Taken
1 st Charter – 1 st Year	2001-02	1 st	YES	Prior Action Letter; End of Year Evaluation Report	
1 st Charter – 2 nd Year	2002-03	2 nd	YES	End of Year Evaluation Report	
1 st Charter – 3 rd Year	2003-04	3 rd	YES	End of Year Evaluation Report	
1 st Charter – 4 th Year	2004-05	4 th	NO	None	
1 st Charter – 5 th Year	2005-06	5 th	YES	Initial Renewal Report	Granted Short-Term Renewal for a period of two years
2 nd Charter – 1 st Year	2006-07	6 th	NO	None	
2 nd Charter – 2 nd Year	2007-08	7 th	YES	Subsequent Renewal Report	Recommended for Full-Term Renewal

RENEWAL BENCHMARKS AND DISCUSSION

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
Benchmark 1A Academic Attainment & Improvement	<p>1A.1 English Language Arts: The school meets or has come close to meeting the English Language Arts goal in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.</p> <p>1A.2 Mathematics: The school meets or has come close to meeting the mathematics goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.</p> <p>1A.3 Science: The school meets or has come close to meeting the science goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.</p> <p>1A.4 Social Studies: The school meets or has come close to meeting the social studies goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.</p> <p>1A.5 NCLB: The school has made adequate yearly progress as required by NCLB.</p>

Family Life Academy Charter School developed an Accountability Plan that set academic goals in the key subject areas of: English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. For each goal, specific outcome measures define the level of performance necessary to meet that goal. These outcome measures include the following three types: 1) the absolute level of student performance on state examinations; 2) the comparative level of student performance on state examinations; and 3) individual student growth based on year-to-year comparisons of grade level cohorts. The following table summarizes the outcome measures currently required by the Institute for each subject area goal, as well as a measure for No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Schools may have also elected to include additional optional measures for these goals in their Accountability Plan.

Summary of Required Outcome Measures in Elementary/Middle School (K-8) Accountability Plans					
GOAL	Required Outcome Measures				
	Absolute		Comparative		Value Added
	75 percent proficient on state exam	Performance Index (PI) meets Annual Measurable Objective (AMO)	Percent proficient greater than local school district	School exceeds its predicted level of performance compared to similar public schools by a small Effect Size	Grade-level cohorts reduce by half the gap between the previous year's percent proficient and 75 percent
ELA	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Math	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Science	◆		◆		
Social Studies	◆		◆		
NCLB	School is deemed in "Good Standing" under state's NCLB accountability system				

The following data and discussion address the outcome measures under each of these five goals. As the basis for determining if a school has met the goals, the results of the various required and optional outcome measures provide the framework for evaluating the school's academic success under this renewal benchmark. If the school's Accountability Plan did not include measures similar to those currently required by the Institute, outcomes related to those additional measures are presented as well. Bold numbers appearing in the tables are the critical values for determining if a measure was met in a given year.

English Language Arts

Accountability Plan Goal: *Family Life Academy students will demonstrate proficiency in critical literacy skills.*

Accountability Plan Measures: Family Life Academy has come close to meeting its English language arts goal. In absolute terms, 60 percent of students were proficient on the state exam in 2006-07. The school has consistently achieved the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set by the state's NCLB accountability system. In both years it outperformed its local school district and all three of the comparison schools selected in its Accountability Plan. In addition, the school has performed better than predicted in comparison to demographically similar schools statewide, with a very wide margin last year. On its value-added measure, the school reported that three out of five grade level cohorts achieved their respective targets on the TerraNova exam in 2005-06. The next year, when value-added was based New York State Testing Program data, one out of two cohorts achieved its target and overall Family Life Academy increased its proficiency rate.

Absolute Measures		
Each year, 75 percent of 3 rd through 5 th graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State ELA examination.		
Results (in percents)		
Grade	School Year	
	2005-06⁴ (N=93)	2006-07 (N= 127)
3	37.5	59.0
4	62.5	63.0
5	55.2	57.1
6	-	-
7	-	-
8	-	-
All	53.8	59.9
Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State ELA exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.		
Results (in percents)		
Index	School Year	
	2005-06 (N=121)	2006-07 (N=138)
PI	139	151
AMO	122	122

Comparative Measures		
Each year, the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State ELA exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of Community School District 9, Bronx.		
Results (in percents)		
Comparison	School Year	
	2005-06 (Grades 3-5)	2006-07 (Grades 3-5)
School	53.8	59.9
District	42.2	37.2
Each year, the percent of students performing at or above Level 3 on the State ELA exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of the following similar schools in Community School District 9: PS 28, PS 55, and PS 64.		
Results (in percents)		
Comparison	School Year	
	2005-06 (Grades 3-5)	2006-07 (Grades 3-5)
School	53.8	59.9
PS 28	41.5	35.0
PS 55	29.2	32.1
PS 64	36.2	32.2

⁴ There are discrepancies between the percentages and numbers reported by the school for 2005-06 for individual grades and overall making the reliability of these data uncertain.

Each year, the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State ELA exam by at least a small Effect Size (performing higher than expected to small degree) according to a regression analysis controlling for students eligible for free lunch among all public schools in New York State.

Results (in percents)		
Index	School Year	
	2005-06 (Grades 3-5) (N=121)	2006-07 (Grades 3-5) (N= 137)
Predicted	42.6	43.3
Actual	50.4	59.9
Effect Size	0.48	1.08

Value-Added Measures		
For the 2005-06 school year, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one half the gap between their average NCE in the previous spring on the TerraNova Total Reading Battery, a nationally-normed ELA test, and an NCE of 50 (grade-level) in the current spring. If a grade level exceeds an NCE of 50 in the previous year, the cohort will show an increase in the current year.		
Results (in percents)		
Mean NCE	School Year	
	2005-06 (Grades 1-5) (N=NA) ⁵	2006-07
Baseline	NA	-
Target	NA	-
Actual	NA	-
Cohorts Made	(3 of 5)	-
Target		
Each year, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 on the previous year's State ELA exam and 75 percent at or above Level 3 on the current year's State ELA exam. If a grade-level cohort exceeds 75 percent at or above Level 3 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.		
Results (in percents)		
Percent Level 3 & 4 on NYSTP	School Year	
	2005-06	2006-07 (Grades 4-5) (N=71)
Baseline	-	47.9
Target	-	61.5
Actual	-	62.0
Cohorts Made	-	(1 of 2)
Target		

⁵ Overall school results could not be calculated, because the number of students in each cohort was not reported.

