

## **Independent School Evaluation Visit Reports**

Attached is a school evaluation report based on a school visit conducted by an external vendor on behalf of the Charter Schools Institute. School evaluation visits are a key component of the Institute’s comprehensive oversight and evaluation system. They provide an assessment of the school’s academic program and, to a more limited degree, its organizational and governance capacity. The objectives of the school evaluation visit are to:

1. Collect and document evidence of the school’s progress toward meeting the academic and organizational standards found in the Institute’s Renewal Benchmarks; and
2. Provide the school with feedback on its current achievement of the Renewal Benchmarks that may be helpful to the school as it determines how best to improve its program in anticipation of renewal.

The Institute engages external vendors to conduct an independent school evaluation visit and write an evaluation report at least once during a school’s first charter term, and occasionally in subsequent charter terms. These evaluations provide the Institute with additional information about a school’s program from an objective external perspective and serve to inform, corroborate or challenge conclusions drawn from the Institute’s ongoing evaluation and oversight.

The vendors are selected through a competitive bidding process, and must demonstrate the capacity to conduct rigorous and reliable qualitative evaluation of a school’s academic program and organizational capacity. The vendors are contracted to specifically collect and analyze evidence pertaining to the following SUNY renewal benchmarks<sup>1</sup>:

<b>Academic Success</b>	<b>Organizational Effectiveness and Viability</b>
1B. Use of Assessment Data 1C. Curriculum 1D. Pedagogy 1E. Instructional Leadership 1F. At-Risk Students 1G. Student Order & Discipline 1H. Professional Development	2A. Mission & Key Design Elements 2B. Parents & Students 2C. Organizational Capacity 2D. Board Oversight 2E. Governance

While specific evaluation methodology is left to the discretion of the vendor, the school evaluation visits typically include classroom observation, interviews with teachers, parents, school leaders and board members, and review of relevant documents. The attached report was written by a vendor based on evidence collected during a school evaluation visit, with the school description section provided by the Institute. The school had an opportunity to review a draft of this report and provide factual corrections and comments prior to the finalization of the report.

Other evaluation reports for this or other schools can be found on the Institute’s website at [www.newyorkcharter.org](http://www.newyorkcharter.org). For questions or concerns about this report or the Institute’s school evaluation procedures, please contact Simeon Stolzberg, Director of School Evaluation, at [simeon.stolzberg@suny.edu](mailto:simeon.stolzberg@suny.edu) or 212-221-6332.

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<sup>1</sup> These reference version 4.0 of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks; the latest version can be found on the Institute’s website at: <http://newyorkcharters.org/documents/renewalBenchmarks.doc>

# EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

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## ACHIEVEMENT FIRST BROWNSVILLE CHARTER SCHOOL

Visit Date  
May 18-19, 2010



CONDUCTED BY CLASS MEASURES  
ON BEHALF OF THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

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# EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

## ACHIEVEMENT FIRST BROWNSVILLE CHARTER SCHOOL

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Achievement First Brownsville Charter School (AF Brownsville) was visited by an external school inspection team from Class Measures on behalf of the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the Institute) on May 18 and 19, 2010. The school opened in 2008 and at the time of the visit served 248 students in grades kindergarten through 2.

The school administers formative and summative assessments in core academic areas that are aligned to the school's defined curriculum and the state standards. The school administers interim assessments to all students every six weeks in both reading and mathematics. Data from student assessments is stored centrally by the Achievement First Network (the Network) for all schools in the Athena online data management program which was developed by Achievement First. School staff access data disaggregated by teacher, student, standard, and question through the Athena online data system.

Assessment data is reviewed and analyzed during full day professional development sessions following receipt of student data. Data is used to collaboratively plan changes to instruction for whole classes, small groups, and individual students. Data is also used by child study teams to identify students needing additional academic support. The leadership team and board regularly use student data to monitor progress towards goals. Both the selection of professional development topics and modifications to staffing are driven by student data.

AF Brownsville has a well documented curriculum in place for each core academic subject that is aligned to state standards. The curriculum is both vertically and horizontally aligned. Teachers reported that they are maintaining curriculum binders of developed materials for use as a resource. Lesson plans are submitted to the principal for review and comment. Assessment data is used to modify the curriculum, which has a strong literacy focus.

The team found strong instruction in place in classes throughout the school. Teachers demonstrated solid content knowledge and grade level competency in all classes observed. Staff held high expectations for student behavior and academic performance. Teachers routinely provided lesson objectives to students using methods appropriate to the students' age and grade. Lesson plans were aligned to the curriculum and state frameworks. Differentiated instruction was routinely observed in classrooms and was delivered through a co-teaching model. Students were actively engaged and participated well in lesson activities.

Instructional leadership was strong and leaders held high expectations for teachers and students. School leaders place an emphasis on the importance of planning; teachers plan collaboratively on a weekly basis and submit lesson plans to school leaders for approval. Even if students at the school are outperforming other Network schools, the emphasis is always on continued improvement. Teachers are evaluated through a comprehensive evaluation program that is based on a coaching model. Teachers develop professional goals collaboratively with their coach and work towards these goals during the year. The formal evaluation is based on his or her progress towards these goals. Leadership monitors student data on an ongoing basis, examining academic programs for successes or weak areas that need improvement.

Services for at-risk students were effectively provided through the school's co-teaching model, a tiered intervention program and the special education department. An after school tutoring program is also available to students needing additional assistance. Students are evaluated for intervention services by a child study team, which evaluates student performance and assessment data every six weeks to determine if students should receive interventions and whether students currently receiving services need adjustments to their intervention plan or are ready to exit the program.

AF Brownsville has created an effective, well documented, and age appropriate discipline program that is implemented consistently school wide. The school promotes a series of strategies to streamline behavior management in the classroom. These strategies and rituals provide for non-verbal communication between teachers and students, class praise for good performance, and non-disruptive behavior modification and redirection. All members of the school community are well informed about the program. During classroom observations, students were observed to be on task and engaged.

Professional development is focused on improving instruction and developing a strong culture of continuous improvement. Responsibility for the delivery of professional development is shared by the Network and the school. Teachers receive three weeks of professional development during an orientation session prior to the beginning of school. Every six weeks, following receipt of interim assessment results, a full day professional development session is provided to analyze data. Professional development has been targeted on literacy. AF Brownsville conducts needs analyses to determine what types of professional development to offer, and professional development is sustained through discussions at grade level meetings.

