



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Renewal Report

King Center Charter School

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

REPORT INTRODUCTION	1
RECOMMENDATION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	1
SCHOOL DESCRIPTION.....	5
RENEWAL BENCHMARKS AND DISCUSSION	9
APPENDIX.....	31

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

REPORT INTRODUCTION

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

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

RECOMMENDATION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendation

Full-Term Renewal

The Charter Schools Institute recommends that the State University Trustees approve the application for renewal of the King Center Charter School and renew its charter for a period of five years with authority to provide instruction to students in kindergarten through 4th grade with a maximum projected enrollment of 105 students and consistent with the other terms set forth in its Application for Renewal.

Required Findings

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

Consideration of School District Comments

In accordance with the Act, the Institute notified the school district in which the charter school is located regarding the school’s application for renewal. No comments were received in response.

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

Summary Discussion

Academic Success

As a condition of being eligible for a full-term, five-year renewal, King Center had to meet, or come close to meeting, *both* of its English language arts and mathematics Accountability Plan goals. Also, for each of these two goals, which consist of five measures, the Institute defined successful achievement as either: 1) meeting the required absolute measure of student proficiency on State assessments *and* coming close to meeting three of the four remaining required measures; or 2) coming close to meeting each of the five required measures. In addition, the school had to meet, or come close to meeting, its science goal. For this one-year charter period,² King Center has posted strong results on the New York State assessments in English language arts and mathematics, meeting its Accountability Plan goals in both of these subjects. In mathematics, King Center has sustained its high level of performance since the beginning of the previous charter period. In English language arts, after a precipitous decline the previous year, the school showed notable progress in 2006-07. In both subjects, the school has outperformed the local school district and enabled a large number of its 4th grade students to become proficient. On the TerraNova test, administered to students in 1st through 3rd grades, King Center enabled students to score above grade level in English language arts and close to grade level in mathematics. In addition, the school met its science goal with the vast majority of students scoring at the advanced level on the 4th grade state science exam.

King Center has established a system to gather assessment and evaluation data for improving instructional effectiveness and student learning in core academic subjects. The system includes collection of assessment data, use of assessment data by the school's leadership to monitor and make improvements to the school's curriculum, a common understanding of the purpose and use of assessments, and the regular communication of assessment outcomes to the entire school community. Systematic collection began with implementation of the Reading First program three years ago. This year, the school has strengthened its assessment system through better alignment with state standards. The school is making a commendable effort to ensure that families are informed regarding the progress and performance of their children. Report cards reflect the skills and content that students are expected to learn and the report card's rating system aligns with that used by the state to measure proficiency. Teacher comments usually explain the child's particular areas of strength and weakness.

The priorities set by the school's leadership are responsive to, and consistent with, achieving the school's academic Accountability Plan goals and addressing academic deficiencies. Beginning late in the 2006-07 school year, the leadership established the improvement of reading results as a clear priority. The school has taken specific, meaningful steps to achieve this goal, including evaluating and selecting a new reading curriculum, evaluating and selecting a rigorous assessment system, and grouping students based on assessment of their literacy mastery levels and needs. The school has hired and assigned teachers according to the priority of improving literacy with reading teachers now considered to be the "primary" instructor in each classroom. King Center also has new systems for teacher evaluation and professional development that are aligned with instructional priorities.

² For the purpose of reporting student achievement results, charter period is defined as the time the Accountability Plan was in effect. In the case of a one-year renewal, the plan covers one annual data reporting cycle: the year subsequent to the previous renewal decision.

At the time of the renewal inspection visit, classroom instruction was uneven with some classrooms establishing clear expectations and effective structure while others were characterized by a more mechanical and less engaging classroom environment. In the most effective classrooms, school inspectors observed clear explanations of the goals for the class. Those teachers structured learning around centers, and provided explicit guidance regarding the task to be completed at each center. Students were engaged at the centers, whether working independently or in groups, and were articulate about the task and its purpose.

Professional development is aligned with the school's current educational priorities. For example, at the time of the renewal inspection visit, teachers had received a 30-day plan to implement small group and station work by following a prescribed step-by-step process. In implementing the plan with varying degrees of success, teachers had the opportunity to observe more experienced, effective teachers modeling the process. In addition, the school has revised and restructured its teacher evaluation form to make it consistent with the school's instructional priorities. While the new system of professional development has been put in place too recently to be evaluated, it has the potential to be effective.

Organizational Effectiveness and Viability

King Center has fulfilled its mission to provide academic support by enlisting the collaboration and involvement of family and community. Insofar as it has met its key academic goals, it has provided an environment of high expectations and academic excellence.

