



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Subsequent Renewal Report

Merrick Academy – Queens Public Charter School

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

REPORT INTRODUCTION

This report is the primary means by which the Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) transmits to the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the “SUNY 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 “SUNY Renewal Practices”).¹

Information about the SUNY renewal process, including the Institute’s comprehensive Charter Renewal Handbook and an overview of the requirements for renewal under the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (as amended, the “Act”), are available on the Institute’s website at: www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsRenewOverview.htm.

RECOMMENDATION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendation

Full-Term Renewal

The Charter Schools Institute recommends that the SUNY Trustees approve the application for subsequent renewal of the Merrick Academy – Queens Public Charter School and renew its charter for a period of five years with authority to provide instruction to students in Kindergarten through 6th grades with a maximum enrollment of 540 students, and consistent with the other terms set forth in its Application for Subsequent renewal.

Background and Required Findings

According to the SUNY Renewal Practices:

In subsequent renewal reviews, and in contrast to initial renewal reviews, the SUNY Trustees evaluate the strength and effectiveness of a school’s academic program almost exclusively by the degree to which the school has succeeded in meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals during the Accountability Period. This approach is consistent with the greater time that a school has been in operation and a concomitant increase in the quantity and quality of student achievement data that the school has generated. It is also consistent with the Act’s purpose of moving from a rules-based to an outcome-based system of accountability in which schools are held accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.

Merrick Academy – Queens Public Charter School (“Merrick Academy”) has applied for a subsequent, Full-Term Renewal of five years.

At the end of Merrick Academy’s first charter term, the school was providing instruction in kindergarten through 6th grade. The Institute recommended a conditioned renewal, however, that

¹ The *Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University Board of Trustees* (revised September 15, 2009) are available at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/documents/renewalPractices.doc>.

restricted the program to kindergarten through 5th grade only. The recommendation was based on weakness in the instructional program at the 5th and 6th grade levels and a finding that the school did not have “the personnel, programs and capacity that permit the Institute to find a likelihood of success in improving student achievement in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades.” In the first year of the current charter term, the school board sought the restoration of the 6th and 7th grades and the SUNY Trustees granted the restoration of only the 6th grade based upon proposed improvements in staffing and curriculum.

Now in its tenth year of operation, the SUNY Renewal Practices provide only two possible renewal outcomes for Merrick Academy – Queens Public Charter School: Full-Term Renewal or Non-Renewal. In order to earn a Full-Term Renewal, Merrick Academy must demonstrate that it has met the criteria for such a renewal as described in the SUNY Renewal Practices. Specifically, the school must demonstrate that it “has met or come close to meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals during the Accountability Period,” or it must face Non-Renewal. Based on the Institute’s review of the evidence that it gathered and that Merrick Academy has provided including, but not limited to, the school’s Application for Subsequent Renewal, evaluation visits conducted during the charter period, a renewal evaluation visit conducted during the final year of the charter period, and the school’s record of academic performance as determined by the extent to which it has met its academic Accountability Plan goals, the Institute finds that the school has met its academic Accountability Plan goals during the Accountability Period.”²

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. The Merrick Academy – Queens Public Charter School as described in the Application for Renewal 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).

Therefore, in accordance with the standard for Subsequent Renewal found in the SUNY Renewal Practices, the Institute recommends that the SUNY Trustees approve Merrick Academy – Queens Public Charter School’s Application for Charter Renewal and renew its charter for a full term of five years to serve students in grades kindergarten through 6th grade as requested in the school’s renewal application.

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. As of the date of this report, no comments were received in response.

² SUNY Renewal Practices, Full-Term Renewal standard (9).

Summary Discussion

Academic Success

Merrick Academy – Queens Public Charter School is meeting its key Accountability Plan goals in English language arts and mathematics. Throughout the current Accountability Period Merrick has considerably improved its performance in English language arts and mathematics. In 2005-06 and 2006-07, the school was far from meeting both goals. In 2007-08, the school improved its performance and came close to meeting its mathematics goal. In the most recent year the school first met both goals. Notably, aside from one cohort falling just short of its growth target (while still maintaining a high level of performance), the school is meeting each of the measures comprising its English language arts and mathematics goals. The school has also met its science and social studies goals during the Accountability Period. According to the state’s No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system, the school is deemed to be in good standing.

Throughout the current Accountability Period Merrick Academy has improved its performance on the state’s English language arts exam.³ In 2005-06 the school was far from meeting its absolute performance target and underperformed its local community school district and demographically similar schools statewide. With respect to growth, each cohort failed to achieve its target that year and overall performance declined. In 2006-07, performance improved somewhat but the school still underperformed the district as well as similar schools statewide and failed to meet its growth targets. In 2007-08, the school made substantial progress, outperformed its local community school district and performed about the same as expected in comparison to similar schools. In addition, overall, student cohorts showed meaningful growth. In 2008-09, the school exceeded its absolute target and outperformed the district and demographically similar schools by a wide margin. Each cohort of students achieved its growth target and overall performance improved markedly. The school surpassed the performance target set by the state for all public schools under its NCLB accountability system in all years as well.