The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter. Stakeholders were familiar with the mission.

According to survey data reviewed by the team and interviews, parents and students were happy with the education their child was receiving. Parents particularly liked having two teachers in each class, the small class size, and the commitment to each student's success. Parents stated that the school was responsive to concerns and were happy with communications between home and school. The school is fully enrolled and receives more applications for enrollment than it has open spaces for new students each year.

The school has sufficient organizational capacity to manage the school efficiently. The Network provides substantial support to the school in non-instructional areas and in management as well as to the principal in setting and monitoring goals. Areas of support include student and teacher recruitment, assessment and data support, financial management.

The team reviewed a variety of documents, including board meeting minutes and bylaws. An interview was also conducted with six of the board members, including the parent representative and a Network employee. The board was found to be in compliance with New York State Public Meeting Laws. Board members receive and review student performance data and financial information at all board meetings. The principal has been evaluated formally by the board and the board also conducts evaluations of the school, the board, and the Network.

## SCHOOL DESCRIPTION<sup>1</sup>

### Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	October 26, 2007
Date Initial Charter Approved by the Board of Regents	January 15, 2008
School Opening Date	September, 2008

### Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades At Location	District
2008-09 through present	2021 Bergen St. Brooklyn, NY	All	New York City CSD 23

### Partner Organizations

	Partner Name	Partner Type	Dates of Service
Current Partner	Achievement First, Inc.	Charter Management Organization	2007 - present

### Current Mission Statement

The mission of Achievement First Brownsville Charter School is to provide students with the academic and character skills they need to excel in top colleges, to succeed in a competitive world, and to serve as the next generation of leaders in their communities.

### Current Key Design Elements

• An unwavering focus on breakthrough student achievement, including fully closing the achievement gap;
• Consistent, proven, standards-based curriculum, including that what is taught at every grade level is defined clearly and systematically so that all essential content is mastered over time;
• Interim assessments and strategic use of performance data, including standards-based assessments administered ever 6 weeks in all of the core subject and individual instructional plans developed in conjunction with school leaders for each teacher based on assessment results;
• More time on task, including three hours daily for reading instruction in elementary grades and three hours of instruction in reading and writing in the middle school grades;
• Principals with the power to lead;
• Increased supervision of the quality of instruction, including a School Manager to handle operational issues, a Dean of Students to coordinate discipline, and an Academic Dean in the school's second year, all of which will free up the Principal to focus on instruction;
• Aggressive recruitment of teaching talent;
• Disciplined, achievement-oriented school culture;
• Rigorous high-quality, focused training for principals and leaders, including a "residency" year before implementing the program and a minimum of 3 weeks of high-quality professional development before the school year begins for all teachers; and
• Parents and community as partners, including parent "contracts."

<sup>1</sup> The information in this section was provided by the SUNY Charters Schools Institute.

## School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Charter Enrollment	Actual Enrollment <sup>2</sup>	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2008-09	84	168	191	5-6	K-1	195
2009-10	165	249	247	5-7	K-2	195

## Student Demographics

	2008-09 <sup>3</sup>		2009-10	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 23 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment <sup>4</sup>	Percent of NYC CSD 23 Enrollment <sup>5</sup>
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.5%	0%	0%	
Black or African American	92.8%	81%	93.1%	
Hispanic	6.1%	17%	5.6%	
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0.5%	1%	1.2%	
White	0%	1%	0%	
Multiracial	0%	0%	0%	
<b>Special Populations</b>				
Students with Disabilities <sup>6</sup>	6%		7%	
Limited English Proficient	0%	4%	0%	
<b>Free/Reduced Lunch</b>				
Eligible for Free Lunch	60%	75%	71%	
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	16%	7%	11%	

## Current Board of Trustees<sup>7</sup>

Board Member Name	Position/Committees
Kelly Wachowicz	Chair
Chrystal Stokes Williams	Treasurer
Max Polaner	Trustee
Vanessa Jackson	Trustee
Amy Arthur Samuels	Trustee
Elgina Brooks	Trustee   Parent Representative
Lee Gelernt	Trustee

<sup>2</sup> 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.)

<sup>3</sup> Source: 2008-09 New York State Report Cards.

<sup>4</sup> Source: These statistics were provided by the school as it is not yet available publicly.

<sup>5</sup> Aggregated District data not yet available for 2009-10 school year.

<sup>6</sup> New York State Education Department does not report special education data. Statistics given provided by the school.

<sup>7</sup> Source: Institute Board Records.

**School Leader(s)**

<b>School Year</b>	<b>School Leader(s) Name and Title</b>
2008-09 – Present (2009-10)	Gina Musumeci, Principal

**School Visit History**

<b>School Year</b>	<b>Visit Type</b>	<b>Evaluator (Institute/External)</b>	<b>Date</b>
2008-09	First Year Visit	Institute	March 3, 2009



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## BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

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### Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?

#### **Benchmark 1B: Use of Assessment Data**

AF Brownsville regularly administers a series of standards based assessments, including interim assessments. Assessments include: for grades kindergarten through 1 reading, the Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress (STEP) Literacy Assessment is administered every six weeks and the Fountas and Pinnell assessment is administered at the midpoint and end of the year; for grade 2 reading, the Network developed reading assessment is administered every six weeks; for all grade levels, writing assessments are administered three times per year; for grades kindergarten through 2 mathematics, the school administers a Network-developed interim assessment every six weeks. In addition, the Terra Nova is administered as a measure of student progress at the beginning and end of every year. The Network-developed assessments are tightly aligned to the curriculum as is the STEP assessment.

A review of the 2008-2009 Accountability Plan Progress report optional goals showed that students in grades K-1 exceeded the end of year Fountas & Pinnel literacy proficiency goals. The team reviewed 2009 end of year Terra Nova assessment data for grades K-1 for mathematics. It was determined that the school met the optional mathematics measure, with the average kindergarten student performing at or above the 50<sup>th</sup> NCE, and the average grade 1 student performing at or above the 55<sup>th</sup> NCE on the Terra Nova mathematics examinations.