The school's improved student achievement results over the last year are in part attributable to the school board of trustees' active and productive engagement in the school's operation. In understanding that the core business of the school is student achievement, the board has provided effective oversight. Where there have been demonstrable deficiencies in the school's academic, organizational or fiscal performance, the board has taken effective action to correct those deficiencies. In particular, the board took meaningful, measured action last spring first to assess the cause of the school's low academic performance and then to ensure implementation of a sound plan to address the identified shortcomings.

With certain exceptions, the school appeared to be in general and substantial compliance with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the terms of its charter at the time of the renewal visit and during the term of its one-year renewal charter. With a few exceptions, the school has implemented effective policies and procedures to ensure compliance with applicable laws, serve the needs of parents and students, and provide compliance controls.

Fiscal Soundness

The school completed the 2006-07 school year in stable and improved financial condition and has been generally stable throughout its existence. The school has no long-term debt and throughout its life has generated adequate cash flow to support operations. King Center has never been cited for any material financial or internal control weaknesses as part of its annual audits. The school has been timely in meeting its financial reporting requirements and such reporting has been complete and accurate with minor exceptions.

Plans for the Next Charter Period

King Center's fiscal plan for the proposed new charter period is reasonable and appropriate. The school has operated in a fiscally sound manner at its current enrollment and grade configuration and is highly likely to continue to do so in the future.

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

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

The King Center Charter School (“King Center”), named after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was approved by the State University Trustees on January 25, 2000 and its charter (certificate of incorporation) was subsequently issued by the Board of Regents on April 4, 2000. The school opened in the fall of 2000 with an enrollment of 85 students in kindergarten through 3rd grade. On April 30, 2001 the State University Trustees approved an amendment to the school’s original charter, permitting them to add 4th grade beginning with the 2001-02 academic year, which was also approved by the Board of Regents on June 12, 2001. The King Center has maintained a grade range of kindergarten through 4th grade since the Fall of 2001, and at the time of its current renewal visit in September of 2007 enrolled 101 students.

King Center is located in the former St. Mary of Sorrows Church, an historic landmark at 938 Genesee Street, in Buffalo’s economically distressed East Side (designated as a federal Enterprise Zone Community since 1994). The school applied for an Initial Renewal in the fall of 2004 and was awarded a Short-Term Renewal of two years by the State University Trustees on March 1, 2005, which was approved by the Board of Regents on May 17, 2005. As part of this renewal decision, the State University Trustees limited the school’s authority to provide instruction to a maximum of 105 students in kindergarten through 4th grade, due in part to the school’s mixed record of academic achievement.

On March 20, 2007 the State University Trustees granted King Center a non-precedent setting one year renewal with conditions, which was also approved by the Board of Regents on May 22, 2007. The State University Trustees authorized the school to continue to provide instruction to a maximum projected enrollment of 105 students in kindergarten through 4th grade. The State University Trustees explicitly outlined their expectations regarding academic attainment and improvement, and provided for only two options at the time of the next renewal: Full-Term Renewal or Non-Renewal.

Key design elements as outlined in the school’s 2007 Third Renewal Charter:

- small class size, ranging from 14 to 21;
- an early admissions program for three and four year olds with an optional home-based school readiness program until time for the student to begin kindergarten;
- a respectful and responsible learning environment created through the elements of a Responsive Classroom;
- strong parental involvement, including teachers working with parents to facilitate academic growth;
- academic intervention programs available for students below grade level in reading or math; and
- full-time technology integration, making it possible for all teachers to integrate technology into their teaching on a daily basis.

School Year (2007-08)

185 Instructional Days

School Day (2007-08)

8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Enrollment

	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment³	Original Chartered Grades	Revised Grades Served	Actual Grades Served	Complying
2000-01	80	80	80	K-3	K-3	K-3	YES
2001-02	80	100	101	K-3	K-4	K-4	YES
2002-03	80	100	100	K-3	K-4	K-4	YES
2003-04	80	100	100	K-3	K-4	K-4	YES
2004-05	80	100	105	K-3	K-4	K-4	YES
2005-06	105	105	105	K-4	K-4	K-4	YES
2006-07	105	105	104	K-4	K-4	K-4	YES
2007-08	105	105	101	K-4	K-4	K-4	YES

Race/Ethnicity	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. King Center	% of Enroll. Buffalo City District	% of Enroll. King Center	% of Enroll. Buffalo City District	% of Enroll. King Center	% of Enroll. Buffalo City District
American Indian or Alaska Native	1 %	2 %	0 %	1 %	N/A	N/A
Black or African American	98 %	58 %	98 %	57%	N/A	N/A
Hispanic	0 %	14 %	0 %	14%	N/A	N/A
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0 %	1 %	0 %	1 %	N/A	N/A
White	1 %	26 %	2 %	26 %	N/A	N/A

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

³ Actual enrollment per the Institute's Official Enrollment Table. Note that the SED 2004-05 Report card, upon which the Free and Reduced lunch figures are calculated, cited the following slightly different enrollment numbers: 2002-03: 271; 2003-04: 412; 2004-05: 478. The SED database file also indicated a 2005-06 enrollment of 592.