Merrick Academy has demonstrated consistent improvement on the state mathematics test during its second charter term. In 2005-06 the school underperformed the local district and demographically similar schools, and grade level cohorts failed to meet growth targets. In 2006-07, the school made progress in its absolute performance, but continued to underperform the local district and demographically similar schools. In 2007-08, the school first exceeded its absolute performance target and outperformed the local district.⁴ In comparison to demographically similar schools, Merrick performed about the same as expected. In addition, the majority of student cohorts achieved their targets and overall cohort performance improved substantially. In 2008-09, the school posted a near-perfect proficiency rate on the state mathematics exam and far outperformed the district and similar schools statewide. In addition, each grade level cohort made significant progress or

³ In interpreting a school's year-to-year changes in the absolute measure, the Institute puts the results in the context of overall state-wide changes. In general, the state-wide proficiency rate on the English language arts exam increased by five percent from 2006-07 to 2007-08 and by nine percent from 2007-08 to 2008-09. From a related perspective, the median school had a proficiency rate of 68.7 percent, 72.8 percent, and 80.9 percent during the three years respectively. These year-to-year changes suggest the importance of the comparative measures included in the goal.

⁴ In interpreting a school's year-to-year changes in the absolute measure, the Institute puts the results in the context of overall state-wide changes. In general, the statewide proficiency rate on the mathematics exam increased by nearly six percent from 2006-07 to 2007-08 and by eight percent from 2007-08 to 2008-09. From a related perspective, the median school had a proficiency rate of 79.5 percent, 86.2 percent, and 90.8 percent during the three years respectively. These year-to-year changes in absolute results suggest the importance of the comparative measures included in the goal.

maintained a high level of performance. The school surpassed the performance target set by the state for all public schools under its NCLB accountability system in all years as well.

The school has been guided by strong and stable leadership over the course of the charter period. In its tenth year of operation, the school continues to be guided by its founding principal. The school added a director of operations late in the current charter period, providing the principal with more time to focus on the academic program. The school's leadership team has established an environment of high expectations for student achievement which has resulted in improved performance. At the time of the renewal visit, instructional leaders were conducting regular and useful teacher evaluations and teachers were receiving ongoing and systematic support from an effective staff developer. Further, the school's leadership team has adequately monitored and evaluated Merrick Academy's instructional program to assure progress in meeting the school's academic Accountability Plan goals.

The school's professional development program assists teachers in meeting students' academic needs and school goals. Staff developers provide targeted assistance to teachers based on identified areas needing improvement in teachers' instructional skills. The content of professional development activities dovetails with the school's instructional program and is derived in part from staff interests. Teacher needs and interests are regularly considered by school leaders, resulting in professional development that is differentiated to meet most individual teacher needs.

Merrick Academy has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and uses it in pursuit of improved instructional effectiveness and student learning. Useful assessments are regularly administered across the school and their results are systematically collected and analyzed. Assessment data is then used for multiple purposes, including re-teaching specific skills and content to entire classes, differentiating instruction within small groups, and identifying students for remediation. In addition, the school regularly communicates each student's progress and growth to his or her parents/guardians through the use of an online tool. Parents interviewed at the time of the renewal visit reported that they felt very well informed about their children's performance.

At the time of the renewal visit the school had in place a curriculum aligned to state learning standards, which is generally used to prepare students to meet state performance standards. Teachers have access to guiding curricular documents, such as scope and sequence, pacing guides, and curriculum maps, yet do not use these resources with consistency. Instead, many teachers rely on the significant resources provided by commercial textbooks in use to guide their instructional decisions. The school lacks an effective system to ensure what is taught from grade to grade, only using ad hoc methods in an attempt to provide vertical continuity. As a result, the curriculum as implemented lacks coherence from grade-to-grade and parallel construction across subject areas.

The quality of instruction at Merrick Academy has varied across the school throughout the charter period and at the time of the renewal visit. Teachers consistently plan and implement purposeful lessons using student learning objectives aligned to state standards. While learning time has been maximized in most of the school's classrooms, the level of cognitive engagement and rigor of instruction in the school's classrooms has been inconsistent. Notably, at the time of the renewal visit the school was differentiating instruction to meet the individual learning needs of students.

Merrick Academy is demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically. The school deploys sufficient resources and personnel, and has allocated adequate instructional time to provide academic interventions that address the range of students' needs. Clear procedures for

identifying at-risk students, including those with disabilities and English language learners, were in place at the time of the renewal visit. Student assessment data is used at every stage in the provision of these interventions. Teachers at Merrick Academy are provided with adequate training and support to help them meet the needs of struggling students, contributing greatly to the effectiveness of these efforts.

