



Charter Schools Institute  

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State University of New York

Our World Neighborhood  
Charter School

End of Year Report

(2004-2005)

September 19, 2005

## Reader's Guide

### Background

Authorized by the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998, charter schools are public schools that operate independently of local school districts and are created by civic leaders, community groups, educators and parents interested in bringing public school choice to their communities and improving student achievement, particularly for children at-risk of academic failure.

The New York Charter Schools Act empowers the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the State University Trustees), the New York State Board of Regents (the Regents), or local boards of education to authorize new public charter schools (in New York City, authorizing power is vested in the Chancellor) and thereafter to renew charters of successful schools. Additionally, existing traditional district-operated schools can seek to convert to charter status through their governing boards of education.

The Charter Schools Institute (the Institute) was established by the State University Trustees to assist in the review and approval of applications to establish charter schools, oversight of chartered schools, and renewal of charters.

As are district-organized public schools, charter schools are open to all children, non-sectarian in their programs and funded with public tax dollars. Each public charter school is governed by an independent board of trustees that, as all school boards, is subject to New York State's Freedom of Information and Open Meetings laws. Public charter schools authorized by the State University Trustees are also subject to oversight and monitoring by the Institute. Additionally, all public charter schools in New York State are jointly subject to inspection and oversight by the State Education Department (SED) on behalf of the Board of Regents.

In exchange for freedom from many State rules and regulations, a public charter school receives a charter, or contract, of up to five years and must meet stated student performance goals that are set forth in its "Accountability Plan" or risk losing its charter or not having its charter renewed, in which case it would close. This tradeoff—freedom from rules and regulations in exchange for unprecedented accountability for student performance, and real consequences for failure—is one of the most significant differences between public charter schools and other public schools that school districts administer.

### The Oversight Process

As noted above, the State University Trustees, jointly with the Board of Regents, are required to provide oversight sufficient to ensure that each charter school that the Trustees have authorized is in compliance with applicable law and the terms of its charter. The Institute, together with the State Education Department, monitors compliance through a monitoring plan and other methods.

In addition to monitoring compliance with the law, the State University Trustees view their oversight responsibility more broadly and positively. Accordingly, they have adopted policies

that require the Institute to provide ongoing evaluation of charter schools authorized by them, including the strength of their educational programs and organizational structures.

By providing this oversight and feedback, the State University Trustees and the Institute seek to accomplish three goals. The first goal is to facilitate improvement. By providing substantive information about the school's strengths and weaknesses to the school's board of trustees, administration, faculty and other staff, the school can potentially take corrective actions. In turn, the school may thereby increase the chances that it will be able to fulfill the promises it made in its charter, including meeting those measures of student achievement set forth in its Accountability Plan. The second goal is to disseminate information beyond the school's professional staff and governing board to all stakeholders, including parents and the larger community in which the school is located. The third goal is to allow the Institute to build a data base of information on the school over time. This permits the Institute to better evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a school—and the likelihood for continued success or failure (as the case may be) based on past patterns when the school comes to renewal, typically in the fifth year of its charter.

A central component of the Institute's evaluative oversight system is a schedule of periodic visits to and inspections of charter schools, resulting in letters and reports to the school's board of trustees. As the result of the periodic visits and inspections, by the end of the charter period, both the Institute and school will have a mutual sense of the school's strengths and weaknesses as viewed over time, especially as viewed through the prism of charter renewal.

In evaluating schools, the Institute uses a series of benchmarks that cover not only the strength of the academic program but the strength and effectiveness of the organizational and fiscal policies, structures and procedures that the school has instituted at the time of the visit. How these benchmarks are used (and which are used) varies, depending on the specific year of the visit.<sup>1</sup>

In particular, the Institute utilizes a series of qualitative indicators to review the effectiveness of a charter school's academic programs, e.g., the strength of a school's internal assessment system, the rigor of its pedagogical approach, and the breadth and focus of the school's curriculum. In the formative years of a school (generally the first three years of operation), these benchmark indicators are important precisely because the quantitative indicators of academic achievement, i.e., students' performance on standardized tests (especially the Regents assessments), are generally few in number and difficult to interpret (for instance, it would be difficult to tease out in the first year the value-added that the school has contributed to a student's success on the fourth grade State assessments). The qualitative indicators serve as proxy indicators, therefore, for student assessment data sets that are necessarily incomplete and incipient. Moreover, only by

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<sup>1</sup> In the school's first year, the Institute visits the school in the spring and uses many, though not all, of the benchmarks it utilizes during its second year visit as well. The first year visit results in a letter to the school's board of trustees summarizing the Institute's findings. In a charter school's second or third year, the Institute retains an outside group to provide a more comprehensive review of the school's educational program, outcomes, and various indicators related to organizational effectiveness. This visit results in a formal report to the school's board of trustees.

using these qualitative indicators can the Institute provide feedback not only on “how” the school is doing but also “why” it is succeeding or failing.<sup>2</sup>

Over time of course, and particularly at the school’s initial renewal (and subsequent renewals thereafter), the quantitative indicators, student test scores, take on paramount importance and the qualitative indicators concordantly diminish in importance. This is consonant with the fact that charter schools are responsible for results (outcome measures).<sup>3</sup>

### The End of Year Report

This End of Year Report contains a reader’s guide, a brief description of the school, a summary of the Institute’s findings from its visit to the school in its first and second years of operation, a summary of the Institute’s findings and observations from this End of Year report, the evidence gathered under the benchmarks that the Institute utilizes in the visit (from which the summary is drawn) and, finally, data on the visit, including identities of the visitors and the date of the visit.

The report reflects the observations and findings from the one-day inspection visit conducted typically by a two to four member team comprised of Institute staff, and, in some cases, outside experts. Consistent with the Institute’s evaluation process throughout the life of the charter, Institute visitors on an End of Year visit seek evidence of effectiveness in key areas: the academic success of the school including teaching and learning (curriculum, instruction and assessment); the effectiveness and viability of the school as an organization, including such items as board operations and student order and discipline; and the fiscal soundness of the school. Although issues regarding compliance with state and federal laws and regulations may be noted (and subsequently addressed), compliance is not the ultimate purpose of the visit.

The visit includes a meeting with the principal/director, classroom visitations, and interviews of staff, students and board members, in addition to reviewing student work. Data from the visit, and any previous visits, is used to develop the curriculum and instruction component of this report.

In reviewing this report, readers should keep in mind that charter schools face major challenges in the first few years of their charter, and not all charter schools address each challenge at the same pace. These challenges include:

- establishing a positive, academically focused school culture that provides high expectations, support and encouragement for students and teaching staff, and any necessary remediation for students;

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<sup>2</sup> More often, of course, schools do not succeed or fail so much as parts of this highly complex organization are working well and parts are not.