Mathematics

Accountability Plan Goal: *Family Life Academy students will become proficient in the application of mathematical skills and concepts.*

Accountability Plan Measures: Family Life Academy has met its mathematics goal. Last year 83 percent of students were proficient on the state exam. The school has consistently achieved the AMO set by the state, and outperformed both its local school district and selected comparison schools. In comparison to demographically similar schools statewide, the school has far exceeded its predicted level of performance. On the value-added measure last year both cohorts achieved their target and overall the percentage of students performing and the proficient level has increased.

Absolute Measures		
Each year, 75 percent of 3 rd through 5 th graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State mathematics examination.		
Results (in percents)		
Grade	School Year	
	2005-06⁶ (N=105)	2006-07 (N=126)
3	62.2	87.2
4	76.2	77.8
5	56.3	85.7
6	-	-
7	-	-
8	-	-
All	65.8	83.3
Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State math exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.		
Results (in percents)		
Index	School Year	
	2005-06 (N=142)	2006-07 (N=137)
PI	159	180
AMO	86	86
Comparative Measures		
Each year, the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State math exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of Community School District 9, Bronx.		
Results (in percents)		
Comparison	School Year	
	2005-06 (Grades 3-5)	2006-07 (Grades 3-5)
School	65.8	83.3
District	50.6	59.4

⁶ There are discrepancies between the percentages and numbers reported by the school for 2005-06 for individual grades and overall making the reliability of these data uncertain.

Each year, the percent of students performing at or above Level 3 on the State math exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of the following similar schools in Community School District 9: PS 28, PS 55, and PS 64.		
Results (in percents)		
Comparison	School Year	
	2005-06 (Grades 3-5)	2006-07 (Grades 3-5)
School	65.8	83.3
PS 28	49.8	62.8
PS 55	45.5	62.9
PS 64	49.0	53.0
Each year, the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State math exam by at least a small Effect Size (performing higher than expected to small degree) according to a regression analysis controlling for students eligible for free lunch among all public schools in New York State.		
Results (in percents)		
Index	School Year	
	2005-06 (Grades 3-5) (N=142)	2006-07 (Grades 3-5) (N=136)
Predicted	54.2	64.3
Actual	69.0	83.8
Effect Size	0.83	1.06

Value-Added Measures		
Each year, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 on the previous year's State math exam and 75 percent at or above Level 3 on the current year's State math exam.		
Results (in percents)		
Percent Level 3 & 4 on NYSTP	School Year	
	2005-06	2006-07 (Grades 4-5) (N=86)
Baseline	-	74.4
Target	-	74.7
Actual	-	82.6
Cohorts Made	-	(2 of 2)
Target	-	

Science

Accountability Plan Goal: *Family Life Academy students will demonstrate proficiency in the practice and methodology of scientific inquiry.*

Accountability Plan Measures: Family Life Academy has met its science goal. In both years more than 80 percent of students scored at the proficient level on the 4th grade state exam and the school outperformed the local school district as well.

Absolute Measures		
Each year, 75 percent of fourth graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State science examination.		
Results (in percents)		
Grade	School Year ⁷	
	2005-06 (N=47)	2006-07 (N=43)
4	80.9	84.8
8	-	-

Comparative Measures		
Each year, the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State Science exam will be greater than that of Community School District 9, Bronx.		
Results (in percents)		
Comparison	School Year	
	2005-06 (Grade 4)	2006-07 (Grade 4)
School	80.9	85.4
District	58.3	NA

Social Studies

Accountability Plan Goal: *Family Life Academy students will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of four key social science components: history, geography, civics and economics.*

Accountability Plan Measures: Family Life Academy has met its social studies goal. While 57 percent of students were proficient on the 5th grade state exam in 2005-06, that rate rose 81 percent in 2006-07. Comparative data for the local school district are unavailable.

Absolute Measures		
Each year, 75 percent of fifth graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Social Studies examination.		
Results (in percents)		
Grade	School Year ⁸	
	2005-06 (N=NA)	2006-07 (N=43)
5	56.6	81.4
8	-	-

⁷ For 2005-06 the school reported results for students in their second year; the 2006-07 data are all tested students.

⁸ For 2005-06 the school reported results for students in their second year; the 2006-07 data are all tested students.

Comparative Measures		
Each year, the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the state's social studies exam will be greater than that of Community School District 9, Bronx.		
Results (in percents)		
Comparison	School Year	
	2005-06 (Grade 5)	2006-07 (Grade 5)
School	56.6	81.4
District	NA	NA

Additional Accountability Plan Goal: English Language Learners

Accountability Plan Goal: *English Language Learners/Limited English Proficient (ELL/LEP) students will become proficient in English.*

Accountability Plan Measure: Family Life Academy has met its goal for ELL/LEP students.

Absolute Measures		
By their second year following admissions to Family Life Academy, at least 60% of English Language Learner/Limited English Proficient (ELL/LEP) students will score at the Advanced or Proficient Levels on the NYSESLAT assessment. For each succeeding year, an additional 50 percent of the remaining students will be added to the school's target for scoring at the NYSESLAT Advanced or Proficient Levels.		
Results (in percents)		
Year of Entry	School Year	
	2005-06	2006-07
2003	88	90
2004	70	78
2005	-	64

NCLB

In addition to meeting its specific subject area goals, the school is expected under No Child Left Behind to made adequate yearly progress towards enabling all students to score at the proficient level on the state English language arts and mathematics exams. In holding charter schools to the same standards as other public schools, the state issues an annual school accountability report that indicates the school's status each year.

Accountability Plan Measures: Family Life Academy has achieved its NCLB goal by maintaining its status of "in good standing" according to the state's NCLB accountability system.

Absolute Measures				
Under the state's NCLB accountability system, the school's Accountability Status will be "Good Standing" each year.				
Results (in percents)				
Status	School Year			
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Good Standing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
Benchmark 2A School Specific Non-Academic Goals	2A The school meets or has come close to meeting the Unique Measures of non-academic student outcomes that are contained in its Accountability Plan over the life of the charter (if any).

Family Life Academy Charter School had no school-specific non-academic goals in effect in its Accountability Plan during this charter period.