The school promotes a culture of learning that is consistently supported with a rich visible display of student work. Throughout the school, a safe and orderly environment has been established. The school has an effective discipline system in place, most teachers employ effective classroom management techniques, and whole-class transitions are smooth across the school.

Organizational Effectiveness and Viability

The school has been faithful to its mission throughout the charter period and has implemented many of the key design elements contained in its charter in pursuit of its mission. The school utilizes research-based instructional materials, has fully implemented student support systems, and has begun to develop intensive professional development for teachers, all of which are significant design elements included in its charter.

Students and their families are satisfied with the school. Parent satisfaction appears to be high, according to data from the annual survey the school uses to determine satisfaction with the school. According to the Application for Renewal, the overwhelming majority of parents responding to the school's most recent survey, which has averaged a 75 percent response rate during the charter period, expressed satisfaction in all categories. In a focus group interview conducted during the renewal visit, parents expressed appreciation for the quality of the teachers at Merrick Academy, the professionalism of the leadership and the degree of communication with families. The corresponding student survey indicated overall satisfaction on the part of most of the school's students as well. Several other indicators also suggest satisfaction with or parental interest in the school, such as a significant waiting list, high average daily attendance, and low student attrition.

Merrick Academy has established a well-functioning organizational structure with staff, systems, and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program. The addition of the director of operations position has strengthened day-to-day operations, which were effectively managed at the time of the renewal visit. Distinct lines of accountability and clearly defined roles and responsibilities have contributed to retention of quality personnel throughout the charter period. Finally, the school has maintained adequate enrollment throughout the charter period.

The school's board of trustees has worked effectively to achieve the school's mission and provide oversight to the total educational program. School board members possess adequate skill sets and expertise and have established policies and practices to ensure appropriate oversight of the school. Further, board members have participated in training to refine their skills and capacity to provide effective governance. At the time of the renewal visit, the board was receiving adequate information from school leaders and Victory Schools, Inc., its charter management organization, including a dashboard that identifies instructional weaknesses based on student assessment data. The school board has regularly evaluated the performance of the principal. While the school board has monitored the performance of Victory Schools, Inc., including an anonymous survey that board members have completed, a formal evaluation that includes clear expectation and consequences has not been conducted.

In addition to being pro-active regarding the school's educational program, the school board has developed its capacity to provide effective governance over the course of the current charter period. The founding board chair, who had competing time constraints, resigned as chair shortly into the charter period paving the way for new board leadership. In addition, some members of the board who were not able to regularly attend meetings resigned. The board also ceased using its longtime outside counsel and instead began using a combination of lawyers on the board, outside counsel and Victory's in-house counsel as appropriate.

The school board is also the entity responsible for negotiating labor agreements. A teacher's union is currently engaged in an effort to unionize the school's instructional workforce and implement a collective bargaining agreement. The school board has retained labor law counsel to negotiate unionization issues and has reached an impasse with the union. The issue may come before the Public Employees Relations Board (PERB) for resolution in the near future. The situation has spurred teacher complaints and more recently parent complaints which are handled consistent with the Institute's documented complaint policy. As final determinations have not yet been made, the Institute continues its obligation to remain neutral and makes no comment on the performance of the school board with respect to its handling of the situation.

In terms of legal compliance, Merrick Academy has some minor flaws in policies and procedures including a deficiency that the State Education Department recently pointed out with respect to alternative instruction (which appears to have been remedied). The Institute also disagreed with some of the criticism the Department provided regarding the school's discipline policy and has assisted the school in drafting an appropriate response. In sum, the school's policies and procedures, other internal controls, board minutes and other documentation, as well as responses to interview questions by board members and school personnel demonstrate the school's general and substantial compliance with the Charter Schools Act, applicable provisions of the New York Education Law, applicable federal law (e.g., IDEA, FERPA), its bylaws and the provisions of its charter.

Fiscal Soundness

Merrick Academy has created realistic budgets over the course of the charter period that are monitored and adjusted when appropriate. Annual budgets are developed by the members of the Victory Schools, Inc. management team with appropriate input from the school's principal, director of operations and members of the school board. The school created a director of operations position in the last year of the charter period, responsible for day-to-day operational needs of the school. Budget variances are routinely analyzed by the Victory Schools, Inc. staff and the director of operations and material variances are discussed with key administrative staff and the board. Actual expenses have been equal to, or less than, actual revenue over the course of the charter period with no material exceptions.

The school has adopted Victory School's 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 director of operations, along with the Victory School's fiscal staff work in collaboration with the school's principal, management team and the board of trustees to ensure that the policies and procedures are documented and followed by school staff. The school's fiscal year ("FY") 2008-09 audit report of internal controls—related to financial reporting and compliance with laws, regulations and grants—disclosed no material weaknesses or instances of non-compliance. The lack of other deficiencies in

the reports provides some, but not absolute, assurance that the school has maintained adequate internal controls and procedures.

