



# Charter Schools Institute

## *The State University of New York*

### Harlem Village Academy Charter School Third-Year Inspection Report

## I. INTRODUCTION

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

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

## II. CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

The inspection of Harlem Village Academy Charter School was conducted on May 1-2, 2006 by an independent team of experienced educators from SchoolWorks, Beverly, MA.

- **Aretha Miller, Project Manager, SchoolWorks:** Ms. Miller is a project manager with SchoolWorks. Formerly she was an eight-year veteran special education teacher in the Boston Public Schools and has developed and supported implementation of programs for at-risk students through traditional and alternative settings.
- **Mihran Keoseian, Team Member:** Mr. Keoseian is a project associate at SchoolWorks. He is a former principal of both middle and high schools and was the superintendent of schools in Hudson, MA. His background is in systems thinking and strategic planning.
- **Leslie Beaulieu, Team Member:** Ms. Beaulieu, a consultant with SchoolWorks, has more than 20 years of experience as a science teacher at all levels. She consults with school districts on curriculum implementation – primarily in science.
- **Zita Samuels, Team Member:** Ms. Samuels, a consultant with SchoolWorks, is a professional grant writer and program evaluator. She has had a long career as a program administrator in the public schools of Somerville, MA.

The team used the school's Accountability Plan goals as the guide for their examination, along with the set of framework questions included in the inspection protocol to assess the school's academic and organizational effectiveness. Prior to the one-and-a-half-day visit, the team reviewed the school's documents, including its annual *Accountability Progress Report*, its original charter application and reports from previous informal site visits by the SUNY Charter Schools Institute. At the school, the team interviewed school administrators, Board representatives, staff, parents and students, and visited classes to understand the efforts the school is making to achieve its academic and organizational goals.

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

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

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

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

### III. SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

Harlem Village Academy Charter School (originally East Harlem Village Academy Charter School) of New York City commenced operations in September 2003 with an enrollment of 76 students in grade 5. The school added a new grade 5 for each of the next two years, and has a current enrollment of 153 students in grades 5-7. The school plans to add a new fifth grade class each September until it reaches grade 12.

One hundred eighteen students (76.2% percent) are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches. There are 24 (15.5 percent) students with special needs and there are no English language learners. The student population is African-American and Latino. The attendance rate for the 2004-2005 school year was 95.5 percent. Each grade is divided into three classes for reading, with 11 to 12 students per class, and divided into two classes for other subjects with approximately 22 to 28 students per class.

Harlem Village Academy's mission is "to prepare students of fine character to graduate from college and make a meaningful contribution to society." To accomplish the mission, the school offers a liberal arts curriculum with a focus on increased instructional time for reading and mathematics. The school's educational program is structured to include an extended school day, from 7:40 AM to 5:30 PM (2:00 PM on Fridays) and a 203-day school year. The school day includes extended day programs from 4:40 PM until 5:30 PM, attended by approximately 60 percent of the school's students. Activities include a homework center, tutoring and enrichment workshops such as martial arts, yoga, decoupage, "slam" poetry, chess and dance.

The school's description indicates that teachers and other staff hold students to high expectations. To support the school's emphasis on college, students are grouped in classes that have the names of their advisory teachers' colleges: New York University, Emory, University of Connecticut, University of North Carolina, Howard and Rutgers.

The school's original faculty included five teachers and six other professional staff, three of whom were full-time core members and three were part-time. There is currently a faculty and staff of 19, including administrators (executive director, principal and dean of students, who is responsible for discipline), classroom teachers, a special education teacher, music teacher, physical education teacher, enrichment director and support staff.

Village Academies, a non-profit educational organization, provides the school with eight core services: 1) principal training and support, 2) teacher recruiting, 3) professional development for teachers, 4) student enrichment, 5) curriculum and assessment development, 6) family and community outreach, 7) fundraising, and 8) operations support. The executive director of the school is also the director of Village Academies, as well as a second charter school. Harlem Village Academy (HVA) is housed at the Harlem Council for Community Improvement, which also houses a nursery school and a clinic. The school plans to move to a larger, permanent facility for the 2006-2007 school year.

## PART I: SCHOOL PROGRESS REPORT

### I. ACADEMIC PROGRAM

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

**1. Test results for 2005 show that a majority of sixth grade students at Harlem Village Academy Charter School are performing on the advanced and proficient levels in mathematics and English language arts on the New York City assessments.**

In 2005, 66.7 percent of sixth graders at Harlem Village Academy demonstrated proficiency or advanced levels on the citywide ELA end-of-year test. They outperformed their peers in District 4 (48.7 percent) and District 5 (39 percent). Also, 89.6 percent of sixth graders scored levels 3 and 4 on the citywide mathematics end-of-year assessment. Again, they outperformed their peers in Districts 4 and 5 (47.3 percent and 38.3 percent, respectively). The performance of the students on the mathematics test is significantly stronger than their performance on the ELA test. Test results for both mathematics and ELA indicate that Harlem Village Academy has achieved its accountability measure to outperform sixth graders in Community School Districts 4 and 5.

**Table 1: Percent of Sixth Graders Scoring Levels 3 & 4 on the New York City English Language Arts and Mathematics End-of-Year Test**

	2004-2005			
	English Language Arts		Mathematics	
	Number (N)	% scoring levels 3 &4	Number (N)	% scoring levels 3 & 4
<b>Harlem Village Academy</b>	48	<b>66.7</b>	48	<b>89.6</b>
District 4		48.7		47.3
District 5		39		38.3

In 2005, there was a significant increase from 2004 in the percentage of fifth graders scoring levels 3 and 4 on the New York City end-of-year tests in both ELA and mathematics. In 2004, 37.5 percent of fifth graders at Harlem Village Academy demonstrated proficiency on the ELA test, while 19.4 percent of them demonstrated proficiency on the mathematics test. In 2005, however, 74.5 percent of the second cohort of fifth graders scored levels 3 and 4 in ELA, while 58.8 percent did so in mathematics. The 2005 results for the second cohort of fifth graders showed that the students significantly outperformed their peers in the first cohort on the New York City end-of-year tests in both ELA and mathematics.

