

Accountability Plan Progress Reports for the 2005-06 School Year

Reader's Guide

SUNY Authorized Charter Schools and Accountability

As set forth in the *Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University Board of Trustees*, the single most important factor that the Charter Schools Institute and the State University Board of Trustees consider in making renewal determinations is the school's record in generating successful student achievement outcomes. In order to determine whether a school has met that high standard, **each charter school that the State University Board of Trustees authorizes is required to enter into an accountability agreement, known as the Accountability Plan**, which ultimately becomes part of its charter.

The Charter Schools Institute closely monitors each school's progress toward achieving the goals outlined in its Accountability Plan.

In addition, as part of their annual reporting requirements **all SUNY authorized charter schools must submit an Accountability Plan Progress Report which, from their vantage point, addresses each of the goals and outcome measures contained in their Accountability Plans**. The information presented in these Progress Reports constitutes important evidence that a school is keeping its promises to its students, parents and community, and is critical to making its case for renewal at the end of its charter period. The most important parts of Progress Reports are student achievement results on state exams and other assessments. However, not all schools will have tested grade levels for a particular exam. Each year the state administers ELA and math tests to grades 3-8, science tests to grades 4 and 8, and social studies tests to grades 5 and 8.

Important Note: **The Accountability Plan Progress Report is authored by the charter school.** In reporting school progress toward meeting the outcome measures set forth in the Accountability Plan, schools are encouraged to build a case for the effectiveness of their program and to lay the groundwork for writing a Renewal Application and ultimately for charter renewal. **The school's evaluation of its own progress does not necessarily reflect the conclusions of the Institute.** Further, the Institute does not affirm the completeness or accuracy of the report's data and may not endorse the school's characterization of the progress it has made toward achieving its Accountability Plan goals. Throughout the life of the school's charter, the Institute will visit each school, generating Institute School Visit Reports, and at the end of each charter period, a Renewal Report (select the <back> button in your browser to return to the school profile to see any/all available reports). These reports include detailed summaries of the Institute's observations of the school, as well as its evaluation of student performance and progress toward meeting the academic subject goals in its Accountability Plan.

Amber Charter School

ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN PROGRESS REPORT FOR 2005-06 (FOR THE CHARTER PERIOD 2004-2010)

Amber Charter School (Amber) completed its sixth year of operation in 2005-06 as a K-6 school. In September 2000, it opened as a K-2 school, adding a grade during each of the five subsequent school years. Amber was re-chartered in 2005 for five additional years with an increase to grade 6.

Goal—English Language Arts: All students at Amber will become proficient readers and will make strong yearly progress towards mastery of English-language reading skills.

- 1. Measure: Absolute Proficiency 2005-06 through 2009-10 school years: 75 percent of 3rd through 6th graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State ELA examination.**

A. Method

Amber Charter School (Amber) students in grades 3 through 6 took the New York Statewide Testing Program English Language Arts (ELA) exam over three days in January 2006. The ELA exam measures skills and knowledge that have been mastered during students' history of school up to that grade level. The progress towards this goal is measured by assessing only those students who have been at Amber for at least two years. This report includes data on raw scores (all students who took the exam). It should be noted this was the first year Amber students participated in the exam for grades 3, 5, and 6. This is the third year of participation for students in grade 4. In all, there were 125 students tested. See Table 1 for number of students tested by grade level as well as percent performance levels.

B. Results

Table 1 lists Amber's NYS ELA 2005-06 results across all grades tested, 3 to 6, including students with less than one full school year.

	# Tested	% Level 1	% Level 2	% Level 3	% Level 4	% Proficiency (L3/4)
3rd Grade	37	2.7	27.0	67.6	2.7	70.3
4th Grade	28	17.9	39.3	42.6	0.0	42.6
5th Grade	48	8.3	43.8	45.8	2.1	47.9
6th Grade	12	0.0	66.7	33.3	0.0	33.3
Total	125	7.2	44.2	47.3	1.2	48.5

For the purposes of determining raw score “proficiency,” we combine Levels 3 & 4 and thus the results of students who took the exam in each grade, are as follows.

Seventy percent (70.3%) of all Amber students in third grade showed proficiency on the NYS English Language Arts exam in 2005-06. Forty-three percent (42.6% of Amber students in fourth grade showed proficiency on the NYS English Language Arts exam in 2005-06. Forty-eight (47.9%) of Amber students in fifth grade showed proficiency on the NYS English Language Arts exam in 2005-06. Thirty-three (33.3%) of Amber students in sixth grade showed proficiency on the NYS English Language Arts exam in 2005-06. School wide, 48.5% of Amber students across all grades showed proficiency on the NYS English Language Arts exam in 2005-06.

The above raw scores have been reported by NYSED to the news media across the state and are listed at the web sites of NYSED and the NY Times among others. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of our ELA scores across grades separated by Levels 1 through 4.

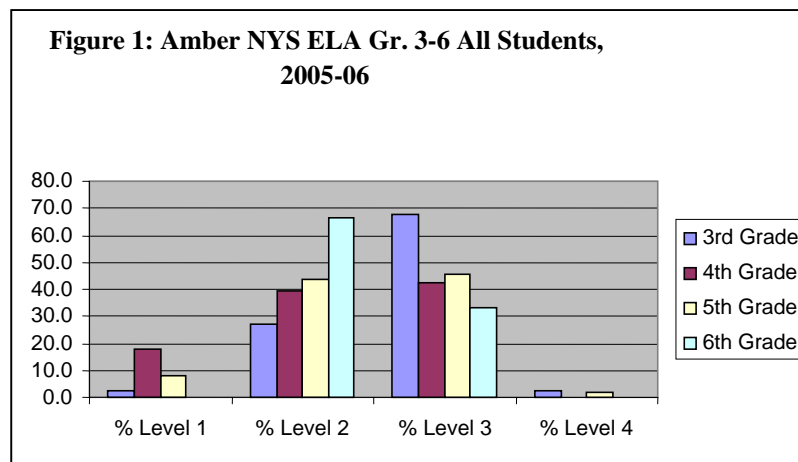


Table 2 lists Amber’s NYS ELA 2005-06 results (in numbers) across all grades tested, 3 to 6, for those students who have been at Amber for two years or more. This data is crucial as it relates to the Charter Schools Institute requirement of showing progress among students who have been at Amber for two years or more.

Grade	# Tested	# L1	# L2	# L3	# L4	# L3/4
3rd Grade	29	1	5	22	1	23
4th Grade	26	3	10	13	0	13
5th Grade	28	1	13	13	1	14
6th Grade	12	0	8	4	0	4
Total	95	5	36	52	2	54

Charter Schools Institute believes it makes “good sense to examine the result of students who have been enrolled in [our] school for at least two years in order to adequately attribute their achievement to [our] school’s program.”¹ Table 3 lists Amber’s NYS ELA 2005-06 results in percents across all grades tested, 3 to 6, for those students who have been at Amber for two years or more.

Table 3: Amber’s Results (in numbers) of NYS English Language Arts 2005-06, Grades 3-6, Students at Amber for 2 Years or more)						
Grade	# Tested	% L1	% L2	% L3	% L4	% L3/4
3rd Grade	29	3%	17%	76%	3%	79%
4th Grade	26	12%	38%	50%	0%	50%
5th Grade	28	4%	46%	46%	4%	50%
6th Grade	12	0%	67%	33%	0%	33%
Total	95	5%	38%	55%	2%	57%

C. Evaluation

Table 3 provides crucial data for Amber since it focuses on the number of students who have been at Amber for two years or more—it excludes those students were new to the school last year and more importantly provides the critical comparison required by Charter Schools Institute. For the purposes of determining meeting “proficiency,” we combine Levels 3 & 4 and thus the results of students who took the exam in each grade, are as follows.

Seventy-nine percent (79%) of Amber students in third grade showed proficiency on the NYS English Language Arts exam in 2005-06. Thus, in third grade, we surpassed our objective measure of 75% demonstrating proficiency. Fifty percent (50%) of Amber students in fourth grade showed proficiency on the NYS English Language Arts exam in 2005-06. While this cohort of students did not meet the 75% proficiency mark, students this year scored relative with the previous year’s fourth grade students. Fifty percent (50%) of Amber students in fifth grade showed proficiency on the NYS English Language Arts exam in 2005-06. While this cohort of students did not meet the 75% proficiency mark, by and large, these students, who scored 50% proficiency on the fourth grade exam in the previous year, maintained their gains. Thirty-three percent (33%) of Amber students in sixth grade showed proficiency on the NYS English Language Arts exam in 2005-06. This cohort fell dramatically short of proficiency. It should be noted, this six grade cohort was, in part, the same cohort of students who scored 33% proficiency in the NYS ELA in 2003-04 (see below). Combining the four grade levels (3, 4, 5, 6), thus school wide, 57% of Amber students across all grades showed proficiency on the NYS English Language Arts exam in 2005-06. Taken as a whole, we did not meet 75% proficiency.

¹ Memo from Simeon Stolzberg, Senior Analyst, Charter Schools Institute, October 27, 2006.

When we examine scores under Level 1 and 2, we note that in each grade level, the majority of students underperforming fall within Level 2: 17% of third grade, 38% of fourth grade, 46% of fifth grade, and 67% of sixth grade. Raising all students from Levels 1 and 2 to proficiency is our overall goal. However, our staff will continue to closely examine individual students' Performance Levels to determine which skill areas of the ELA test students need improvement to move them to the next level.