Special Populations	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. King Center	% of Enroll. Buffalo City District	% of Enroll. King Center	% of Enroll. Buffalo City District	% of Enroll. King Center	% of Enroll. Buffalo City District
Students with Disabilities	14.3 %	NA	18.3 %	N/A	11.5 %	20.0 %
Limited English Proficient	0 %	7 %	0 %	7 %	0.0 %	6.5 %

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

Free/Reduced Lunch	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. King Center	% of Enroll. Buffalo City District	% of Enroll. King Center	% of Enroll. Buffalo City District	% of Enroll. King Center	% of Enroll. Buffalo City District
Eligible for Free Lunch	72 %	67 %	83 %	67 %	86.5 %	65.4 %
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	22 %	10 %	18%	10 %	6.7 %	7.6 %

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

School Charter History

Charter Year	School Year	Year of Operation	Evaluation Visit	Feedback to School	Other Actions Taken
1 st Charter – 1 st Year	2000-01	1 st	YES	Prior Action Letter; End-of-Year Evaluation Report	
1 st Charter – 2 nd Year	2001-02	2 nd	YES	Evaluation Report	
1 st Charter – 3 rd Year	2002-03	3 rd	YES	Evaluation Report	
1 st Charter – 4 th Year	2003-04	4 th	NO	None	
1 st Charter – 5 th Year	2004-05	5 th	YES	Initial Renewal Report	Granted Short-Term Renewal for a period of two years; Request to offer 5 th grade denied
2 nd Charter – 1 st Year	2005-06	6 th	NO	None	
2 nd Charter – 2 nd Year	2006-07	7 th	YES	Subsequent Renewal Report	Granted Short-Term Renewal for a period of one year; Request to offer 5 th – 8 th grade denied.
3 rd Charter – 1 st Year	2007-08	8 th	YES	Subsequent Renewal Report	Recommended for Full-Term Renewal

RENEWAL BENCHMARKS AND DISCUSSION

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

For this one-year charter period, King Center has posted strong results on the New York State assessments in English language arts and mathematics, meeting its Accountability Plan goals in both of these subjects. In mathematics, King Center has sustained its high level of performance since the beginning of the previous charter period. In English language arts, after a precipitous decline the previous year, the school showed notable progress in the current year. In both subjects, the school has outperformed the local school district and enabled a large number of 4th grade students to become proficient. On the TerraNova test, administered to students in 1st through 3rd grades, King Center enabled students to score above grade level in English language arts and close to grade level in mathematics. In addition, the school met its science goal with the vast majority of students scoring at the advanced level on the 4th grade state science exam.

At the beginning of the charter period the school developed and adopted an Accountability Plan that set academic goals in the key subjects of English language arts and mathematics, as well as science and social studies. For each goal, specific outcome measures define the level of performance necessary to meet that goal. These outcome measures include the following three types: 1) the absolute level of student performance on state examinations; 2) the comparative level of student performance on state examinations; and, 3) individual student growth based on year-to-year comparisons of grade level cohorts. The following table summarizes the outcome measures currently required by the Institute for each subject area goal, as well as a measure for NCLB. Schools may have also elected to include additional optional measures for these goals in their Accountability Plan.

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

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

English Language Arts

Accountability Plan Goal: *Students will be proficient readers and writers of the English language.*

Accountability Plan Measures: The school's performance in English language arts improved over the last two years and it came close to meeting its goal in 2006-07. In absolute terms, in 2005-06 one-third of students scored at the proficient level on the state exam; the following year almost two-thirds scored at that level. While the school did not achieve the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set under the state's NCLB accountability system in 2005-06, the following year it exceeded the AMO. Similarly, the school did not outperform the local school district or similar schools statewide in 2005-06; however, last year it outperformed both the local district and similar schools statewide by a wide margin. On the TerraNova exam neither of the two cohorts achieved their targets in either year, but overall the school was performing slightly above the national average in 2006-07. Examining value-added using New York State Testing Program data, the school's 4th grade cohort far exceeded its target.