Benchmark 2B Mission & Design Elements	2B The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.
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Family Life Academy’s mission statement, as stated in its current charter, is as follows:

The Family Life Academy Charter School (FLACS) in partnership with the Latino Pastoral Action Center (LPAC) and the parents, seeks to empower all New York City students in grades K-5 to achieve high standards, help them take responsibility for their own learning, and encourage them to explore and affirm human values.

Like a family – and in collaboration with each family – the school will create and orderly, nurturing and dynamic environment where learning is engaging, meaningful, and joyful. All members of the school community (students, parents, and teachers) will develop the knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm to continue learning throughout their lives, expand their understanding of what is possible for themselves and their world, and productive and satisfying lives.

Family Life Academy has fulfilled its mission in regard to creating an orderly and nurturing environment. This was evident during the most recent renewal inspection visit as well as during the school’s first renewal inspection visit. However, at the time that the school sought its Initial Renewal, it had not yet demonstrated that its students had achieved high standards. Now, in its seventh year, the school has made substantial progress towards that element of its mission. As described fully under Benchmark 1A, the school has enabled more than 80 percent of its students to achieve proficiency on the state mathematics exam and come close to meeting its accountability goal in English language arts, by substantially outperforming its local community school district and similar schools state-wide.

In their Application for Initial Renewal submitted to the Institute in 2005, Family Life Academy presented an extensive list of the school’s “successful key design elements” that it planned to continue to implement. In addition, the school intended to add several key elements in order to “address shortcomings” noted in previous Institute inspections. At the time of the renewal visit, the following elements were in evidence:

Academic Program	The school continues to use the curricular programs outlined in its Application for Initial Renewal.
After School Tutoring	The school offers small group instruction to students who are at-risk of academic failure.
Expanded Data Use	Family Life Academy appears to have made a commitment to a data-driven model, including data team meetings and a dedicated data specialist.
Sustained and Customized Professional Development	The school has two full-time staff developers, in addition to an assistant educational administrator, who provide coaching and feedback to teachers.

The limited nature of a one-day inspection visit did not allow the inspectors to collect data regarding all of the design elements. Based on the data collected, it appears that Family Life Academy has implemented the majority of its design elements.

One important design element, “revised approach to the instruction of English language learners,” was not in place at the time of the renewal inspection visit. The Application for Subsequent Renewal indicated that the school has provided a sheltered English Immersion model of its own design that has adapted instructional practices for English language learners from program models such as Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) and English for Students of Other Languages (ESOL). However, notwithstanding these assertions, at the time of the visit, teachers did not demonstrate familiarity with these methods, despite the fact that the model relies on the ability of classroom teachers to modify their instruction to meet the specific needs of ELL students.

Benchmark 2C Governance	2C.1	The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school’s mission and specific goals.
	2C.2	The board has implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes and has abided by them.

Family Life Academy’s board of trustees understands the core business of the school—student achievement—in sufficient depth to permit it to provide effective oversight. Board members understand their role in monitoring the progress of the school’s educational program and in holding the school leader accountable for school performance. The board has engaged in deliberate school leadership succession planning.

According to board members, they have adopted a “data-driven assessment model” through which they provide oversight of the school. Following the Institute’s first renewal inspection visit to the school two years ago, the school’s board of trustees established an Accountability Committee, as a committee of the whole. On a monthly basis, it reviews the school’s progress in the form of achievement data disaggregated by grade and class, and performance of English language learners. The data serve as the basis for the board’s discussion regarding student performance and ensures that results on state tests are not a surprise, since individual student progress has been tracked on a regular basis. The chair stated that the board needs to be in a position to make immediate decisions as part of its oversight system such that the school can make “quick interventions” based on the interim data.

In addition, board members claimed to regularly question the principal about what she is doing in implementing the educational program. All members state that they make time to ensure that the school works by visiting classes. “The best thing we can do is to ask the questions.” One board member explained that the board’s role is to determine where resources can be allocated and to then work with the principal to push for effective implementation. “We direct her on focusing resources to make sure goals are achieved; we do not determine the initiatives.” For example, the board approved allocating funds for the “Fast ForWord” intervention program, based on the principal’s recommendation. Nevertheless, the board members indicated that they want to measure the program’s success to determine if the expenditure is justified.

The board has evaluated the principal at the end of the last two school years, but at the time of the renewal visit had not yet determined the criteria for her evaluation this year. Board members indicated that the previous evaluations’ foci were on the test results necessary to achieve a Full-Term Renewal, as well as the administration of the school, including succession planning. However, the reviews have not been based on a formal protocol, and there has been no agreed-upon goal setting. To address this, the board has asked the principal to develop a three-year plan, due at the end of the current year, to lay out expectations and anticipated challenges.

As part of its renewal review, the Institute reviewed the progress of Family Life Academy with respect to policies and procedures, by-laws, self-dealing transactions and conflicts of interest, especially regarding those issues noted as problematic in the prior renewal report. With one notable and some minor exceptions discussed below, the school made substantial progress in these governance areas. As a result, the school generally has maintained appropriate policies, systems and

processes, and appears to have abided by them. The school board and leadership deserve credit for their efforts in this area.

The notable exception to the board's record of good governance during the renewal term was its failure to abide by the staggered terms as set forth in its by-laws and as reported by the Institute in Family Life Academy's prior renewal report dated February 13, 2006. At the time of the renewal inspection visit, the Institute reiterated the importance of this issue. Since then the school board has worked with the Institute to resolve this issue and has properly amended its by-laws.

The school board's more minor exception to abiding by the provisions in its by-laws was that on more than one occasion, the principal, who is a non-voting member of the school board, was not counted toward quorum when she should have been. The by-laws also contained other technical deficiencies that have since been remedied.

The Institute noted Family Life Academy's overall progress related to policies as part of its renewal review, and concluded the following.

- The policy on fingerprinting, which had been noted as deficient, was improved. More importantly, in practice, a single person under the direct supervision of the principal, was in charge of all employee fingerprinting, and was effective.
- While the school did have a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) notice posted, it still reflected a deficiency in the FOIL policy as it inaccurately stated the person handling FOIL appeals. The school also lacked the two required FOIL lists.
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) policies and practices did not show much improvement. While the school still had a sign-in/sign-out sheet for access to student records, and now had a list of student file contents, there was little evidence of compliance with the other provisions of FERPA.
- The discipline policy references the New York City Board of Education's "Citywide Standards," but these are not actually used and are only loosely consulted by Family Life Academy in its daily implementation of the discipline policy. While charter schools are free to use whatever discipline policies they choose, that are in compliance with the Act and federal due process/law, the policy should reflect the school's actual practice.