Since this was the first year of testing for grades 3, 5, and 6, there is no available data by which we can compare to previous years. However, school year 2005-06 is the third year that Amber has participated in the NYS ELA exam, affording us some opportunity to gauge longitudinal effects.² Table 4 lists proficiency level data (in percent) for Amber over three contiguous years in 4th grade NYS ELA testing.

	L1	L2	L3	L4	L3/4
2003-04	27%	41%	28%	5%	33%
2004-05	4%	46%	43%	7%	50%
2005-06	18%	39%	43%	0%	50%
Average	16%	42%	38%	4%	44%

When, accounting for students at Amber for two or more years, fourth graders took the test in the first year of administration in 2003-04, 33% of Amber students scored at proficiency Levels 3 & 4. Our spirits were buoyed in the second year, 2004-05, when 50% of Amber students scored at proficiency, Levels 3 & 4, thus demonstrating an upward trend. However, in our third year of the NYS ELA exam participation, 50% of Amber students scored at proficiency, Levels 3 & 4, remaining flat from the previous year.

To say the least, we were surprised that our scores were not at the level we expected. As a school community we have begun to analyze our concerns. We have committed to making changes at various levels including instructional leadership, instructional program, and improving professional development. Towards that end, we have entered into a partnership with the Lehman College Institute for Writing to support classroom teachers in building upon the key skills students need to develop for better literacy. For example, we will work to improve reading, listening, and questioning skills.

In addition, we have exposed several of our staff to various training opportunities led by the NYC Center for Charter School Excellence. In particular, we have participated in an ELA Scoring workshop to learn how our students participation in the state ELA will be graded. Already, we've learned that students under testing conditions don't

² According to the Charter Schools Institute Model Accountability Plan Progress Report, "Because of the new testing program, standards for Performance Levels on the 4th (and 8th) grade tests have changed. As year-to-year comparisons may not be valid, any discussion of trends over time must be approached with caution," October 30, 2006.

refer back to the text when determining answers, they don't focus on one question at a time, and don't adequately support their written answers with sufficient details. We will work with our students to learn how to use graphic organizers to help determine main idea and write supporting details; learn to adopt the preferred style of responding to essay questions (e.g., use the question in the answer); highlight important information; model scanning the text; and write notes in the margins, among other key methods.

D. Additional Evidence

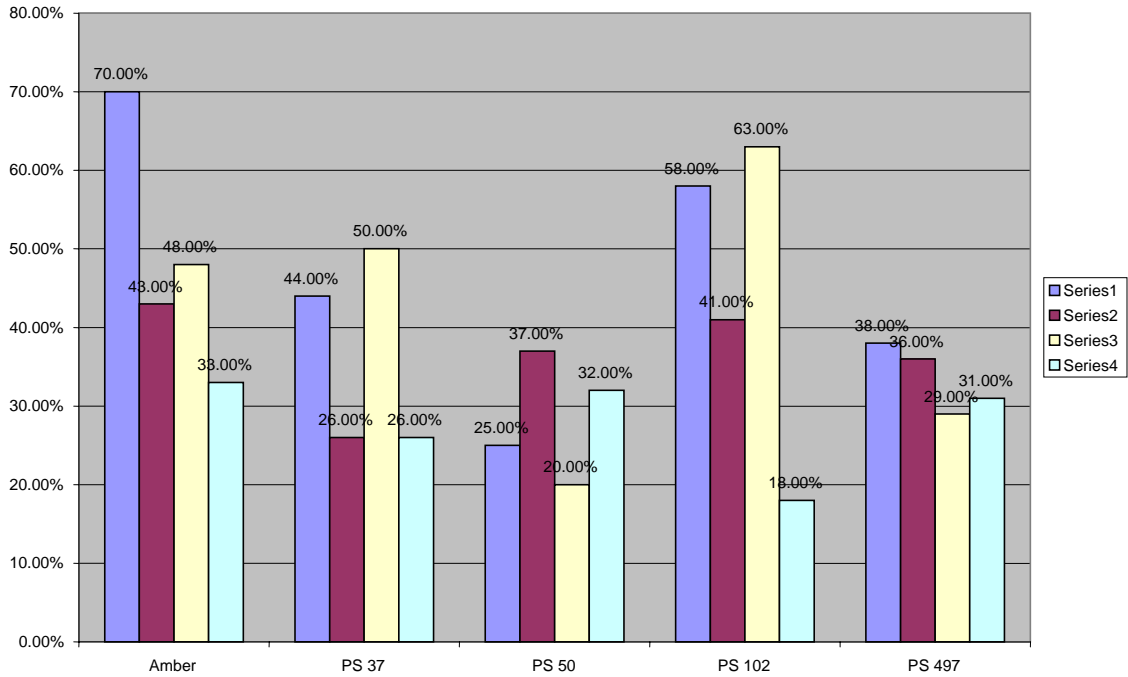
To help us gauge our relative standing to area schools, we compared Amber's ELA scores to four local public schools by all grades tested. While the selection of these schools seems arbitrary and less than scientific, we chose the schools based on relative distance to our school and relative distance to the homes of Amber students within the neighborhood. The use of this data is to provide a "snapshot" of how we are faring compared to local schools. See below for a discussion on Amber compared to area school districts. Table 5 shows the comparison between Amber and the four closest public schools, on the NYS ELA exam across all grades in 2005-06.

Table 5: Amber Compared to 4 Nearby Public Schools, NYS ELA 2005-06: Combined Proficiency Levels 3 & 4; Grades 3, 4, 5 & 6						
	3rd	4th	5th	6th	% Schoolwide	Schoolwide Ranking
Amber	70.0%	43.0%	48.0%	33.0%	48.5%	1
PS 37	44.0%	26.0%	50.0%	26.0%	36.5%	3
PS 50	25.0%	37.0%	20.0%	32.0%	28.5%	5
PS 102	58.0%	41.0%	63.0%	18.0%	45.0%	2
PS 497	38.0%	36.0%	29.0%	31.0%	33.5%	4

Based on this data, Amber leads these four schools, ranking #1, with 48.5% of all students being proficient. The data show that the gap, in percentage point difference, between Amber and the #2 ranked school (P.S. 102's 45.0%) is 3.5 percentage points and the gap between Amber and the #5 ranked school is 20 percentage points (P.S. 50's 28.5%). Our school's third grade surpassed all of the four schools with a range of 12 to 45 percentage points. See below for fourth grade comparisons. Our fifth grade scores were better than two schools. Surprisingly, our sixth grade scores were slightly better than all four public schools.

Figure 2 presents a visual representation of Amber compared to the four schools' tests scores by each of the grades tested. The figure shows Amber's strength is in our third grade. The same is true for P.S.102 which virtually matches Amber's scores but outpaces us in grade 5.

Figure 2: ELA 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Comparison Amber vs. Local Schools, 2005-06



Again, we compare Amber to these four local public schools by fourth grade ELA scores over the past two years (for which data is available). The determination of school selection is arbitrary and, as stated in the Charter Schools Institute model progress report, “given the changes in the testing program, any discussion about pre-2006 performance may not be a valid comparison.” Use of this information serves as a “snapshot” comparison.

Table 6 shows Amber’s fourth grade compared to the four public schools, level 3 and 4 proficiency over a two-year period.

Table 6: Amber NYS ELA 4th Gr. Compared to Nearest 4 Public Schools: L 3 & 4; a 2-year comparison				
School	Distance to Amber	04-05	05-06	Difference
Amber		50.00%	43.00%	-7.00%
PS 37	7 blocks	20.80%	26.00%	5.20%
PS 50	3 blocks	27.50%	37.00%	9.50%
PS 102	6 blocks	20.50%	41.00%	20.50%
PS 497	4 blocks	18.20%	36.00%	17.80%

In a comparison between Amber and the four closest public schools, on the NYS ELA fourth grade exam, Amber surpassed these schools in school year 2004-05 by a factor of two to one. In a similar comparison for the subsequent year, 2005-06, Amber continued to lead these four schools however the gap was markedly less strong with only 2 percentage point difference between Amber (with 43% proficiency) and the next school P.S. 37 (with 41% proficiency). While Amber declined slightly—a negative 7 percentage points—from one year to the next (50% proficiency down to 43% proficiency in raw scores), each of the four local public schools climbed significantly—ranging from a positive 5 to 21 percentage points. Table 7 shows the rankings between Amber’s fourth grade and these four public schools. Again, Amber ranks as #1 among these schools however; there was considerable ranking change among the four public schools with the most dramatic change occurring at P.S. 102. (No information is available at this time on any of the four schools, in terms of instructional program and approach.)

Table 7: Amber NYS ELA 4th Gr. Ranking Compared to Nearest 4 Public Schools: Levels 3 & 4		
School	2004-05	2005-06
Amber	1	1
PS 37	3	5
PS 50	2	3
PS 102	4	2
PS 497	5	4

2. Measure: Absolute Proficiency

Each year, the school’s aggregate Performance Index on the State ELA exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State’s No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.

A. Method

For school year 2005-06, the Annual Measurable Objective measurement in English Language Arts has been set at 122, according to the Charter Schools Institute guidelines pertaining to the No Child Left Behind regulation for elementary schools taking the English Language Arts exam (see Memo October 27, 2006). The following is the formula used to calculate the Annual Measurable Objective, where PI is Performance Index and L is Percent at Level:

$$PI = (L2+L3+L4) + (L3+L4)$$

B. Results

Using the overall school Proficiency Levels, Amber's performance index is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} PI &= (L2+L3+L4) + (L3+L4) \\ PI &= (38+55+2) + (55+2) \\ PI &= 95 + 57 \\ PI &= 152 \end{aligned}$$

Amber surpassed the expected Annual Measurable Objective with 152 over the state required 122.