The school has complied with financial reporting requirements during the charter period. Budget, quarterly and annual financial statement audit reports were filed in a timely, accurate and complete manner. Each of the school's annual financial statement audit reports followed generally accepted accounting principles as required, and received an unqualified opinion, indicating that, in the auditor's judgment, the school's financial statements and notes fairly represent, in all material respects, the school's financial position, changes in net assets, and cash flows. The school board reviews and approves the annual financial statement audit report.

Merrick Academy has maintained minimally adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations and has monitored and managed stringent cash flow. The school completed FY 2008-09 in fairly stable financial condition, increasing both cash reserves and total net assets. It should be noted that even with this minimal increase in cash reserves the school maintains very little liquid assets thereby weakening its fiscal viability. The school has a negative working capital ratio, indicating it possibly does not have enough short-term assets to cover all immediate liabilities, short-term debt or any unforeseen expenditures that may arise. Merrick Academy has little short- or long-term debt. The school has no major investments and any cash is left in savings and/or money market accounts, which is used to pay current bills and other shortly due payables. As noted below, there are current factors—including salary discussions with the teacher's union—that could impact the school's future fiscal standing.

Plans for the Next Charter Period

The school has provided all of the key structural elements for a renewal charter and they are deemed to be reasonable, feasible and achievable. The school has made some slight changes to its mission statement, but has not altered the substance of its mission. The proposed mission statement for the next charter period reads as follows:

The mission of the Merrick Academy is to become one of the finest public schools in America. The Academy is built on the philosophy that all children can learn and the Academy ensures that all students meet or exceed New York State performance standards. The focus of the Academy is on the core skills of reading, language and mathematics. The Academy is organized to provide an extended day, a high degree of individualized instruction and an innovative research-based academic curriculum.

The school would continue providing instruction to students in grades kindergarten through sixth for the term of the next charter. Maximum enrollment would be 540 students for each year of the charter term. The school would continue to align much of its schedule to that of the New York City Department of Education's 180 day instructional year.

The school proposes slight changes to its educational program. The school would deliver additional supports for struggling students, including after-school and summer enrichment programs, as well as a Saturday Academy. Key design elements proposed for the next charter period include the following: research-based curriculum and focus on the subjects of English language arts, mathematics, and social studies; data-driven instruction, including differentiated instruction to support individual student needs; comprehensive professional development program for teachers; a two and one-half hour block of instruction in the Balanced Literacy curriculum each day for all students; a one and one-half hour block of mathematics instruction each day for all students; use of

the Core Knowledge curricular program to teach social studies; extended Title I remediation services; and a comprehensive and rigorous assessment program. The school also proposes within its application for subsequent renewal to implement project-based learning, interdisciplinary teaching, and technology-based instruction.

Members of the Merrick board of trustees expressed their intent to continue their service to the school. The school board has proposed no significant changes to the school's governance structure for the term of the next charter. The school board proposes to continue its relationship with Victory Schools, Inc. to provide school management services. Board members maintain both the requisite skills sets and an understanding of a board's roles and responsibilities in order to adequately govern the school during the term of the next charter.

Merrick Academy has presented a reasonable and achievable fiscal plan for the next charter period, including an adequate budget. The school will need to closely monitor revenue and expenses, adjusting projections when necessary to ensure fiscal stability due to the lack of cash and reserves. The school has assumed a four-percent increase in per pupil funding in each year of this plan. The plan shows the school with an operating deficit each year before agreed-upon deferment of management fees by Victory Schools, Inc. Such deferred fees allow the school to project a minor operating surplus in cash each year and without this agreement the school would be in jeopardy of maintaining no reserves. Due to the state deficit problems and the uncertainty of per pupil funding, the school acknowledges that the per-pupil percentage increases they have budgeted are not assured. The school recognizes that it must also have in place a more strategic and conservative approach to budgeting and planning for the next charter period to ensure the school remains fiscally viable while meeting the needs of its educational program. The school will devise a working budget that will show per pupil funding remaining flat at 2009-10 per-pupil allocation levels. 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, laws and state funding. Salary increases being sought by the teachers union within current negotiations with the board have the potential to significantly impact the school's budgeting and financial condition over the course of the next charter period.