Benchmark 2D	2D	Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.
Parents & Students		

Over the life of the charter, parents have expressed satisfaction with Family Life Academy’s performance. However, the evidence available is insufficient to conclude that these results are representative of the parents as a whole.

First, the school has administered parental satisfaction surveys each year and, while they have indicated positive results, parental participation has been low. For example, only 53 percent of parents returned the spring 2007 survey. Such a low response rate is insufficient to be an indicator of parental opinion in general.

Second, Family Life Academy maintains a waiting list for students seeking admission to the school. In July 2007, the number of students on this list ranged from 154 for Kindergarten to 30 for 5th grade. A board member indicated that at the time of the renewal visit, the waiting list contained the names of more than 600 children.

Third, parents who participated in focus groups during the subsequent renewal visit all expressed confidence in and enthusiasm for the school. Parents in the focus group for this inspection visit asserted that the school sufficiently communicates with parents regarding their children’s progress.

In addition to parent-teacher conferences, Family Life Academy requires that parents sign homework, reading logs and all tests to ensure that they know how their children are performing. Several parents indicated that their children had taken responsibility for ensuring that their work is signed. In addition, they noted that written documents are translated into Spanish as needed.

Benchmark 2E Legal Requirements	2E The school has substantially complied with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.
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As part of the Institute’s legal review, compliance deficiencies noted in Family Life Academy’s last renewal report were reviewed. In almost all areas, improvement was noted. Compliance in the area of conducting fingerprint supported background checks was substantially improved with all employees cleared by the State Education Department or appointed on an emergency conditional basis by the school’s board.

Another area of substantial improvement was teacher qualification. At the time of the last renewal visit, the Institute found enough problems in teacher certification and No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) highly qualified teacher requirements to warrant a corrective plan for the school. The school actively worked to resolve the situation and sought the Institute’s advice as needed. At the time of the renewal inspection visit, more than a sufficient number of teachers were certified and those that were not were both qualified under the Charter Schools Act and highly qualified under NCLB.

As part of the legal review Family Life Academy board minutes were reviewed. Minutes of executive sessions did not appear to be kept, and reasons for going into executive session were not listed in the board’s minutes, both in violation of the New York Open Meetings Law. Also, there were references to finance committee meeting minutes in the board meeting minutes but they were not attached or separately sent to the Institute. The absence of an Open Meeting Law policy was noted by the Institute and may be a contributing factor to the above violations. The Institute will work with the school to develop an effective policy. Any other legal deficiencies beyond those set forth in Benchmark 2C.2 noted at the time of the renewal inspection visit were both minor and largely technical.

The Institute also followed-up on a finding of the Office of the State Comptroller, which found a computer at the school contained pornographic images during its audit. That computer was re-searched and contained neither evidence of such images nor any evidence that such internet access has occurred since the time of the audit.

The school’s board stated it would consult outside counsel as appropriate if legal issues arose, which the Institute, based on some of the issues under Benchmark 2C.2, strongly encourages.

Based on the foregoing and with the exceptions noted, at the time of the renewal inspection visit, the school appeared to be in, and to have compiled a record of, general and substantial compliance with applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations and the terms of its charter during the term of its charter. Also, with the exceptions noted, the school generally has maintained effective systems and controls for legal compliance, which was apparent at the time of the renewal visit.

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
Benchmark 3A Budgeting and Long Range Planning	3A The school has operated pursuant to a long-range financial plan. The school has created realistic budgets that are monitored and adjusted when appropriate. Actual expenses have been equal to or less than actual revenue with no material exceptions.

Although it prepared a five year fiscal plan as part of its last renewal application, Family Life Academy has effectively operated pursuant to year-to-year plans. Given the limited life of the school’s renewal charter and the lack of expansion plans during that time, the year-to-year planning has been sufficient. Family Life Academy’s annual budgets have provided a realistic overall framework for the school’s spending activities and monitoring procedures are in place. A review of board minutes indicates discussions of budget and fiscal issues and most board meetings include a finance report. However, historically the school’s adopted budgets have underestimated both revenues and expenses and in both FY 2005 and FY 2006 actual expenses exceeded actual revenue. The school has maintained positive fund balances and adequate cash flow and has been able to meet its bills at all times.

Family Life Academy has generally used conservative assumptions when budgeting revenue, which has helped ensure that positive fund balances were maintained. However, although the school does a good job of anticipating personal service expenditures, which represents about two-thirds of total expenses, it does less well projecting other expenses, as noted at the time of the school’s Initial Renewal. As a result, it does not appear that the budget is being used to its full potential as a tool for planning and controlling operations.

Benchmark 3B Internal Controls	3B	The school has maintained appropriate internal controls and procedures. Transactions have been accurately recorded and appropriately documented in accordance with management’s direction and laws, regulations, grants and contracts. Assets have been and are safeguarded. Any deficiencies or audit findings have been corrected in a timely manner.
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Based on interviews with staff and review of documentation, Family Life Academy has established processes and controls related to payroll, procurement and safeguarding of assets. In FY 2004, the school established a written fiscal policy and procedure manual that has subsequently been updated. Overall, implementation of the school’s internal controls and procedures has improved over time. These policies continue to be reviewed and are subject to modification.

There is an annual presentation of the audited financial statements to the board by the school’s independent certified public accountants. The school’s independent auditor has issued written management letter comments in conjunction with its audits and the school has accepted and tried to implement all recommendations. The school’s FY 2007 audit report on internal controls over financial reporting and compliance with laws, regulations and grants did not disclose any material weaknesses, or instances of non-compliance. The lack of deficiencies in these independent reports provides some, but certainly not absolute, assurance that the school has maintained adequate internal controls and procedures. The purposes of the reports are not to provide assurance on internal control over financial reporting or an opinion on compliance.

Recently, Family Life Academy has been audited by the New York State Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) as required by Chapter 267 of the Laws of 2005. The law requires the OSC to audit each school district, BOCES and charter school at least once by March 31, 2010. Thereafter, OSC will decide which schools to audit based on a risk-assessment process. The purpose of OSC school audits is to review the internal controls, financial practices and operations to help ensure that there is adequate protection against fraud, theft or professional misconduct.

