



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Harlem Link Charter School

School Evaluation Report 2010-11

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INTRODUCTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (“SUNY 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 SUNY Trustees have authorized is in compliance with applicable law and the terms of its charter. The SUNY Trustees, however, consistent with the goals of the 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 SUNY authorized charter schools. By providing this oversight and feedback, the SUNY 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 notes 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.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

The Charter School Institute conducted a school renewal visit to Harlem Link Charter School on March 24, 2009. The evaluation team observed classrooms; interviewed administrators, board members and teachers; and reviewed student work and other documents. Following the 2009 renewal evaluation visit, a letter was provided to the school's board of trustees outlining the major conclusions from the visit. The conclusions provided at that time are briefly summarized below.

Use of Assessment Data (Benchmark 1 B)

Harlem Link had a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and was beginning to use it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning. The school regularly administered useful assessments and had procedures to systematically collect and analyze assessment results.

Curriculum (Benchmark 1C)

The school had a clearly defined curriculum framework. Most teachers were sufficiently supported in implementing the curriculum. The school had established an effective process for reviewing and revising curriculum.

Pedagogy (Benchmark 1D)

High quality instruction was not evident in all classes throughout the school. Teachers planned lessons with clear learning objectives, although these objectives were not always adequate. Instructional rigor and student engagement varied widely. Teachers primarily differentiated lessons through student grouping and alternative instruction.

Instructional Leadership (Benchmark 1 E)

Instructional leadership continued to develop and improve, but school leaders had not adequately established high expectations for teaching and learning. Instructional leaders provided most teachers with ongoing and systematic support and conducted regular teacher evaluations. Instructional leaders adequately monitored and evaluated academic programs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF CURRENT SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

The Charter Schools Institute conducted a school evaluation visit to Harlem Link Charter School (“Harlem Link”) on March 1st and 2nd, 2011. Harlem Link is in its seventh year of operation and in the second year of its current three-year accountability period. Based on the analysis of evidence from the evaluation visit, Harlem Link’s progress towards refining the systems and procedures in its educational program is not sufficient to put it on a trajectory for meeting the Qualitative Education Benchmarks (a component of the Institute’s Renewal Benchmarks) when the school is scheduled for renewal. This overall conclusion is drawn from a variety of indicators which are discussed more fully later in the report. Some of the more salient indicators include the following.

Use of Assessment Data (Benchmark 1B)

Harlem Link has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and uses it to address instructional planning. However, these assessments are limited in their frequency of administration and their alignment to state standards.

Curriculum (Benchmark 1C)

Harlem Link’s curriculum map is not consistently aligned with state standards; as a result, instruction across grades does not prepare students to meet the standards.

Pedagogy (Benchmark 1D)

Most teachers plan and implement relevant lessons; however, learning objectives are generally not met. The school’s co-teaching model is not implemented in a manner that leads to the level of student achievement necessary to meet the SUNY Trustees’ renewal standards.

Instructional Leadership (Benchmark 1 E)

Harlem Link’s leadership is currently in transition, and the school does not have systems in place to support teachers.

Organizational Capacity (Benchmark 2 C)

Harlem Link has established an operational structure with systems and procedures that allow the school to function day-to-day. The school is struggling to hire and retain high-quality staff.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	June 22, 2004
Date Initial Charter Approved by Board of Regents	September 10, 2004
School Opening Date	September 6, 2005

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades	District
2005-06 to 2006-07	134 W 122 nd St., New York, NY	All	New York City Community School District 3
2007-08	134 W 122 nd St., New York, NY 425 W 130 th St., New York, NY	1-3 K	New York City Community School District 3 and 5
2008-09	134 W 122 nd St., New York, NY 425 W 130 th St., New York, NY	2-4 K-1	New York City Community School District 3 and 5
2009-10 to Present	20 W 112 th St., New York, NY	All	New York City Community School District 3

Current Mission Statement

Harlem Link Charter School, a K-5 public school, links academics, values and community to graduate articulate scholars who will meet or exceed New York State Performance Standards and active citizens who learn and serve in their communities. Families, staff and community join together to provide a safe, supportive learning environment that empowers students to take an active role in their learning and demonstrate good character.

Current Key Design Elements

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigorous expectations and a belief in all students;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data-driven instruction;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extended school year and day;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • structured academic programs, including “fieldwork;”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high levels of professional development;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-teaching model;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong connections to community-based organizations for the arts;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a “focus” period, specifically designed for individualized or small-group instruction based on children’s academic needs;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family and community involvement; and
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a supportive school culture.