Assessment data from the STEP Literacy Assessment and the AF interim assessments, all administered every six weeks, are the primary assessments used at AF Brownsville for evaluating student progress and modifying instruction to meet student needs. Data from student assessments is stored centrally by the Network for all schools within the Athena online data management program, which was developed by Achievement First. School staff have access through Athena to reports on data disaggregated by teacher, student, standard, and question. Every six weeks, following receipt of the student data from the interim assessments, all teaching staff meet during a full day professional development session to analyze student data and plan instructional modifications. Teachers collaboratively plan targeted instruction addressed at meeting student needs at all levels. Plans are completed for instruction for individual student, small group instruction within the classroom, and for whole class instruction. In addition student data is used to identify students for participation in the tiered intervention model. Student data is also used to sort students into three reading groups within the classroom that are homogeneously grouped. The co-teacher model allows each student group to receive leveled instruction.

Data is provided to board members at every meeting. In the Fall, following analysis of student data during the summer, the principal provides the board with an in-depth presentation on data, progress towards goals, and a preview of instructional focal points for the year. The board regularly monitors the progress toward school goals, which are more comprehensive than the Accountability Plan Goals. Board members reported that there is an “obsessive culture towards achievement and a strong focus on goals.”

The school and the Network have standardized processes in place to ensure that student assessment scoring is reliable and consistent. For example, writing assessments are graded by pairs of teachers using a uniform rubric. In addition, all STEP assessment results are double checked by the literacy coach. Student Scantron sheets are reviewed before submission to ensure that students will not lose points due to incompletely filled in bubbles.

The school uses assessment data to identify topics for professional development for teachers. In addition, students may be grouped and staffing shifted to address needs identified through data. An example of this was the grouping of students whose interim assessment showed weak reading scores. These students were placed with very strong literacy teachers in order to bring up their skill levels.

Parents and guardians receive student report cards three times a year. Students who are identified as struggling receive interim reports six times per year. While parents are not notified of school wide data on assessments or the school's progress towards goals, they are notified of how their child scored on the STEP assessment. They also receive a certificate if their child performs above 95 percent on the interim mathematics assessment.

### **Benchmark 1C: Curriculum**

AF Brownsville has developed a well-defined state-aligned curriculum for each grade and core academic subject. Review of curriculum documents revealed a rigorous curriculum also aligned to the school's mission. Other than the guided reading program, which is taught by each homeroom teacher, each grade level has two teachers responsible for developing and teaching the mathematics, science, and social studies curricula. Teachers reported that this year they are maintaining classroom binders of developed curricula to serve as a resource. They reported that this departmentalization and planning "sets us apart" and contributed to their sense of ownership. Teachers also reported they have access to the curricular documents and work collaboratively to review and refine the curriculum.

The school uses some commercial programs (for example, TERC, SRA, 6+1 Traits Writing Framework) as a basis for its curricula and teachers are expected to utilize them to meet student and school learning goals. The principal, who reviews and comments on teachers' lesson plans, stated that teachers would not submit a mathematics, or social studies lesson plan containing a reference to a publisher's prepared lesson; all lessons are designed using the school's Understanding by Design (UBD) format and lessons are expected to be tailored to the learning needs of students in each class. For example, all grades use TERC mathematics as a foundation program, but they add the Everyday Counts Calendar program in grades K-1, and blend in materials from Scott Foresman Envisions in grade 2. In Social Studies, teachers in grades K-1 develop a standards-driven curriculum using Scott Foresman resources, while History Alive! is also used in grade 2. All grades use the Foss Science program, and the principal stated that reading and writing skills such as summarizing and drawing inferences are infused throughout the science and the social studies curriculum. The purpose of spreading literacy across subjects is twofold: to reinforce literacy skills (such as developing written responses), and to preserve the morning English language arts (ELA) instructional time to develop critical thinking skills.

The school's reading and writing program are standards-driven, well-developed, and well-resourced. All teachers utilize a guided reading approach with varied groupings dependent on student skill levels. Teachers also use resources from a variety of programs. For example, SRA phonics cards are displayed in the kindergarten classrooms; these are used as a resource to better portray phonics sounds. As independent reading is an important literacy behavior and is a focal point for the school, a wide variety of leveled readers were available for students in classrooms. Writing is also a teacher-developed, standards-driven program built on the 6+1 Traits of Writing framework and extensive reading response writing is conducted as part of the literacy program.

One non-core curricular area that the school is currently targeting for improvement is character education. AF Brownsville plans to introduce the Open Circle Social Competency Program in the next school year to replace a program that is developed individually by teachers or by grade levels, and is a social and emotional learning program for elementary school children, their teachers, principals, and

parents. According to information reviewed by the team, this program recognizes the role that relationships play in the academic and social successes of children and works to support caring, respectful school communities with high expectations for students. Art, chorus, and dance are additional non-core classes offered to all students.

Curricular analysis is conducted when teachers, the academic dean, and the principal work together to find gaps and overlaps during coaching and grade level meetings throughout the year. Assessment data helps them to identify areas that need further development. Embedding writing skills in the science and social studies curricula is one example of a revision that resulted from this process. In the summer, a team of teachers and administrators from various AF schools worked together in areas such as developing a scope and sequence in mathematics.

The curriculum as implemented is organized, cohesive, and aligned grade to grade. When asked about how she ensured consistency and quality, the principal described a process, which teachers validated, where all areas except guided reading were planned with the help of subject leaders in each grade. The principal and curriculum dean review all curricula.

### **Benchmark 1D: Pedagogy**

Teachers at AF Brownsville exhibited strong subject matter and grade level competency during classroom observations. Teachers showed a solid understanding of early education both through their instruction and classroom culture. Expectations were high for the development of higher level thinking skills. An example of this was observed in a kindergarten class where students worked on comprehension from material that had been read to them, effectively developing higher level skills prior to the development of fluency. The school has a literacy focused instructional model and embeds literacy skills throughout all subject area.

Teachers clearly expressed learning objectives to students, with teachers both stating the lesson objectives to students as well as having the students sing the objective at the beginning of class. Teachers reported that what sets AF Brownsville apart is that departmentalized planning taps into teacher strengths and allowing teachers to develop expertise in their strength. Data review feeds into lesson planning, allowing for instruction that is targeted to student needs.

Lesson plans were found to be aligned to the school curriculum and the state frameworks. Classroom instruction was consistent with that identified in the lesson plans.