**Table 2: Percent of Fifth Graders Scoring Levels 3 & 4 on the New York City English Language Arts and Mathematics End-of-Year Test**

	Spring 2004		Spring 2005	
	Number (N)	% scoring levels 3 & 4	Number (N)	% scoring levels 3 & 4
ELA	72	37.5	51	74.5
Mathematics	72	19.4	51	58.8

2. **Test results for two consecutive years on the Stanford Achievement Test 9<sup>th</sup> edition (SAT 9) indicate that a majority of students at Harlem Village Academy are performing at or significantly above national norms (50 NCEs [Normal Curve Equivalents]).**

The spring 2004 and 2005 results for fifth and sixth graders on the reading and mathematics subtests show that students are performing above the norm on the Stanford 9 assessment. In spring 2004, fifth graders scored 56.2 NCEs in reading and 74.8 NCEs in mathematics. In 2005, the second group of fifth graders at Harlem Village Academy scored 53.19 NCEs on the reading subtest and 79.54 NCEs on the mathematics subtest.

The performance of the first cohort of sixth graders at Harlem Village Academy was very strong on the SAT 9 assessment. In 2005, sixth graders scored 66.45 NCEs in reading and 84.33 NCEs in mathematics.

**Table 3: Harlem Village Academy SAT 9 Results in NCE for 5<sup>th</sup> grade Spring 2004 & 2005**

	Spring 2004		Spring 2005	
	Number (N)	NCE	Number (N)	NCE
Reading	72	56.2	51	53.19
Mathematics	72	74.8	51	79.54

**Table 4: Harlem Village Academy SAT 9 Results in NCE for 6<sup>th</sup> grade Spring 2005**

2005		
Grade	(N) Reading	(N) Mathematics
6	(48) 66.45	(48) 84.33

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

**1. Test results for two consecutive years on the SAT 9 indicate that a majority of students at Harlem Village Academy have made notable gains and are performing moderately or significantly above national norms in mathematics and English language arts.**

Sixth graders who have attended Harlem Village Academy for two years demonstrated nominal to moderate gains on the SAT 9, compared to the performance of the same students when they were in the fifth grade. The gains that students made on the SAT 9 ranged from 3.39 NCEs in mathematics to 7.23 NCEs in reading.

**Table 5: Harlem Village Academy Grade 5-6 Cohort Results on the SAT 9 in NCEs**

<b>N Size = 48 Students</b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Spring 2004</b>	<b>Spring 2005</b>	<b>Gain</b>
Mathematics	80.94	84.33	<b>3.39</b>
Reading	59.22	66.45	<b>7.23</b>

Fifth graders who attended Harlem Village Academy during the 2004-2005 academic year made significant gains from fall to spring on both the reading and mathematics subtests of the SAT 9. In reading, they made a gain of 18.57 NCEs and, in mathematics, a gain of 44.3 NCEs.

The spring 2005 results show that Harlem Village Academy achieved its Accountability Plan measure for ELA and mathematics. The school’s Accountability Plan states that students in grades 5-8 at Harlem Village Academy would “...improve their mean score by 7 percentiles per year on the average over the course of the charter, on the Stanford 9 reading comprehension assessment [math], until they reached a cohort average of the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile, at which point cohorts will maintain their level of performance.” Student performance on the mathematics test exceeded the school’s benchmark of 70 percentile. The 7.23 NCE gains that students made in reading also fulfilled the school’s requirement for an annual improvement of 7 percentile.

**Table 6: Harlem Village Academy Grade 5 Cohort Results on the SAT 9 in NCEs  
Fall 2004-Spring 2005<sup>1</sup>**

<b>N Size = 51 Students</b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Fall 2004</b>	<b>Spring 2005</b>	<b>Gain</b>
Mathematics	35.24	79.54	<b>44.3</b>
Reading	34.62	53.19	<b>18.57</b>

<sup>1</sup>The gains were achieved from fall to spring – an interval whose gains are typically greater than those from spring to spring.

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

**1. Harlem Village Academy’s core curriculum is aligned with state standards and teachers are diligent about using it to guide their instructional planning.**

From classroom observations, as well as from examination of the curriculum, sample lesson plans and the school's diagnostic assessments, it was evident to the inspection team that curriculum, instruction and assessment are all driven by the school's internal standards and aligned with the New York State standards. Harlem Village Academy's written curriculum for each core content area (i.e., reading, writing, mathematics, social studies and science) follows state standards, with aligned diagnostic assessments and extensive sample lesson plans. Teachers build units of study, lesson plans and lesson materials based on the standards and assessments. Students are assessed every Friday as a way of monitoring their mastery of the week's standards and are assigned follow-up tutoring if they fail to demonstrate mastery of the skills and concepts that were addressed during the week. The weekly assessments include a variety of question types, including multiple choice and open response.