<sup>3</sup> Where a school comes to renewal with an ambiguous data set of outcome assessments (because of limited data, inconsistent data—some strong, some weak—or both), the Institute continues to place emphasis on the qualitative indicators as proxy indicators of future success. Thus, where the Institute finds that qualitative indicators are strong, it may still recommend, despite ambiguous evidence of student achievement on assessment results, that the school be renewed (though not for a full term) because the qualitative indicators suggest that with more time the school will compile a strong data set of student assessment outcomes.

- establishing operational and communication patterns with the governing school board of trustees, as well as communication patterns with staff, parents and the community;
- setting up sound fiscal processes and procedures;
- establishing this operation in often less-than-ideal facilities, without ready access to facilities funding mechanisms available to district administered public schools;
- creating an environment with strong instructional leadership where teachers receive timely professional development to address changing student needs;
- ensuring that all staff are familiar with and consistently use an effective system for behavior management; and
- retaining qualified staff and minimizing the frequency and rate of any staff turnover by understanding the reason for it, and providing replacement staff with an orientation to the school and its program, as well as the necessary professional development.

Readers should also keep in mind the inherent limitations of a one-day visit, which provides only a snap-shot of that school on that day. While the Institute is confident that the majority of its observations are “valid” in that they reflect an underlying reality about the school’s academic and organizational structures, they are not perfect or error-free.

For the reasons above, and because of the inherent complexity of an organization such as a school, the End of Year Report does not contain a rating or a single comprehensive indicator that would indicate at a glance that the school is “on track” to be renewed or is not. It does, however, in the “Summary” section, summarize the various strengths of the school and the areas that the inspection team found in need of improvement.

While there is no one rating that the Institute gives (or reasonably could give) as a result of a single-day visit, it is important to note that where the inspection team identifies area after area with not just room for improvement but significant and severe deficiencies, and few, if any, countervailing strengths, the difficulty that the school may have in presenting a compelling case for renewal is likely to be substantially increased. Conversely, where the inspection team finds that strengths outnumber weaknesses in both quantity and quality, the school is likely to be better positioned to build a strong case for renewal.

In sum, then, we urge all readers to review the entire report (or at the very least the entire summary) and not to take a particular comment in the report about the school out of context.

Finally, we note that the End of Year Report cannot serve its three functions (providing data to the school to use for its potential improvement; disseminating information to shareholders; gathering data so that the Institute may come to renewal with a richer set of evidence) unless the report is not only unsparingly candid regarding the observations that the Institute has made, but also focused on those areas that are potentially in need of improvement rather than those accomplishments that the school has accumulated to date.

While this level of what can reasonably be termed “brutal honesty” is necessary, as is the focus on areas for improvement, readers should remember that almost no other entity in education is

held to such a high standard of review. This is especially true of public schools that traditional districts and Boards of Education oversee. In so saying, the Institute does not ask the reader to make excuses for schools that are not succeeding—and the Institute’s accountability system does not and will not—but we do note that providing this level of accountability, which almost every charter school welcomes and even advocates for, represents in and of itself a revolution in how public education is governed.

## School Description

### Mission Statement

The mission of Our World Neighborhood Charter School is to provide kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade students with the foundation of a rigorous liberal education. Students will develop a historical perspective on our own time and place through an integrated study of history, geography, literature, the social sciences, science, math, art and music. We are committed to preparing all students to meet the academic challenges of the best New York City high schools. To this end, OWN will, among other strategies:

Follow an extended school day and year;

Devote mornings to the mastery of basic skills;

Integrate all students into the classroom and avoid tracking by ability;

Foster cultural literacy through an interdisciplinary, hands-on study of the great ideas in world history;

Have one computer for every three students in the classroom where they will be used in daily lessons;

Introduce study of a foreign language in Kindergarten, to be continued through all the grades;

Individualize instruction with the aid of computer technology as well as through the development of personalized learning plans; and

Support teachers through extensive and continuous teacher training.

Our World Neighborhood Charter School will be located in the most ethnically diverse neighborhood in the United States. We celebrate this and seek to integrate the cultural richness of our community with the lessons of the classroom and the governance of the school. To ensure the meaningful participation of all parents in their children's education, we will make a special effort to reach the school's non-English speaking and recently immigrated parents to help them overcome the isolation that many – especially women – experience.

Our World Neighborhood Charter School will help students see themselves as part of widening circles of their community: from home, school and neighborhood to country and world. Each circle supports and nurtures us and becomes stronger when its members both realize their full potential and embrace their responsibilities.

## Background

The applicants sought a charter school because Community School District 30 elementary schools are overcrowded, operating at an average 107 percent of capacity, with three schools over 130 percent. Also Western Queens is “extraordinarily diverse,” with thirty-four percent foreign-born. Astoria/Long Island City is unique in that no single nationality dominates the multitude of cultures represented there – the local concept of neighborhood “has exploded to include something that looks like a microcosm of the world.” However, new immigrants are underrepresented in Astoria’s neighborhood organizations, owing to language barriers, long work hours, and familial ties. As the applicants note: “Schools can play an important role in helping parents become meaningfully involved in their children’s education and help families connect with other parents across ethnic and cultural lines.”

After one year of research and touring of 30 public, private and charter schools in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, the applicants elected to contract with Mosaica Education Inc. (MEI) to manage the school. The applicants used the following criteria in selecting MEI:

Comprehensiveness  
Adaptability  
Innovative and Rigorous Curriculum  
Proven Track Record  
Score of Resources Available to OWN

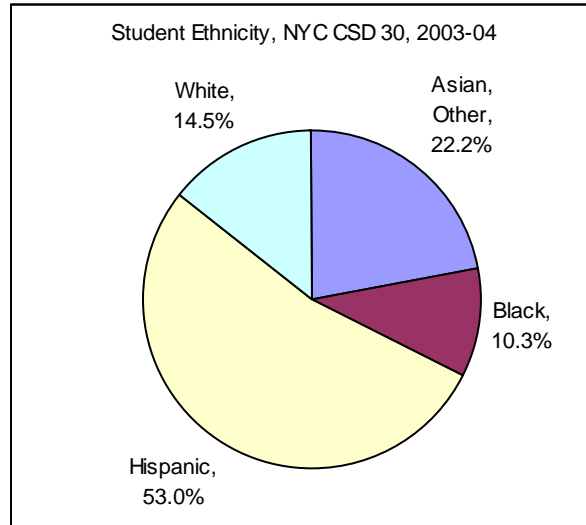
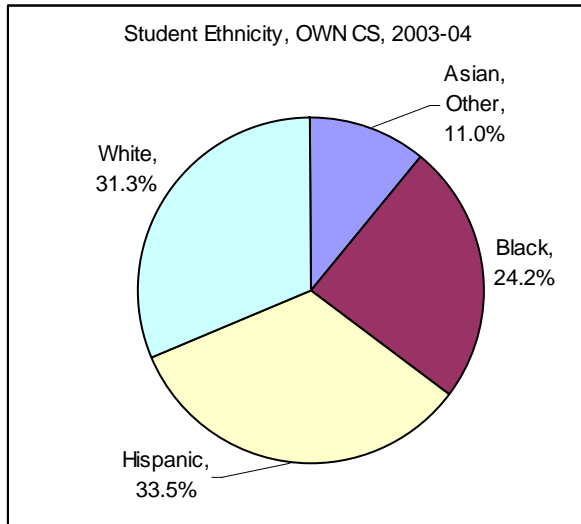
The applicants were impressed by MEI’s “Paragon” curriculum and its application in the classroom. The charter notes that Paragon “provides a fully integrated curriculum that blends the disciplines of Literature and Philosophy; World History; Social Studies and Geography; Visual Arts and Music; Science; Mathematics; and Foreign Language.”