Differentiated instruction was strongly in evidence in classrooms at AF Brownsville. The school promotes a co-teaching model where each classroom has two teachers. For ELA instruction students are broken into three groups, one group with each teacher and another reading independently. These groups rotated between teachers and independent work. For kindergarten classes, where students may not yet be able to read well independently, computers are provided for student to work on programs that enhance or reinforce learning skills. In addition, students receive individualized intervention services through a number of programs, including a tiered intervention program, tutoring, and summer school.

Students were well engaged and teachers used a well-developed, school wide system of strategies designed to keep students on task and bring them back as necessary. These strategies were ideal for lower elementary students. Chanting, movement, and the use of a variety of methods for teachers and peers to express approval were strongly in evidence. Students and teachers used a series of hand signals to provide constant non-verbal feedback and reinforcement for being on task. In one class every student raised their hand in response to questions. Teachers reported that they prided themselves in not yelling at students.

Teachers maintained tight control over pacing within the classrooms, which was paired with an understanding that students at this age level needs lots of physical movement, singing and chanting. Teachers are aware of the attention span of students of this age and teachers reported having “eagle eyes” in a room. The team observed that teachers had a strong sense of the room, shifting strategies to maintain student attention as necessary.

Teachers challenged students with questions and assignments that promote academic rigor and depth of understanding. AF Brownsville promotes the intentional use of morning lessons to develop critical thinking skills. Students in one class were observed evaluating a teacher’s story to ensure that it was aligned to the model for the development of a good story. Students were adept at supporting their opinions and in one classroom a student wanted the teachers to “look at page 94 as evidence.”

### **Benchmark 1E: Instructional Leadership**

AF Brownsville has strong leadership in place that is led by a principal who distributes responsibilities among a leadership team consisting of an academic dean, dean of students and an operations manager. Both deans and the principal serve as teacher coaches and are assisted in this process by lead teachers.

The school establishes an environment of high expectations for students. The principal stated that establishing high expectations begins with a strong partnership with parents. Parents are valued as part of a team approach to educating their child. She said that AF Brownsville is a rigorous and goal oriented school that puts metrics in place to measure academic achievement as well as character. The mission serves as the foundation for high expectations by demanding breakthrough student achievement and character skills that will serve students in their roles as the next leaders in a competitive world. The principal said that connecting student choices to the long term goal of college is important. For example, teachers tell students if they read while waiting in line they will become better readers and this skill will help them do well in college. On a day to day basis, students are expected to be kind to one another and to do their best in the classroom. The principal said that teachers are expected to know their students very well so that they can provide individualized attention and continuously challenge them to do their best work.

The school leadership has established high expectations for its teaching staff by emphasizing planning in order to develop quality lessons. Teachers hand in lesson plans each week and are given feedback for improvement. Both the academic dean and principal are in classes daily and the team observed this in practice during the site visit. Observation feedback is sent to teachers using email. The example of feedback read by the team was positive, specific, and directly connected to improving student learning. For example: “Name and praise the value you want to instill: ‘scholars we are working on determination in toucans this week- determination means...’”

Teachers interviewed stated that the leadership models high expectations by never “resting on their laurels.” Even if the student scores are surpassing other schools, AF Brownsville wants to strive for higher goals for each student. Teachers said that a strong evaluation process, weekly lesson plan checks with feedback, and a strong focus on planning help set standards high. They also said that strong communication from leadership is coupled with praise and appreciation and builds a collegial respectful working environment.

AF Brownsville has in place a comprehensive system for evaluating teachers that is based on a coaching model. Coaches are trained using a protocol entitled “the professional growth plan toolkit” that connects inputs and outcomes(quality instruction and professional values with student achievement and character development). The training includes best practices for written feedback, conversations, and goal setting.

Everyone on staff has a coach. Teachers do a self reflection as the year begins by using an adaptation of Doug Lemov's taxonomy that includes two main areas: achievement and character development and the essentials of effective teaching. Teachers rate themselves on each indicator listed in each area and then have an initial meeting with their coach so that they get to know each other, set up a meeting schedule for the year, and go over the teacher self assessment. Coaches respond to the self assessment and the teacher and coach collaboratively develop professional goals for the year. Coaches provide support for teachers through observation, co-planning, and modeling lessons as appropriate. They also video tape and review lessons with teachers as needed. The formal evaluation takes place between the coach and teacher during the winter and is a conversation that takes place in two meetings with feedback and response to feedback based on the goals and progress toward them. Teachers interviewed said they felt supported by this model.

The school's leadership ensures that the school is responding to the needs of at-risk students and maximizing their achievement to the greatest extent possible in the regular education program using in-class resources and/or pull-out services and programs where necessary. The leadership is constantly monitoring the academic progress of all students at the school by relying on the data and by asking challenging questions about results. The principal and academic dean look at each cohort and monitor progress against how they did against previous results as well as how they performed against the goals set for them. If progress is not being made, the leadership team will look for a solution. For example if they believed the problem to be a teacher issue they might co-teach, co-plan or focus on professional development.

#### **Benchmark 1F: At-Risk Students**

The school allocates sufficient resources to provide interventions to address the needs of all struggling students, including special education students. A special educator and social worker provide support services and work closely with the dean of school culture, who focuses on student cultural and behavior issues. Each classroom is heterogeneously grouped and within each classroom instruction is provided by two certified teachers who are able to split the class into smaller groups. School documents described the classes as usually containing three groups of approximately nine students. Team members confirmed this grouping during classroom observations. Each teacher was observed instructing a small group, and a third small group working on independent work or with other intervention staff.

AF Brownsville has structured the student support program so that all teachers are required to utilize effective strategies to support students within the regular education program. As mentioned in the pedagogy section of the report, differentiated instruction was observed in classrooms. School documents describe a tiered intervention program where students receive literacy and mathematics supportive interventions varying in frequency and duration. Double instruction time in reading and mathematics is provided for students whose assessment results indicated the need for re-teaching and support within the general education program. After-school tutoring and, if needed, additional school-day pull out support, are provided to grade 1 and 2 students in ELA and mathematics by classroom teachers during their prep time.

The school reported that 15 students are on Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs). The school has no English Language Learners or students on 504 plans. The school uses a home language survey to determine eligibility for ELL services.