Central to the school's academic program is an intensive assessment program known as DIP (Data-driven Instructional Planning) in the core academic areas. DIP is fully aligned to the state standards. In addition to external assessments – such as the New York City and State assessments and the SAT 9 – internal diagnostic assessments are designed to determine – on a monthly basis – which students and classes have mastered the standards that have been taught in each subject and to further drive instructional planning. An 80 percent grade is considered mastery level. Students (or class groups) who score below 80 percent on a given assessment or test item are targeted for re-teaching and subsequent re-testing. For example, every month in the area of guided reading, students in grades 5 and 6 take a Village Academies Leveled Text Assessment, which consists of one fiction and one nonfiction selection at the student's instructional reading level. For each selection, students must answer 10 questions that are coded in accordance with 10 reading standards, including genre, facts and details, character, setting, cause and effect. If a student scores 80 percent, s/he passes and moves on to the next level. Students who do not pass remain at the same level and receive additional explicit instruction in the standards during Reading Skills Analysis. There are five assessments at each reading level. In grade 7, students – at the end of each unit – take a Village Academies Core Book Assessment, which targets major themes and issues presented in the individual book. These assessments examine mastery of the text and reading comprehension. In each discipline, there are several “power standards” that are basic to that content area; these standards are assessed on every diagnostic.

The inspection team noted that in most classrooms observed, the standards-based aim of the lesson (students will be able to . . .) is posted, along with a “do now” activity for the beginning of every class. School leaders stated that teachers' lessons are expected to follow a consistent format that includes the “do now” activity, an introduction to the material to be covered, guided practice, independent practice and a closing summary. This was confirmed by teacher interviews and class observations. For the most part, classroom groups are heterogeneous, although there are flexible homogeneous groups within the guided reading classes through the first half of seventh grade.

In order to meet Harlem Village Academy expectations for curriculum and instruction, teachers are required to participate in professional development that is conducted during the summer.

During the summer of 2005, the five-week induction program included an overview of the curriculum standards and the monthly diagnostic assessment system; lesson planning, using the results of diagnostics and the Master Academic Planning (MAP) model; vocabulary used throughout the curriculum; training in the school's behavior code and expectations; family involvement and communications; and, SRA (decoding and fluency) training. Teachers are also required to complete standards-based lesson plans that are submitted on the school's intranet, according to a weekly schedule. Teachers and school leaders reported that, on Friday afternoons, teachers engage in departmental collaborative planning that is guided by the standards. These sessions include sharing of best practices and development of lesson plans and assessments. Teachers reported that they often take each other's tests to determine quality and appropriateness.

## **2. Teachers across the school are consistently implementing a variety of strategies that address the needs of diverse learners.**

Based on conversations with the school's teachers and leaders, the needs of students with diverse learning levels and instructional needs are met primarily through a multi-faceted approach that includes re-teaching the whole class or individual students (depending on the results of monthly diagnostic assessments); small group instruction during the school day by content teachers; frequent checking for understanding; and pullout ELA support from the learning specialist for students who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and others who may be struggling and need speech-language support. Based on results of diagnostic assessments, as well as class work, mandatory after-school or weekly Saturday tutoring is assigned. Summer school is also available for students whose promotion to the next grade is marginal.

Teachers are expected to provide one hour of after-school tutoring one day each week for students who need support in mastering standards. They also may pull students from special subject classes (music, physical education, technology) for small group instruction on an as-needed basis. Testing accommodations, pursuant to students' IEPs, are made for special education students who may have extended time for testing or have test items read to them by teachers who also may shade in bubble sheets. Members of the inspection team observed teachers redirecting students and checking for understanding during independent work periods and, when needed, providing assistance.

Each student is assigned to an advisory teacher who acts as a mentor and a bridge to his or her family. Students also have teachers' telephone numbers. The school's code for self-discipline indicates that students may call teachers at home with questions about homework. To help students organize their homework assignments, each student receives a daily homework planner with space to record the homework for each class and, upon completion of each assignment, a space for parents to sign.

Except for the guided reading class, instruction is generally directed to the whole class, although some differentiation of instruction in the classroom was observed to accommodate divergent learning styles. In one mathematics class, for example, students were observed using manipulatives to understand a variety of metric measures. There were also a few observed



instances of paired sharing and students working in cooperative groups on an assignment. Student work samples that were examined did not show modifications for students achieving at different levels.

Conversations with school leaders and teachers and a review of school-wide documents show that the staff at Harlem Village Academy is actively engaged in using data to support the diverse learning needs of all students in the school.

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

**1. Both the written curriculum and the delivery of instruction reflect high academic expectations for all students.**

As noted earlier, the school-wide curriculum used at Harlem Village Academy is aligned to state standards and explicitly outlines the skills and knowledge that students are expected to acquire at the end of each grade. Furthermore, school-wide assessments are standards-based and provide teachers with comprehensive data on students' mastery of expected skills and knowledge.

The school climate is generally conducive to learning. There are high expectations for appropriate student behavior, as outlined in the school code, for student self-discipline, which includes detailed rules and routines for homework, preparation, academic effort and behavior. Wall charts in classrooms and hallways reinforce the theme of high expectations. The names of students who are "stars" and "superstars" are posted in hallways, along with samples of excellent work. Posters that contain the code for self-discipline, the student pledge, the procedure to focus student attention, and warm-up and cool-down routines for each class are evident in all classrooms.

In general, students were polite, well-behaved and engaged in the work of their classes. The inspection team observed, however, that in multiple instances, teachers needed to redirect students who were off task, slightly disruptive or slow to begin their assigned work. The inspection team was particularly concerned that some students had not yet internalized the school's behavioral expectations, considering that the visit occurred in early May – at a time of year when patterns of classroom management should have been clearly established. It was not clear if this issue is impacting teacher effectiveness and student achievement. School leaders acknowledged that this is an area of concern and that it seems most prevalent in grade 5. School leaders informed team members that they have observed that the first cohort of fifth grade students struggled with school's rules their first year at Harlem Village Academy but seemed to have internalized them by the time they became seventh graders. They have seen a similar pattern with their current sixth graders. They are, therefore, optimistic that this will be true for the current fifth graders.