## Enrollment

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>ORIGINAL CHARTERED ENROLLMENT</b>	<b>APPROVED CHARTERED ENROLLMENT</b>	<b>ACTUAL ENROLLMENT</b>	<b>ORIGINAL CHARTERED GRADES SERVED</b>	<b>APPROVED GRADES SERVED</b>	<b>ACTUAL GRADES SERVED</b>
<b>2001-2002</b>	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year
<b>2002-2003</b>	249	375	382	K-5	K-5	K-5
<b>2003-2004</b>	475	530	530	K-6	K-6	K-6
<b>2004-2005</b>	550	600	575	K-7	K-7	K-7
<b>2005-2006</b>	625	675		K-8	K-8	
<b>2006-2007</b>	625	675		K-8	K-8	



## Demographics



### Free Lunches (2003-04)

OWN	47.3%
CSD 30	76.7%

### Students with Disabilities (2003-04)

OWN	3.2%
CSD 30	10.3%

## **Summary of Year One Findings**

In the spring of 2003, at the end of Our World Neighborhood (OWN) Charter School's first year of operation, the Charter Schools Institute conducted a visit of the school. Institute staff observed classrooms, met with administrators and interviewed teachers.

In a report to the school's board of trustees, the Institute reported that, while the majority of the student work displayed at the school appeared to be at grade level, it was unclear how, or if, student work was reviewed and/or graded by teachers prior to its display. The visitors could not determine the acceptable standard of achievement and whether or not students were making adequate progress in the instructional program. At the time of the Institute visit, not one piece of student work on display in the hallways or classrooms included teacher comments or grades. The principal indicated that, in evaluating student work, classroom teachers consider the amount of student effort that went into a work sample.

With the majority of OWN's teachers in their first few years of teaching, the school provided them a substantial amount of training during this academic year. Teachers spoke highly about the training during the summer and throughout the year provided by the program facilitator and Mosaica Education, Inc. (MEI). Teachers appreciated the expertise and give-and-take attitude of the trainers. Teachers indicated that the MEI curriculum (Open Court reading, SRA mathematics, and science along with MEI's proprietary Paragon program for social studies) was "aligned to state standards," even though no nationally-marketed commercially-produced curriculum materials can be perfectly aligned to the state standards without some local adaptation.

The school had a full-time social worker who assisted the principal (or Chief Academic Officer) and dealt with the behavioral issues of students from third through fifth grade. The board of trustees was aware of this practice, and indicated that they would like the social worker to address more traditional social work responsibilities. To assist with behavior management, the board planned to have a behavior improvement specialist on staff for 2003-04. They also recognized that classroom teachers need more classroom management training.

As of May 2003, Our World Neighborhood had a surplus fund balance and expected to end the fiscal year with a surplus. The school consistently maintained an adequate cash flow for operating purposes. As this was the school's first year of operation, no prior year audits were available for review. Overall, the Institute viewed the school as being in a fiscally sound position.

## Summary of Year Two Findings

In January 2004, SchoolWorks, an independent educational consulting company, conducted an inspection visit to Our World Neighborhood. The visit took place during the third year of its charter and its second year of operation.

The school identified services for special education students and student behavior issues as its greatest challenges. The reorganization of the New York City Public Schools had disrupted existing relationships with the administrators in District 30 with whom the school coordinated its testing and service provisions for students with special needs. Student behavior had been a concern since the school's opening as revealed in parent surveys and staff interviews. To address that challenge, the school hired a Dean of Students in November 2003 to implement systems to enhance the learning environment at the school.

OWN had no systematically-applied internal assessment measures to determine student attainment or progress over time. During the inspection, staff members and school leaders referred to an interest in developing school portfolios as a tool to demonstrate growth in student achievement. At that point in the school's operations, they had not put into place a structured protocol for making use of collections of student work to monitor achievement at either the individual, classroom or school level. Work samples from the upper elementary grades did not often include teachers' assessments, so inferences about expectations for students were based on the demands of the assignment and the quality of the work. On many of the pieces of written work, there were few constructive comments from teachers, making it difficult to determine the standards for acceptable work.

SchoolWorks described the curriculum at OWN as appropriate and engaging with the potential to provide a challenging learning opportunity for students. In 12 of 19 classes visited during the inspection, students were engaged and involved in lesson activities. In classes using 'centers,' there was occasional off-task behavior but for the most part students attended to their tasks with determination and purpose. While the students were engaged and involved in their work, the level of work varied across the school. Generally, in the primary grades students were being challenged to persist in their tasks, to revise and refine their efforts to meet the expectation set by the teacher. The 11 classes in grades three through six were more varied in their level of engagement and interest exhibited by students.

The commercial materials – selected by the school for reading, mathematics, science and social studies and constituting the curriculum – include a range of activities suitable for addressing the needs of diverse students. However, as implemented, the programs at OWN at the time were limited in their attention to these students' abilities or interests. Observations in classrooms where 'centers' were the primary instructional strategy revealed that students were expected to complete the same task at each station with little individualization and little oversight by the classroom teacher, who was occupied with small group instruction at one of the other stations.

Students reported that they felt safe at the school, explaining that the climate was calmer and safer than in the previous year. Their comments about school safety were confirmed by board representatives, administrators and teachers. The school claimed that the first year of operation attracted a number of students with significant behavior problems to the school, a number of

whom were encouraged to find other placements since OWN had insufficient resources to serve the needs of students needing substantially separate placement due to emotional or behavioral concerns.

## Summary of Year Three Findings

Towards the end of the third year of instruction, the Institute concludes that Our World Neighborhood exhibits strength in the implementation of its academic program, especially in the lower grades and middle grades.