Teachers reported that they worked collaboratively at grade levels to identify at-risk students and discuss ways to support struggling students. They also said that their coaches provided opportunities to develop strategies and that the special educator was available to suggest intervention strategies. A child study



team meets approximately every six weeks, according to teachers and school leaders. This team develops or rechecks student plans to insure progress is being made. The school provides sufficient time for on-going coordination among regular and special education and other support staff. Every six weeks, a “data day” is held where progress of each student throughout the school is reviewed and the success of intervention programs is evaluated.

The school provides sufficient training, resources, and support to all teachers with regard to meeting the needs of at-risk students. A list of professional development topics provided by the school indicated that teachers receive training in a variety of strategies to support students; nevertheless, the principal reported that training in identifying and meeting the needs of students with disabilities was an area identified for future growth.

### **Benchmark 1G: Student Order and Discipline**

AF Brownsville is a safe and orderly school with a classroom environment that is strongly focused on learning. The AF Brownsville family handbook has a clearly written disciplinary policy that states that the learning environment is sacred and that each child needs an opportunity to learn without needless disruptions. In order to provide such an uninterrupted learning environment, the school establishes high expectations for student behavior and has implemented procedures to create and preserve that environment. All teachers use a choice chart and a check system that continually monitors each child’s behavior status. The chart system is color coded. Green means the child’s behavior is exemplary; blue means the child is doing a very good job; yellow means the child has been given three warnings, and red means the child has been given six warnings and redirections and has not changed behaviors. If a child ends the day in red, the parent will be called and a meeting will be set up with the teacher so that they can discuss how the child can get his or her behavior back on track. In classroom observations performed by the team, teachers were observed using the check system, and color charts were hanging in each classroom.

Students are expected to follow the rules and practice the REACH values: respect; enthusiasm; achievement; citizenship and hard-work. Additionally, students are expected to follow SLANT in class: sit up straight, listen, ask and answer questions, nod and track the speaker. Students interviewed by the team knew and understood the REACH values. They could explain the color code system and gave examples about what they might do to check their behavior choices such as try to ignore a student bothering them or tell the teacher.

There is also a system of hand signals known by both teachers and students that help to redirect students or allow students to quickly ask a question or get help. For example there are signals to indicate a need to use the rest room, to indicate they are not feeling well or to let the teacher know they need a pencil.

The dean of school culture is a member of the leadership team and is primarily responsible for student behavior. The dean stated that his desire is to keep students in the classroom and he uses strategies to refocus students when they are struggling. The family handbook outlines consequences for student behavior issues. Students displaying physical aggression and extreme defiance may be suspended, according to the dean, and he reported nine suspensions this year. Suspended students are required to attend school for reading instruction and then return home.

In the classrooms observed by the team students were respectful and attentive. Team members were greeted by a student welcoming them to the classroom and sharing what they were working on at the time. Teachers do not raise their voices at AF Brownsville which contributes to a calm and orderly environment.

## **Benchmark 1H: Professional Development**

AF Brownsville has in place a comprehensive professional development program to support its teaching staff, and the school and Network provides sufficient time, personnel, materials and funding to support a wide-ranging and sustained professional development program.

Professional development begins before school opens in the summer. New teachers spend one week in New Haven being trained by the Network on the essentials in the Achievement First instructional model and the Doug Lemov taxonomy. The second week new teachers go to AF Brownsville for school led training that is a mixture of professional development on culture and academics. The third week new teachers are joined by returning staff and time is spent on team building and establishing school culture. Starting in October, early dismissal for students occurs on Friday and teachers have professional development from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. Every six weeks there is a full professional development day for data analysis.

Professional development programs are oriented toward the school meeting its mission. According to the principal, professional development connects clearly to the mission of the school because 60 percent of the school's professional development budget is spent on reading instruction. The principal said that research indicates that literacy achievement is directly connected to the achievement gap for urban children. The school conducts a professional development needs assessment to look at staff needs as individuals for professional growth as well as what the whole school needs to be more successful with its student population.

Professional development is evaluated through teacher surveys and analysis of student achievement data. For example, the principal said that her school has the highest reading scores in the Network and attributes that to strong professional development in literacy. The implementation of strategies learned through professional development is monitored by the principal in classroom observations and through follow up sessions with teachers during grade level meetings.

In a strategic overview of the Network provided to the team, it was indicated that the Network just completed the second year of a Leadership Fellows program designed to increase the Networks leadership pipeline. This professional development program enhances the ability of the Network to promote school leaders from within the Network.

Professional development is differentiated at AF Brownsville. The principal said that this differentiation helps to address the different pedagogical skill levels of teachers and strengthens teacher involvement by allowing them some control over their own professional development. Teachers interviewed told the team that there is sufficient professional development offered by the school and the Network. The team reviewed an extensive list of professional development offerings provided by the Network, including offerings on Response to Intervention (RTI) strategies and the Athena data system. Teachers said that they could request to attend a conference on their own and the school would support them. The principal said that she could also send teachers to Teacher University at Hunter College. The special educator at AF Brownsville conducts trainings for teachers in meeting the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms.

## **Renewal Question 2**

### **Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?**

#### **Benchmark 2A: Mission and Key Design Elements**

The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter. The mission is supported through a rigorous, standards aligned curriculum with a strong student support program that allows for students to receive additional, individual assistance with academics as needed to become proficient. In addition, AF Brownsville promotes the REACH values: respect; enthusiasm; achievement; citizenship and hard-work as a model for the development of strong character skills throughout the school for both students and faculty. Students are taught behavioral and interpersonal skills that will allow them to be successful in life. All stakeholders interviewed were able to describe the major points of the mission.

The school was found to have implemented all of its key design elements designed to support the mission. These included:

- AF Brownsville maintains a focus on student achievement through an instructional model that provides abundant support for student learning through the tiered intervention, co-teaching model and tutoring program. In addition, the focus on literacy, that is the root of the academic program, is in place specifically to address the achievement gap observed in urban students in reading.
- AF Brownsville has a well documented curriculum in place that benefits from the previous experience of other Network schools. The documentation is clear and useful to the teaching staff.
- The school has interim assessments, developed collaboratively with other Network leaders, in place for all core subjects. These assessments are administered approximately every six weeks. Data from these assessments are analyzed by the entire teaching staff during full day professional development sessions. Instruction is modified based on student assessment data.
- Students at AF Brownsville participate in an academic program that is strongly focused on instruction and time on task. Students receive three hours daily of reading instruction.
- The principal is a strong instructional leader. The Network provides sufficient support to allow the principal to effectively lead the school.
- The school has a leadership team in place that includes a dean of school culture, an office manager, and an academic dean. This structure allows for increased supervision of instruction.
- The Network provides a systematic approach to the management of recruitment activities for all schools within the Network. Principals collaborate during the hiring process and review teacher demonstration lessons. In addition, the school provides opportunities for teacher growth in order to maintain existing staff.
- The school culture is one that is disciplined and achievement oriented. The school promotes excellence through a variety of methods including the SLANT model and school wide behavior management programs for behavior, REACH model for character development, and through strong instructional and academic support programs.