3. Measure: Comparative Proficiency on State Exams

2005-06: Students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State ELA exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of the local school district CSD#5.³

A. Method

Charter Schools Institute requires we compare ourselves to a local community school district (CSD). As negotiated with our authorizer, we use district 5 as the basis of comparison (Harlem) as this district was Amber's location at its inception. Included in this analysis are districts 4 and 6. District 4, which includes East Harlem and the Upper East Side, is where Amber is currently located. District 6, Washington Heights, is where Amber was originally slated to open. Approximately 66% of Amber students hail from districts 4, 5, and 6 (in about equal parts). The remainder of students in our school hail from the Bronx.

³ Comparisons may not hold valid as the district 4,5,6 scores cited in this report may include all students tested regardless of the amount of time spent at the specific school or district; whereas the Amber scores are for students at Amber for two years or more.

B. Results

Overall, when compared to the three nearest local community school districts, where a majority of our students are from, Amber ranked #1. Thus, Amber is keeping pace with district 4. Amber’s third grade scores outpaced each of the districts by a range of 33 to 17 percentage points. See below for fourth grade comparisons. Amber’s fifth grade scores were better than two districts. Amber did not surpass any of the three districts’ scores. Table 8 shows data comparing Amber to three select districts.

Table 8: Amber 4th Gr. NYS ELA Compared to Select Districts by Levels 3 & 4						
	3rd Gr.	4th Gr.	5th Gr.	6th Gr.	% District	District Ranking
Amber	79%	50%	50%	33%	57%	1
CSD 4	59%	47%	51%	43%	50%	2
CSD 5	37%	43%	35%	34%	38%	4
CSD 6	53%	45%	44%	34%	44%	3

C. Evaluation

When we compare Amber’s fourth grade scores to the local community school districts, we can do so with three years worth of data. Table 9 compares Amber to three select districts over three years of testing administration. We acknowledge that this may not be a fully valid comparison as we compare “raw” district scores with our requirement to review the scores of students at Amber with two years or more history.

Table 9: Amber 4th Gr. NYS ELA Compared to Select Districts by Levels 3 & 4					
	03-04 (Yr.1)	04-05 (Yr. 2)	05-06 (Yr. 3)	Change Bet. Yr. 1 & Yr. 2	1 Yr. Change (Yr. 3 to Yr. 2)
Amber	33.00%	50.00%	50.00%	17.00%	0%
CSD 4	40.40%	50.60%	47.00%	10.20%	-3.60%
CSD 5	31.70%	38.80%	43.40%	7.10%	4.60%
CSD 6	34.90%	44.80%	45.00%	9.90%	0.20%

In a comparison of ELA test scores for fourth grade, Amber showed slightly higher proficiency rates than all three districts. Thus, we rank first. These higher scores range from only a high of 4 percentage points to a low of .4 percentage points. When

comparing year 2 to year 1 changes, Amber scores rose significantly (17 percentage points). Similarly, each of the comparison districts rose in percentage points in the same period. When comparing year 3 to year 2 changes, Amber remained flat, keeping ahead of district 4 which lost some ground (4 percentage points). District 5 gained 5 percentage points and district 6 remained virtually unchanged from the prior year.

C. Further Evidence

With respect to our colleagues in the various districts, we believe that comparatively speaking, there is a glimmer of hope that our students did not perform as poorly. We believe that we can do better and will continue to make immediate and lasting improvements

4. Measure: Comparative Proficiency on State Exams

2004-05 through 2009-10: the percent of students performing at or above Level 3 on the State ELA exam in each tested grade will place the school in the top quartile of all similar schools as determined by the Charter Schools Institute and based on the similar school categories generated by the State Education Department and the New York City Department of Education (if applicable).

As discussed with Charter School Institute leadership, the data and regression analysis for this measure will be provided by Charter Schools Institute at a later date. Listed on the next page are last year's data and regression analysis conducted by Charter School Institute.

5. Measure: Comparative Proficiency on State Exams

2004-05 through 2009-10: the school will exceed to a specified degree (as set by CSI) its expected level of performance on the State ELA exam, as determined by the performance of other schools that have a similar proportion of students eligible for free lunch among all charter and public schools in districts with charter schools.

As discussed with Charter School Institute leadership, the data and regression analysis for this measure will be provided by Charter Schools Institute at a later date. Listed on the next page are last year's data and regression analysis conducted by Charter School Institute.

**SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS
COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS**

**NEW YORK STATE 2005 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) EXAMINATION
GRADE 4**

The chart below displays how students in your school performed compared to other public schools in New York State with a similar population of free-lunch-eligible students.

Charter School	Percent of Free Lunch Eligible Students	Number of Students Tested	Percent of Students at Levels 3&4		Difference between Actual and Predicted	Effect Size**	Comparative Performance***
			Actual	Predicted*			
Amber	69.7	58	50.0	59.5	-9.5	-0.54	Lower than expected to a medium degree

*Predicted Percent of Students at Levels 3&4 was calculated after performing a regression to measure the effect on outcomes of a school's free lunch population, based on all public schools, including charter schools, in New York State in which students were tested in 2005 and applying that effect to each school.

**Effect Size is a statistical measure calculated by dividing the difference between the actual and predicted outcome by the standard deviation difference. It reflects the difference between a school's attained and expected performance, relative to other schools with similar free-lunch statistics

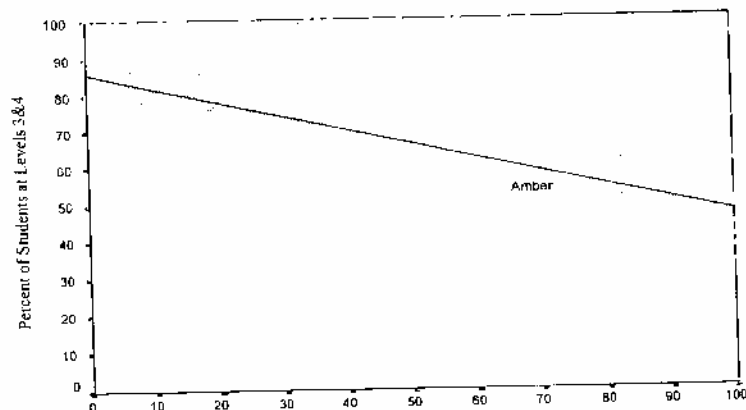
***Comparative Performance is based on Effect Size as follows:

Above 0.79	Higher than expected to a large degree
0.5 to 0.79	Higher than expected to a medium degree
0.3 to 0.49	Higher than expected to a small degree
-0.29 to 0.29	About the same as expected
-0.3 to -0.49	Lower than expected to a small degree
-0.5 to -0.79	Lower than expected to a medium degree
Below -0.79	Lower than expected to a large degree

Scatter Plot Analysis

The scatter plot below shows the distribution of all public schools in New York State by ELA score and percent of free-lunch-eligible students.

The solid line shows schools' predicted performance with a given percent of free-lunch-eligible students. The location of school name on the scatter plot indicates the approximate performance of your school in comparison to other New York State public schools.



6. Measure: Value Added to Student Learning on Nationally Normed Test

2004-05 and 2009-10 school years, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between their average NCE in the previous spring on the Terra Nova, a nationally normed test, and an NCE of 50 (i.e., grade-level) in the current spring. If a grade-level cohort exceeds an NCE of 50 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.⁴

A. Method

In 2004-05, Amber for the first time instituted the Terra Nova exam, a nationally normed assessment. This test, developed by McGraw Hill, was administered to students in grades one through five in late September and again in early May. The current school year, 2005-06, was the second time that Amber administered the test. Charter Schools Institute guidelines recommend comparisons of testing be conducted spring to spring, thus this was the first year Amber's comparisons are made on a spring to spring basis.

As per Charter Schools Institute: "If the plan contains a gap-closing outcome as a value-added measure, the results should be expressed as the extent to which cohorts are narrowing the difference between their scores in the previous spring and grade-level performance in the current spring. The school is expected to enable the cohorts to reduce the difference between the first year's average NCE score and average NCE of 50, or above grade second year. (As per CSI guidelines, if a cohort scores above an NCE of 50 or above grade level in the first year, then it need only show *some* gain in the second year.)"

The formula used to determine threshold is as follows:

Threshold = spring 2005 NCE + [NCE 50 minus spring 2005 NCE]/2]

B. Results

Using the Terra Nova exam's norm curved equivalent (NCE) scores; a review of the grade level cohorts of grades 1 through 6 reveals positive increase in two of five cohorts. Thus two cohorts achieved the targets, the current third graders and the current fourth graders. The table below summarizes the Terra Nova spring 2005 and spring 2006 NCE results. (This data shows a cohort of students from one year to the next but does not reflect attrition nor new admits from one year to the next. Despite this caveat, by and large, a spring 2005 student in first grade is now a spring 2006 student in second grade.)

⁴ A note on Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE): The NCE is used in the evaluation of remedial education and other special programs. Because NCEs are equal-interval scores, they are often used for comparing achievement across subject areas over time. Because NCEs have no inherent meaning, national percentiles are generally preferred when reporting results to parents and the general public. For this report, Amber is required to use NCEs rather than percentiles.