### Academic Program

1. Over the three years of its operation, Our World Neighborhood (OWN) Charter School has shown notable progress on the State's fourth grade English language arts (ELA) exam, meeting both State ELA goals in 2005. With results on the State's math exam available through 2004, it met one of its key State math goals. Because of OWN's reporting, it is unclear whether it has added value year-to-year to student learning, according to the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.
2. Beginning in its third year of operation, OWN has begun implementing a wide assortment of assessments. A comprehensive portfolio system is under development. Through the Reading First Program, a variety of assessment tools monitor reading skill development in the Kindergarten through third grades. Results of the Reading First assessments and portfolio evaluations results have been used to track student learning and inform instruction to meet individual needs. To the extent that the portfolio system and writing assessments are still under development, the effectiveness of the assessment program can not be determined.
3. The school has focused a great deal on evaluating student writing. Grade level teachers have collaborated on developing writing rubrics and reviewing their respective evaluations of student work. The school has made a concerted effort to align standards in writing from grade to grade. There is a significant amount of student writing school wide across all subjects, including mathematics, social studies and science. Further, much of the writing is on grade level. Student use of strong voice and creative self-expression is already manifested in the lower grades.
4. Based on observations in a sampling of classes, instruction in the lower and middle grades was of generally high quality.
5. Based on observations in a sampling of classes, students were on task and engaged, there was a culture of learning and classrooms were orderly in the lower and middle grades. Since its first year of operation, OWN has put in place a consistent and effective behavior system that promotes calm, safe classrooms and has fostered a supportive environment.
6. In 2005-06, OWN will face a significant challenge in housing its middle school for the first time in a separate facility with a new on-site new administrator, given that academic requirements are substantial for eighth graders in general and that this year's seventh grade did not appear to be adequately prepared.

## Organizational Viability

1. The mission of the school to provide an integrated curriculum is generally being realized. OWN students possess an integrated understanding of subject material which likely leads to a grasp of “the interdependence of our world.”
2. In its third year, OWN has filled key administrative positions for the first time. With further growth and expansion of the middle school into a second school facility, the school organization will require additional administrators to provide instructional leadership in a more complex organization.
3. In its third year, the OWN board of trustees has begun to assume more of an oversight function, giving the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) more latitude in the day-to-day operations of the school. The board continues to be well-informed about the school’s instructional program.

## Benchmarks

What follows are the selected benchmarks used by the Institute in preparing this report. These benchmarks focus on the critical issues of teaching, learning and assessment as well as organizational and fiscal responsibility. Evidence from the visit is summarized under each benchmark and serves as the foundation for the summary section above.

Is the School an Academic Success?	
<b>Benchmark 1A</b>  <b>Academic Attainment &amp; Improvement</b>	<p><b>1A.1.1 Absolute Measures (New York State Assessments):</b> The school meets or has made meaningful and consistent progress towards meeting the outcome measures contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of the school's charter.</p> <p><b>1A.1.2 Comparative Measures:</b> The school meets or has made meaningful and consistent progress towards meeting the outcome measures contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of the school's charter.</p> <p><b>1A.1.3 Value Added Measures:</b> The school meets or has made meaningful and consistent progress towards meeting the outcome measures contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of the school's charter.</p> <p><b>1A.1.4 NCLB Measure:</b> The school has made adequate yearly progress as required by NCLB.</p> <p><b>1A.1.5 Unique Academic Measures:</b> The school meets or has made meaningful and consistent progress towards meeting the outcome measures contained in its Accountability Plan.</p>

Over the three years of its operation, Our World Neighborhood (OWN) Charter School has shown notable progress on the State's fourth grade English language arts (ELA) exam, meeting its absolute and comparative Accountability Plan goals in 2005. With results on the State's math exam available through 2004, it has met its absolute goal, but has not performed comparatively as well as the community school district (CSD 30) in which it is located. Because of the way OWN has reported its results on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), it is not possible to determine how well the school has performed in other grades, in particular the school's oldest students in the seventh grade. As such, their performance on the state's eighth grade exams cannot be predicted.

Subject on State's Fourth Grade Examinations	Comparison	Results by School Year		
		2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
ELA	<b>OWN</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>71</b>
	CDS 30	58	59	68
Math	<b>OWN</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>67</b>	N/A
	CSD 30	74	76	

**Source: NYC Department of Education**

### **Absolute Results on State Exams**

On the state's fourth grade ELA exam, OWN has shown steady upward progress with 71 percent of the students meeting the state standard in 2005. To the extent that students who are in the school longer are more likely to meet the criterion of success set in the Accountability Plan, OWN met its goal for the first time. On the state's fourth grade math exam, OWN had a slightly smaller proportion of students achieving proficiency in 2004 than it had had the previous year. Nevertheless, it appears to have met its Accountability Plan measure in both years.

### **Comparative Results on State Exams**

OWN has made greater progress on the state's ELA exam than CSD 30 over the three years of its operation. After performing below the district in its first year of operation (when results can be attributed mostly to student achievement *prior* to entering OWN), the school in 2005 achieved slightly above the district. Because of the decreased performance on the math exam, OWN under-performed the district in 2004, after scoring about the same as the district in the previous year.

### **Value-Added ITBS Results**

In its 2005 Accountability Plan Progress Report, OWN reported that the school showed some cohort gains from spring 2004 to spring 2005 on the ITBS test in reading and math. While the school did not meet the goal it had set for itself for the one year period, it did meet the goal over a two year period: among the cohort of students who were enrolled and tested in spring 2003 and 2005, there was a six NCE gain in both subjects. Furthermore, in spring 2005, all grades from K – 5 scored on average above grade level (NCE score greater than 50) in reading and all grades from K – 6 scored on average above grade level (NCE score greater than 50) in math.

### **NCLB**

The State Education Department's School Accountability Report states Our World Neighborhood's 2004-05 School Accountability Status as a *Charter School in Good Standing*, which indicates that the school has not failed to make adequate yearly progress for two successive years.

### **Conclusion**

While results from the state's fourth grade ELA exam in 2005 and math exam in 2004 and from the most recent (2004) Annual Progress Report are encouraging, OWN has thus far not *reported* an unambiguous record of student achievement, based on the goals it set in its Accountability Plan, mostly because of the limited data available, attributable to the short period the school has been in operation.



Is the School an Academic Success?	
<p><b>Benchmark 1B</b></p> <p><b>Use of Assessment Data</b></p>	<p><b>1B The school effectively and systematically uses assessment and evaluation data to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.</b></p> <p>A school that fully meets this benchmark will have put in place during the life of the charter a system for the effective use of assessment data. Such a system would include at least the following elements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the collection and analysis of student performance data, including data gathered from an analysis of student work pursuant to a set of well-defined and well-aligned standards;</li> <li>the use of assessment instruments and data to determine accurately whether State performance standards and other academic goals are being achieved;</li> <li>the use of assessment data to make changes and improvements, where the data indicates a need, to curriculum and instruction;</li> <li>the regular communication between teachers and administrators of assessment results and a common understanding between and among teachers and administrators of the meaning and consequences of those results; and</li> <li>the regular communication to parents of assessment data to assist them in their efforts to improve student learning and achievement.</li> </ul> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">More generally, a school should be able to demonstrate a system where performance standards, instruction, required student work and assessments are integrated and have led to increased student achievement.</p>

Beginning in its third year of operation, OWN has begun implementing a wide assortment of assessments. A comprehensive portfolio system is under development. Through the Reading First Program, a variety of assessment tools monitor reading skill development in the Kindergarten through third grades. Results of the Reading First assessments and portfolio evaluations results have been used to track student learning and inform instruction to meet individual needs. To the extent that the portfolio system and writing assessments are still under development, the effectiveness of the assessment program can not be determined.