To the extent that Merrick Academy – Queens Public Charter School 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 proposed during the next charter period are reasonable, feasible and achievable.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	January 1, 2000
Date Initial Charter Approved by Board of Regents	May 4, 2000
School Opening Date	September, 2000

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades	District
2000-01	132-14 Bennet Court Jamaica, NY	All	New York City Community School District 29
2001-02 - present	207-01 Jamaica Avenue Queens Village, NY	All	New York City Community School District 29

Partner Organizations

	Partner Name	Partner Type	Dates of Service
Current Partner	Victory Schools, Inc.	For-profit Educational Management Organization	2000-present

Renewal

Type of Renewal	Date
Initial Full-Term Renewal by SUNY Board of Trustees	March 1, 2005
Initial Full-Term Renewal approved by Board of Regents	May 17, 2005

Current Mission Statement

The mission of the Merrick Academy – Queens Public Charter School is to create one of the finest public schools in America through use of the charter school process; to serve the “at risk” children of Springfield Gardens and Jamaica, Queens; and to create a role model for charter public school design that can be replicated in disadvantaged neighborhoods everywhere.

Current Key Design Elements

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a commitment to students, parents and the Southeast Queens community to provide an academic program that will prepare students to meet and exceed New York State performance standards;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a curriculum in English language arts and mathematics that includes scientifically-based research to support its success;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the use of data to inform instruction and in providing differentiated instruction to support individual student needs;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • established learning community where teachers use student work, research and best practices to improve student performance;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a comprehensive professional development program;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a summer homework program to address any regression in learning;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one hour and thirty minutes of ELA instruction daily based on balanced literacy, including a readers' and writer's workshop, as modeled by the National Writing Project and Great Source Writing Program;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one hour and thirty minutes of daily mathematics instruction, using Everyday Mathematics, enrichment and experiential learning; and
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a comprehensive assessment system.

School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Charter Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ⁵	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2000-01	350	125	121	K-2	K-2	180
2001-02	450	175	169	K-4	K-3	180
2002-03	550	350	348	K-6	K-4	180
2003-04	650	400	400	K-8	K-5	180
2004-05	750	450	448	K-10	K-6	180
2005-06	475	500	500	K-5	K-6	180
2006-07	500	525	461	K-5	K-6	182
2007-08	500	525	495	K-5	K-6	182
2008-09	500	525	500	K-5	K-6	180
2009-10	525	525	494	K-5	K-6	180

⁵ Source: SUNY Charter School Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

Student Demographics

	2006-07 ⁶		2007-08 ⁷		2008-09	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 29 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 29 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment ⁸	Percent of NYC CSD 29 Enrollment ⁹
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	N/A
Black or African American	99%	72%	96%	72%	95%	N/A
Hispanic	1%	13%	1%	13%	2%	N/A
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0%	12%	2%	13%	2%	N/A
White	0%	2%	0%	2%	0%	N/A
Multiracial	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	N/A
Special Populations						
Students with Disabilities ¹⁰	7%	N/A	7%	N/A	7%	N/A
Limited English Proficient	0%	7%	0%	7%	0%	N/A
Free/Reduced Lunch						
Eligible for Free Lunch	40%	63%	39%	62%	N/A	N/A
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	21%	13%	20%	12%	N/A	N/A

Current Board of Trustees¹¹

Board Member Name	Term	Position/Committees
Gerald Karikari, Board Chair	2002-present	Chairman
Darryl Green	2002-present	Trustee
Traci Powell	2002-2004	Trustee (PTA Representative)
Jaques Leandre	2002-present	Trustee/Finance Committee (Chair)
Juanita Watkins	2000-present	Trustee
Yves Mompont	2008-present	Trustee
Meredith Smart	2009-present	Trustee
Shante Spivey	2008-present	Trustee (PTA Representative)

⁶ Source: 2006-07 School Report Cards, New York State Education Department.

⁷ Source: 2007-08 School Report Cards, New York State Education Department.

⁸ Source: 2008-09 Demographics and Limited English Proficient Percentages calculated from BEDS reports submitted at the beginning of the school year. This information is unverified by the schools. It also does not include Free/Reduced Lunch status, but rather categorizes students as “economically disadvantaged.” Merrick has 70% of students that fall into this category.

⁹ Aggregated district data not yet available for 2008-09.

¹⁰ New York State Education Department does not report special education data. School data is school-reported from charter renewal applications. District data not available for NYC CSD 29.

¹¹ Source: Application for Renewal.

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2000-01 through 2009-10 (present)	Alma Alston, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2000-01	First-Year Visit	Institute	May 22, 2001
2001-02	Second-Year Visit	Institute	May 13, 2002
2002-03	Third-Year Visit	External (SchoolWorks)	January 15-16, 2003
2003-04	None	N/A	N/A
2004-05	Initial Renewal Visit	Institute	September, 2004
2005-06	None	N/A	N/A
2006-07	7 th Year Evaluation Visit	Institute	May 24, 2007
2007-08	8 th Year Evaluation Visit	External (SchoolWorks)	May 13-14, 2008
2008-09	None	N/A	N/A
2009-10	Subsequent Renewal Visit	Institute	November 6, 2009

ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

Background

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. The plan also included an NCLB goal. For each goal in the Accountability Plan specific outcome measures define the level of performance necessary to meet that goal. Furthermore, the Institute has established a set of required outcome measures that 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) the growth in student learning according to year-to-year comparisons of grade level cohorts. The following table shows the outcome measures currently required by the Institute in each subject area goal, as well as for the NCLB goal. Schools may have also elected to include additional optional goals and measures in their Accountability Plan.