School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ¹	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2005-06	108	101	K-1	K-1	196
2006-07	162	162	K-2	K-2	190
2007-08	216	195	K-3	K-3	190
2008-09	270	262	K-4	K-4	189
2009-10	324	310	K-5	K-5	190
2010-11	320	293	K-5	K-5	190

Student Demographics²

	2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 3 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 3 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 3 Enrollment
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black or African American	80	34	80	34	82	31
Hispanic	20	38	18	38	18	36
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0	6	0	6	0	7
White	0	22	0	22	0	25
Multiracial	0	0	2	0	1	0
Special Populations						
Students with Disabilities	10	N/A	11	N/A	N/A	N/A
Limited English Proficient	1	13	2	10	N/A	9
Free/Reduced Lunch						
Eligible for Free Lunch	74	48	71	47	71	48
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	6	8	16	8	16	7

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.)

² Source: School Report Cards, New York State Education Department.

Current Board of Trustees³

Board Member Name	Term	Position/Committees
Jonathan Barrett	2008-2011	Chairman and Acting Treasurer
David W. Brown	2009-2012	Secretary
B. Peter Carry	2009-2012	Trustee
Sean Coar	2009-2012	Trustee
Steven Evangelista	N/A	Ex Officio
Rachel Field	2009-2012	Trustee
John Reddick	2008-2011	Trustee
Margaret Ryan	N/A	Ex Officio
Kesha Young	2007-2010	Trustee

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2005-06 to 2009-10	Steven Evangelista, Co-Director for Operations Margaret Ryan, Co-Director for Instruction
2009-10 to Present	Steven Evangelista, Director

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2005-06	First-Year Visit	Institute	March 15, 2006
2006-07	Second-Year Visit	Institute	March 13, 2007
2007-08	Third-Year Visit	External (RMC Research)	April 16-17, 2008
2008-09	Fourth-Year Visit	Institute	March 24, 2009
2009-10	Initial Renewal Visit	Institute	October 27-29, 2009
2010-11	Sixth-Year Visit	Institute	March 1-2, 2011

³ Source: Application for Renewal

SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

Benchmark Conclusions and Evidence

Use of Assessment Data (Benchmark 1.B)

Harlem Link administers and gathers assessment data; however, these assessments are limited in their frequency of administration and their alignment to state standards.

Harlem Link administers multiple assessments throughout the academic year including: end-of-unit assessments aligned with the school's curriculum materials, Developmental Reading Assessments (DRAs) and English language arts Interim Assessments (IAs). IAs are administered three times per year; November, March and June. Assessment results from the third IA administration are analyzed and distributed at the end of the school year. Teachers report that second IA results are distributed too late in the academic year to provide enough time to plan academic interventions with current students.

The school does not have a process to monitor teachers' procedures for administering or analyzing end-of-unit assessments. Administrators have access to and review teachers online Grade Book; however, the school acknowledges that this level of oversight is insufficient. Teachers independently collect and analyze end-of-unit and DRI assessment results. Teachers report they generally use DRI results to create small instructional groups. They independently use the assessment data to create reading groups within their co-taught classrooms and to identify academically struggling students. They monitor student reading progress with DRI results and develop reading group goals.

School leaders report they collect and analyze IA results by class, grade and school yet this analysis has not lead to strong professional development support or translated into acceptable levels of student achievement. Given the results of the initial IA administration, if a classroom is not performing at the school's goal of 75% mastery, school leaders assign an external professional development coach to mentor the classroom co-teachers. This coaching is, however, not resulting in achievement necessary to ensure consistent high performance. School leaders also report that they use the IA results from the beginning of the school year to predict student and overall school performance on the spring state assessments. However, school leaders acknowledge IA test items require revision because they are not aligned with state standards. Teachers report that there were factual errors in previously administered IAs and they have been responsible for correcting those errors. Teachers also report the IAs are not aligned to their current curriculum materials.

Curriculum (Benchmark 1.C)

Harlem Link's curriculum map is not aligned with state standards. As a result, instruction across grades does not prepare students to meet the standards.

Harlem Link's teachers possess curriculum maps for each grade level, and the school's leaders have a process to review the maps and teachers' lesson plans; however, there is no consistent school-wide process to revise the curriculum or to ensure it properly prepares students for success on state

assessments. The school's teaching staff has significant autonomy in the creation of lesson plans, selection of instructional materials and their ability to revise the curriculum.

As a result of this autonomy, some teachers follow the TERC math program closely while others rely on a mixture of purchased and self-created curriculum. The high-level of teacher autonomy leads to inconsistent curriculum alignment with state standards and a lack of vertical alignment between grade levels. For example, at the beginning of the school year teachers expressed concerns to the school leaders about the school's reading program. Teachers, in collaboration with the school's external curriculum coaches, have changed the program without leadership coordination or documentation of the process. Teachers report they have not vertically aligned the new program between grade levels.