In the first two years of its charter, OWN made limited use of assessments. Aside from ITBS results, used to evaluate individual student performance, assessments were used idiosyncratically to show individual student progress. The SchoolWorks report indicates that OWN had no systematically-applied internal assessment measures to determine the standards for acceptable work. The report indicates that there had been no presentation of information that described how individual students were attaining expected skills on the state standards at other than the fourth grade tested year, or how students are improving their achievement within the school year. Teachers explained that they sometimes use rubrics to score essays and projects, but the scoring has not been systematized so that grades are comparable across the year or from year to year.

In the third year, through the Reading First program in the Kindergarten through third grades, there was a strong emphasis on collection and analysis of assessment data. Reading Academy, an online professional development tool, is popular and used frequently by teachers. Reading Academy features self-paced professional development for teachers around which, twice monthly, the Literacy Coordinator discusses the results in a group setting with teachers. Additionally, the Literacy Coordinator discusses with teachers the DIBELS results throughout the year.

In addition to the Kindergarten through third grade reading, there is a growing systematized analysis of student performance. Teachers utilized portfolios, which contain some similar examples of student work signifying a degree of grade-level agreement among teachers on work to be collected. Teachers utilized portfolios as assemblages of assignments to demonstrate students' growth over the course of the year. However, teachers acknowledged that portfolios are used less for formal evaluation and more for demonstrating progress to parents. Additionally, teachers worked individually and in grade level teams to develop rubrics. While the CAO (Chief Academic Officer) reported that the rubric-scoring of student writing varied from teacher to teacher, teachers reported that they developed the specific elements of the rubrics collaboratively with grade level colleagues and reviewed each others' scoring to improve consistency. In addition, the school scheduled time for teachers in adjacent grades to review rubrics and calibrate grade-level expectations.

The computer-based Success Maker is generally used. Students are rotated on the computers to participate in a self-paced use of Success Maker literacy and math tools. Further, teachers appear to be using the results to inform individual instruction to the extent that Success Maker clearly identifies which students are on grade level for a particular skill.

According to OWN's CAO, Program Facilitators work with teachers regularly (including individual or at group meetings) at least once every three weeks to, in part, discuss and analyze student performance. Specifically, Program Facilitators act as coaches – checking lesson plans, identifying struggling students and monitoring the quality of student writing and the alignment of rubrics.

However, especially in regards to student essays, the tendency to rely on peer editing of student work, rather than direct teacher corrections, limits the ability for assessment to inform student work. For example, there are teacher evaluations and comments (in the form of “post-its”) on most student work posted in classrooms. Also, teachers record evaluations of final student work in teacher grade books. Yet, in other observed student work, such as writing drafts and writing journals, there is little to no evidence of teacher input or corrections. It is unclear how students know what constitutes a high quality essay until the essay is completed.

Is the School an Academic Success?	
<p><b>Benchmark 1C</b></p> <p><b>Curriculum</b></p>	<p><b>1C The school has a clearly defined quality curriculum that prepares students to meet the demands of state standards.</b></p> <p>The school that meets this benchmark has defined with precision the essential knowledge and skills that all students are expected to achieve (and that are aligned with the relevant State standards) and makes them a priority within the curriculum. Course offerings and outlines reflect those priorities. The curriculum as implemented is organized, cohesive, and seamless from grade to grade.</p> <p><b>1D.1 Strong instructional leadership girds the school’s work in improving student learning and achievement.</b></p> <p>The school that meets this benchmark has instructional leadership that has demonstrated the capacity to lead the comprehensive implementation of the school’s curriculum and has facilitated the alignment of classroom instruction, learning activities, instructional resources, support, and assessments. Instructional leaders at the school ensure that teacher planning time, lesson development, and internal assessment systems lead to the successful attainment of the school’s mission and academic goals.</p>
<p><b>Benchmark 1D</b></p> <p><b>Pedagogy</b></p>	<p><b>1D.2 Quality instruction is evident throughout the school fostering an academic learning environment and actively supporting the academic achievement of children.</b></p> <p>The school that meets this benchmark is one in which classroom practice reflects competent teaching and instructional strategies that engage students. The academic learning environment at the school is one in which effective teaching and learning are valued and supported; there is a clear and strong focus on achievement goals, and student and staff accomplishments are recognized.</p> <p><b>1D.3 The school has strategies in place to identify and meet the needs of students at risk of academic failure, students not making reasonable progress towards achieving school goals, and students who are English Language Learners.</b></p> <p>The school that meets this benchmark has implemented special programs and provides the necessary resources to help students who are struggling academically to meet school goals. The programs are demonstrably effective in helping students meet goals.</p>

**Curriculum**

In using the Open Court Reading series for literacy, SRA Mathematics and Prentice Hall Mathematics, Harcourt Brace Science 2000, and the Mosaica Paragon programs, OWN has a clearly defined curriculum that helps prepare students to meet the demands of state standards. Further, because these curricular materials have not changed since OWN opened its doors three years ago, the curricular direction is generally clear to all teachers.

The only curricular area that is not definitively defined school wide, yet highly prevalent, is student writing. There is a significant amount of student writing school wide, especially in writing answers to specific math, science and social studies questions. Further, much of the writing is on grade level.

The expository essay curriculum is not always implemented in the same fashion, yet OWN is working to further systematize expository essay writing. For example, many teachers, often during grade level meetings, create their own writing assignments to supplement the writing program outlined in curricular elements such as Open Court. Some teachers do not consistently engage in essay writing. It is likely for this reason that Mosaica is planning to work with OWN school leadership to “ramp up” writing across the curriculum next school year.

The mathematics curriculum features substantial higher order thinking rather than pure computation. The Math and Science Program Facilitator is revising the math curriculum for the 2005-2006 school year. Additionally, there is a rich social studies and science curriculum manifested often in Paragon projects.

## **Instructional Leadership/Supervision/Professional Development**

Teachers submit weekly lesson plans to the principal or to the Program Facilitator who offers feedback to guide instruction. According to teachers, informal visits to classes complement the lesson plan review. According to teachers interviewed during the visit, classroom instructional decisions are the responsibility of the individual teacher. Teachers reported frequent sharing of ideas and materials within their grade level, though on an informal basis. The daily school schedule allows teachers within each grade to meet during their lunchtime.