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

The most important criterion for renewal is academic success, which is demonstrated in large part by meeting or coming close to meeting the goals in a school's Accountability Plan. The Institute determines the outcome of a goal by evaluating the multiple measures associated with that goal.

The following presentation indicates the outcome of each of the school's goals, as well as an analysis of the respective measures for each goal during the Accountability Period.¹² *Italicized text indicates*

¹² Because the renewal decision is made in the last year of a Charter Period, the Accountability Period ends in the next to last year of the Charter Period. For initial renewals, the Accountability Period is the first four years of the Charter Period. For subsequent renewals, the Accountability Period includes the last year of the previous Charter Period through the next to last year of the current Charter Period.

goals or measures as written in the school’s Accountability Plan; bold numbers appearing in the tables are the critical values for determining if a measure was achieved in a given year. Aside from required Accountability Plan measures, the following also presents the results of optional measures that the school may have included in its plan.

English Language Arts

Accountability Plan Goal: All students at the school will become proficient in reading and writing of the English language.

Outcome: Merrick Academy has met its English language arts goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures:

Absolute Measure: <i>Each year, 75% of students in each assessed grade who have been continuously enrolled in the school for two or more years will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State English Language Arts (ELA) Assessment.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Grade	2005-06¹³ (Tested: 240)	2006-07 (Tested: 189)	2007-08 (Tested: 202)	2008-09 (Tested: 239)
3	38.1	59.0	74.6	91.2
4	54.9	43.6	62.5	84.3
5	75.4	58.2	78.2	87.5
6	44.1	62.5	61.4	88.7
7	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-
All	50.4	55.0	70.3	87.9

Merrick Academy has improved its performance on the state English language arts exam during the Accountability Period. In 2005-06, 50 percent of students were proficient and the school was far from its 75 percent target. In 2006-07, the school made incremental progress and 55 percent of students were proficient. In 2007-08, the school underperformed its target with 70 percent of students being proficient. In 2008-09, the school exceeded its target by a wide margin: 88 percent of students were proficient.

Absolute Measure: <i>Each year, the school’s aggregate Performance Index on the State ELA exam will meet or exceed the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the state’s No Child Left Behind (NCLB) school accountability system.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Index	2005-06¹⁴ (Tested: 293)	2006-07 (Tested: 263)	2007-08 (Tested: 266)	2008-09 (Tested: 261)
PI	137	147	168	188
AMO	122	122	133	144

Merrick Academy has surpassed the English language arts Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set by the state as part of its NCLB accountability system during each year of its accountability period. The school’s Performance Index has increased by over 40 points from 2005-06 to 2008-09.

¹³ In 2005-06 New York State implemented English language arts and mathematics exams in grades 3-8. Prior to that, the exams in these subjects were administered only in grades 4 and 8.

¹⁴ In 2005-06 English language arts and mathematics testing began in grades 3-8, and the Performance Index was henceforth calculated based on the aggregate of all tested students.

Comparative Measure: <i>Each year, the percentage of students who have been continuously enrolled in the school for two or more years and who perform at or above Level 3 on the State ELA Assessment will be greater than that of the local school district.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
School Year				
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	(Grades 3-6)	(Grades 3-6)	(Grades 3-6)	(Grades 3-6)
School	50.4	55.0	70.3	87.9
District	55.3	57.3	62.2	71.7

Since 2007-08, Merrick Academy has outperformed its local community school district on the state’s English language arts exam. In 2008-09, the school widened the performance gap and again outperformed the district.

Comparative Measure: <i>Each year, the school will exceed to a specified degree (as set by the Charter Schools Institute) 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.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
School Year				
Index	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	(Grades 3-6)	(Grades 3-6)	(Grades 3-6)	(Grades 3-6)
	(Tested: 293)	(Tested: 263)	(Tested: 266)	(Tested: 261)
Predicted	66.3	66.5	72.1	80.1
Actual	49.1	54.2	70.7	88.1
Effect Size	-1.11	-1.07	-0.13	0.85

In comparison to demographically similar schools statewide, Merrick Academy demonstrated consistent improvement in its performance during the Accountability Period. In 2005-06, the school performed much lower than expected and was far from achieving its target. In 2006-07, performance remained nearly level and the school again underperformed similar schools. In 2007-08, the school improved its relative performance and performed slightly worse than predicted. In 2008-09, the school first achieved its Effect Size target and performed better than expected to a large degree.