Although teachers spent time redirecting students who were off task, they generally used the 55-minute time blocks well. They had well-established routines – such as the "do now" activity – that prepare students for learning. They were relatively successful in having students transition smoothly between activities. Nevertheless, class observations showed that some teachers did not

diligently follow the timeframe of the recommended lesson-planning format. For example, in these classes, the “do now” activity took up to 15 minutes of the class (instead of 5 to 10 minutes) and the two-to-three-minute concluding evaluation was not typically observed by the inspection team.

Student assignments clearly showed a specific relationship to the standards and content of the discipline by indicating an aim or objective and by providing opportunities for students to demonstrate problem solving or higher-order thinking skills. On a written mathematics assignment, for example, students were asked to identify which answers from a choice of five may be incorrect and explain why each is wrong. On a reading assignment, students needed to provide evidence to explain why an answer is correct. They were also asked to answer (in open-response format) questions that involve identifying facts and details, personality traits of fictional characters, cause and effect and author’s purpose. In general, all lesson plans and assignments examined (including those in mathematics) were detailed, focused on standards and called for higher-order thinking skills.

According to the executive director, results from assessments that were administered early in the school year show that most students are performing below grade level when they enter Harlem Village Academy in grade 5. The school’s vision is that by teaching to mastery, students will be at grade level by the end of sixth grade, and above grade level by the end of grade 7. The goal of 80 percent mastery by item analysis and whole test on the school’s diagnostic assessments is a clear indication of the school’s high expectations for students.

Students are in advisories at the beginning and end of each day and, as well, during Family Circle on Friday afternoons. During the afternoon advisory, students are expected to check that they have everything they need to complete their homework, which consists of approximately 30 - 40 minutes in each subject every day (about three hours total, including weekends and holidays) and are expected to read independently at home for at least 30 minutes daily and one hour on weekends.

## **II. ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY**

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

#### **1. Students at Harlem Village Academy recognize that the school is committed to helping prepare them for college and the world beyond.**

The inspection team interviewed twelve students from grades 5 – 7. When asked about the school’s mission, their responses included: “To get into a good college; to learn to make money;” to “Not be stuck here.” Students expected to be leaders; one said that they will not just have a job but “own the business.” For the most part, the students interviewed told the inspection team that they were learning more and were more successful at Harlem Village Academy than in their former schools. One said that she felt lucky to be at the school and was proud of herself. One student said, “I used to be at Saturday school; now I get A’s.” In general, students felt that by

attending Harlem Village Academy, they will have more opportunities in the future. They knew that teachers have high expectations of them. Some fifth grade students, however, had mixed responses when asked if they were learning new things at the school. One felt that previous work was being repeated, while others felt that they were learning new material. The sixth and seventh graders also had mixed responses regarding the challenge of the work. A few indicated that it could be more difficult.

Although students feel safe at Harlem Village Academy, they believe that teachers could do more to improve the overall tone of the school. Some students – especially those in fifth grade – noted that there is bullying and teasing among their peers and that they would like this issue to be addressed. While the bullying occurred when teachers were not present, it was still an issue for the students. All students expressed concern that there are some students in the school who consistently argue with teachers and disrupt the lesson. They would like the teachers to deal effectively with the students who exhibit poor behavior. While students feel safe in the school, they do not necessarily feel the same way about the neighborhood in which the school is currently located. This is particularly true for those students who rely on public transportation to get to and from school.

Students reported that they get a lot of homework over the summer, during vacations and on weekends. They appreciate the extra help they receive, such as being able to call teachers about homework assignments, after-school tutoring and Saturday school. The school also has a buddy system, in which stronger students provide support for weaker ones. Students like the extracurricular activities, such as dance class, journalism club and basketball.

Students wear uniforms consisting of a light blue short- or long-sleeved button shirt and tan pants (boys and girls) or skirts (girls). Students who are stars and superstars for academic effort, behavior, preparation and homework are recognized with a special red T-shirt, which may be worn over the standard uniform.

## **2. Parents are very satisfied with the school.**

Members of the inspection team met with one parent and one grandparent of students in attendance at the school. The families interviewed feel that their children are very safe at the school and appreciate the security guard who is present at the front desk. They feel that the school is preparing the children for college and the real world and for whatever course they choose in the future. One parent stated, “They don’t give up on the children. That’s why we love it.” For the most part, they originally learned about the school through word-of-mouth and fliers that were left in public buildings.

The parents appreciate having teachers’ telephone numbers and indicated that communication back and forth is frequent. Advisors are particularly required to be in contact with students’ families. A copy of a Family Communication Log provided to the inspection team showed that the teacher of one advisory group made eleven calls to families in September. The purpose of the calls was to let parents know that the advisor is the point of contact about the particular child and

to ask if there was any information about the child that parents wanted to share with the school. Advisors are required to call parents monthly.

In addition to the telephone contact, parents are notified in writing of the results of students' tests. For example, following the mathematics Unit 2B diagnostic, each child's family was notified of the results of the overall test and also of the results for each of twelve standards assessed. A regularly-published newsletter informs parents of events at the school. A sample newsletter examined by the inspection team included information about special events, such as trips to Barnes & Noble accompanied by volunteers from Time Magazine, ice skating in Central Park and a special ice cream party for stars and superstars (whose names were listed). In a letter dated April 24, 2006, parents were advised about after-school elective courses and were given an update on the move to the new facility in September 2006.

In the 2004-2005 annual survey of Harlem Village Academy parents, 81 percent of parents responding agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "The school communicates effectively with parents and is responsive to questions and concerns." There was also strong agreement that parents feel welcomed at the school. However, the school did not meet its goal to have an 80 percent response rate to the survey. Other survey questions on the quality of the educational program, the environment and supplemental education (such as tutoring) also elicited high percentages of positive responses, including 86 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that Harlem Village Academy offers a high quality academic program.