In addition to curriculum program selection, lesson plan creation and material selection, teachers have discretion over lesson pacing. They have significant autonomy regarding what they teach and when content is introduced. This autonomy results in limited alignment with state requirements. School leaders acknowledge that teachers need to increase curriculum articulation with their colleagues.

Pedagogy (Benchmark 1.D)

Most teachers plan and implement relevant lessons; however, learning objectives are generally not met. The school's co-teaching model is not implemented in a manner that leads to the level of student achievement necessary to meet the SUNY Trustees' renewal standards.

Instructional time is generally not maximized within the school, because significant instructional time is misused when transitioning students between activities and between co-teachers within the same classroom. Frequent transitions lead to low-level misbehavior which requires redirection by classroom teachers. Transitions are also generally slow, and if students do not transition between activities to their teacher's specification, they are asked to repeat the process which results in a loss of instructional time. While this strategy may be useful to maximize instructional time, the school should have established the requisite routines much earlier in the school year. The cumulative loss of instructional time throughout the day negatively affects teachers' ability to complete lesson objectives.

The school has a co-teaching model, and some teachers collaboratively deliver lessons, while in other classrooms one teacher delivers instruction as the other teacher circulates through the classroom. The co-teaching model is not consistently used to differentiate instructional groups or provide assistance to academically struggling students.

Instructional Leadership (Benchmark 1.E)

While Harlem Link's current leadership is in transition, the school does not have systems in place to support teachers. Harlem Link's leadership team sets expectations for student achievement but not for teacher performance, indicating a significant lack of leadership necessary to help students achieve, which is the core work of the school. The leaders conduct regular teacher evaluations that accurately identify teacher strengths and weaknesses; however, there is no sustained or systematic support to address those weaknesses resulting in ineffective instruction that is a barrier to student success.

Harlem Link's school leaders and the school's board of trustees annually review school goals and set specific goals for student academic achievement. However, school leaders do not develop or communicate clear *teacher* performance expectations. School leaders focus on teachers' classroom behavior management skills and lesson plan development but not instructional effectiveness.

The school leaders' teacher evaluations accurately identify teacher strengths and weaknesses. They regularly observe teachers' classrooms using unannounced "walk-throughs" and schedule specific observations twice during the academic year. While teachers report they are regularly observed they also report that follow-up feedback is minimal. They report that informal walk-through observations do not assist them with improving weaknesses identified in their formal evaluations, as their general feedback does not provide specific recommendations for improving instruction.

Teachers report discussing lesson plan effectiveness and instructional practices with each other. Teachers have common planning periods, yet there are no systems or structures in place to ensure that teachers regularly learn from one another or support each other. They initiate *ad-hoc* grade-level meetings, yet the meetings are not monitored by the school leaders for content, quality or alignment with school goals. For example, school leaders require teachers to introduce accountable-talk within their classrooms, yet teachers use different accountable-talk definitions and descriptions on how it is implemented.

At-Risk Students (Benchmark 1.F)

Harlem Link has written policies and procedures for serving academically struggling students. However, these policies and procedures are not implemented consistently throughout the school. As a result, academically struggling students are not effectively monitored.

School leaders report that the school has a tiered Response to Intervention (RTI) process to support academically struggling students which consists of progressively intensive academic remediation. The policy requires teachers to present names of academically struggling students at a bi-weekly Child Study Team (CST) meeting where initial remediation strategies are discussed. However, teachers do not consistently implement the school's written policies for at-risk students. The school's policy mandates that students receive intervention strategies for a prescribed time period, though teachers report that the school automatically continues academic intervention services to students who previously received them. Teachers have discretion on how academically struggling students receive academic intervention services and how they monitor student progress. As a result of this autonomy, teachers' effective implementation of classroom intervention strategies is yet to be determined. Additionally, the length of time students spend within intervention tiers is inconsistent across grades.

Student Order and Discipline (Benchmark 1.G)

Harlem Link has a clear discipline policy, yet it is inconsistently applied. Student behavior management is left to the discretion of individual teachers. Tolerated misbehavior detracts from the culture of learning and scholarship necessary to ensure all students perform at high standards.

Behavior management is left to the discretion of individual teachers. A common behavior management system is evident in classrooms, yet implementation of the system is different between

classrooms. Some teachers use their discipline systems effectively and maximize instructional time while others struggle to maintain order. School leaders acknowledge there is inconsistency in the implementation of the school's discipline policy, and the school continues to work on instituting a more uniform approach.

Variations in behavior management lead to some teachers tolerating low-level misbehavior more than their colleagues. For example, in some classrooms students speak without raising their hand, and their behavior is not corrected, while in other classrooms teachers continually ask students to raise their hand and pay attention to classroom procedures.