Grade to Grade	Spring 2005	Spring 2006	Benchmark	Threshold
K-1.	NA	48.2	NA	NA
1 - 2.	57.8	47.5	53.9	Below
2 - 3.	50.0	52.3	50.0	Above
3 - 4.	45.3	50.0	47.7	Above
4 - 5.	53.7	46.7	51.9	Below
5 - 6.	53.8	44.4	51.9	Below

In 2005-06, the second grade cohort had an average NCE score of 47.5. When these students were in the first grade in 2004-05, they had an NCE score of 57.8. Since the second grade's target was an average NCE score of more than half the difference between 57.8 and 50 (e.g., $57.8 + \frac{1}{2}(50 - 57.8) = 53.9$), the cohort did not reach the minimum threshold.

In 2005-06, the third grade cohort had an average NCE score of 52.3. When these students were in the second grade in 2004-05, they had an NCE score of 50.0. Since the third grade's target was an average NCE score of more than half the difference between 50.0 and 50 (e.g., $50.0 + \frac{1}{2}(50 - 50) = 50$), the cohort did reach the minimum threshold.

In 2005-06, the fourth grade cohort had an average NCE score of 50. When these students were in the third grade in 2004-05, they had an NCE score of 45.3. Since the fourth grade's target was an average NCE score of more than half the difference between 45.3 and 50 (e.g., $45.3 + \frac{1}{2}(50 - 45.3) = 47.7$), the cohort did reach the minimum threshold.

In 2005-06, the fifth grade cohort had an average NCE score of 46.7. When these students were in the fourth grade in 2004-05, they had an NCE score of 53.7. Since the fifth grade's target was an average NCE score of more than half the difference between 53.7 and 50 (e.g., $53.7 + \frac{1}{2}(50 - 53.7) = 51.9$), the cohort did not achieve its target.

In 2005-06, the sixth grade cohort had an average NCE score of 44.4. When these students were in the fifth grade in 2004-05, they had an NCE score of 53.8. Since the sixth grade's target was an average NCE score of more than half the difference between 53.8 and 50 (e.g., $53.8 + \frac{1}{2}(50 - 53.8) = 51.9$), the cohort did not achieve its target.

C. Evaluation

While the Terra Nova results as measured by NCEs are mixed for the current school year compared to the previous year, the Terra Nova results show slight gains in the Grade Level Equivalent comparisons. Grade Level Equivalent is a score on a scale developed to indicate the school grade (usually measured in months) that corresponds to an average age, mental age, test score, or other characteristic of students. For example, Grade Level Equivalent of 6.4 is interpreted as a score that is average for Grade 6, 4th month. The

“typical” student should gain 1 grade per year to maintain his/her position in relation to age-mates.

Our colleagues at the NYC Center for Charter School Excellence caution that “a student with a 6.5 Grade Level Equivalent would not necessarily succeed in 6th grade since the testers are estimating how a 6th grader would do on the 5th Grade test. With that in mind, we are encouraged by results in each of grades 2, 3, and 4 when examining reading data from the Terra Nova grade level equivalents as cited in the table below. At each grade level, students were shown to be at or above grade level. Students in the fifth and sixth grades lost some ground from one year to the next. (Putting attrition and new admits aside, this data shows cohorts of students from one year to the next. In other words, a spring 2005 student in first grade is now a spring 2006 student in second grade.)

Grade to Grade	Spring 2005	Spring 2006	Difference
K-1.	NA	1.7	NA
1 - 2.	2.4	2.6	0.2
2 - 3.	2.9	4.1	1.2
3 - 4.	3.5	4.8	1.3
4 - 5.	5.7	5.3	-0.4
5 - 6.	7	5.4	-1.6

D. Further Evidence

Amber has learned that by implementing and integrating a comprehensive scope and sequence program, such as Scotts Foresman for grades K through 4 and Success For All for grades 5 and 6, we have created and enforced alignment by grade. The adoption of the Scott Foresman 2004 literature-based reading series for Amber’s balanced literacy program helped to create a clearly defined curriculum that prepared students to meet State standards. Customized for New York State, and providing alignment with the NYS ELA standards, Scott Foresman provides consistency of instruction taught among classes in a grade and between grades. In addition, Amber adopted McGraw Hill’s Terra Nova series for use from the end of Kindergarten through sixth grade. McGraw-Hill produces both Terra Nova and the New York State ELA exams assuring alignment. Movement to Terra Nova allowed Amber to effectively and systematically use assessment and evaluation data to improve the instructional program and student learning. For the first time, an extensive analysis of individual students’ Terra Nova scores dramatically helped drive instruction. This past year included the introduction of the Reading Edge program for students in our three upper grade classes where students were grouped by ability. Some groups met in teams of 10 to 15 and all worked intensively during each six-week cycle. Instructional leadership, teachers, and professional developers from Success for All analyzed scores consistently and changed students to appropriate ability groupings during cycles.

We believed that the stability of scores in the lower grades can be accounted for by increased familiarity with the Scotts Foresman curriculum now in its third year at Amber. In addition, a full time experienced Title 1 reading teacher worked primarily with the third and fourth grade students enabling teaching staff to focus on student deficiencies in between testing periods. Teachers and the reading specialists (two at different times throughout the school year) worked with all regular and special education students. In addition, with the support of our community sponsor, ACDP, we were able to offer extended day and Saturday test preparation as an enrichment program which began in October. To aid instruction and determine added value, every third, fourth, and fifth grade class participated in extra test preparation classes once a week as one of their prep periods. Amber paid close attention to research that shows group size variation—especially smaller groups for those students identified as being at risk through Title 1.

The road to improvement had some bumps this past year, including a maternity leave of absence for our primary Title 1 reading specialist that was unexpectedly extended beyond the period of time we first expected. The replacement specialist had agreed to cover students up to the expected maternity person's return date and due to fixed long range plans was unable to provide additional time for reading support when we learned of the extended maternity leave. Also, we realized that the first grade classes required additional support. Each first grade classroom has a teacher and teacher assistant, however due to larger than expected student size—each of the three first grade classes had 26 students—we did not have sufficient pull out/push in reading support for these students. As for lower than expected grade level equivalents in the fifth and sixth grades, we believe this was a result of the newness of the reading curriculum, Success for All, coupled with its step by step, scripted approach, proved a challenge for teachers and students alike. While the three classes—a bridge fourth and fifth, a fifth grade, and a sixth grade—included small group reading interaction for one hour a morning, led by the three teachers and two additional teachers (the technology specialist and the physical education specialist), this was not enough. We plan to add other teaching specialists to the roster of small group reading instruction cycles.

After our Terra Nova scoring was returned to the school, we engaged the staff in several conversations to ascertain as a whole school why our students scored the way they did. Among the varied possible reasons were consistent student lateness; little or no homework content provided by the Success for All programming, requiring teachers to create their own varied assignments; little or no writing components attached to the reading program. In addition, staff acknowledged there were challenges to test administration including philosophical and practical issues. We have begun to address all of these factors immediately starting with grade level conference led by instructional leadership, extended through the Summer Institute Part 1 this past June/July and in the upcoming Summer Institute Part 2 in late August, as well as constantly in the coming school year.

Goal—Mathematics: All students at Amber will become proficient in math and will make strong yearly progress towards mastery of mathematical skills.

1. Measure: Absolute Proficiency

2005-06 through 2009-10 school years: 75 percent of 3rd through 6th graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Mathematics examination.

A. Method

Amber students in grades 3 through 6 took the New York Statewide Testing Program Mathematics exam over three days in March 2006. The math exam measures skills and knowledge that have been mastered during students' history of school up to the grade level. The progress towards this goal is measured by assessing only those students who have been at Amber for at least two years. This report includes data on raw scores (all students who took the exam) and students who have been at Amber for two years or more. It should be noted this was the first year Amber students participated in the exam for grades 3, 5, and 6. This is the third year of test administration for students in grade 4. In all grades, there were 124 students tested. There were 26 students who had not been at Amber for two years.

B. Results

Table 12 lists Amber's NYS math 2005-06 results for all grades tested, 3 to 6, regardless of length of time at the school.

Table 12: Amber's Results of NYS Math 2005-06, Grades 3-6 (all students tested)						
	# Tested	% Level 1	% Level 2	% Level 3	% Level 4	L3/4
3rd Gr.	36	5.6%	27.8%	50.0%	16.7%	66.7%
4th Gr.	28	7.1%	25.0%	64.3%	3.6%	67.9%
5th Gr.	47	29.8%	36.2%	34.0%	0.0%	34.0%
6th Gr.	13	30.8%	61.5%	7.7%	0.0%	7.7%
Total	124	18.3%	37.6%	39.0%	5.1%	44.1%

Amber students show strength in 3rd grade math scores, consistent with ELA. These scores, 67%, approach the required 75% proficiency levels. Amber shows strength in its 4th grade math scores, not consistent with ELA scores. These scores, 68%, approach the required 75% proficiency levels. Amber shows less strength than anticipated in its 5th grade math scores, consistent with ELA scores. Amber shows very low strength in its 6th grade math scores, consistent with ELA scores.

Table 13 lists in numbers and Table 14 lists in percent Amber’s NYS math 2005-06 results for all grades tested, 3 to 6, excluding new students. In other words, these tables include critical data for Amber as it examines the number of students who have been at Amber for two years or more.