Family Life Academy’s audit is not yet finalized, but it has received and responded to the draft report. The school acknowledges that the final report will include recommendations to improve the school’s internal controls. The final report will be available on the OSC website at the following address: <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/audits/auditAgencyList.htm>. Although the audit identified several areas needing improvement, there was no evidence of material fraud, theft, professional misconduct or financial mismanagement and all identified areas can be relatively easily addressed. The school has agreed to make improvements in the following areas:

- fingerprinting (non-employees);
- board meeting documentation and adherence to the number of meetings in its by-laws;
- adherence to the school’s procurement and disbursement procedures and retention of appropriate related documentation;
- adherence to the school’s payroll procedures and retention of appropriate documentation to overtime and pay authorizations;
- segregation of key financial functions;

- clarification and administration of equipment inventory procedures; and
- adherence to computer usage policies.

Family Life Academy's affiliation with the Latino Pastoral Action Center (LPAC) has been an integral part of the school's mission. LPAC provides the school and its students with a variety of services. In addition, the school leases its classrooms, office facilities and the use of a gymnasium from LPAC. The president of LPAC is also a board member of the school. The leased facilities are suitable for the school's program and are reasonably priced. Family Life Academy's relationship with LPAC has required it to be diligent in avoiding even the appearance of a conflict of interest in transactions between the two organizations. The school has taken appropriate steps to address this issue including, but not limited to, obtaining a market rental analysis by an independent third party of its rented space.

<p>Benchmark 3C</p> <p>Financial Reporting</p>	<p>3C</p> <p>The school has complied with financial reporting requirements. The school has provided the State University Board of Trustees and the State Education Department with required financial reports on time, and such reports have been complete and have followed generally accepted accounting principles.</p>
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Generally, Family Life Academy has met its financial reporting requirements during its current charter period. Reports have been complete, have followed generally accepted accounting principles and have been filed on a timely basis.

Each of Family Life Academy’s financial statement audit reports received an unqualified opinion. An unqualified opinion on the financial statements indicates that, in the auditor’s opinion, the school’s financial statements and notes fairly represent, in all material respects, the school’s financial position, changes in net assets, and cash flows, in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. The reports indicate the audits were conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards as required.

Benchmark 3D Financial Condition	3D	The school has maintained adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations and has monitored and successfully managed cash flow. Critical financial needs of the school are not dependent on variable income (grants, donations and fundraising).
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Family Life Academy completed the FY 2007 in stable and improved financial condition. Total net assets increased by \$322,341 and the school finished the year with total net assets of \$955,123. In addition, the school increased its cash position by \$449,859. FY 2007 was unusual in that the school received significant unbudgeted special education funding that related to prior years. Family Life Academy’s operating activities provided net cash of \$634,098 and the school invested in fixed asset acquisitions totaling \$184,239. The school has not relied on significant philanthropic support to meet its program needs.

The school has fixed assets (net of accumulated depreciation and amortization) totaling \$450,224 that consist of leasehold improvements, furniture and equipment. The school has no long-term debt and throughout its charter has generated sufficient cash flow from operations to pay ongoing expenses.

Spending per student (total expenses divided by the revised approved enrollment) in each year of the school’s life was as follows:

<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>
\$ 8,998	\$ 9,664	\$ 10,858	\$ 12,464	\$12,704	\$12,488

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	Renewal Question 4 Should the School’s Charter Be Renewed, What Are Its Plans for the Term of a Future Charter?
Benchmark 4A Plans for the School Structure (mission, enrollment, schedule)	4A Key structural elements of the school’s plans for the next charter period are reasonable, feasible and achievable.

The trustees of the Family Life Academy Charter School seek to renew the school’s charter to continue its Kindergarten through 5th grade education program, drawing on a student population from the South Bronx. The school is prepared to continue to serve students from predominantly low-income families, English language learners whose native language is Spanish, as well as English proficient students, and others who speak languages other than Spanish. Given its current track record of student achievement and avowed plans, the school is poised to continue to fulfill its mission.

Family Life Academy has set forth the following staffing plans:

- Each Kindergarten and 3rd grade class will have a teacher and a teaching assistant.
- 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th grades will have one teacher in each class and a teaching assistant shared between the two classes on each grade level.
- Instructional coach/staff developers will support each grade.
- The staff will include the following positions:
 - Full-time ESL teacher
 - Full-time ESL/bilingual teacher
 - Full time Spanish teacher
 - Special education teacher /testing coordinator
 - SETSS teacher
 - Computer lab teacher
 - Gym teacher
 - Data specialist
 - Part-time art, music and science lab teachers

Family Life Academy will continue to add 52 Kindergarteners each year. The Application for Subsequent Renewal provides the following projected enrollment for 290 students in Kindergarten through 5th grade:

Expected Future Enrollment by Grade and Total Number of Students					
Grade	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
K	52	52	52	52	52
1	52	52	52	52	52
2	48	48	48	48	48
3	48	48	48	48	48
4	45	45	45	45	45
5	45	45	45	45	45
Totals	290	290	290	290	290

Family Life Academy’s yearly calendar is based on that of the NYC Department of Education, in order to be in alignment with the city’s student transportation services. The 2007-08 school calendar contains 183 days of instruction and is deemed to provide sufficient instructional time to meet all legal requirements and to allow the school to meet its proposed Accountability Plan goals.

Considering Family Life Academy’s current academic success and its determination to sustain the systems it has in place, the key structural elements of its school plans are reasonable, feasible, and achievable.

Benchmark 4B Plans for the Educational Program	4B The school has clearly laid out its plans for its educational program, shown that it can implement that program and such program will allow the school to meet its Accountability Plan goals.
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In its Application for Subsequent Renewal, Family Life Academy reports that it will continue implementing the instructional and administrative program that it has put in place over the past four years. The school will continue to use the Trophies literacy series, the Saxon Math program, the Harcourt Science series and Horizons for social studies; and it will continue to emphasize the importance of effective staff development through a variety of practices.