Absolute Measures		
For the 2005-06 through 2006-2007 school years, 75 percent of 3rd - 4th graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State ELA examination.		
Results (in percents)		
Grade	School Year	
	2005-06 (N=42)	2006-07 (N=38)
3	33.3	47.1
4	33.3	76.2
5	-	-
6	-	-
7	-	-
8	-	-
All	33.3	63.2
Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State ELA exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.		
Results (in percents)		
Index	School Year	
	2005-06 (N=42)	2006-07 (N=41)
PI	110	149
AMO	122	122

Comparative Measures		
Each year, the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State ELA exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of the Buffalo City School District.		
Results (in percents)		
Comparison	School Year	
	2005-06 (Grades 3-4)	2006-07 (Grades 3-4)
School	33.3	63.2
District	37.5	37.5
Each year, the school will exceed to a specified degree (as set by CSI) its expected level of performance on the State ELA exam, as determined by the performance of other schools that have a similar proportion of students eligible for free lunch among all charter and public schools in districts with charter schools. ⁴		
Results (in percents)		
Index	School Year	
	2005-06 (Grades 3-4) (N=42)	2006-07 (Grades 3-4) (N=41)
Predicted	49.7	46.6
Actual	33.3	63.4
Effect Size	-0.88	1.13

⁴ The Institute's criteria for achieving this measure is an Effect Size equal to or greater than 0.3 which is deemed to be performing better than predicted to a small degree.

Value-Added Measures		
For the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between their average NCE in the previous spring on the Terra Nova Standardized Test, a nationally-normed reading test, and an NCE of 50 (i.e., grade-level) in the current spring. If a grade-level cohort exceeds an NCE of 50 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.		
Results (in percents)		
Mean NCE	School Year	
	2005-06 (Grades 2-3) (N=42)	2006-07 (Grades 2-3) (N=42)
Baseline	56.8	60.7
Target	56.9	60.8
Actual	48.1	53.1
Cohorts Made Target	(0 of 2)	(0 of 2)
For the 2006-07 school year, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between the percent at-or-above Level 3 on the previous year's State ELA exam and 75 percent at-or-above Level 3 on the current year's State ELA exam. If a grade-level cohort exceeds 75 percent at-or-above Level 3 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.		
Results (in percents)		
Percent Level 3 & 4 on NYSTP	School Year	
	2005-06	2006-07 (Grade 4) (N=21)
Baseline	-	33.3
Target	-	54.2
Actual	-	76.2
Cohorts Made Target	-	(1 of 1)

Mathematics

Accountability Plan Goal: *Students will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of mathematical computation and problem solving.*

Accountability Plan Measures: The school achieved its mathematics goal in both years. In absolute terms, more than 80 percent of students have consistently scored at the proficient level on the state exam. The school far exceeded the AMO, and outperformed both the local district and similar schools statewide by large margins. On the TerraNova exam overall performance declined each year to about the national average. On the other hand, examining year-to-year growth on the New York State Test, the school's 4th grade cohort far exceeded its target, moving from 76 percent to 90 percent at the proficient level.

Absolute Measures		
For the 2005-06 through 2006-2007 school year, 75 percent of 3 rd - 4 th graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State mathematics examination.		
Results (in percents)		
Grade	School Year	
	2005-06⁵ (N=42)	2006-07 (N=39)
3	76.2	72.2
4	90.5	90.5
5	-	-
6	-	-
7	-	-
8	-	-
All	83.3	82.1
Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State mathematics exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.		
Results (in percents)		
Index	School Year	
	2005-06 (N=42)	2006-07 (N=42)
PI	179	179
AMO	86	86

Comparative Measures		
Each year, the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State mathematics exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of the Buffalo City School District.		
Results (in percents)		
Comparison	School Year	
	2005-06 (Grades 3-4)	2006-07 (Grades 3-4)
School	83.3	82.1
District	43.7	43.7
Each year, the school will exceed to a specified degree (as set by the Institute) its expected level of performance on the State Mathematics exam, as determined by the performance of other schools that have a similar proportion of students eligible for free lunch among all charter and public schools in districts with charter schools.		
Results (in percents)		
Index	School Year	
	2005-06 (Grades) (N=42)	2006-07 (Grades) (N=42)
Predicted	63.7	69.5
Actual	83.3	83.3
Effect Size	1.03	0.85

⁵ In 2005-06 New York State implemented English language arts and mathematics exams in grades 3-8. Prior to that, exams in these subjects were administered only in the 4th and 8th grades.

Value-Added Measures		
For the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between their average NCE in the previous spring on the Terra Nova, a nationally-normed math test, and an NCE of 50 (i.e., grade-level) in the current spring. If a grade-level cohort exceeds an NCE of 50 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.		
Results (in percents)		
Mean NCE	School Year	
	2005-06 (Grades 2-3) (N=42)	2006-07 (Grades 2-3) (N=42)
Baseline	60.7	55.0
Target	60.8	55.1
Actual	48.8	49.8
Cohorts Made	(1 of 2)	(0 of 2)
Target		
For the 2006-07 through school year, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 on the previous year's State math exam and 75 percent at or above Level 3 on the current year's State math exam. If a grade-level cohort exceeds 75 percent at or above Level 3 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.		
Results (in percents)		
Percent Level 3 & 4 on NYSTP	School Year	
	2005-06	2006-07 (Grade 4) (N=21)
Baseline	-	76.2
Target	-	76.3
Actual	-	90.5
Cohorts Made	-	(1 of 1)
Target		

Science

Accountability Plan Goal: *Students will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of scientific concepts.*

Accountability Plan Measures: Each year the school has met its science goal. In 2005-06 on the state 4th grade science exam 86 percent of students scored at the proficient level, rising to 91 percent the next year. In addition, the school outperformed its local school district in 2005-06; comparison data for 2006-07 is unavailable.