Table 13: Amber’s Results (in numbers) of NYS Mathematics 2005-06, Grades 3-6, Students at Amber for 2 Years or more						
Grade	# Tested	# L1	# L2	# L3	# L4	# L3/4
3 rd Gr.	31	4	8	14	5	19
4 th Gr.	26	6	5	14	1	15
5 th Gr.	28	6	12	10	0	10
6 th Gr.	9	4	8	1	0	1
Total	95	20	33	39	6	45

Table 14: Amber’s Results (in percent) of NYS Mathematics 2005-06, Grades 3-6, Students at Amber for 2 Years or more						
Grade	% Tested	% L1	% L2	% L3	% L4	% L3/4
3 rd Gr.	31	13%	26%	45%	16%	61%
4 th Gr.	26	23%	19%	54%	4%	58%
5 th Gr.	28	21%	43%	36%	0%	36%
6 th Gr.	9	31%	62%	8%	0%	8%
Averages	95	20%	34%	40%	6%	46%

With two years at Amber, students show strength in 3rd grade math scores, consistent with ELA. These scores, 61%, approach the required 75% proficiency levels. Amber shows some strength in its 4th grade math scores, not consistent with ELA scores. These scores, 58%, do not approach the required 75% proficiency levels. Amber shows less strength than anticipated in its 5th grade math scores, consistent with ELA scores, with 36% proficiency. Amber shows extremely low strength in its 6th grade math scores, consistent with ELA scores, at only 8%.

C. Evaluation

The relative strength of student performance in grades 3 and 4 reflect a somewhat strong instructional program and instructional performance. It indicates that the instructional staff has a relative good grasp of the content and students were somewhat prepared to participate in the testing program. To a lesser extent, two of three instructors in these grades participated in a mathematics scoring workshop conducted by the New York City Center for Charter School Excellence;

we believe this may have contributed to better information on exposure to the expectations on the test. We are extremely concerned about the instructional program and teaching at the upper grades. This past year was the first time Amber had a sixth grade program and thus the instructional staff's unfamiliarity with the requirements of the mathematics program may have contributed to the lower than expected scores. Further, none of the upper grade staff participated in the aforementioned scoring training.

D. Further Evidence

Table 15 shows the comparison between Amber and the four closest public schools, on the NYS math exam across all grades in 2005-06.

Table 15: Amber Math Compared to Nearest 4 Public Schools: Proficiency Levels 3 & 4, All Grades						
School	3rd	4th	5th	6th	% Schoolwide	Schoolwide Ranking
Amber	66.70%	67.90%	34.00%	7.70%	44.1%	2
PS 37	58.80%	33.30%	36.40%	61.30%	47.5%	1
PS 50	29.20%	53.70%	26.40%	42.30%	37.9%	4
PS 102	31.20%	73.50%	40.00%	26.90%	42.9%	3
PS 497	53.80%	34.80%	23.50%	13.80%	31.5%	5

Based on this data, Amber leads three out of the four schools, ranking #2, with 44.1%. The data show that the gap, in percentage point difference, between Amber and the #1 ranked school (P.S. 37's 47.5%) is 3 percentage points. The gap between Amber and the #5 ranked school is 13 percentage points (P.S. 497's 31.5%). Our school's third grade surpassed all of the four schools with a range of 8 to 26 percentage points.

Our fifth grade scores were only better than one school. Our sixth grade scores were lower than expected when compared to all four public schools.

When we compare Amber to four local public schools by fourth grade mathematics scores, Amber surpassed three out of the four schools ranking #2, with 68%. The data show that the gap, in percentage point difference, between Amber and the #1 ranked school (P.S. 102's 73.5%) is 5 percentage points. The gap between Amber and the #5 ranked school is 40 percentage points (P.S. 37's 33.3%).

2. Measure: Absolute Proficiency

2005-06 school year: 75 percent of fourth graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Mathematics examination.

A. Method

Amber students in grades 4 took the New York Statewide Testing Program Mathematics exam over three days in March 2006. The math exam measures skills and knowledge that have been mastered during students' history of school up to the grade level. The progress towards this goal is measured by assessing only those students who have been at Amber for at least two years. This section includes data on raw scores or all fourth grade students who took the exam, and students who have been at Amber for two years or more. This is the third year of test administration for students in grade 4. In fourth grade, there were 28 students tested.

B. Results

Table 16 lists Amber's NYS math 2005-06 results for fourth grade tested over a three-year period. Based on this information, Amber students' abilities in math are markedly different from ELA scores. The scores from Year 1 in 2003-04 to Year 2 2004-05 grew by 23 percentage points. The scores from Year 2 2004-05 to Year 3 2005-06 grew by a slight 4 percentage points. The score this year for fourth grade for students at Amber two or more years was 58%, below the required 75 % proficiency.

	L1	L2	L3	L4	L3/4
2003-04	15%	44%	33%	7%	40%
2004-05	2%	35%	48%	15%	63%
2005-06	23%	19%	54%	4%	58%
Total	8%	35%	48%	9%	54%

C. Evaluation

We were, again, surprised at the decrease in raw math scores as well as the downward trend. We had expected the scores to be above the previous year's 63% proficiency. We are particularly concerned that a significantly higher number of our students were at Level 1, 23%, as it constitutes a dramatic climb from the previous year's cohort of students with only 2% in Level 1. It means that our third grade mathematics program needs more support. However, as one looks at the current third grade scores (see below) our concerns may not be warranted. To make sure we do not lose ground in fourth grade, Amber continues to work with a consultant from CUNY's Lehman College on math instruction and assessment. We believe that this has had a positive impact on math instruction.

3. Measure: Absolute Proficiency

Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State math exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set forth in the State's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.

For school year 2005-06, the Annual Measurable Objective measurement in mathematics has been set at 86, according to the Charter Schools Institute guidelines pertaining to the No Child Left Behind regulation for elementary schools taking the mathematics exam. The following is the formula used to calculate the Annual Measurable Objective, where PI is Performance Index and L is Percent at Level, followed by the calculation:

$$PI = (L2+L3+L4) + (L3+L4)$$

$$PI = (L2+L3+L4) + (L3+L4)$$

$$PI = (37+36+5) + (36+5)$$

$$PI = 78 + 41$$

$$PI = 119$$

Amber surpassed the expected Annual Measurable Objective with 119 over the state required 86.

4. Measure: Comparative Proficiency on State Exams

2005-06: Students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State Math exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of the local school district CSD#5.

A. Method

Charter Schools Institute requires we compare ourselves to a local community school district (CSD). As negotiated with our authorizer, we use district 5 as the basis of comparison (Harlem) as this district was Amber's location at its inception. Included in this analysis are districts 4 and 6. District 4, which includes East Harlem and the Upper East Side, is where Amber is currently located. District 6, Washington Heights, is where Amber was originally slated to open. Approximately 66% of Amber students hail from districts 4, 5, and 6 (in about equal parts). The remainder of students in our school hail from the Bronx. Table 17 shows Amber compared to three select districts.

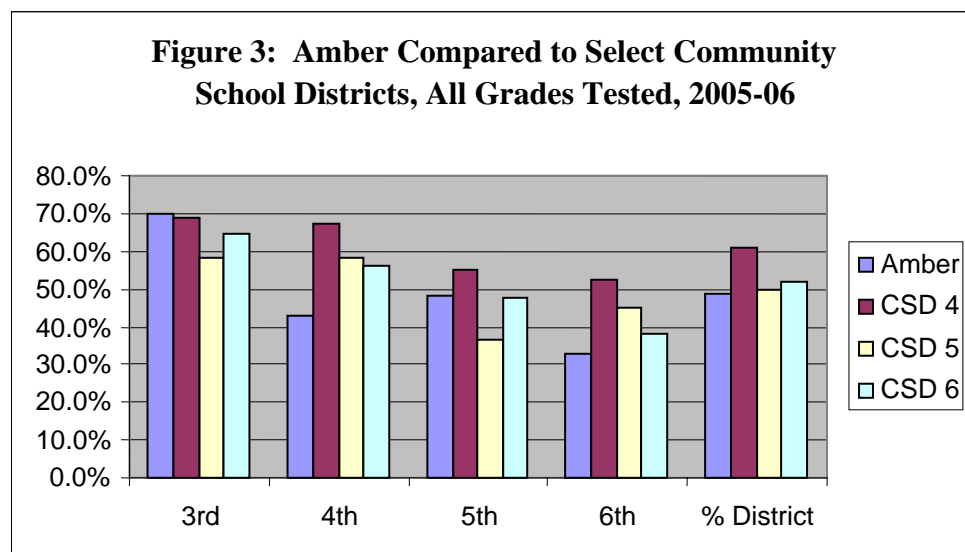
Table 17: Amber's Results (in percent) of NYS Mathematics 2005-06, Grades 3-6, Students at Amber for 2 Years or more							Comparison L3/4		
Grade	# Tested	% L1	% L2	% L3	% L4	% L3/4	CSD 4	CSD 5	CSD 6
3 rd Gr.	31	13%	26%	45%	16%	61%	69%	58%	65%
4 th Gr.	26	23%	19%	54%	4%	58%	67%	58%	56%
5 th Gr.	28	21%	43%	36%	0%	36%	55%	38%	48%
6 th Gr.	9	31%	62%	8%	0%	8%	52%	45%	38%
Tot./Avg	95	22%	37%	36%	5%	41%	61%	50%	52%
					Ranking :	4	1	3	2

A. Results

Overall, Amber did not surpass any of the three districts' scores, ranking last. Amber's third grade math scores surpassed all the other districts' scores in the same grade. Amber's fifth grade scores ranked ahead of two districts. Amber ranked last in grades 4 and 6. The data show that the gap, in percentage point difference, between Amber and the #1 ranked district (CSD 4's 61%) is 13 percentage points and 3 percentage points between the second ranked district (CSD 6).