Instructional leadership plays an increasing role in improving student learning and achievement. 2004-2005 marks the first academic year that OWN's administrative leadership is staffed at the level indicated in the charter application. Therefore, this academic year should be seen as a period in which OWN's instructional leadership is in development. Program Facilitators are now deployed to meet regularly with teachers, acting as teacher coaches, while keeping the CAO informed about individual teacher progress.

Teachers reported receiving support from a variety of sources. For instance, the Kindergarten through third grade teachers rely on the Literacy Coordinator for reading comprehension – and there is evidence that the Literacy Coordinator also assists teachers at higher grade levels. But when asked who is/are the school's instructional leader/s, teachers tended to answer that fellow teachers are instructional leaders. For example, fourth grade teachers rely primarily on each other. The continued reliance of teachers on the assistance of other teachers suggests there is a need for more sustained in-classroom coaching.

Teachers reported that, as the school year progressed, the frequency and intensity of in-classroom coaching diminished. While the Program Facilitators continued to provide some support, it became less consistent and they became less available. The ELA Program Facilitator's role focused increasingly on testing and supply acquisition while the Math and Science Program Facilitator concentrated increasingly on developing the math curriculum, specifically a full scope and sequence for all teachers/grades with whom she works. In addition, she was working on a pacing chart (a month-by-month curriculum delivery) and mastery map to be completed in the summer.

The Paragon program is designed to offer a broad range of opportunities for students of varying abilities to access the content of the curriculum. At OWN, Paragon is extensively implemented in the primary grades (Kindergarten through second) with its numerous projects and activities designed to allow students to translate what they learn about other cultures into experiences they can simulate in their own classes.

Teachers supplemented the mathematics program with other materials, including E.T.A. rods K-7, Mad Minute Math K-7, and pattern cubes K-7. Another tool used to supplement the math program is Success Maker, the software program referenced earlier. While their recognition of the current weaknesses is commendable, there is no structured analysis of the gaps in concepts and skills between the existing materials and student learning needs. For example, OWN student performance is strong in mathematics, but weaker in English language arts. Attention to the deficiencies that may exist in the reading program were not mentioned or discussed directly by school leaders or management company advisors.

## **Instructional Strategies**

With the exception of the seventh grade, quality instruction was evident throughout the school. Much of student work was on grade level and, generally speaking, students were engaged and on task. Project-based learning and Paragon instruction, produces rich content-acquisition and knowledge among students. There was evidence of good pedagogy in a number of classes, in which teachers challenged students to elaborate on answers, promoted students' responding to each other, sought clarification in answers, and monitored answers in order to gauge student learning and to pace a lesson.

In 2005-2006, OWN will face a significant challenge in housing its middle school for the first time in a separate facility with a new on-site administrator, given that academic requirements are substantial for eighth graders in general and that this year's seventh grade did not appear to be adequately prepared. During the Institute's visit, the two seventh grade teachers conducted ineffective lessons in classes with limited order. As such, the students in

these classes will enter the eighth grade without having internalized the school routines that would make them critical role models to the rest of the school.

### **At-Risk Learners**

The most frequent phrases used by teachers, administrators and parents to describe the mission of OWN is “meeting the needs of individual students” in a “safe and welcoming environment.” Among teachers, the means by which they are expected to achieve the goal of meeting individual needs is through differentiated instruction. To most teachers, the use of “centers”, as defined by the Mosaica model, allows them to differentiate sufficiently to meet the needs of a diverse population.

In the judgment of the inspectors, the implementation of the “centers” strategy is insufficient at the present time to allow differentiation of the content and pace of instruction or variation in the ways students demonstrate learning. Each group of teachers, as well as board representatives and administrators, commented that the school is poorly equipped to serve students with special learning, behavior or language needs.

In addressing the demands of individual student needs with limited time and resources, OWN’s school leadership reported having made considerable strides in meeting the needs of at-risk students and English Language Learners. The Special Education Coordinator conducts “push-in” and “pull-out” instruction. Also, the Special Education Coordinator said she helps modify programs and monitors whether teachers implement the recommended modifications. There is now an ESL teacher to work with the approximately 70 ELL students. At the Kindergarten through third grade levels, ESL reading groups were utilized more this year. Additionally, the school’s Reading Specialist conducts considerable reading assistance for at-risk students.

However, Institute staff could not confirm that these efforts were effective. No evidence is yet available to demonstrate the value-added to low performing students, including those in the mainstream, on standardized tests. Further, there is no evidence about the effectiveness of the ESL program, in which ELA instruction is provided independent of that in the regular classrooms. While OWN has developed its programs for at-risk students since its second year, their effectiveness could not be determined.

Is the School an Academic Success?	
<p><b>Benchmark 1F</b></p> <p><b>Student Order &amp; Discipline</b></p>	<p><b>1F The school has implemented discipline policies and procedures that promote learning for all students.</b></p> <p>The school that meets this benchmark has documented discipline policies and procedures (for regular and special education students) and has consistently enforced those policies. As implemented and enforced, the discipline policy will have promoted calm, safe classrooms where students are required to (and not distracted from) participating fully in all learning activities. Students at a school meeting this benchmark will also generally report a reasonable sense of security. A school will also be able to provide appropriate records regarding expulsions and suspensions.</p>

Based on observations in a sampling of classes, students were on task and engaged, there was a culture of learning and classrooms were orderly in the lower and middle grades. Since its first year of operation, OWN has put in place a consistent and effective behavior system that promotes calm, safe classrooms and has fostered a supportive environment.

The extent to which disruptive behavior significantly interfered with instruction suggests the seventh grade classroom management program may need to be revisited and revised. It is unclear what role the Dean of Students plays as the Dean was absent during the Institute’s visit.

<p><b>Benchmark 2B</b></p> <p><b>Mission &amp; Design Elements</b></p>	<p><b>2B The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.</b></p> <p>The school that meets this benchmark has school board members, parents, teachers, school leader(s) and community partners that consistently present evidence of the school’s success with reference to the school’s mission and the key design elements included in its charter application. Key elements of the school’s design are well implemented and the school’s academic results, governance, and instructional practices reflect the mission of the school.</p>
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OWN’s mission is:

“Students will graduate from Our World Neighborhood Charter School with the foundation of a liberal education that will prepare them to succeed at the best New York City High Schools. They will have a historical perspective on our own time and place, achieved through an integrated understanding of history, geography, literature, the social sciences, science, math, art, and music. They will express themselves well verbally and in writing, and be competent in a foreign language and with computers. Most importantly, our students will have the broad education needed to overcome provincialism and grasp the interdependence of our world.”

OWN students possess an integrated understanding of subject material which likely leads to a grasp of “the interdependence of our world.” Further, students express themselves well verbally and orally and are competent with computers. However, based on observations of the seventh grade, the first graduating class of OWN students will likely not be prepared to “succeed at the best New York City High Schools.”