Growth Measure: <i>Each year beginning in 2006-07, 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.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
School Year				
Percent	2005-06	2006-07¹⁵	2007-08	2008-09
Level 3 & 4		(Grades 4-6)	(Grades 4-6)	(Grades 4-6)
		(N=166)	(N=166)	(N=175)
Baseline	-	51.2	53.6	74.9
Target	-	63.1	64.3	75.0
Actual	-	54.2	67.5	86.9
Cohorts Made				
Target	-	(0 of 3)	(1 of 3)	(3 of 3)

¹⁵ New York State began administering English language arts and mathematics exams in grades 3-8 in 2005-06, thus year-to-year growth could not be evaluated until 2006-07 when two years’ of results were first available.

With respect to cohort growth, Merrick Academy has improved its performance over the Accountability Period. In 2006-07, when two years of state test data first became available for analysis, none of the school's three cohorts achieved their targets and overall performance improved slightly. In 2007-08, one of three cohorts achieved its target and overall performance improved substantially. In the most recent year, all cohorts achieved their targets and overall performance again improved.

Mathematics

Accountability Plan Goal: All students at the school will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of mathematics computation and problem solving.

Outcome: Merrick Academy has met its mathematics goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures:

Absolute Measure: <i>Each year, 75% of students in each assessed grade who have been continuously enrolled in the school for two or more years will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Mathematics Assessment.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
Grade	School Year			
	2005-06¹⁶ (Tested: 237)	2006-07 (Tested: 187)	2007-08 (Tested: 200)	2008-09 (Tested: 239)
3	77.4	92.1	98.4	98.5
4	51.7	63.6	77.5	95.7
5	59.6	52.7	74.5	97.9
6	27.6	66.7	93.2	100.0
7	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-
All	54.4	66.8	86.5	97.9

Merrick Academy has greatly improved its absolute performance on the state mathematics exam and is currently far surpassing its 75 percent target. In 2005-06, 54.4 percent of students were proficient and the school was far from its target. In 2006-07, the school improved its performance but continued to perform below its target with 67 percent of students scoring proficient. In 2007-08, the school first achieved its target and 87 percent of students were proficient. In 2008-09, the school again improved its performance and 98 percent of students were proficient.

Absolute Measure: <i>Each year, the school's aggregate³ Performance Index on the State Math exam will meet or exceed the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the state's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) school accountability system.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
Index	School Year			
	2005-06¹⁷ (Tested: 293)	2006-07 (Tested: 261)	2007-08 (Tested: 266)	2008-09 (Tested: 261)
PI	143	159	184	198
AMO	86	86	102	119

¹⁶ In 2005-06 New York State implemented English language arts and mathematics exams in grades 3-8. Prior to that, the exams in these subjects were administered only in grades 4 and 8.

¹⁷ In 2005-06 English language arts and mathematics testing began in grades 3-8, and the Performance Index was henceforth calculated based on the aggregate of all tested students.

Merrick Academy has consistently surpassed the English language arts Annual Measurable Objective established by the state’s NCLB accountability system. In the most recent year, it’s nearly perfect Performance Index exceeded the AMO by nearly 80 points.

Comparative Measure: <i>Each year, the percentage of students who have been continuously enrolled in the school for two or more years and who perform at or above Level 3 on the State Mathematics Assessment will be greater than that of the local school district.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06 (Grades 3-6)	2006-07 (Grades 3-6)	2007-08 (Grades 3-6)	2008-09 (Grades 3-6)
School	54.4	66.8	86.5	97.9
District	64.0	71.9	78.3	82.8

Merrick has improved its performance relative to the local community school district. In 2005-06 and 2006-07, the school underperformed the district. In 2007-08, the school improved its performance and first outperformed the district. In the most recent year, the school again outperformed the district.

Comparative Measure: <i>Each year, the school will exceed to a specified degree (as set by CSI) its expected level of performance on the State Math 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.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Index	2005-06 (Grades 3-6) (Tested: 293)	2006-07 (Grades 3-6) (Tested: 261)	2007-08 (Grades 3-6) (Tested: 266)	2008-09 (Grades 3-6) (Tested: 261)
Predicted	72.1	77.6	84.4	89.1
Actual	53.6	64.9	85.3	98.1
Effect Size	-1.09	-1.05	0.16	1.16

In comparison to demographically similar schools, Merrick has consistently improved its performance and is currently exceeding its target by a wide margin. In 2005-06, the school performed considerably worse than expected and failed to meet its Effect Size Target. In 2006-07, performance remained nearly level and the school remained far from its target. In 2007-08, the school improved its performance substantially and performed slightly better than predicted. In 2008-09, the school first exceeded its Effect Size target and performed better than expected to a large degree.