B. Evaluation

Figure 3 illustrates Amber's math scores compared to select districts. The dramatic image in Figure 3 shows what we are up against as a school. Clearly we need to strengthen the mathematics program across all grades, but especially the upper grades, fifth and sixth. We will continue to work with Lehman College on mathematics, conduct in-service trainings and workshops to increase teacher competencies. We have begun to address students' mathematical skills. In addition, working with our after school program, we will help students with test taking strategies treating it as its own subject, in particular to help students who seem to know their concepts and computational skills during regular class work.



5. Measure: Comparative Proficiency on State Exams

2004-05 through 2009-10: The percent of students performing at or above Level 3 on the State Math exam in each tested grade will place the school in the top quartile of all similar schools as determined by the Charter Schools Institute and based on the similar school categories generated by the State Education Department and the New York City Department of Education (if applicable).

As discussed with Charter School Institute leadership, the data and regression analysis for this measure will be provided by Charter Schools Institute at a later date. Listed on the next page are last year's data and regression analysis conducted by Charter School Institute.

6. Measure: Comparative Proficiency on State Exams

2004-05 through 2009-10: The school will exceed to a specified degree (as set by CSI) its expected level of performance on the State Math exam, as determined by the performance of other schools that have a similar proportion of students eligible for free lunch among all charter and public schools in districts with charter schools.

As discussed with Charter School Institute leadership, the data and regression analysis for this measure will be provided by Charter Schools Institute at a later date. Listed on the next page are last year's data and regression analysis conducted by Charter School Institute.

7. Measure: Value Added to Student Learning on Nationally Normed Test

2004-05 and 2009-10 school years, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between their average NCE in the previous spring on the Terra

Nova, a nationally normed test, and an NCE of 50 (i.e., grade-level) in the current spring. If a grade-level cohort exceeds an NCE of 50 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.

A. Method

In 2004-05, Amber for the first time instituted the Terra Nova math exam, a nationally normed assessment. This test, developed by McGraw Hill, was administered to students in grades one through five in late September and again in early May. The current school year, 2005-06, was the second time that Amber administered the test. Charter Schools Institute guidelines recommend comparisons of testing be conducted spring to spring, thus this was the first year Amber's comparisons are made on a spring to spring basis.



SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

NEW YORK STATE 2005 MATH EXAMINATION GRADE 4

The chart below displays how students in your school performed compared to other public schools in New York State with a similar population of free-lunch-eligible students.

Charter School	Percent of Free Lunch Eligible Students	Number of Students Tested	Percent of Students at Levels 3&4		Difference between Actual and Predicted	Effect Size**	Comparative Performance***
			Actual	Predicted*			
Amber	69.7	59	62.8	79.1	-16.3	-1.23	Lower than expected to a large degree

*Predicted Percent of Students at Levels 3&4 was calculated after performing a regression to measure the effect on outcomes of a school's free lunch population, based on all public schools, including charter schools, in New York State in which students were tested in 2005 and applying that effect to each school.

**Effect Size is a statistical measure calculated by dividing the difference between the actual and predicted outcome by the standard deviation difference. It reflects the difference between a school's attained and expected performance, relative to other schools with similar free-lunch statistics.

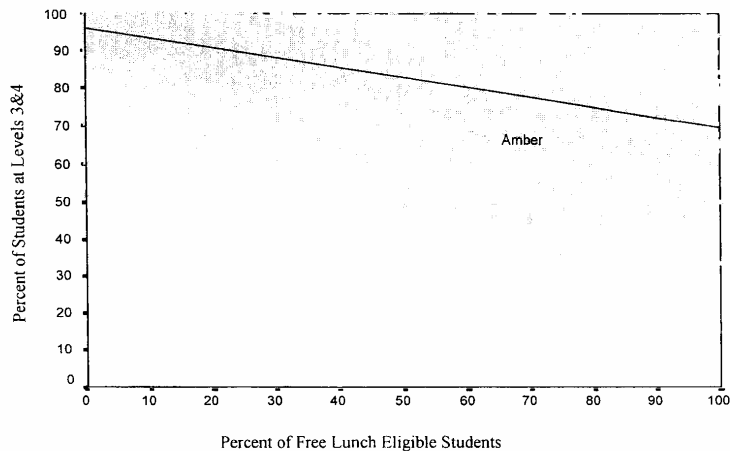
***Comparative Performance is based on Effect Size as follows:

Above 0.79	Higher than expected to a large degree
0.5 to 0.79	Higher than expected to a medium degree
0.3 to 0.49	Higher than expected to a small degree
-0.29 to 0.29	About the same as expected
-0.3 to -0.49	Lower than expected to a small degree
-0.5 to -0.79	Lower than expected to a medium degree.
Below -0.79	Lower than expected to a large degree

Scatter Plot Analysis

The scatter plot below shows the distribution of all public schools in New York State by ELA score and percent of free-lunch-eligible students.

The solid line shows schools' predicted performance with a given percent of free-lunch-eligible students. The location of school name on the scatter plot indicates the approximate performance of your school in comparison to other New York State public schools.



As per Charter Schools Institute: “If the plan contains a gap-closing outcome as a value-added measure, the results should be expressed as the extent to which cohorts are narrowing the different between their scores in the previous spring and grade-level performance in the current spring. The school is expected to enable the cohorts to reduce the difference between the first year’s average NCE score and average NCE of 50, or above grade second year. (Remember, if a cohort scores above an NCE of 50 or above grade level in the first year, then it need only show *some* gain in the second year.)”

The formula used to determine threshold is as follows:

$$\text{Threshold} = \text{spring 2005 NCE} + [\text{NCE 50 minus spring 2005 NCE}]/2]$$

B. Results

Using the Terra Nova exam, a review of the grade level cohorts of grades 1 through 6 reveals positive increase in each cohort. Each cohort achieved its target. Amber has demonstrated student progress, attributable to the impact of the school instructional program. The following table reports the grade NCE scores for mathematics on the Terra Nova exam from spring 2005 to spring 2006.

Grade to Grade	Spring 2005	Spring 2006	Benchmark	Threshold
K-1.	NA	40.5	NA	NA
1 - 2.	54.6	58.8	52.3	Above
2 - 3.	44.2	51.7	47.1	Above
3 - 4.	45.8	47.4	47.9	Below
4 - 5.	48.5	42.5	49.3	Below
5 - 6.	50.0	40.6	50.0	Below

C. Evaluation

In 2005-06, the second grade cohort had an average NCE score of 58.8. When these students were in the first grade in 2004-05, they had an NCE score of 54.6. Since the second grade’s target was an average NCE score of more than half the difference between 54.6 and 50 (e.g., $54.6 + \frac{1}{2} (50 - 54.6) = 52.3$), the cohort did reach and surpass the minimum threshold.

In 2005-06, the third grade cohort had an average NCE score of 51.7. When these students were in the second grade in 2004-05, they had an NCE score of 44.2. Since the third grade’s target was an average NCE score of more than half the difference between 44.2 and 50 (e.g., $44.2 + \frac{1}{2} (50 - 44.2) = 50$), the cohort did reach the minimum threshold.

In 2005-06, the fourth grade cohort had an average NCE score of 47.4. When these students were in the third grade in 2004-05, they had an NCE score of 45.8. Since the fourth grade's target was an average NCE score of more than half the difference between 45.8 and 50 (e.g., $45.8 + \frac{1}{2} (50 - 45.8) = 47.9$), the cohort did not reach the minimum threshold by only .4.

In 2005-06, the fifth grade cohort had an average NCE score of 42.5. When these students were in the fourth grade in 2004-05, they had an NCE score of 48.5. Since the fifth grade's target was an average NCE score of more than half the difference between 48.5 and 50 (e.g., $48.5 + \frac{1}{2} (50 - 48.5) = 49.3$), the cohort did not achieve its target.

In 2005-06, the sixth grade cohort had an average NCE score of 40.6. When these students were in the fifth grade in 2004-05, they had an NCE score of 50.0. Since the sixth grade's target was an average NCE score of more than half the difference between 50.0 and 50 (e.g., $50.0 + \frac{1}{2} (50 - 50.0) = 50.0$), the cohort did not reach the minimum threshold.

D. Additional Evidence

While only two of five grades reached the target NCE scores this school year, we are encouraged by our comparison of Terra Nova Grade Level Equivalents between this current school year and last school year. Grades 2, 3, and 4 students of this current year are at grade level and only grades 5 and 6 did not attain grade level. Amber continues to work with a consultant from CUNY's Lehman College on math instruction and assessment. We believe that this has had a positive impact on math instruction. It is our belief that the decrease of Terra Nova scores are due to variability in testing administration, we plan to tackle in a uniform manner how our faculty conduct testing. We will use professional development opportunities along with weekly staff meetings to help staff understand the best ways to conduct testing for optimal efficiency.

Grade to Grade	Spring 2005	Spring 2006	Difference
K-1.	NA	1.3	NA
1 - 2.	2.2	3.2	1.0
2 - 3.	2.6	3.9	1.3
3 - 4.	3.6	4.6	1.0
4 - 5.	4.8	5.3	0.5
5 - 6.	6	5.7	-0.3

Goal—Science: All students at Amber will become proficient in science and will make strong yearly progress toward mastery of scientific skills.

1. Measure: Absolute Proficiency

In each year, 75 percent of fourth graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Science examination.