- Teachers and principals are engaged in regular, high quality professional development. This includes access to both school and Network professional development. Teachers are engaged in three weeks of Network and school-based professional development prior to the school year.
- The school considers parents to be valuable partners in student learning and has developed a strong communication structure to include and inform parents. Parents are provided multiple opportunities to learn about the school and its programs.

## **Benchmark 2B: Parents and Students**

The team interviewed a group of parents whose comments supported the New York City Department of Education’s 2008-2009 survey results, which indicated very positive parent and guardian perceptions regarding the school and its programs. Fifty-five parents or guardians, only 32 percent of those surveyed, responded to the survey. The results of the parent survey included as an optional goal in the 2008-2009 Accountability Plan Progress Report showed that 114 of 116 respondents, almost 100 percent, rated the school A+, A, or B. Parents reported that the school provides them with opportunities to learn about the school and its programs through an orientation program, question and answer sessions, and meetings with teachers when students transition from grade to grade. Bi-weekly newsletters keep the parents informed about school activities and news. In interviews, parents stated that the academic programs were “above and beyond” traditional public school programs. They also specifically identified as positive the presence of two teachers in each classroom, the small class size, the challenging curriculum, and the strong “get to college commitment” that is present in classrooms as early as kindergarten. A parent organization, entitled the leadership council, is composed of parents who are elected to the council. The leadership council provides hands-on opportunities for parents and guardians to help at the school and be involved in school activities. Parents mentioned they felt welcomed at the school, noting that parents are allowed to shadow their children to learn more about their academic programs and progress.

The school is responsive to parent interests and concerns. The principal stated that in response to parent feedback she made improvements to how and what the school communicates to families, which included modifications to parent and family newsletters. According to all groups interviewed, communication structures between parents, teachers, and the school are efficient, well thought out, and enable all stakeholders to connect quickly and effectively to address concerns and questions. When questioned regarding the presence of a grievance policy, parents stated that they were not aware of the formal process for pursuing grievances at the school board level or beyond, but stakeholders interviewed stated that they knew of no instances where this would have been necessary during the school’s two year history. The team was provided and reviewed a written parent/guardian complaint policy.

Parents were well-informed about the availability of student support opportunities. The school provided an information pamphlet on student support services that was available in the school’s office. Parents and students reported that the school was safe and students said that the teachers were helpful in addressing social issues and made them feel safe. Parents expressed the concern that possible space limitations within the current facility as the school continued to expand enrollment may create a crowding problem.

The school attendance rate was 97.7 percent through February 2010 according to information provided by the school. According to the Accountability Plan Progress Report for 2008-2009, attendance was 96 percent through June 2009. In school year 2008-2009, seven students left the school, and in 2009-2010

six students have left the school through December 2009. Examples of why students left included moving to new address, change in guardianship, and enrolled in school closer to home.

## **Benchmark 2C: Organizational Capacity**

AF Brownsville is located in New York City community school district 23, and shares space in the building with Brooklyn Collegiate: A College Board School. Brooklyn Collegiate serves approximately 600 students in grades 6-12. According to the AF Brownsville principal, the schools meet monthly to discuss the scheduling of common spaces such as the cafeteria and other issues. The principal also indicated the schools held joint fire drills.

AF Brownsville opened in the fall of 2008 serving approximately 182 students in grades K-1, according to the 2008-2009 Accountability Plan Progress Report. The school added grade 2 this year and plans to add grade 3 next year, according to the principal. As of February 24, 2010, the school served 248 students. It is estimated enrollment will grow to 340 next year, according to an overview of the 2010-2011 proposed budget. A review of the March 22 board minutes showed that due to a “strained partnership with Brooklyn Collegiate and the lack of district support” a representative from the AF Network would participate in negotiating the classroom space needed to add grade 3 next year. In addition, the minutes indicated space needs must accommodate daily gym time and 90 minutes of cafeteria time.

Presently the school has 33.8 full time equivalent (FTE) staff, including 25 teachers, according to information provided to the team. The school will hire three additional teaching staff next year and two teachers will move into leadership positions, according to information included in the principal’s report to the board dated March 22, 2010. Information provided to the team showed that the student/teacher ratio will increase next year and, because the principal realized staff will be spread thin, he is working on “creative” solutions to make sure critical classes and interventions are staffed appropriately.

According to documentation provided to the team, the school’s academic personnel included six kindergarten general education teachers, six grade 1 general education teachers, six grade 2 general education teachers, three K-2 general education teachers, one K-2 special education teacher, one K-2 art teacher, one K-2 art teacher, and one K-2 dance teacher. In addition, the school has a principal, a director of operations, an academic dean, and a dean of school culture. According to information provided to the team, five teachers at AF Brownsville do not have certification to teach in New York, but all had attained Highly Qualified status.

Expectations and standards for students, teachers and Network staff to accomplish the mission, meet goals, and improve performance have been set by the principal and the Network. According to information provided by the Network, Network staff teams participate in an annual planning process that requires them to set priorities and goals. The Network also has student achievement goals; examples include: 95 percent of scholars will be proficient after four years and 90 percent of students will graduate from high school in five years. The school also has Accountability Plan goals and the team reviewed the 2009-2009 Accountability Plan Progress Report. The principal indicated the school was goal oriented and used academic rubrics and achievement and assessment data to measure success in meeting goals. The team observed academic goals on the walls in the corridor of the school and interviewees indicated that students and families know the overarching goal in mathematics is that all students were capable of 100 percent work. In addition, the school is in the process of developing character goal rubrics. Interviewees indicated that teachers and the principal had professional growth goals that were monitored through the evaluation process.