Organized family involvement in the school has been limited this year. For example, at a recent breakfast with the principal about which all families were notified, only twelve parents attended. In response, the school recently (April 2006) hired a family and community outreach director to act as a liaison to parents, organize meetings and notify parents of the school's progress. One of his goals is to help develop a parent organization and to enhance the school's visibility in the community.

In general, the information gathered from the parent focus group and the survey shows that Harlem Village Academy has become a viable option for some families in New York City.

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

### **1. There is considerable evidence to show that data are analyzed and used to support and enhance classroom instruction.**

According to the school's leaders and teachers, as well as the school's curriculum documents, weekly and monthly assessment data are used to plan instruction and determine what needs to be re-taught to classes and individual students. As described above, the school's academic curriculum is informed by an intensive assessment program known as DIP (Data-driven Instructional Planning) in the core academic areas that is fully aligned to the standards. For each of these assessments, as well as for external assessments – such as the New York City and State assessments and the SAT9 – the goal is for students to attain mastery at the 80 percent level.

Students (or class groups) who score below 80 percent on a given assessment or test item are targeted for re-teaching and subsequent re-testing.

Teachers receive extensive training during the summer induction program (and ongoing throughout the school year, as well) on using spreadsheets relating to standards and item analyses for each assessment. This information is used for reinforcing daily instruction, as well as for selecting students for tutoring, pullout groups and Saturday school. School leaders and teachers reported that, in weekly academic department meetings, they use the data to share standards-based lesson plans and formulate plans that are designed to address areas that need reinforcement and, as well, to help each student reach mastery. The data are used to identify and support students in need of extra help. A review of school documents show that the use of data-driven differentiated instruction and improved student results are components of the teacher performance evaluation system.

The school also collects data for the star and demerit student behavior management system (described fully in the Student and Parent Handbook) that rates students for academic effort, behavior, preparation and homework. The Family Communication Log is also used to keep track of the school's communication with the home. The enrichment director, who is in charge of the school library and the after-school workshops and programs, has a system to track students' independent reading. For every ten books they read, they receive a prize.

## **2. School leaders and staff have developed a comprehensive system to monitor implementation of the academic program as outlined in the charter.**

School leaders at Harlem Village Academy have a comprehensive approach for monitoring the overall success of the academic program. More specifically, they use student performance data, information from the teacher performance appraisal process, and the Board of Trustees' evaluation of the executive director to make a determination of the efficacy of the instructional program.

The school uses information on student performance on internal and external assessments to make adjustments to school-wide curriculum and to identify students for additional instructional support. The principal meets weekly with teachers to review their spreadsheets (which cover every diagnostic assessment – including standards and item analysis – for each student) to discuss what needs to be done for the whole class and for each child. Spreadsheets have been developed for reading and mathematics. A spreadsheet for writing is in development and, according to school leaders, would be transferable to social studies and science. The principal also monitors teachers' grade books to ensure that they are grading to the standards. To further ensure accountability, the executive director meets weekly with the principal to monitor implementation of the academic program and other school issues that arise. This makes it possible for the school to make significant progress toward the goals and objectives outlined in its Accountability Plan.

A review of school-wide documents and conversations with teachers and administrators indicate that Harlem Village Academy has a well-defined protocol and process for conducting formal

teacher evaluations. As outlined in the Faculty Accountability Plan – the tool that both the principal and executive director use to evaluate teachers – school leaders hold faculty to high standards and expectations. An examination of the Faculty Accountability Plan reveals that it has clear standards and criteria for categories (i.e., instruction and curriculum, culture and conduct, student and family relations and professionalism) on which teachers are evaluated. For instruction and curriculum, for example, the criteria are: effective, rigorous, engaging and aligned. School leaders stated that the Faculty Accountability Plan is aligned with the school’s learning standards and with external assessments, as well.

Teachers are observed by both the executive director and principal – sometimes separately, sometimes together. During the joint observations, the principal and executive director share their notes on what was seen with respect to the ways teachers are adhering to the Harlem Village Academy standards of excellence for teachers. Feedback on student achievement results and observations by school leaders is provided to teachers via e-mail or face-to-face. Teachers are also encouraged to engage in peer observation and use a protocol that guides the feedback they provide to one another. As part of their professional development, teachers also visit and observe instruction at other schools and share best practices upon their return to Harlem Village Academy.

Teachers reported that they are scheduled to receive three formal interim observations and one final evaluation on June 30. This was confirmed by school leaders, who informed the inspection team that the final teacher evaluation is a cumulative review of a teacher’s performance over the course of the school year. School leaders noted that teachers at Harlem Village Academy also receive numerous informal observations – all of which are included in the final cumulative review – from either the principal or the executive director. At the time of the inspection visit, the schedule for formal teacher observations was not fully implemented. Members of the inspection team learned that, based on students’ performance on New York State ELA and mathematics tests and other assessments, teachers are eligible for performance bonuses.

The Board of Trustees has developed an evaluation tool for the executive director that is based on the school’s attainment of the academic and organizational viability goals outlined in the Accountability Plan. In an interview with members of the inspection team, two Board members reported that they monitor the indicators in the Accountability Plan at each bi-monthly Board meeting. A review of school documents revealed that school leaders conducted an independent audit of the Harlem Village Academy’s Stanford 9 results. The independent audit was conducted by the Center for Research on Educational Outcomes (CREDO). The CREDO evaluators included three findings in their report to the school. The findings were: (1) “the Village Academy records of test scores were precise and complete; (2) the grade-level average scores were computationally correct; and, (3) Village Academy used an imperfect measure (percentage gains rather than NCE point gains) to reflect the change in student performance. However, when the results were recalculated based on actual NCE gains, the performance of the school remains positive and dramatic.” CREDO, however, did not conduct a qualitative review of the school’s academic program.