Absolute Measures		
In each year, 75 percent of fourth graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Science examination.		
Results (in percents)		
Grade	School Year	
	2005-06 (N=21)	2006-07 (N=21)
4	85.7	90.5
8	-	-

Comparative Measures		
Each year, the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State Science exam will be greater than that of the Buffalo City School District.		
Results (in percents)		
Comparison	School Year	
	2005-06 (Grade 4)	2006-07 (Grade 4)
School	85.7	90.5
District	68.5	NA

NCLB

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

Accountability Plan Measures: *The school has achieved its NCLB goal by maintaining its status of “in good standing” according to the state’s NCLB accountability system.*

Absolute Measures		
Under the state’s NCLB accountability system, the school’s Accountability Status will be “Good Standing” each year.		
Results (in percents)		
Status	School Year	
	2005-06	2006-07
Good Standing	Yes	Yes

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

King Center Charter School has no school-specific non-academic goals in effect in its Accountability Plan during this charter period.

Benchmark 2B Mission & Design Elements	2B The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.
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King Center Charter School’s mission statement during the last charter period was:

Committed to urban education, the King Center Charter School builds on an early intervention foundation by partnering with families and community to ensure a respectful, student-centered environment of high expectation and academic excellence.

The school fulfilled its mission in providing academic support and by enlisting the collaboration and involvement of family and community. Insofar as it has met its key academic goals, the school has provided an environment of high expectations and academic excellence.

According to the renewal application, the school’s mission statement was revised in June 2007 to reflect the fact that the school’s early intervention strategies are limited by the willingness of parents to participate in the support activities. In order to “focus on that which the school does control,” the board reported that it revised the statement to take effect in the 2007-08 school year:

The King Center Charter School partners with parents and the community to ensure a caring student-centered environment of high expectation and academic excellence supported by evidence-based curriculum taught by a deeply committed and highly qualified staff.

King Center strives to create a nurturing, socially supportive learning environment. The administrators and staff of the King Center Charter School have used the “Kindness and Respect” (KAR) program to recognize and promote positive student behavior. Further, part of the school leadership team’s mandate is to improve the social and emotional supports provided by the school and, as the director states, to give all students a “trusting relationship” with an adult. The school has a referral agreement with the King Urban Life Center EMPOWER program, a program that provides case managers with a network of services that parents may access for their family. Teachers work to know their students well, and to ensure that classrooms are consistently calm, safe and orderly.

Key Design Elements

King Center reported that during the current charter period it carried out the following key design elements:

- The school provided a 7.5 hour day for 180 days with a 4 week summer program which provided intensive reading instruction.
- The school provided an Early Admissions Program and made an optional home-based school readiness program available for participating families.
- A Responsive Classroom model was used to develop a respectful and responsible community of learners.
- Students wore uniforms four out of five days each week; the school pledge and the school song were part of the morning exercises.

- As an out-growth of the collaboration with Buffalo State College, including assisting future educators with “real time” observations of teaching, classroom teachers benefited professionally by reflecting on their practice in response to professors’ and college students’ questions.
- The teachers utilized small-group and individualized instruction across all grade levels.
- In order to enable children to learn to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade, two-hour reading instruction was scheduled daily with the reading coach providing support.
- The full-time technology coordinator made it possible for all teachers to integrate technology into their teaching on a daily basis.
- Students recorded digital clips of their reading three times a year and the clips were included in their literacy portfolios.
- The school provided an individualized academic intervention program for selected students; either intensive (daily) or strategic (two times per week) according to their test results.
- A special education teacher/coordinator worked with students with special education needs to help them achieve the goals recorded in their Individual Education Programs.
- The Buffalo School District provided a speech teacher, an occupational therapist and a counselor to work with students who needed those services.
- Two parent representatives with full voting rights served on the board of trustees (a practice in place for the past two years).

While the school addressed the vast majority of key program elements, there was no evidence that it focused on small classes, which have generally had up to 21 students, or music opportunities through chorus, violin and/or recorder lessons, two elements identified in the previous renewal application.

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

In response to the results of the 2005-06 New York State assessment in English language arts, and the Institute’s Subsequent Renewal Report issued in March 2007, King Center’s board of trustees acted promptly and effectively to address inadequacies in the educational program. After establishing an education committee in the spring of 2005 to make recommendations to the full board, the board hired an outside consultant with strong administrative and education credentials to evaluate the educational program and to make recommendations. The board received a comprehensive analysis. In response, it engaged the consultant to continue working for the school to implement the outlined recommendations.