The current partner of AF Brownsville is the Achievement First Network, a charter management organization that now serves approximately 4,500 students in eight charter schools in New York and nine in Connecticut. The Network has implemented an organizational structure that is similar for all schools. The structure has clear lines of authority and responsibility. Each school has a principal, a director of operations, an academic dean, and a dean of school culture. Assistant superintendents, who are responsible for a portfolio of schools, provide support for principals. The Network also has support teams in place to assist schools in areas such as finance, talent, operations, data, external relations, and teaching and learning.

The Network has implemented programs to retain as much “talent” as possible and to provide a pipeline for teachers to move into leadership positions as the Network and its member schools grow. Teachers have opportunities to be grade level chairs or coaches. The Network also runs a leadership fellows cohort, which was described as a “dean track.” This consists of a three or four day workshop held during the summer that focuses on school operations and includes training in management and the use of data. Cohort members also come together during the year for other leadership workshops and trainings. The Network provides these internal programs in an effort to minimize the need to go outside the Network to find school leaders.

The Network and the school collaborate on hiring teachers and other staff. The Network has in place a talent team of recruiters that uses an online application process to track candidates. The Network manages the recruitment process centrally and posts jobs online on the Network website and on other commercial employment websites. At the January 2009 board meeting, the chief talent officer for the Network discussed hiring accomplishments and challenges. While the Network recruits centrally, the principal of the school has the final hiring authority. Prospective candidates model lessons, fill out a questionnaire, and the Network develops a pool of candidates for principals to interview. According to the minutes of the March 22 board meeting, over 90 percent of the staff will be staying for the next school year. According to the principal, last year one teacher was not renewed because it was mutually agreed the school was not a good fit and two teachers resigned during the year. From the present staff, one teacher will not be renewed for next year.

The primary method of recruiting students is through a lottery, which the Network holds each April. The Network interviewee indicated that the school received 400-500 applications for 84 spots for next year. The school provides an admission preference for siblings and for students who live in the school district and are low-income students. Examples of methods the school uses to make students and families aware of the lottery include holding open houses, which include presentations by current parents, and outreach to community organizations. According to information provided to the team, 742 students were on the school’s waiting list. The school accepts students anytime during the year.

School leaders and the board communicate regularly with parents, school staff, and students. The school publishes a monthly family bulletin, which includes “shout outs” and announcements of important dates. The principal uses email as her primary method of communication and provides email “blasts” to teachers about upcoming important dates and priorities. Calendars were also observed in the hallways that included important dates. The Network also has a website that includes information about each school. The board primarily communicates through board minutes from meetings to which the public is invited. Board meeting minutes are published and made available to the public.

## Benchmark 2D: Board Oversight

The school and the Network each have a board of trustees. Interviewees indicated that an employee of the Network sits on the board of each school. In the case of AF Brownsville, two Network employees sit on the board: the Network chief financial officer and an employee from a network support team involved with special projects and board logistics. According to the school's by-laws provided to the team, the number of trustees shall be not less than seven or more than 15. The powers of the board are described in the by-laws. Examples of specific powers include selecting officers; borrowing money and incurring debt; acquiring personal property; and maintaining insurance.

Six members of the board were available for the interview by the team, including the parent representative. One member participated in the interview via telephone. The inspection team determined that the board had the skills necessary to effectively oversee the school. Interviewees indicated that board expertise was diverse and included members with backgrounds and experience in finance, development, law, and education. According to the by-laws, the board may elect at its discretion any person who it believes will serve the interest of the school.

Board members indicated that they received student achievement data packages prior to each board meeting, and the principal and other staff make presentations on the data. Board members stated they receive a rigorous and robust snapshot of the school at a meeting at the beginning of the year with comparisons against other Network schools. School leaders indicate what the school will focus on related to student achievement and updates are provided at each board meeting. For example, at the January 25, 2010 board meeting the principal reported on academic successes and challenges. Successes included all interim assessments averaging above 90 as of December 2009 and that 6-week behavior plans as well as crisis responses and counseling programs were in place. Challenges included providing emotional, behavioral, and social support to kindergartners and improving facility conditions regarding some wastewater and other water leaks in classrooms.

The board treasurer provided financial reports to the board at this meeting and reviewed the impact of New York State budget cuts on the school. Revenue has been reduced by \$150,000 but will be offset by stimulus funding and an operating grant from the Walton Foundation. Board members interviewed stated that they compare spending against the budget and forecasts. They also review the school's balance sheet and approve the budget in May of each year. The board also reviewed the charter management agreement at this meeting and at a separate meeting discussed the rate charged by the charter management organization.

The board has not made any financial or organizational decisions that have impeded the school in meeting its mission. The team was provided a 22 page fiscal policies and procedures manual. This "Fiscal Control Structure" is defined by the fiscal policies adopted by the board and then implemented by the school to control financial expenditures. Examples of procedures included in the manual were reconciling employee payroll deductions, procedures for processing purchase orders, and asset inventory procedures. Board members indicated that flat public funding is a challenge that the school will face in the future as staffing and enrollment increases.

The board members interviewed indicated that the board has evaluated the principal. They stated that the school boards use a rigorous rubric to evaluate the principal and focus on the results of the principal's professional growth plan. At the January, 2010 board meeting, the president and co-ceo of the Network provided an overview of the professional growth plan and asked the board to create a sub-committee of 2-3 members to look at the principal evaluation and work with the network assistant superintendent who

supports the principal. Compensation is tied to the evaluation and the principal is eligible for a bonus up to \$15,000.

The board evaluates itself and the Network. The team was provided with a nine page detailed evaluation rubric for the school, the board, and the Network. The rubric notes that the actual evaluation will take place before the July board retreat. The school evaluation rubric was related to academic (Accountability Plan), organizational, and fiscal goals; the Network evaluation rubric was related to areas such as budget, recruitment, curriculum development, and teacher training; and the board evaluation rubric was related to attendance, giving, and participation. The board reviewed and approved the board, school, and charter management organization evaluation instrument at the September 2008 board meeting.

## **Benchmark 2E: Governance**

The board has developed and approved a mission and academic goals included in the school's Accountability Plan. The SUNY Charter Schools Institute made a presentation to the board on Accountability Plan development. Members interviewed stated that the process of goal development was an ongoing process and goals existed at the school in various forms.