During the next five years, the school plans to focus primarily on strengthening its academic program with a special emphasis on professional development. These efforts will be enhanced through the implementation of a Teacher Incentive Fund federal grant, Partnership for Innovation in Compensation for Charter Schools (PICCS), which is to be a comprehensive program to recruit, retain, develop and reward top quality teachers and school leaders. Through PICCS, the school intends to establish a comprehensive peer review program to draw upon and share best practices. The school will continue to emphasize the importance of effective staff development through turnkey presentations by staff members who attend retreats and conferences, in-house presentations, and best practices demonstration lessons.

Family Life Academy will continue to provide the support of a data analysis coordinator. Teachers are to review each student’s prior year’s data and establish value-added targets for the current year as well as to assess student performance in light of the targets the teachers have established. For Kindergarten through 2nd grades, the school will continue to administer TerraNova and Early Child Literacy Assessment System-2 (ECLAS-2) tests as both are diagnostic tools and to establish baseline data to track progress. The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) will be used for 3rd through 5th grades. The school will continue to use the Fast ForWord computer-based program, as well as the Kaplan Achievement Planner and the Kaplan Advantage.

In recognition of its status as the charter school with the greatest percent of second language learners, Family Life Academy plans to strengthen its school-developed Sheltered English Immersion program in order to help ESL students both in language acquisition and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

In its Application for Subsequent Renewal, Family Life Academy indicates that it plans to continue to strengthen its core academic program, which will consist of the following elements:

- English Language Arts - utilizing Harcourt Brace’s Trophies across all grades including early childhood and with a special focus on ELLs and offering Use of Strategies for Writers;
- Mathematics - using Saxon Math, augmented with various materials from other companies;
- Science and Social Studies - utilizing the Harcourt Science curricula, which provides practice in scientific inquiry methods and key concept review;

- Spanish Language Arts - offering Spanish as enrichment for students who are non-Spanish speaking and to native Spanish speakers; and
- Art and Music Programs - offering arts to support students with analytical thinking, motivation and self-expression and music in a cultural context.

Based on the renewal inspection visit and its ability to meet Accountability Plan goals, Family Life Academy has demonstrated the capacity to implement the proposed educational program, which is likely to enable the school to meet Accountability Plan goals during the next charter period. Therefore, the Institute concludes that the proposed educational program is reasonable, feasible, and achievable.

<p>Benchmark 4C</p> <p>Plans for the Governance Structure</p>	<p>4C The school has provided a reasonable, feasible and achievable governance structure for the term of the next charter.</p>
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Family Life Academy has provided a reasonable, feasible and achievable governance structure for the term of the next charter. The structure does not include any material changes from the present structure, other than the school’s revision of its trustee terms as described under Benchmark 2C.2. The board understands its duties and responsibilities related to the school as well as the level of performance it needs to show going forward. The school has a code of ethics that details the expected conduct of school stakeholders and sets a high standard for officers and employees, as well as provisions in its by-laws regarding conflicts of interest and self-dealing transactions. Responses to interview questions and other evidence, including questions regarding school oversight demonstrate that the school’s governance model is sustainable for a five-year renewal term.

Benchmark 4D Fiscal & Facility Plans	4 D The school has provided a reasonable, feasible and achievable appropriate five-year fiscal plan for the term of next charter, including plans for an adequate facility.
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Family Life Academy has operated in a fiscally sound manner in its current grade and enrollment configuration and is likely to continue to do so. The school has presented a fiscal plan that overall is considered reasonable and likely to be achievable assuming sufficient enrollment demand. Before the start of the current school year, the school’s waiting list had 412 applicants demonstrating strong demand. Although Family Life Academy is in stable financial condition and has enjoyed high enrollment demand, all New York City charter schools have enjoyed average increases in the per pupil revenue of nearly 9 percent over the last four years. Given that the school will not be increasing its enrollment during the next charter term, any significant decline in the annual increase, let alone a decrease, will be challenging for the school. The school board has discussed the issue of fundraising at various times over the life of the school. Given its current fiscal stability, it may be an opportune time for the board to put its fundraising plans into operation to leverage its recent strong academic performance and strengthen its position for the future. The fiscal plan anticipates modest fundraising income of \$10,000 per year, which represents less than one quarter of one percent of total revenue during that period.

The school projects an operating deficit in each of the first three years of the proposed new charter period, but on a cash flow basis, it projects a modest surplus in all but the first year. Analysis of the fiscal plan found that projected depreciation and amortization expenses in total are overstated over the five years, which in turn overstates the total operating deficits as well as overstating the net cash flow changes.

Long-range fiscal projections are more susceptible to error than those for a single year. Such projections are subject to revision due to changes in local conditions, objectives, and laws. Regardless of the assumptions embedded in the fiscal projections, the school will be required to develop and adopt annual budgets based known per pupil amounts.

Family Life Academy makes some conservative assumptions regarding revenue including that paid enrollment will be less than approved and current enrollment, and that federal entitlement funding will remain level. Significantly the school has also not included projected revenue from its participation in a new federal grant program. The school’s participation with ten other charter schools in the Partnership for Innovation in Compensation for Charter Schools (PICCS) will have a major influence on the next charter period. Led by the Center for Educational Innovation - Public Education Association, PICCS is funded through a five-year federal grant from the Teacher Incentive Fund program, which supports development of performance-based compensation systems to help drive increases in student performance. The estimated level of additional compensation for participants will range up to \$8,000 for school leaders, \$6,000 for teachers and \$2,000 for para-professionals. Participating schools will take increasing financial responsibility for the compensation system; schools will contribute 10 percent of the compensation funds in Year 2, increasing annually up to 75 percent in Year 5. The expectation is that schools will assume 100 percent of the incentives by the end of the sixth year.

Unlike its conservative assumptions, the school optimistically anticipates a 7.5 percent increase in per pupil revenue in each year of the proposed new charter period, which is approximately the historical average since FY 2000. A more conservative estimate of 3 percent increases would result in a cumulative decrease in projected revenue of more than \$600,000 over the new charter term. This would effectively wipe out the school's expendable net assets of only \$504,899⁹ as of June 30, 2007. In the past, the school was able to adjust and meets its financial obligations during a period when per pupil revenue declined from the previous year (FY 2004). However, this decrease in per-pupil funding was accompanied by an increase in student enrollment at the school that helped mitigate its effects. In the proposed new charter term, the school will not have any increase in enrollment to rely on. The school's financial position during the period of the new charter will be helped by revenue from the PICCS program.