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

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

**1. All stakeholders clearly articulate the school's mission to prepare students of fine character for college and the world beyond.**

All stakeholders – including students, teachers, parents, administrators and the Board – could speak confidently about the school's mission and expectation that all of the school's graduates will be prepared for college and the world beyond. They also agreed that the school is pushing students further than the traditional public schools and that their work reflects the school's high expectations.

In addition, each advisory teacher's group is named for the college that he/she completed to give students a sense of identity with specific colleges. Excellent student work is posted in hallways and classrooms, as are the names of students who have earned recognition as stars or superstars for adherence to the self-discipline rubric. The Harlem Village Academy student pledge is posted throughout the building as a constant reminder of the school's expectations.

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

The school does not have any special programs outlined in its Accountability Plan. Therefore, the inspection team could not arrive at a judgment about this.

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

### **I. ACADEMIC PROGRAM GOALS**

**Goal 1: *English Language Arts.* Students at Harlem Village Academy will meet or exceed state performance standards for mastery of skills and content knowledge in the area of English language arts. Students will also demonstrate proficiency in advanced skills in the area of English language arts necessary for admission into and success in college.**

**Goal 2: *Mathematics.* Students at Harlem Village Academy will meet or exceed state standards for mastery of skills and content knowledge in the area of mathematics. Students will demonstrate further proficiency in advanced skills in mathematics necessary for admission into and success in college.**

(Note: Because the measures for Goals 1 and 2 are identical, they have been combined for purposes of this report.)

**Measure 1:** By the 5th year of the charter, 65% of 7th graders who have been enrolled at Harlem Village Academy for two or more years and 75% of 8th graders who have been enrolled at Harlem Village Academy for two or more years will score proficient (i.e., at level three) on the New York State English language arts (ELA) and mathematics assessments.

**Measure 2:** For the 2004-2005 school year, the mean score of all Harlem Village Academy students on New York City ELA and mathematics assessments for 6th grade will exceed the mean score of comparable New York City public schools in Community School Districts 4 and 5. For the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years, the mean score of all Harlem Village Academy students on yearly New York State ELA and mathematics assessments for 6th-8th grades will exceed the mean score of comparable New York City public schools in Community School Districts 4 and 5.

**Measure 3:** For the 2003-2004 through 2005-2006 school years, each cohort of 5th-8th grade students at Harlem Village Academy will reduce by half the remaining difference between the initial baseline mean score and the 50th percentile or will improve their mean score by 7 percentiles per year, on average, over the course of the charter, on the Stanford 9 reading comprehension assessment and the Stanford 9 mathematics procedures and problem solving assessment, until they have reached a cohort average of the 70th percentile, at which point cohorts will maintain their level of performance. For the 2005-2006 through 2006-2007 school years, on the New York State ELA and mathematics assessments, each cohort of 5th-8th grade students at Harlem Village Academy will reduce by half the remaining difference between the initial baseline performance and the scaled score required for proficiency (i.e., corresponding to level 3) by their 8th grade year.



**Goal 3: *Social Studies*. Students at Harlem Village Academy will meet and exceed state standards for mastery of skills and content knowledge in the area of social studies.**

**Goal 4: *Science*. Students at Harlem Village Academy will meet and exceed state standards for mastery of skills and content knowledge in the area of science.**

(Note: Because the measures for Goals 3 and 4 are identical, they have been combined for purposes of this report.)

**Measure 1:** By the fifth year of the charter, 60% of Harlem Village Academy students who have been enrolled at the school for two or more years will score proficient (i.e., at level three) on the 8th grade New York State social studies and science assessments.

**Measure 2:** The mean score of all students at Harlem Village Academy on the 8th grade New York State social studies and science assessments will exceed the mean score of comparable public schools in Community Schools Districts 4 and 5.

**Goal 5: *Technology*. Students at Harlem Village Academy will meet and exceed state standards for mastery of skills and content knowledge in the area of technology.**

**Measure 1:** By the fifth year of the charter, 60% of Harlem Village Academy students who have been enrolled at the school for two or more years will score proficient (i.e., at level three) on the New York State middle school technology assessment, to be administered by the end of the 8th grade.

## **ACADEMIC PROGRAM GOALS—RECOMMENDATIONS**

Before providing specifics on the recommendations for reporting progress toward attainment of the goals and measures, the inspection team urges the school to have an opening statement to show overall progress toward the goals and differentiate between the goals and the measures. The school should also be aware that adjustments might need to be made if there are changes in the New York State or New York City testing cycles. The inspection team suggests that the school might consider the following specific recommendations to enhance the quality of evidence to be used to assess progress toward its goals and measures:

Because the measures for Goals 1-5 are similar measures, therefore, the recommendations are identical for each of the proposed measures as applicable.

1. When doing a comparative analysis between Harlem Village Academy and other schools, bold and highlight Harlem Village Academy on graphs, charts and tables.
2. Number all graphs, charts and tables so that graphs correlate with their accompanying tables. Refer to all graphs, charts and tables by number in the narrative paragraphs. Be consistent in the way graphs, charts and tables are set up and labeled.
3. Insert numbers at the top of each bar on the bar graphs; type in the percentage of attainment on top of each bar in order for the reader to determine what is actually being measured.

4. Because percentile ranks are not based on equal intervals, they cannot be compared with each other. The only valid comparisons to be made on the Stanford 9 are between NCE scores, which do represent an equal interval measure.
5. Separate tables should be created to show fall to spring gains/losses to confirm summary results on the Stanford 9 assessments.
6. The document should include page numbers.