A. Method

The New York State Science examination was administered in May 2006. The exam measures skills and knowledge that students have studied in fourth grade in preparation for the NYS Science examination. Twenty nine students attempted the exam but five have been removed from the count because four students were only in their first year at Amber and one student was absent for part of the exam.

B. Results

Of the 24 Amber students who tested in the fourth grade New York State Science examination, 71% of students scored at Level 3. Amber nearly reached its fourth grade science objective measure in 2005-06. This is slightly under the desired objective measure of 75% at Level 3. Of the four students subtracted from the total tested population, three students scored at Level 3 and one student scored at Level 2. Thus, the remaining Level 3 students mirror the tested figures.

Table 20: NYS Science Exam 2005-06				
Level	All Tested*	%	Only 2 years +	%
1	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
2	8	28.57%	7	29.17%
3	20	71.43%	17	70.83%
4	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
	28	100.00%	24	100.00%

*Excludes one student who was absent for part of the exam; this student holds an IEP.

C. Evaluation

In a comparison of scores between the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years, Amber lost slight ground in that last year we achieved our target with 76% of students at Levels 3 and 4 but this year we scored 71% of students at Level 3. Unfortunately, the percentage of students at Level 2 climbed from 20% to 29%. One student who scored a Level 2 holds an IEP. However, we did improve ground by elimination of all Level 1 and there were no Level 1 students this year, down from 4% last year.

Table 21: NYS Science Exam 2004-05			NYS Science Exam 2005-06		
Level	N	%	Level	N	%
1	2	4%	1	0	0%
2	11	20%	2	7	29%
3	28	52%	3	17	71%
4	13	24%	4	0	0%
Total	54	100%	Total	24	100%

D. Additional Evidence

Trends indicate that the science cohort of school year 2005-06 is making significant progress within classrooms and school wide. These scores reflect the work that Amber staff did this year, including organizing a school wide science fair that engaged students in the scientific method over several weeks followed by hands on exploration and presentations to a standing room audience of parents and local visitors and board members. Students who participated in the science fair showed gains in their science exam scores. We are also encouraged that we did not have any Level 1 students. Our Terra Nova science assessment conducted in Spring 2006 compared to Spring 2005 (see below) also demonstrate that our students are making progress. (We examine these grades as a comparison to the NYS Science Exam that is conducted at grade four.) Last year’s first grade students show remarkable growth at the end of their second grade when we examine the Terra Nova NCE scores. Similarly, there is some progress demonstrated for the subsequent second and third grades.

Table 22: Terra Nova Science Exam Two-Year Comparison			
Grade to Grade	Spring 2005	Spring 2006	Difference
K - 1.	NA	38.8	NA
1 - 2.	31.2	55.4	24.2
2 - 3.	40.8	44.3	3.5
3 - 4.	39.9	44.6	4.7

2. Measure: Comparative Proficiency on State Exams

Each year, students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State Science exam will be greater than that of the local school district CSD#5.

The science scores for CSD#5 were not available at the time of this writing.

Goal—Social Studies: All students at Amber will become proficient in social studies and will make strong yearly progress toward mastery of social studies skills.

1. Measure: Absolute Proficiency

In each year, 75 percent of fifth graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Social Studies examination.

A. Method

The New York State Social Studies examination was administered in November, 2005. The exam measures skills and knowledge that students have acquired during their first four years of schooling in preparation for the NYS Social Studies examination. Forty six students took the exam but five have been removed from the count because they were not in their second year at Amber.

Table 23 NYS Social Studies Exam 2005-06 (All tested)			NYS Social Studies Exam 2005-06 (W/2yrs.+at Amber)		
Level	N	%	Level	N	%
1	6	13.04%	1	4	8.70%
2	4	8.70%	2	4	8.70%
3	33	71.74%	3	30	65.22%
4	<u>3</u>	6.52%	4	<u>3</u>	6.52
	46	100.00%		41	100.00%

B. Results

Amber’s raw results for the fifth grade NYS Social Studies exam indicate that 78% of students scored at Levels 3 and 4. However, when we account for those students with two or more years at Amber (72%), we find that Amber narrowly missed the objective measure of 75%.

Table 24 NYS Social Studies Exam 2004-05			NYS Social Studies Exam 2005-06		
Level	N	%	Level	N	%
1	1	8.33%	1	4	8.70%
2	3	25.00%	2	4	8.70%
3	6	50.00%	3	30	65.22%
4	<u>2</u>	16.67%	4	<u>3</u>	6.52%
	12	100.00%		41	100.00%

C. Evaluation

While Amber students narrowly missed the objective measure of 75%, we remain extremely encouraged when we compare our scores against last year's social studies scores. Last year, only 56% of our fifth graders with two or more years attained proficiency Levels 3 and 4. Thus we increased our percentage of students with proficiency by 16% percentage points, including one student with an IEP who scored at Level 3.

D. Additional Evidence

Given the percentage increase over last year's scores compared to this year and the raw score of this year's tested group, we believe Amber is making progress towards reaching its objective measure. When we compare our Terra Nova NCE scores for students testing in social studies we continue to show progress (see below). Examining the past two years of Terra Nova social studies testing scores, we see that progress is being made in the following cohorts: grade 1 to 2; 2 to 3; 3 to 4. We detect a slight decline in cohort grade 4 to 5 and will monitor this cohort—we might also consider conducting the Terra Nova social studies test closer to the state's social studies exam in the fall. Overall, this data demonstrates that using a standard scope and sequence humanities curriculum and related texts is beginning to pay off for our students.

Grade to Grade	Spring 2005	Spring 2006	Difference
1 - 2	47.7	56.6	8.9
2 - 3	44.4	48.4	4.0
3 - 4	43.5	48.0	4.5
4 - 5	49.0	42.4	-6.6

2. Measure: Comparative Proficiency on State Exams

Each year, the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State Social Studies exam will be greater than that of the local school district CSD#5.

CSD#5 NYS Social Studies scores were unavailable.

SUMMARY

Amber's third grade ELA and math scores were good and near required levels. However, this was not true of ELA and math scores in grades 4, 5, and 6. Amber's Terra Nova scores, used as another gauge for learning at Amber, were also with mixed results. As a school community—including the school's board of trustees, parents, teachers, and staff, we have been asking what classroom and institutional supports are in place that lead to high scores? Will this year's instructional changes to third grade change next year's test scores? There were problems with fourth grade scores perhaps due to instruction and/or resources. We have engaged all staff in determining to what classroom and institutional supports were not in place that lead to low scores? How will instructional team changes (with new personal, new team leaders) improve scores? There were major problems with fifth and sixth grade scores perhaps due to instruction and/or resources. What classroom and institutional supports were not in place that lead to low scores? With a total change in instructional team, how will changes improve next year's scores?

ACTION PLAN

We have undertaken an intensive re-examination of our assumptions and preconceived notions about our leadership and practice. We have commissioned an internal evaluation with an outside educational management consultant. We have entered into partnership with subject matter specialists in literacy, mathematics, and science. We have signed up to work with the city's Department of Education empowerment schools which will provide us with educational consultants and assessment managers. We have re-committed to work with the NYC Center for Charter Excellence to identify the right support systems and mechanism to make positive change happen in our school. We have re-organized grade level classrooms, hiring new teachers in-sync with the demands of the age of accountability. We have entered into partnership with Partnerships for Children to support our students academic and social emotional support system. We are committed to improving our students' tests scores but more importantly, we have committed to helping our students become life long learners.

Additional Required Academic Measure

Under the state's NCLB accountability system, the school's Accountability Status will be "Good Standing" each year.

According to a July 10, 2006 memo from Martha Musser of the NY State Department of Education, we remain in Good Standing in 2005-06 and made Adequate Yearly Program in 2004-05 on every accountability measure. The memo further states that we will remain in Good Standing in 2006-07.

Organizational Goals

Parent and Student Satisfaction

Goal: Amber will maintain strong enrollment and strong parent interest.

1. Measure: Parents

Each year, parents will express satisfaction with the school's program, based on the school's Parent Survey in which at least two-thirds of *all* parents provide a positive response to each of the survey items.

A. Methods

Amber designed a parent survey with the input of administrators and teachers for distribution in early April 2006. We color-coded the surveys by class, and teachers distributed the surveys to all 329 students to give to their parents, with a one week deadline. Approximately 50% of surveys were received within the first week. During the balance of the month, Amber staff reached out to as many parents as possible via telephone to encourage survey completion.

B. Results

Overwhelmingly, parents of Amber students participated in the parent survey and based on results, Amber *exceeded* its objective measure of two-thirds of parents expressing their satisfaction with the school. In all, 342 parents completed the surveys, representing over 100% of all Amber parents. (The number of duplicates, 13, is negligible and does not mitigate the final analysis.) Survey questions were keyed to the objective measures, including the following along with primary responses:

My knowledge of what goes on in my child's classroom is: 91% excellent/good; **up** from 86% in the previous year.

I think my child's homework is: 80% age appropriate; **up** from 76% in the previous year.

Communication with my child's teacher is: 92% excellent/good; **up** from 82% in the previous year.

I am satisfied with my child's academic progress: 94% excellent/good; **up** from 83% in the previous year.

My child likes to come to school: 95% strongly agree/agree; **up** from 88% in the previous year.

My child is interested in learning: 98% strongly agree/agree; **up** from 90% in the previous year.

My child has improved his/her ability to resolve conflicts: 89% strongly agree/agree; **up** from 82% in the previous year.