Growth Measure: <i>Each year beginning in 2006-07, 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.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Percent Level 3 & 4	2005-06	2006-07¹⁸ (Grades 4-6) (N=167)	2007-08 (Grades 4-6) (N=167)	2008-09 (Grades 4-6) (N=176)
Baseline	-	63.5	67.7	85.2
Target	-	69.3	71.3	85.3
Actual	-	59.9	79.6	97.7
Cohorts Made Target	-	(0 of 3)	(2 of 3)	(2 of 3)

With respect to year to year cohort growth, Merrick has improved its performance over the course of the Accountability Period. In 2006-07, when two years of test data first became available for analysis, none of the school's cohorts achieved their targets and overall performance declined. In 2007-08, two of three cohorts achieved their targets and overall performance improved. In 2008-09, again two out of three cohorts achieved their targets and overall performance improved substantially.

Science

Accountability Plan Goal: All students at the school will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of scientific reasoning.

Outcome: The school has met its science goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures:

Absolute Measure: <i>Each year, 75% of students in each assessed grade who have been continuously enrolled in the school for two or more years will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Science Assessment.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Grade	2005-06	2006-07 (Tested: 56)	2007-08 (Tested: 39)	2008-09 (Tested: 70)
4	-	71.4	82.1	91.4
8	-	-	-	-

Merrick Academy has consistently improved its performance on state science test and is currently exceeding its absolute performance target by a wide margin.

¹⁸ New York State began administering English language arts and mathematics exams in grades 3-8 in 2005-06, thus year-to-year growth could not be evaluated until 2006-07 when two years' of results were first available.

Comparative Measure: <i>Each year, the percentage of students who have been continuously enrolled in the school for two or more years and who perform at or above Level 3 on the State Science Assessment will be greater than that of the local school district.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
		(Grade 4)	(Grade 4)	(Grade 4)
School	-	71.4	82.1	91.4
District	-	74.0	71.0	NA

Merrick Academy underperformed its local community school district to a small degree in 2006-07 and outperformed the district by a wide margin in 2007-08. While district comparison data for the most recent year are yet unavailable, Merrick Academy’s 91 percent proficiency rate far exceeds the district’s performance in each of the two previous years. Assuming district performance remained at a similar level on the 2008-09 exam, the school will have met its target.

Social Studies

Accountability Plan Goal: All students at the school will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of social, geographical, civic and world studies.

Outcome: Based on the limited data available, the school met its social studies goal.

Analysis of Accountability Plan Measures:

Absolute Measure: <i>Each year, 75% of students in each assessed grade who have been continuously enrolled in the school for two or more years will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Social Studies Assessment.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Grade	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	(Tested: 62)	(Tested: 58)	(Tested: 55)	(Tested: 48)
5	83.0	72.4	81.8	95.8
8	-	-	-	-

With the exception of 2006-07, when Merrick Academy performed slightly below its absolute performance target, the school has exceeded its target during each year of the Accountability Period. In the most recent year, the school far exceeded its target with a 96 percent proficiency rate.

Comparative Measure: <i>Each year, the percentage of students who have been continuously enrolled in the school for two or more years and who perform at or above Level 3 on the State Social Studies Assessment will be greater than that of the local school district.</i>				
Results (in percents)				
	School Year			
Comparison	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	(Grade 5)	(Grade 5)	(Grade 5)	(Grade 5)
School	83.0	72.4	81.8	95.8
District	71.0	66.0	77.0	NA

Merrick Academy outperformed the local community school district on the state social studies test from 2005-06 through 2007-08. While district comparison data for the most recent year are yet unavailable, Merrick Academy’s 96 percent proficiency rate far exceeds the district’s performance in each of the two previous years. Assuming district performance remained at a similar level on the 2008-09 exam, the school will have met its target.

NCLB

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

Accountability Plan Goal: The school will demonstrate academic success by making adequate yearly progress as required by NCLB.

Outcome: The school met the goal. Merrick Academy was deemed to be in good standing in each of the four years of the Accountability Period.

Absolute Measure: <i>Each year, the school will be designated in “Good Standing” under the Federal Title I component of the state’s “school accountability system.”</i>				
Results				
Status	School Year			
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Good Standing	YES	YES	YES	YES

Analysis of Additional Evidence

Merrick Academy received a letter grade of "A" on its 2008-09 New York City Department of Education (DOE) Progress Report. According to the DOE, overall Progress Report scores are based on school performance in three categories: School Environment, Student Performance and Student Progress, with the greatest emphasis placed on Student Progress. District schools and charter schools authorized by the DOE that receive As and Bs are eligible for rewards while schools that get Ds and Fs, or Cs over three years in a row, face possible consequences.

Consistent with the data presented for the Accountability Plan measures in English language arts and mathematics above, Merrick received the highest possible grade for both Student Performance and Student Growth on its DOE Progress Report. These high marks reflect the school’s near-perfect proficiency rate on state mathematics exams, its high level of performance on state English language arts exams and the strong year-to-year growth in student proficiency rates from 2007-08 to 2008-09 on both exams.