## II. ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY GOALS

**Goal 1: *Fiscal Management.* Harlem Village Academy will practice sound decision making and fiscal management sufficient to ensure strong student achievement and the responsible stewardship of public monies.**

**Measure 1:** The results of annual financial audit, submitted to the Trustees of the State University of New York, will demonstrate the sound, trustworthy and transparent management of public funds.

**Measure 2:** At the close of each school year, a statement of profit and loss, (i.e., a balance sheet) will demonstrate the presence of resources sufficient to meet scheduled payments and continue school operations.

**Measure 3:** Each year, a budget for the coming fiscal year will attest to the school's effective financial planning and a budget from the previous school year will demonstrate the school's ability to operate in a fiscally sound manner.

**Measure 4:** A statement of the school's financial control practices, to be submitted to the Trustees of the State University of New York, will demonstrate the existence of control systems necessary to the careful oversight of public funds.

**Goal 2: *Parental Involvement and Communication.* Parents of Harlem Village Academy students will be satisfied with the school's effectiveness in communicating with them and the opportunities provided for involvement in their children's education.**

**Measure 1:** In an annual survey given to all Harlem Village Academy parents and responded to by at least 80% of parents, 80% of parents surveyed will agree or strongly agree with the statement, "The school (or Harlem Village Academy) communicates effectively with parents and is responsive to questions and concerns."

**Measure 2:** Further, 80% of parents surveyed will agree or strongly agree with the statement, "As a parent, I feel welcome at the school (or Harlem Village Academy)."

**Measure 3:** Since providing parents with timely and reliable information about homework is one of the most critical aspects of a school's communication with parents, an independent audit of the school's homework support systems will be conducted on at least three unannounced days during the school year. This audit will find a minimum 90% success rate in each of the following areas:

- Each classroom's homework assignments will be accurately recorded on the correct voicemail account by 6:00 PM each day.
- Hard copies of recent homework assignments will be available to parents in a binder in the main office.

**Goal 3: *Student Daily Attendance.* Harlem Village Academy will ensure strong and consistent daily attendance by all students.**

**Measure:** Average daily student attendance at Harlem Village Academy will exceed 92% annually.

**Goal 4: *Community and Parent Satisfaction.* Harlem Village Academy will demonstrate its continued effectiveness in earning community and parent satisfaction and support sufficient to ensure the school's long-term viability.**

**Measure 1:** In an annual survey given to all Harlem Village Academy parents and responded to by at least 80% of parents, 80% of parents surveyed will agree or strongly agree with the statement, "The school offers a high quality academic program."

**Measure 2:** Further, 80% will agree or strongly agree with the statement, "The overall quality of the Harlem Village Academy academic program is superior to that at the school(s) my child previously attended."

**Measure 3:** The school will demonstrate its effective service to the community by filling 99% of available seats by September 15 each year.

**Measure 4:** The school will maintain a waitlist equal to at least 15% of the overall number of approved seats in the school during each academic year.

**Measure 5:** 80% of students enrolled at Harlem Village Academy on July 1 of each year will re-enroll and be in attendance on October 1 of the subsequent school year, exclusive of those students who are required to repeat the grade and those who move out of the school's area.

**Measure 6:** Fewer than 10% of parents whose children leave the school will describe poor quality of the school's academic program or an unsafe school environment as factors leading to their decision.

**Goal 5: *Governance.* Harlem Village Academy will be effectively governed by an active, responsive, qualified Board of Trustees.**

**Measure 1:** The Harlem Village Academy Board of Trustees will hold posted and previously announced public meetings in a location accessible to parents. The minutes of each Board meeting will be available to parents in the school's main office.

**Measure 2:** Harlem Village Academy will distribute to each parent a summary of the school's annual Accountability Progress Report, submitted yearly to the Trustees of the State University of New York, and will make copies of that report available to parents, as well as community members, in the school's main office.

**Measure 3:** Because the ultimate measure of the Board's effectiveness will lie in the achievement of the goals described in this document, the Board will demonstrate its effectiveness by reporting on its successful progress against these goals in its annual Accountability Progress Report. This report will include a discussion of strategies to address any areas in which the school is not on course to achieve its goals.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY GOALS—RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Goal 1:** No changes recommended.

**Goal 2, Measures 1 and 2:** Create a table to show year-to-year progress in both number and percentage of parent satisfaction on the survey.

**Goal 3:** Create a table to show a year-to-year comparison of attendance rates.

**Goal 4:** Combine Goal 4 with Goal 2 because it references the same survey data.

**Goal 5:** No changes recommended.

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

Village Academy Charter School did not include unique programmatic area goals in its Accountability Plan.

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

Not applicable.

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

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

**APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HARLEM VILLAGE ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL**