Family Life Academy's assumptions related to expenses are generally considered unreasonable and based primarily on the school's historical experience with inflation factors applied. Expenses are scheduled to rise between three and five percent by category each year (13 percent for health insurance).

Overall, Family Life Academy has presented a fiscal plan which is reasonable and likely to be achievable. The school has operated in a fiscally sound manner in its current grade and enrollment structure and is likely to continue to do so, as proposed. The school's financial position during the term of a future charter should remain stable assuming continued strong demand for enrollment in the school. Before the start of the current school year, the school's waiting list had 412 applicants demonstrating strong current demand.

⁹ Unrestricted net assets of \$942,123 plus temporarily restricted net assets of \$13,000 subtracted by net property and equipment (\$450,224).

APPENDIX

An Overview of Renewal Requirements

The New York State Charter Schools Act of 1998 (as amended) (the “Act”) authorizes the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York to grant charters for the purpose of organizing and operating independent and autonomous public charter schools. Charter schools provide opportunities for teachers, parents, and community members to establish and maintain schools that operate independent of existing schools and school districts in order to accomplish the following objectives:

- improve student learning and achievement;
- increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at-risk of academic failure;
- provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system;
- create new professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators and other school personnel;
- encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods; and
- provide schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance based accountability systems by holding the schools accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.¹

In order to assist them in carrying out their responsibilities under the Act, the State University Trustees authorized the establishment of the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Among its duties, the Institute is charged with evaluating charter schools’ applications for renewal and providing its resulting findings and recommendations to the State University Trustees.

This report is the primary vehicle by which the Institute transmits to the State University Trustees its findings and recommendations regarding a school’s renewal application, and more broadly, details the merits of a school’s case for renewal. This report has been created and issued pursuant to the *Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University Board of Trustees* (the “State University Renewal Practices”).²

Statutory and Regulatory Considerations

Charters may be renewed, upon application, for a term of up to five years. There is no limitation upon the number of times that a charter may be renewed. The Act prescribes the following requirements for a charter school renewal application, whether such application be for an initial renewal or any subsequent renewal:

- a report of the progress of the charter school in achieving the educational objectives set forth in its charter;

¹ See § 2850 of the New York Education Law.

² The *Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University Board of Trustees* (revised December 13, 2005) are available at www.newyorkcharters.org.

- a detailed financial statement that discloses the cost of administration, instruction and other spending categories for the charter school that will allow a comparison of such costs to other schools, both public and private;
- copies of each of the annual reports of the charter school including the charter school report cards and certified financial statements; and
- indications of parent and student satisfaction.³

The Institute’s processes and procedures mirror these requirements and meet the objectives of the Act.⁴

As a charter authorizing entity, the State University Trustees can renew a charter so long as the Trustees can make each of the following findings (“Required Findings”):

- the charter school described in the application meets the requirements of the Act and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations;
- the applicant can demonstrate the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner;
- granting the application is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act; and,
- (if applicable) in a school district where the total enrollment of resident students attending charter schools in the base year is greater than five percent of the total public school enrollment of the school district in the base year: (i) granting the application would have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the proposed charter school; or (ii) the school district in which the charter school will be located consents to such application.⁵

Where the State University Trustees approve a renewal application, they are required under the Act to submit the application and a proposed charter to the Board of Regents for its review.⁶ The Regents may approve the proposed charter or return the proposed charter to the State University Trustees with the Regents’ comments and recommendation(s). In the former case, the charter will then issue and become operational on the day the current charter expires. In the latter case (return to the State University Trustees), the State University Trustees must review the returned proposed charter in light of the Regents’ comments and respond by resubmitting the charter (with or without modification) to the Regents, or by abandoning the proposed charter. Should the State University Trustees resubmit the charter, the Regents have thirty days to act to approve it. If they do not approve the proposed charter, it will be deemed approved and will issue by operation of law; as above, it will become operational upon expiration of the current charter.⁷

³ Education Law § 2851(4).

⁴ Further explication of these policies and procedures is available on the Charter Schools Institute’s website. See www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsRenewOverview.htm.

⁵ See Education Law § 2852(2).

⁶ See Education Law § 2852(5).

⁷ See Education Law §§ 2852(5-a) and (5-b).

Process for Initial Renewals

While the Initial Renewal process formally commences with submission of a renewal application, a school must work to make the case for renewal from the time it is chartered. From its inception, the school must build its case for renewal by setting educational goals and thereafter implementing a program that will allow them to meet those goals.

Under the State University's accountability cycle, a school that is chartered enters into a plan (the "Accountability Plan")⁸ setting forth the goals for the school's educational program (and other measures if the school desires) in the first year of the charter. Progress toward each goal is determined by specific measures. Both goals and measures, while tailored in part to each school's program, must be consistent with the Institute's written guidelines. When the Accountability Plan is in final form, it receives approval from the Institute.

Thereafter, the charter school is required to provide an annual update on its progress in meeting its Accountability Plan goals and measures (the "Accountability Plan Progress Report").⁹ This permits the school not only the ability to provide all stakeholders with a clear sense of the school's progress, but forces the school to focus on specific academic outcomes. In the same vein, both the Institute and the State Education Department conduct visits to the school on a periodic basis. The main purpose of the Institute's visits is to determine the progress the school is making in implementing successfully a rigorous academic program that will permit the school to meet its Accountability Plan goals and measures and to provide feedback to the school on the Institute's conclusions. Reports and debriefings for the school's board or leadership team are designed to indicate the school's progress, its strengths and its weaknesses. Where possible, and where it is consistent with its oversight role, the Institute identifies potential avenues for improvement. To further assist the school in this regard, the Institute may contract with third-party, school inspection experts to conduct a school visit to look specifically at the strength of the school's program and the evidence it is accumulating to support the school's case for renewal. The number, breadth and scope of visits that the Institute conducts depend primarily on the school's performance on standardized assessments.

By the start of the last year of a school's charter (as set forth above), the school must submit an application for charter renewal, setting forth the evidence required by law and the State University Trustees. Applicant charter schools are asked to formulate and report evidence of success in answer to four renewal questions:

1. Is the school an academic success?
2. Is the school an effective, viable organization?
3. Is the school fiscally sound?
4. What are the school's plans for the term of the next charter and are they reasonable, feasible and achievable?