In addressing last year’s academic concerns, the board has become more engaged in monitoring and pursuing the school’s educational goals. Toward this end, the consultant reports directly to the board regarding implementation of the revised curriculum. Board members now seek out “leading indicators” that enable them to anticipate rather than react to performance changes, and they are re-evaluating the administrative structure with an eye toward institutionalizing the improvements that have recently taken place. This focus on organizational structures includes a concern for making succession plans, mindful of the importance of strong instructional leadership.

Another indication of the board’s sound leadership priorities is its assessment of how and when to expand the school. The board recognizes that there are strong incentives to enlarge the school, given the need for better educational options in the Buffalo. Nevertheless, the board has determined that the current priority should be to stabilize and sustain the gains the school has made in its current configuration. The board now takes the view that any plans for growth must be “methodical” and should be secondary to ensuring the success of the existing school.

As part of its renewal review, the Institute reviewed the progress of the school with respect to policies and procedures, by-laws and conflicts of interest especially regarding the issues noted as problematic at the time of the prior renewal inspection visit in September 2006. At the time of the last renewal visit, the school board had formed a policies and procedures committee to address policy issues, and stated that it reviews policies at its annual meeting. In general these efforts bore fruit, but several issues still needed attention at the time of the most recent renewal inspection visit.

- Special education and other policies were new or improved. At the time of the last renewal inspection visit no written policy regarding the child study team existed, whereas at the time of the recent renewal visit, written procedures existed. The board member handbook was also improved and contained a copy of the school’s charter agreement. New, well-drafted Open Meetings Law and fingerprinting policies existed. The policies and procedures manual was also improved and remedied some of the prior policy deficiencies.

- Additional policies were improved but still had certain deficiencies. For example, formerly the school had very little in terms of Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) material, but at the time of the renewal inspection had a policy and annual notification with the notification only lacking information regarding copies of student records. Similarly, the improved Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) policy still needed to have “regulations” and a few adjustments for recent statutory changes. Also, the FOIL notice was not posted. While better, the medication administration policy stated that students “must be self-directed,” which is not possible for younger students, but probably meant the parents would have to administer drugs (reflecting the school’s lack of a full-time nurse and information in other school publications).
- A few policies still required attention. The *School Wide Discipline Policies and Procedures* still appear to be more of a summary than a full policy, and no broader publication is available in the school office. It does not make clear what number of days constitutes a long-term suspension, properly reference the federal Gun Free Schools Act or fully detail alternative instruction. The special education discipline policy now existed but also had a variety of minor defects. The school also lacked a written retention policy.

Overall, the school made progress in the area of policies and procedures with the exceptions above and some other minor exceptions. As a result, the school generally has maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes, and appears to have abided by them.

The school board generally appears to have 1) abided by the provisions in its by-laws, which contain a number of technical deficiencies that can be easily remedied, and 2) handled conflicts of interest appropriately and in accordance with its by-laws and policies.

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

Parents/guardians report being satisfied with the school. According to a survey administered last spring 84 percent of all the parents in the school indicated that they would recommend King Center to friends and family. More than 90 percent of the entire parent population stated they were satisfied with their with their child’s growth in self-control, responsibility, concern for others, and progress throughout the course of the year. The same parents also indicated their satisfaction with the effectiveness of the reading and mathematics programs, communication with their child’s teacher and the school’s director. The parents reported being slightly less satisfied with the school’s health and fitness program.

<p>Benchmark 2E Legal Requirements</p>	<p>2E The school has substantially complied with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.</p>
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As part of the Institute’s legal review, compliance deficiencies noted in the school’s last renewal report were reviewed. In almost all areas improvement was noted.

King Center’s performance of fingerprint-supported background checks on all employees, including non-teaching staff is vastly improved. The school’s notification to the Institute regarding proposed trustees is also improved. As was the case during the last renewal visit, Open Meetings Law compliance is improved with a change in the school’s bylaws settling an issue related to board committee minutes. In at least one case, it was not clear if a quorum was present at a board meeting as a result of the minutes not always reflecting quorum status. The timeliness of sending minutes to the Institute per the school’s monitoring plan (part of charter) could also be improved.

King Center continues to appear to be in compliance with the provisions of the Charter Schools Act related to employing sufficient numbers of New York State certified teachers with only one teacher not certified, and also appears to be in compliance with the “highly qualified teachers” requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

King Center has two lawyers on its school board and stated that it would not hesitate to procure outside counsel if *pro bono* counsel could not be found.

With the foregoing exceptions, King Center appeared to be in general and substantial compliance with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the terms of its charter during its renewal charter term and at the time of its renewal inspection visit. Also, with exceptions the school generally has maintained effective systems and controls for legal compliance.