Of course there are Accountability Plan goals, but the principal also has goals reflected in her professional growth plan, the board has goals related to its performance, the Network has goals related to its responsibilities as a charter management organization, and the school has additional academic goals related to school performance such as state ELA and mathematics state examination scores. Board members indicated that the system in place to assure that goals and priorities are met is the academic and support structure implemented by the Network. The board relies on the principal, in collaboration with the Network, to implement and monitor systems to meet goals and priorities.

AF Brownsville board membership includes seven trustees and has by-laws that were voted on and approved on February 27, 2008. The by-laws include articles which describe a process for election, eligibility, term of office, removal, resignation, vacancies, and compensation. The board has a chair, a vice-chair, a treasurer, and a secretary. The board also has a committee structure that includes an executive committee, a finance and audit committee, and an education and accountability committee.

School and board policies are in place. School policies for students and parents are outlined in staff and family handbooks and board policies are reflected in the by-laws and in the fiscal policies and procedures manual; the board adheres to the New York State public meeting law and six times per year all school boards meet simultaneously at different schools in Brooklyn. Individual school boards then have separate breakout board meetings. Members interviewed indicated parents do attend board meetings.

According to board members interviewed, at least one board member at each Network school is also an employee of the Network. In most cases, only one Network employee sits on a school board. For instance, the chief financial officer of the Network sits on the AF Brownsville board. This member indicated he recuses himself on financial board votes and other matters that may have an appearance of conflict. The by-laws also include a code of conduct and a conflict of interest policy, which in general states the persons covered under the policy "are to act in the best interest of the school without personal benefit or interest." Board members indicated an updated complaint policy, designed to formalize the process by which parents should address concerns with the school staff, the Network superintendent, the board of trustees, and the authorizer, was in the place at the school and was reviewed and approved by the board at its May 2009 board meeting.



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## METHODOLOGY

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The two-day renewal inspection site visit was conducted at AF Brownsville during the period from May 18 to 19, 2010. The renewal inspection team (the team) conducted interviews with the principal; the AF director of external relations, the academic dean, the dean of school culture, the director of operations, and the special educator. The team used a portion of the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks to guide the evaluation process.

In addition, the team conducted the following focus groups of school community representatives:

- A board of trustees' interview consisting of six current members.
- A teacher focus group consisting of four teachers.
- A student focus group consisting of six students representing kindergarten through grade 2.
- A parent focus group consisting of four parents.

The team conducted 19 classroom observations in grades K–2. The observations ranged in length from 20 to 28 minutes. Four ELA lessons were observed; one art lesson, four mathematics lessons, one dance lesson, one music lesson, 5 reading lessons, two science lessons, and one writing lesson were observed. Team members kept running records of their observations using a classroom observation evidence worksheet.

The documents and data reviewed by the team before, during, and after the site visit included the following:

- Organization chart
- School improvement or strategic plan
- List and calendar of formative and summative assessments
- Copies of data analyses and summaries
- Description of student support programs
- Student and family handbooks
- Faculty and staff handbooks
- Professional development program documents, schedules, and course lists
- Board minutes and by-laws
- Teacher planning time and meeting schedules
- Teacher evaluation tools
- Classroom observation tools
- Job descriptions of school leaders and instructional staff
- School classroom schedules and map
- Teacher roster and certification, including highly qualified status
- Parent surveys and newsletters
- School data to include waiting list, enrollment, student teacher and attrition data
- Sample lesson plans
- Sample student work
- Sample evaluations of teachers, school leaders, and management organizations
- Curriculum documents

The external school evaluation was conducted by an experienced team of educators from Class Measures. Their biographies follow:

**Christine Brandt** has been an educator for several years, serving as a classroom teacher, special educator, administrator, and principal. She began her career as a Middle School teacher of English, French, Moderate Special Needs, and Reading. She moved into the administrator ranks as a Special Education Director at the Middle School level. For 18 years she served as principal, first in Wellesley, then in Dover, Massachusetts. In addition, she worked with the Somerville Charter School as their Lower School Coordinator. Currently, she mentors and supervises aspiring school administrators in both regular and special education. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association and is their Federal Liaison and Legislative Chair. She earned her undergraduate degree from Regis College, and her graduate degrees from the University of Massachusetts at Lowell in Reading and Learning Disabilities and from Northeastern University in Education Administration.

**Jeanne Simons, Director of Educational Development.** She worked previously as a high school mathematics teacher and in mathematics reform in urban school districts as a Targeted Mathematics Specialist with the Massachusetts Department of Education. She is a content and pedagogical expert in mathematics. She has experience in the development of coaching programs, effective differentiation, assessment and the formative usage of data, and in developing and providing professional development for teachers and leaders across a variety of reform topics. In addition, she has been involved in the development of a variety of technology-based educational initiatives, most recently providing educational support in the development of one of the first online teacher licensure programs in the Middle East. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from the California Institute of Technology and a Masters of Education in Mind, Brain and Education from Harvard.

**James Hearn, Vice President of Professional Services** Jim is the Vice President of Professional Services for Class Measures. In that capacity, he manages the Class Measures school evaluation process and all contracts, participates as a team member on site visits, and edits and writes evaluation reports. Jim has over twenty-five years of experience in state government policy and budget analysis, performance auditing, program evaluation, and University teaching. Jim served as a School District Examiner and Field Coordinator for the Massachusetts Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, completing over forty school and district reviews in Massachusetts. For almost a decade, Jim held the position of Senior Policy Analyst for the Senate Post Audit and Oversight Committee of the Massachusetts State Senate. In that capacity, he completed a number of performance audits and policy reviews, including a comprehensive review of the Massachusetts adult correctional education programs. Jim is a former member of the Executive Committee of the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society. From 1982 to 1996, he served as an Adjunct Lecturer in Health Management at University College at Northeastern University. Jim earned his Bachelors Degree in Business from Boston College and holds a Master's Degree in Business from Suffolk University.

**Melanie Gallo** has been an educator for 35 years. A member of the National School Reform faculty, she has been a teacher and a school director. She has been a founder of two schools: a school in New Hampshire and a charter school in Massachusetts. She has been recognized by the College Board for excellence in teaching AP English and is the author of Senior Project in Creating the Good High School by Mackin/Silva. She is a trained Critical Friends coach and has served on the Board of the Massachusetts Drama Guild. She is currently on the graduate school adjunct faculty at Fitchburg State College. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and a Master's degree in Education from Fitchburg State College. She is at present a Leadership Consultant for Class Measures.