Professional Development (Benchmark 1.H)

Harlem Link's professional development program is largely dependent on meeting the interests of teachers rather than identifying teacher needs. As a result, classroom instruction is not sufficient to ensure students succeed.

Teachers report that they meet in collegial subject-area groups and select professional development topics; however, topics chosen within these groups are dependent on teacher requests rather than school needs. Although teachers meet in subject-area groups, formal structures mandating teachers learn from one another in these groups are not present. Teachers report that instructional rigor is an ongoing group topic, yet systematic approaches to monitoring classroom rigor do not exist.

The school's professional development consultants provide significant curriculum development assistance which accounts for a significant portion of the school's professional development program. School leadership acknowledges that the reliance on these external professional development consultants leads to a lack of focus on school-wide goals. The limited continuity between professional development content and school goals prevents the leaders from holding teachers accountable for implementing what they learn in these sessions.

Organizational Capacity (Benchmark 2.C)

Harlem Link has an operational structure with systems and procedures that allow the school to operate day-to-day. The school struggles to hire and retain high-quality staff.

The school's organizational structure is in a period of transition. Two critical leadership positions, the school's co-director and the school's dean of academics and assessment are unfilled. The school's existing leadership team assumes the additional leadership responsibilities and manages the school's day-to-day operations. The school has high rates of staff turnover, and the school leader reports that he struggles to hire high-quality staff. As evidenced by student performance over the life of the charter, the school's organizational structure and professional development strategies are insufficient to prepare all students for success.

Governance (Benchmark 2.D-E)

Harlem Link's board of trustees did not hold school leaders accountable for student achievement for much of the current charter term but is now beginning to do so.

The school board is staffed with a mixture of educators, business and legal professionals. They report receiving regular student academic performance updates from school leaders, and they report understanding the importance of student academic achievement as it relates to the their school's charter renewal. The school board chair reports that historically the board focused on finance and facility matters and recently began holding school leaders accountable for student achievement. The board chair reports that they evaluate school leaders and provide an incentive based remuneration package if the school leaders meet school achievement goals. Overall, the board has stable membership; the board chair reports that he was involved in the creation of the school.

Conduct of the Visit

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the school evaluation visit at Harlem Link Charter School on March 1st and 2nd, 2011. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit:

Institute Team Leader: Dr. Paul Wright. Dr. Wright was recently appointed Director of School Evaluation at the SUNY Charter Schools Institute. Dr. Wright will be responsible for the Institute's extensive school evaluation program, overseeing and in many cases leading school evaluation visits by Institute staff as well as coordinating the independent evaluations done on the Institute's behalf. Dr. Wright will lead ongoing efforts to refine the Institute's nationally regarded evaluation protocols and reporting tools; including oversight of the production of the Institute's school evaluation reports which provide valuable information to schools and the public about school progress. He will also coordinate internal staff training on school evaluation. Prior to joining the Institute, Dr. Wright directed Quality Education Partnership, Inc., a national consulting network that conducted evaluations of traditional and charter schools and created strategic management plans for school improvement. The former Development Director for School Design and Strategic Planning of Mesa Public Schools in Arizona, Dr. Wright developed unique schools of choice serving a wide spectrum of learners in coordination with Mesa Public Schools. Dr. Wright also served as Vice President for Student Services at the Leona Group, an Educational Management Organization providing educational services to students throughout Arizona. Dr. Wright received his Ed.D. and his M. Ed. from Arizona State University and his B.A. in Psychology from the State University of New York at Albany

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

Institute Team Member: Maya Lagana. Ms. Lagana is an Accountability Analyst for the SUNY Charter Schools Institute. 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.

External Team Member: Jenn David-Lang. Ms. David-Lang has worked in the field of education for 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. Four years ago she founded The Main Idea, a service to provide professional development to over 2000 school leaders 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>
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 1B</p> <p>Use of Assessment Data</p>	<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.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 1C</p> <p>Curriculum</p>	<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 materials) currently in use in relation to the school’s curriculum framework,

	<p>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>State University Renewal Benchmark 1D</p> <p>Pedagogy</p>	<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>State University Renewal Benchmark 1E</p> <p>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 teachers;

	<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>State University Renewal Benchmark 1F</p> <p>At-Risk Students</p>	<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 mission, curriculum, and instructional programs; annual professional development plans derive from a data-driven needs-assessment

	<p>and staff interests;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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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<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2A</p> <p>Mission & Key Design Elements</p>	<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.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2B</p> <p>Parents & Students</p>	<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.

<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2C</p> <p>Organizational Capacity</p>	<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 its mission and Accountability Plan goals, and a process for their regular review and revision;
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<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2D</p> <p>Board Oversight</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>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.