**I. Academic Program Goals**

<p><b>Goal 1 &amp; 2: ELA and mathematics. Students at Harlem Village Academy (HVA) will meet or exceed state performance standards for mastery of skills and content knowledge in the area of ELA and mathematics. Students will also demonstrate proficiency in advanced skills in the area of ELA and mathematics necessary for admission into and success in college.</b></p>	
<p><b>Proposed Measures</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendations for the school to consider:</b></p>
<p><b>Measure 1:</b> 65% of 7<sup>th</sup> graders &amp; 75% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders at school 2+ years score level 3 on NYS ELA &amp; mathematics test by 5<sup>th</sup> year of charter.</p> <p><b>Measure 2:</b> Mean score of VA 6<sup>th</sup> graders on NYC ELA &amp; mathematics test higher than mean score of comparison schools in 2004-2005; mean score of VA 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders on NYC ELA &amp; mathematics test higher than mean score of comparison schools in 2005-2006 &amp; 2006-2007.</p> <p><b>Measure 3:</b> Cohorts to reduce by half difference between initial baseline mean score &amp; 50<sup>th</sup> percentile or by 7 percentiles/year on Stanford 9 reading &amp; mathematics to reach 70<sup>th</sup> percentile by end of grade 8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bold and highlight VA when comparing with other schools on graphs, charts, tables</li> <li>• Number all graphs, charts and tables so that graphs correlate with accompanying tables; refer to all graphs, charts &amp; tables by number in narrative; consistent set-up &amp; labeling for graphs, charts &amp; tables</li> <li>• Insert numbers at top of each bar on bar graphs; type in percentage of attainment on top of each bar</li> <li>• Percentile ranks cannot be compared with each other; only NCEs can be compared</li> <li>• Create separate tables to show fall/spring gains/losses to summarize Stanford 9 assessments.</li> <li>• Document should include page numbers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal 3 &amp; 4: Social studies and science. Students at Harlem Village Academy (HVA) will meet and exceed state standards for mastery of skills and content knowledge in the area of social studies and science.</b></p>	
<p><b>Proposed Measures</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendations for the school to consider:</b></p>
<p><b>Measure 1:</b> by 5<sup>th</sup> year 60% of VA students at school for 2+ years will score proficient on the 8th grade NYS social studies assessments</p> <p><b>Measure 2:</b> Mean score of all VA students on 8th grade NYS social studies assessment to exceed mean score of comparison schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bold and highlight HVA when comparing with other schools on graphs, charts, tables</li> <li>• Number all graphs, charts and tables so that graphs correlate with accompanying tables; refer to all graphs, charts &amp; tables by number in narrative; consistent set-up &amp; labeling for graphs, charts &amp; tables</li> <li>• Insert numbers at top of each bar on bar graphs; type in percentage of attainment on top of each bar</li> <li>• Document should include page numbers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal 5: Technology. Students at Harlem Village Academy (HVA) will meet and exceed state standards for mastery of skills and content knowledge in the area of technology.</b></p>	
<p><b>Proposed Measures</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendations for the school to consider:</b></p>
<p><b>Measure 1:</b> by 5<sup>th</sup> year 60% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade HVA students at school for 2+ years will score proficient on the middle school NYS technology assessments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See recommendations for Goals 3 &amp; 4</li> </ul>

**II. Organizational Viability Goals**

<p><b>Goal 1: Fiscal Management. Harlem Village Academy (HVA) will practice sound decision-making and fiscal management sufficient to ensure strong student achievement and the responsible stewardship of public monies.</b></p>	
<p><b>Proposed Measures</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendations for the school to consider:</b></p>
<p><b>Measure 1:</b> Annual audits to demonstrate the sound, trustworthy &amp; transparent management of funds.  <b>Measure 2:</b> Annual balance sheet to demonstrate presence of sufficient resources  <b>Measure 3:</b> Annual budgets to attest to school’s effective financial planning &amp; a fiscally sound operations  <b>Measure 4:</b> statement of Financial Control Practices to demonstrate control systems.</p>	<p>No recommendations</p>
<p><b>Goal 2: Parental Involvement and Communication. Parents of Harlem Village Academy (HVA) students will be satisfied with the school’s effectiveness in communicating with them.</b></p>	
<p><b>Proposed Measures</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendations for the school to consider:</b></p>
<p><b>Measure 1:</b> annual survey given to all HVA parents re: effective communication  <b>Measure 2:</b> 80% agree or strongly agree that “As a parent I feel welcome at the school.”  <b>Measure 3:</b> independent audit of the school’s homework support systems will be conducted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• each classroom’s homework assignments recorded on correct voice mail account</li> <li>• hard copies of recent homework assignments available to parents in main office</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create table to show year-to-year progress in number and percent of parent satisfaction on survey.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal 3: Student Daily Attendance. Harlem Village Academy (HVA) will ensure strong and consistent daily attendance by all students.</b></p>	
<p><b>Proposed Measures</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendations for the school to consider:</b></p>
<p><b>Measure:</b> Average daily student attendance at HVA to exceed 92% annually.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create table to show year-to-year comparison of attendance rates</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal 4: Community and Parent Satisfaction. Harlem Village Academy will demonstrate its continued effectiveness in earning community and parent satisfaction and support sufficient to ensure the school’s long-term viability.</b></p>	
<p><b>Proposed Measures</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendations for the school to consider:</b></p>
<p><b>Measure 1:</b> Annual survey given to all HVA parents to have 80% response rate...  <b>Measure 2:</b> 80% agree or strongly agree that “The overall quality of the Harlem Village Academy academic program is superior ...  <b>Measure 3:</b> 99% of available seats filled by September 15 each year  <b>Measure 4:</b> Waitlist to equal at least 15% of seats in school each year  <b>Measure 5:</b> 80% of students enrolled at HVA on July 1 will reenroll and be in attendance on October 1 ...  <b>Measure 6:</b> Under 10% of parents whose children leave will describe poor quality academic program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combine Goal 4 with Goal 2 because it references the same survey data</li> </ul>

<p><b>Goal 10: Governance. Harlem Village Academy (HVA) will be effectively governed by an active, responsive, qualified Board of Trustees (BOT).</b></p>	
<p><i>Proposed Measures</i></p>	<p><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></p>
<p><b>Measure 1:</b> BOT to hold posted &amp; announced public meetings ...</p> <p><b>Measure 2:</b> HVA to give each parent a summary of school's annual Accountability Progress Report ...</p> <p><b>Measure 3:</b> Board to report successful progress against these goals in its annual Accountability Progress Report</p>	<p>No recommendations</p>