I am pleased that my child attends Amber: 91% strongly agree/agree; **up** from 86% in the previous year.

Parents were asked to comment on their concerns and responded with the following: help with ways to improve my child's behavior, English homework, the discipline/card process, homework is too easy, student squabbles, teacher absences, standing outside before school starts in wintertime, the after school program needs more staff, more communication and activities. We will explore these comments (and their meaning) with our new Parent Association leaders.

Parents' recommendation for improvements vary but some of the commentary include the following: Provide more info about what goes on in school, create more opportunities for music, theatre, and dance programs; better microphones, speakers in the multi purpose room; parents should be able to go inside the school with children; have more Spanish instruction; help my child with phonics; everything is great and all the staff is friendly; give less writing homework; Amber is excellent; create more tutoring programs, more movement activities for hyper kids. Again, we will examine these issues with our Parents Association as well as the entire staff.

C. Evaluation

We are heartened that parents are delighted with Amber's resolve to improve their children's learning. We have made great strides in creating a learning community for students that is safe and contributes to their productivity. We do this by creating meaningful relationships with parents and students. Working with faculty and counselors, Amber has established a series of parent workshops over the past school year. Nearly one third of parents participated in workshops focused on the important of attendance and its effects on school success, the importance of service providers (e.g., speech, OT, PT, special education), understanding standardized testing and time management. This series will be revised and presented anew in the coming school term. In addition, one of the vehicles for communicating with parents was extensive use of automated telephone calls to inform parents of the latest school wide happenings. Towards that end, we made bi-monthly telephone calls.

D. Additional Evidence

Parents are also active participants in Amber's policy planning and decision making through the following vehicles: parent association, parent representatives on the board of trustees, and members of the school planning council. This coming year, with new parental leadership on the Parents Association, we expect to see an increased level of parent outreach to improve education for our students.

2. Measure: Parents

Each year, 90 percent of the parents will participate in Parent Teacher Conferences and Primary Language Interviews.

Amber conducts two annual Parent Teacher Conferences, one over two days in the fall and another over two days in the spring. These half day sessions are led by Amber staff. During the 2005-06 school year 275 parents participated.

To better understand its student population, Amber conducts the Primary Language Record (PLR) interviews at the beginning of the school year. The PLR is designed as an instrument for parents and teachers to share information and discuss a child's language and literacy development at home and at school. The PLR was administered during September and October 2006 to Kindergarten and first grades with 90% completion.

Goal: Students will demonstrate strong interest and engagement.

1. Measure: Students

Each year, the school will have a daily student attendance rate of at least 95 percent.

A. Method

Amber staff works closely to coordinate attendance to make certain students participate in school. Each day classroom teachers take attendance within 30 minutes of commencing instruction. Pupil personnel services staff collect the daily attendance rosters for input into its data collection system connected to the New York City Department of Education's ATS. Staff monitor student attendance, pursuant to the school handbook, and notify parents. A policy has been implemented wherein when students who miss three to five days (unexcused absences or lateness) we generate an official notice addressed to parents. When six to eight unexcused absences/lateness occur, an intervention conference is conducted with Amber guidance personnel. After eight or more unexcused absences/lateness an official meeting is held with the appropriate school administrator and parents that may result in a possible education neglect report to the City's Agency for Child Services and/or the state's 800 telephone hotline.

B. Results

Amber's daily attendance rate was an average 90% throughout the school year, slightly less than our objective measure of 95%.

Table 26: Student Attendance/Registration, September 2005 to June 2006					
Month	# Absent	% Absent	# Present	% Present	Total Registered
September	22	7%	311	93%	334
October	38	11%	306	89%	344
November	27	8%	318	92%	345
December *	60	17%	285	83%	345
January	29	9%	307	91%	336
February	36	11%	294	89%	332
March	27	8%	305	92%	332
April	32	10%	299	90%	331
May	33	10%	297	90%	330
June	46	14%	282	86%	328
Averages	35	10%	300	90%	335

* Weeklong transit strike.

C. Evaluation

Amber strives to improve student attendance. We feel confident that with a strong 90% average daily attendance, we will reach target levels by next year. Contributing factors to decreased attendance are a result of high student absences on staff development half days. In this case, most parents chose to find child sitting services to manage their children on the days Amber holds its staff development days. We plan to discontinue half-day staff development and institute full day staff development, thus increasing our overall student attendance. Despite missing our objective, we are encouraged by data from our survey of parents. When asked to respond to the statement, “My child likes to come to school,” overwhelmingly 95% of all parents strongly agreed and agreed.

D. Additional Evidence

We have learned that our attendance problem lies principally in the Kindergarten arena. We have learned from parents that since Kindergarten is not compensatory, it is much easier for parents to consider absences as acceptable behavior. We do not believe absences, except in extreme cases of illness, should be allowed. We have spent time convincing parents of the importance of attending school (promptly) and will continue to make this a crucial outreach step in the coming year. For our incoming students (approximately 100), we have conducted parent orientations where we provide information on attendance policies. We will continue to offer workshops and training to parents for them to understand the need for students to attend school and stay on task.

Legal Compliance

Goal: Amber will be in legal compliance

1. Measure:

Each year, the school will generally and substantially comply with all applicable laws, rules and regulations, including, but not limited to, the New York Charter Schools Act, the New York Freedom of Information Law, the New York Open Meetings Law, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and the provisions of its by-laws and charter.

Amber has complied with all federal, state, and municipal rules and regulations. Amber has posted meeting dates, time, and location on its web site, in mailings to parents, and staff have participated in appropriate workshops (e.g., Individuals with Disability Education Act training) to ensure compliance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations. We received only one request considered under the New York Freedom of Information Law (FOIL), from the New York State Teachers Union. The inquiry was in regards to the number of teaching positions, certification, etc. We complied with the request in a timely fashion.

2. Measure:

Each year, the school will have in place and maintain effective systems, policies, procedures and other controls for ensuring that legal and charter requirements are met.

Amber has established, put in place, and refined effective systems, policies, and procedures and other controls ensuring that all legal and charter requirements are met. Amber board members meet monthly, document all board meetings, and take an active role in creating and enforcing policies. Towards that end, the board realized that our bylaws first written in 2000 were woefully out of date and required updating. The bylaws were discussed at a retreat and then discuss publicly at our June 17 meeting. The bylaws were amended and approved on July 12, 2006. A leadership team handling academic, administrative, financial, facilities is in place to ensure that these policies and procedures are acted upon in efficient ways.

3. Measure:

Each year the school will maintain a relationship with independent legal counsel that reviews relevant policies, documents, and incidents and makes recommendations as needed, and in proportion to the legal expertise on the board of trustees, if any.

Amber has maintained for five years a relationship with independent legal counsel Michael Stolper, Esq., a partner in Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, LLP. Mr. Stolper and his firm have contributed hundreds of hours *pro bono* in reviewing relevant policies, documents, and incidents and have designed and made recommendations as needed. In addition to serving as counsel to Amber, Mr. Stolper also serves as the board vice chairman. As such, in the rare absence of Amber's board chair, Mr. Stolper takes a leadership role at board meetings, works closely with the school's leadership team, and negotiates contracts on the school's behalf. In addition, we have made use of the counsel of Gia Cavellini, a longtime board member who resigned this past year due to work schedule difficulties. Ms. Cavellini, who works for the international insurance giant AIG, was a former NYC assistant district attorney with extensive experience in child welfare practice. She has responded to Amber staff inquiries. Despite her resignation from our board of trustees, she continues to field inquiries *pro bono* from Amber staff.

Fiscal Soundness

Goal: Amber will make sound decisions and effective, responsible use of financial resources to maximize student learning.

1. Measure—Budgeting:

Each year, the school will operate on a balanced budget meaning actual revenues will equal or exceed actual expenses.

On a monthly basis, Amber's fiscal office produces a balance sheet for the current fiscal year. The balance sheet is reviewed by the board treasurer and additional members of the board who serve on the finance committee. The balance is filed quarterly with the Charter Schools Institute as well as additional agencies that oversee Amber's fiscal matters, including La Raza Development Fund, which holds the mortgage for Amber's building.

In the year ending June 30, 2006 representing the 2005-06 school year, Amber demonstrates a balance between resources and expenses. The detailed results are attached in the appendices.

Amber continues to abide by GAAP, engages an external auditing firm to review its books, materials, resources, and procedures. An audit began in mid July 2006 and is expected to be completed by early October. The audit will be reviewed by Amber staff and board to be discussed and to be approved by the board. The completed and approved audit will be delivered to the Charter School Institute by November 1, 2006.

2. Measure—Financial Condition:

Beginning with the school's first operating year, at the end of each fiscal year, unrestricted net assets will be equal to or exceed two percent of the school's operating budget for the upcoming year.

Amber's unrestricted net assets were equal to two percent of the school's operating budget for the upcoming year.

3. Measure—Internal Controls and Compliance

Each year the school will take corrective action, if needed, in a timely manner to address any internal control or compliance deficiencies identified by its external auditor, SED, or the Institute.

Where appropriate, Amber took one corrective action to address an internal control or compliance deficiency identified by our external auditor, but no other measures for major change were requested by SED, or the Charter Schools Institute. The external auditor discovered that a new A-133 audit filing for fiscal year 2003-04 was required when Amber used certain funds. To support the cost of the revised audit, we asked for a grant of the Hispanic Federation, a membership organization, which granted funding for our request. The auditor was engaged and upon completion, the audit filed with the appropriate federal and state tax departments.