<p><b>Benchmark 2C</b></p> <p><b>Governance (Board of Trustees &amp; School Leadership)</b></p>	<p><b>2C.1 The board has implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes and has abided by them.</b>  A school that meets this benchmark has implemented a comprehensive and strict conflict of interest policy (and a code of ethics) and has consistently abided by them through the term of the school’s charter. Where possible, the board has avoided creating conflicts-of-interest. The school board has also maintained and abided by the corporation’s by-laws. In addition, a board meeting this benchmark will have actively sought information from the staff, parents, and community and student populations. The system for hearing such views and concerns will have been consistently implemented so that all views and concerns were appropriately heard and acted upon. The board will have published, reviewed and communicated policies annually and currently maintains an up-to-date policy manual.</p> <p><b>2C.2 The board and school leadership clearly articulate the school’s mission and design and work to implement it effectively.</b>  To fully meet this benchmark, school leaders and board members should be able to evidence a strong understanding of the school design and demonstrate that they have referred to it regularly in managing and governing the school. Moreover, the board and the school’s administration should have deployed resources effectively to further the academic and organizational success of the school. At the board level, the board should have a process for selecting both board members and the school leader or school leadership team that is timely and effective and such process should result in a stable and effective board and leadership team. The board should also have evaluated school leadership on an annual basis. Such evaluation should be based on clearly defined goals and measurements. The school board and school leadership should be able to demonstrate that they are facile with the process.</p>
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In its third year, Our World Neighborhood Charter School’s board of trustees has begun to assume more of an oversight function, giving the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) more latitude in the day-to-day operations of the school. The board continues to be well-informed about the school’s instructional program.

OWN’s board of trustees is comprised of six members; two are original founding members of the school. The board meets regularly, using prepared agendas. The board originally worked as a committee of the whole, but subcommittees have evolved such as curricula, fundraising, facility, charter renewal and strategic planning. In the past there were more subcommittees but the Board decided that additional committees are unnecessary at this time.

The board and school leadership articulate well the school’s mission and plans to further develop the school’s program. The board is aware of academic directions taken by instructional leadership. For example, the board is fully aware of the details on the school’s portfolio system, as well as other recently instituted standardized assessments. In contrast to past years, and purportedly due to the instructional leadership being fully staffed this year, the board has been less involved in OWN’s day-to-day operations. In turn, this year the board has asked for more formal, written updates from OWN’s CAO.

The board has instituted a formal evaluation process to evaluate the CAO and plans to administer it at the end of the school year. The educational management company at this school, Mosaica Education, Inc., is involved in the evaluation of the school leader and the academic program. The board contracts with MEI to provide services such as a Mosaica’s Paragon social studies curriculum. The board describes themselves as “self-managing.” One board member stated that Mosaica’s services will be reviewed in light of the demand on school resources of expanding the current school facility to accommodate its middle school grades.

The board indicated its awareness of its responsibility to ensure the improvement of student learning and achievement. With the school “fully staffed,” board members expressed confidence in the ability of the instructional program to enable students to make further academic progress. According to one board member, this year’s strategy



was to focus on the school's development of student portfolios and centers. In 2005-2006, the board will focus on charter renewal, self-evaluation, fundraising and developing the board's competence by recruiting a new member with legal expertise.

## Benchmark 2E

### Legal Requirements

2E The school has substantially complied with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.

A school that meets this benchmark will have compiled a record of substantial compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable laws and regulations. In addition, at the time of renewal, the school will be in substantial compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable laws and regulations. Such school will have maintained and have had in place effective systems and controls for ensuring that legal and charter requirements were and are met. A school should also be able to demonstrate that the school has an active and ongoing relationship with independent legal counsel that reviews relevant policies, documents, and incidents and makes recommendations as needed.

The Institute undertook a limited compliance review consisting of a review of information in the files of the Institute and State Education Department (“SED”) correspondence regarding the school. In September of 2003, SED notified the school that it had not submitted all information required in its Annual Report, but took no further action against the school. Separately, the school had some minor issues with SED regarding enrollment information that also resulted in no adverse action. In January of 2005, SED noted the school’s SAVE Plan was not complete and on file with SED. The school told the Institute that it revised its plan and re-submitted it to SED, but SED has not yet confirmed that this issue has been fully resolved.

Through March of 2005, the school has presented a mixed record of submitting information to the Institute in a timely manner as provided for in the school’s charter. While the school has had an exceptional record of submitting information on time since late 2004, prior to that time many documents have been from one to 258 days late, and in the earliest years of the charter two documents were more than a year late. Financial and enrollment documents had been the most problematic. In addition, in January of 2003, the Institute had difficulty in contacting the school on several occasions and could only reach voice mail. This issue has since been remedied. Due to facility problems the school also opened later than its scheduled first day of school.

A review of the school’s by-laws revealed two deficiencies. Section 2.19 of the by-laws allows school trustees to participate in meetings via conference telephone in derogation of the Open Meetings Law, which only allows trustees not present at a meeting to participate via video conference equipment under certain conditions. Also, the by-laws provide for an executive committee of only three trustees in section 3.1(a) as opposed to the five required under the Education Law.

While there were no official complaints against the school requiring action by the Institute under the Charter Schools Act, there was a minor complaint by parent in May of 2004 and a teacher complaint in December of 2003. The teacher complaint concerned a cancellation notice for health insurance the teacher received on November 24, 2003. The school’s policy was cancelled as of October 1, 2003 for non-payment of premium, but on December 4, 2003 reinstated retroactive to October 1. The teacher complained that neither the school nor its management company, Mosaica Education Inc., kept the teachers apprised of this situation. While there ultimately was no gap in health insurance coverage, we note that payroll and benefits are the school trustees’ responsibility even when such tasks are delegated to a management company. Further, the level and quality of management company oversight a school board exercises with regard to both academic and non-academic matters is an important renewal indicator.

According to the Institute's records, except as set forth above, the school has not been found in material violation of its charter, the Charter Schools Act, applicable provisions of the New York Education Law and other New York law, applicable federal law (e.g., I.D.E.A., F.E.R.P.A.), and its bylaws.

Is the School Fiscally Sound?	
<p><b>Benchmark 3A</b></p> <p><b>Board Oversight</b></p>	<p><b>3A</b> The board has provided effective financial oversight, including having made financial decisions that furthered the school’s mission, program and goals.</p> <p><b>3B</b> 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.</p> <p><b>3C</b> 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> <p><b>3D</b> 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> <p><b>3E</b> 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).</p>

A review of the board minutes for OWN indicates that the board takes an active role in OWN’s financial operations. A financial report is prepared and presented at most board meetings and the report provides meaningful information and analysis of the status of OWN’s financial condition. During its first operating year, the board struggled with obtaining timely and accurate financial information, but that situation improved upon the hiring of OWN’s own business manager independent of Mosaica Education, Inc.