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

For the term of its renewal charter, the school has operated pursuant to year-to-year plans. Other charter schools have used rolling five-year budget plans to assist them in long-range fiscal planning. Given the limited life of the school’s renewal charter and the lack of expansion plans during that time, the year-to-year planning has been sufficient. The school’s annual budgets have provided a realistic framework for the school’s spending activities and monitoring procedures are in place.

The annual budget is developed in conjunction with the school director, the outside accountant and finance committee of the school’s board of trustees. The full board typically reviews, discusses, modifies and approves the budget over the course of two to three board meetings. Budget variances are analyzed routinely and material variances are discussed and addressed at the board level. Modifications to the budget are infrequent with the focus on the overall budget rather than on individual line items. A process by which material budget adjustments could be made as needed could provide more effective monitoring by the school board.

<p>Benchmark 3B</p> <p>Internal Controls</p>	<p>3B</p> <p>The school has maintained appropriate internal controls and procedures. Transactions have been accurately recorded and appropriately documented in accordance with management’s direction and laws, regulations, grants and contracts. Assets have been and are safeguarded. Any deficiencies or audit findings have been corrected in a timely manner.</p>
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King Center has written fiscal policies and procedures related to external and internal compliance for cash disbursements, cash receipts, bank reconciliations, payroll, fixed assets, grants/contributions, and the preparation of financial statements. The board has documented its purchasing procedures in writing. School officials indicated that out of the ordinary expenditures are discussed with the board. However, King Center could enhance its purchasing practices by adopting a written purchasing policy to provide overall guidance to school personnel. The school recently adopted a fraud policy to lay out responsibilities and procedures related to fraud or suspected fraud.

Financial oversight by the board has generally been effective. Given the small size of the school’s staff, optimal segregation of duties cannot be achieved. As a result, the continued active financial oversight by the board is required. The board has outsourced the financial back-office operations of the school to an accounting firm, while maintaining appropriate oversight. This arrangement provides a level of independent oversight over the processing of transactions and also allows the school to leverage the experience and competency of staff at the accounting firm. Duties at the accounting firm’s office are appropriately segregated.

King Center could also improve its controls over capital assets. The school does have written procedures related to maintaining records related to capital assets and requires that physical inventories are completed at the end of each year. However, school policies do not require that assets be affixed with tags identifying the property as being owned by the school. The school could improve its control over fixed assets by using such tags, at a minimum. It could further improve its controls by assigning unique identifying numbers to each item/tag when feasible. Also, King Center’s policies could more fully describe the person(s) responsible and procedures to be performed when conducting physical inventories.

<p>Benchmark 3C</p> <p>Financial Reporting</p>	<p>3C</p> <p>The school has complied with financial reporting requirements. The school has provided the State University Board of Trustees and the State Education Department with required financial reports on time, and such reports have been complete and have followed generally accepted accounting principles.</p>
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Generally, King Center has met its financial reporting requirements. The annual financial statements, budget, and quarterly financial reports were filed on time during the renewal charter period. Each of the school’s financial statement audit reports have received an unqualified opinion indicating that, in the auditor’s opinion, the school’s financial statements and notes fairly represent, in all material respects, the school’s financial position, changes in net assets and its cash flows in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. All statements required by generally accepted accounting principles were included in the school’s financial statements.

The independent auditor has not issued management letters and, as a result, King Center has not needed to follow up on any such comments. Also, the school’s annual audit reports on internal controls over financial reporting and compliance with laws, regulations and grants did not disclose any reportable conditions, material weaknesses, or instances of non-compliance. The lack of deficiencies in these independent reports provides some, but certainly not absolute, assurance that the school has maintained adequate internal controls and procedures. The purposes of the reports are not to provide assurance on internal control over financial reporting or an opinion on compliance. The school board reviews and approves the annual financial statement audit report, although it does not meet separately with the independent auditors, which is considered a best practice.

Benchmark 3D Financial Condition	3D	The school has maintained adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations and has monitored and successfully managed cash flow. Critical financial needs of the school are not dependent on variable income (grants, donations and fundraising).
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King Center completed the 2006-07 school year in stable and improved financial condition. Expendable net assets⁶ of \$177,877 represent 16 percent of the school's adopted FY 2008 budget. The school's total net assets increased by \$135,654 and it finished with total net assets of \$535,907. The school increased its cash position by \$179,502. King Center has property and equipment (net of accumulated depreciation and amortization) totaling \$187,831 that consist of leasehold improvements, furniture and equipment. The school has no long-term debt and leases office and program space from an affiliated party, King Urban Life Center, Inc. The cost of the lease, which includes utilities, averages about \$1,248 per student. The average occupancy cost for other SUNY authorized charter schools in Buffalo that lease their facilities is \$1,500 per student.