The application is reviewed by Institute staff. The staff also conducts a desk audit to both gather additional evidence as well as verify the evidence the school has submitted. This audit includes examination of the school's charter, including amendments, Accountability Plan, Accountability Plan Progress Reports, Annual Reports and internal documents (such as school handbooks, policies,

⁸ See <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsAccountability.htm> for detailed information on Accountability Plan guidelines.

⁹ See <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsAccountability.htm> for a model Accountability Plan Progress Report.

memos, newsletters, and board meeting minutes). Institute staff also examines audit reports, budget materials, and reports generated over the term of the school's charter both by the Institute and the State Education Department.

Thereafter, the Institute conducts a multi-day site visit to the school. Based on a review of each school's application for charter renewal, the leader of the Institute's renewal visit team works with the school's leadership to design a visit schedule and request any additional documentation the team may require to ensure that analysis of the school's progress is complete. Renewal visit team members conduct a variety of activities to get a sense of the educational program and determine if there are material deficiencies. These activities include: visiting classes, observing lessons, examining student work and other documents, observing school meetings, interviewing staff members and speaking informally with students. In addition, the team conducts extensive interviews with the school's board of trustees and administrators.

The evidence that the Institute gathers is structured by a set of *Qualitative Education Benchmarks*, often referred to as the "Renewal Benchmarks," that are grouped under the four renewal application questions listed above. These benchmarks are linked to the Accountability Plan structure and the charter renewal requirements in the Act; many are also based on the correlates of effective schools.¹⁰

Following the visit, the Institute's renewal team finalizes the analysis of all evidence generated regarding the school's performance. The Institute's renewal benchmarks are discussed and the lead writer uses the team's evidence and analysis to generate comments under each renewal benchmark. The team members' completed benchmark comments present a focus for discussion and a summary of the findings. The benchmarks are not used as a scorecard, do not have equal weight, and support—but do not individually or in limited combination provide—the aggregate analysis required for the final renewal recommendation. The Institute then prepares a draft report and provides a copy to the school for its review and comment. The draft contains the findings, discussion and the evidence base for those findings, as well as a preliminary recommendation.

The following renewal outcomes are available to schools that are in their first charter period.¹¹ Each outcome contains specific criteria that a school must meet in order to be eligible for that outcome. These criteria are keyed to one or more of the Required Findings. In addition to any specific criteria set forth in a particular outcome, a school, to be eligible for any type of renewal, must be able to provide evidence that permits the State University to make *each* of the Required Findings:

- *Early Renewal*: available to a school that after three years of operation has accumulated three years of data in multiple grades on all or nearly all of the standardized assessment measures set forth in its Accountability Plan and for the last two years has met or come close to meeting its Accountability Plan academic goals based on its performance on those measures. In addition, the State University must find that the educational program, as assessed by the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, is sound and effective. Early Renewal will be for a full-term of five years only.
- *Short-Term Planning Year Renewal*: available to a school that has taken one or more planning years and has yet to be renewed. The renewal term will be equal in length to the number of planning years the school has taken. The State University Trustees must be able to determine that the educational program will be sound during the next charter

¹⁰ See <http://www.effectiveschools.com>.

¹¹ A school that is awarded a short-term planning year renewal is still considered a school in its initial charter period when it comes again to renewal in its fifth full year of operation.

period based on the available outcomes on the standardized assessment measures and any data available as gathered using the Qualitative Education Benchmarks.

- *Full-Term Renewal*: available to a school in its fifth year, Full-Term Renewal is for the maximum term of five years. In order for a school to be eligible for Full-Term Renewal, a school must at the time of renewal either (a) have compiled a strong and compelling record of meeting or coming close to meeting its Accountability Plan academic goals, and have in place at the time of the renewal review an educational program that, as assessed by the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, is effective or (b) made strong overall progress towards meeting its Accountability Plan academic goals and have in place at the time of the renewal review an educational program that, as assessed by the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, is particularly strong and effective.
- *Renewal with Conditions*: available to a school that (a) meets the standards for Full-Term Renewal or Short-Term Renewal as regards its educational program, but that has material legal, fiscal or organizational deficiencies that cannot be fully corrected by the time of renewal — so long as such deficiencies are not fatal to making each and every other required finding, or (b) meets the standards for Full-Term Renewal or Short-Term Renewal as regards some portion of its educational program, but requires conditions to improve the academic program. Such conditions may include, but are not limited to, restrictions on the number of students and grades served. Conditions may also be imposed that are consonant with the requirements of NCLB as to schools requiring corrective action. Where appropriate, conditions may be imposed which if not met by the school shall be deemed a substantial and material violation of the school's charter and therefore expose the school to probation or charter revocation.
- *Short-Term Renewal*: available to a school in its fifth year that (a) has compiled an ambiguous or mixed record of educational achievement as measured by the school's progress toward meeting its Accountability Plan academic goals, but that has in place and in operation at the time of the renewal review an academic program of sufficient strength and effectiveness, as assessed by the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, that will likely result in the school's being able to meet or come close to meeting those goals with the additional time that renewal would permit or (b) has compiled an overall record of meeting or coming close to meeting its Accountability Plan academic goals but that at the time of the renewal visit, has in place an educational program that, based on its assessment pursuant to the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, is inadequate in multiple and material respects. Typically, but not always, Short-Term Renewal will be for two years. Short-Term Renewal may also be coupled with conditions relating to educational, organizational, fiscal or legal deficiencies.
- *Restructuring Renewal*: available to a school that does not meet the standards for any type of renewal but which submits plans to the State University Trustees for a restructuring of the school that legally commits the school to implementing a wholesale restructuring of the education corporation, including, but not necessarily limited to, a new board of trustees, administrative team, academic program, organizational structure, and such plans, if implemented, would lead to the school likely meeting its standardized assessment measures set forth in its Accountability Plan during the next charter period.

Whether to permit a school to submit an application for a Restructuring Renewal is at the discretion of the State University.

- *Non-Renewal:* where a school does not present a case for any kind of renewal, the charter will not be renewed and the charter will be terminated upon its expiration.

Upon receiving a school's comments on the draft report, the Institute reviews its draft, makes any changes it determines are necessary and appropriate and renders its findings and recommendations in their final form. The report is then transmitted to the Committee on Charter Schools of the State University Board of Trustees, the other members of the State University Trustees and the school itself. This report is the product of that process.