Although OWN’s bylaws reference an Audit Committee with clearly outlined duties, the board has not yet formed such a committee. An Audit Committee, being advisory in nature, would not release the board from its responsibilities. However, an independent and objective Audit Committee can assist the board to discharge its duties by helping to strengthen the quality of financial reporting and improve communication between the board, management and external auditors.

Since its inception, OWN has generally operated pursuant to its long range fiscal plan included in its application. Modifications were made to reflect the changes not initially anticipated such as reduced enrollment in 2002-2003 (75 fewer students or 17%). In its first two years, OWN operated on balanced budgets. Actual revenues exceeded budgeted revenues and actual revenues exceeded actual expenses. Although budget modifications were not made as needed during OWN years, no negative consequences occurred because the overall budget was in balance.

Internal control can be expected to provide only reasonable, not absolute, assurance to OWN’s management and board that objectives will be achieved. For the year ended June 30, 2003, OWN’s independent auditors’ reports on compliance and on internal control over financial reporting disclosed fifteen reportable conditions including eight items that were considered material weaknesses.

At the time of CSI’s last fiscal site visit (April 2004), OWN was working on ensuring that appropriate accounting policies and procedures had been established and were working. Duties had generally been segregated to the extent practical or compensating controls were established. A system to record, track and safeguard assets has been established, but the board still needed to address the capitalization policy fixed assets. Based on the results of its audit for the year ended June 30, 2004, it appears OWN has addressed these issues. Each reportable condition previously disclosed was reported as corrected and no new reportable conditions were disclosed.

The audit report opinion in each of OWN's first two operating years was unqualified, indicating the financial statements were fairly presented, in all material respects, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and Government Auditing Standards as required. A review of OWN's financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2004 noted some anomalies and minor typos.<sup>4</sup>

OWN has met its financial reporting requirements with few exceptions. The annual budget and quarterly financial reports were generally filed on time or within one week of the applicable due date with two exceptions. The first quarterly report for the 2004-2005 school year which was filed two months late. Also, OWN was significantly late (more than four months) in submitting its financial statement audit report for the year ended June 30, 2003. In addition to missing the initial deadline (December 1st), OWN did not provide consistent weekly status updates to CSI as required. Financial reporting is most useful for OWN board, CSI and SED when it is timely.

OWN completed its second operating year in moderate financial position. As of June 30, 2004, OWN had unrestricted net assets of \$803,618. Unaudited quarterly statements for year three indicate OWN is on track to continue to improve its financial position. OWN has not been reliant on variable financing to meet its goals

OWN has a few areas it can improve to enhance its fiscal soundness. The most significant improvement opportunities relate to:

- Establishment of an Audit Committee as contemplated in OWN's bylaws.
- Material budget revisions. OWN has not historically made budget transfers between budget lines, instead simply explaining the reasons for significant variances. OWN should consider whether establishing a procedure for identifying when budget transfers (among budget lines) should be made would be beneficial to the board's understanding of OWN's interim financial reporting results. At a minimum, such a procedure should cover material changes.
- Financial reporting. While OWN made strides in improving its internal control over financial reporting, the financial statement audit report for FY 2004 contained several typographical and spelling errors as well as some unusual presentation issues. OWN should work closely with its independent auditor to eliminate such issues in the future.

<sup>4</sup> The table below identifies typographical and spelling errors and unusual presentation issues with the school's financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2004.

Page #	Comment
1	The final paragraph should read "the School's" internal control not "the Plan's."
2	"Accrued expensed" should be "accrued expenses."
2	"Deffered Rent Expense" should be "deferred rent expense"
2	The school presents the liability category "funds designated for future period." Such categorization is unusual and it is unclear if such presentation is in accordance with generally accepted accounting principals. Organizations may impose limitations on the use of contributions. These restrictions will not affect the asset classification, but they may be presented on the face of the statement of net assets or disclosed in the notes to the financial statements. However, any such "designated" funds would appear to be more properly presented as part of net assets, not as a liability as shown on the school's statement of financial position. The presentation by the school therefore appears to understate net assets and overstate liabilities by \$73,950.
3	Institute staff also finds the reclassification terminology "Net assets released from restrictions – restrictions satisfied by payments" highly unusual. Typically restrictions may be removed by the passage of time, or performance or act of the organization (satisfaction of a purpose restriction).
4	"Maintenace" should be "maintenance."
5	The items "repayment of facility debt" and "decrease in capital lease payable" are cash flows from financing activities and therefore should not be part of "Cash flows for investing activities."
9	"Federal" should be "fixed."

## Visit Data

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the Third Year Visit at Our World Neighborhood Charter School on June 2, 2005. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit:

### **RON MILLER, Ph.D.**

*Vice President for Accountability, CSI*

Ron was the educational accountability officer for the New York City Department of Education. After teaching grades three to five in New York City public schools for seven years, he joined the central offices of the New York City schools, where he conducted evaluative research and organizational studies. As Director of the Office of School Planning and Accountability, he worked with school leaders to develop their capacity to use data for school improvement. In this capacity he developed PASS, a school performance review system which was adopted in 600 city schools. Ron holds an AB degree from the University of California at Berkeley and a Ph.D. in Applied Anthropology from Columbia University.

### **SUSAN SEYMOUR**

*Special Assistant to the Executive Director, CSI*

Susan Seymour is the Special Assistant to the Executive Director of the Charter Schools Institute, State University of New York. In the past Mrs. Seymour taught pre-kindergarten through 10<sup>th</sup> grade. From 1996 to 1999 she worked in the Governor's Office of Regulatory Reform as an analyst. There she assisted various state agencies, among others the banking department and the Office of Children and Family Services, in cutting "red tape" from their New York State regulations. Interested in education reform, she joined the Charter Schools Institute in 1999. She received her B.S. from The University of Rochester and her M.A. from Manhattanville College concentrating in Special Education and Reading.

### **ADAM ABERMAN**

*President and Founder of the Learning Collective Inc. and  
Executive Director and Founder of ICOULDBE.ORG Inc.*

Mr. Aberman is currently President and Founder of The Learning Collective Inc. which is an educational and non-profit consulting service. He is also Executive Director and Founder of ICOULDBE.ORG INC. which is a 501(c)3 non-profit internet-based mentoring program that guides underserved teens toward careers by linking them with mentors.

Formerly, he served the New York City Board of Education in the Office of School Planning and Accountability where, among other things, he analyzed student data to better inform classroom

instruction. Additionally, he was a consultant to the Massachusetts House of Representatives-Committee on Education, Roxbury Preparatory Charter School and the Los Angeles Educational Partnership.

He was a bilingual Spanish teacher with the Los Angeles Unified School District. His B.A. is in Anthropology from Vassar College and his M.A. from Harvard University is in Public Policy with a focus on education.