King Center has maintained adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations and has monitored and successfully managed cash flow. Critical financial needs of the school are not dependent on variable income (grants, donations and fundraising). The school has generated adequate cash flow to support operations and has access to a \$200,000 line of credit with a local bank. As of June 30, 2007, there was no balance owed by the school on the line. Spending per student (total expenses, including grant related, divided by the revised approved enrollment) in the last three years was as follows:

2005	2006	2007
\$ 11,672	\$ 11,611	\$ 11,843

⁶ Unrestricted net assets of \$460,907 subtracted by net property and equipment (\$187,831) and a loan receivable from the Buffalo Board of Education (\$95,199).

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

In its application for subsequent renewal, King Center Charter School has revised its mission statement for the next charter term:

The King Center Charter School partners with parents and the community to ensure a caring student-centered environment of high expectation and academic excellence supported by evidence-based curriculum taught by a deeply committed and highly qualified staff.

To the extent that King Center has achieved its key academic goals and continues to implement an educational program that supports achieving those goals, it is likely to achieve this mission.

The school will retain its extended school day of 7.5 hours during 180 school days for kindergarten through 4th grade students. The school plans to continue with the same enrollment structure in effect in its previous charter term: 105 students with 21 students in each of five classes, in kindergarten through 4th grade.

King Center currently requires classroom teachers to have earned master’s degrees, and that classroom teachers in 1st through 4th grades be certified in literacy instruction. In addition, assistant teachers in 1st through 4th grades are to be certified with a focus on mathematics and science instruction. According to the renewal application, this staffing model, reflecting the school’s reading instruction priority will be maintained throughout the new charter period. Other than staffing, the school’s intention is to sustain its current class schedules and resources, also in order to support its focus on enabling students to become strong readers and writers.

Given King Center’s current academic success and the consistency of its planned structure to that of the previous charter period, the key structural elements in its plans are reasonable, feasible, and achievable.

<p>Benchmark 4B</p> <p>Plans for the Educational Program</p>	<p>4B</p> <p>The school has clearly laid out its plans for its educational program, shown that it can implement that program and such program will allow the school to meet its Accountability Plan goals.</p>
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The King Center Charter School plans to continue the components of its educational program as they were constituted during the 2007-08 school year. King Center will continue to utilize the Scott Foresman Reading Street core reading program, as well as the Scott Foresman mathematics and science materials, to support its standards-based curriculum - as it has for the past six years.

In addition to citing these plans in its renewal application, King Center also includes additional plans ostensibly to ensure that the instructional program continues to be rigorous and focused. While these proposed plans, covering assessment, curriculum, professional development, and instruction are voluminous, they represent, as displayed in the application an exhaustive list of brainstorming ideas. They are a useful point of departure for further planning, needing to be fleshed out into concrete, actionable plans.

The King Center has shown that it can implement the proposed educational program and that the program is likely to enable the school to meet its Accountability Plan goals. Therefore, the Institute concludes that the proposed educational program is reasonable, feasible, and achievable.

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

<p>Benchmark 4D Fiscal & Facility Plans</p>	<p>4 D The school has provided a reasonable, feasible and achievable appropriate five-year fiscal plan for the term of next charter, including plans for an adequate facility.</p>
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King Center’s fiscal plan for the proposed new charter period is reasonable and appropriate. The school has operated in a fiscally sound manner at its current enrollment and grade configuration and is highly likely to continue to do so in the future. Long-range fiscal projections are more susceptible to error than those for a single year. Such projections are subject to revision due to changes in local conditions, objectives, and laws. King Center will be required to develop and adopt annual budgets based on known per pupil amounts and other revenues. The school’s stable finances, along with the board’s record of effective financial oversight, make it well suited for adjusting its plans as needed going forward.

King Center has proposed an appropriate staffing structure and the school facility is suitable to meet its needs. Importantly, the school has always been at or near full enrollment and currently has a waiting list at each grade level. Continued full enrollment will allow the school to appropriately plan and fund its program.

King Center’s fiscal plan conservatively assumes per-pupil funding will increase 1.9% per year, which is consistent with recent historical trends. Other funding is conservatively projected to be unchanged. Generally, the school’s plan makes reasonable assumptions related to expenses with a few exceptions. However, these potentially higher expenses are mitigated by the planned surpluses in each year and its current fiscal stability. King Center has never relied on variable funding to finance ongoing operations and has generated adequate cash flow to support operations throughout its existence.

APPENDIX

An Overview of Renewal Requirements

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

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

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

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

Statutory and Regulatory Considerations

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

¹ See § 2850 of the New York Education Law.

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

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

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

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

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

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

³ Education Law § 2851(4).

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

⁵ See Education Law § 2852(2).

⁶ See Education Law § 2852(5).

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

Process for Initial Renewals

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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