

# Accountability Plan Progress Reports for the 2006-07 School Year

## Reader's Guide

### *SUNY Authorized Charter Schools*

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 an 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 its annual reporting requirements, **each SUNY authorized charter school must submit an Accountability Plan Progress Report which, from its vantage point, addresses each of the goals and outcome measures contained in its Accountability Plan.**

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 state exam. Each year, the state administers English language arts and mathematics tests to 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, science tests to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, and social studies tests to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.

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.

## **Harlem Link Charter School 2006-2007 Accountability Plan Progress Report**

### ***English Language Arts***

**Goal:** Students will become proficient readers and writers of the English Language.

#### **Absolute Proficiency**

##### ***Required outcome measures***

Each year, 75 percent of third through fourth graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State English Language Arts (ELA) examination.

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.

#### **Comparative Proficiency on State Exams**

##### ***Required outcome measures***

Each year, the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State ELA exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of the local school district.

Each year, the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State ELA exam by at least a small Effect Size (performing higher than expected to small degree) according to a regression analysis, performed by the Charter Schools Institute, controlling for students eligible for free lunch among all public schools in New York State.

#### **Value Added to Student Learning**

##### ***Required outcome measure***

For the 2008-09 through 2009-10 school years, each year grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 on the previous year's State ELA exam and 75 percent at or above Level 3 on the current year's State ELA exam.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Method / Results / Evaluation**

Harlem Link did not administer the state ELA exam in 2006-2007.

#### **Additional Evidence**

Harlem Link administered the *TerraNova* Multiple Assessments in November 2006 to grades 1 and 2, and June 2007 to grades K to 2. In the spring, the first and second grades were administered the next highest level assessment (11C and 12C, respectively) from the ones given in the fall (10C and 11C, respectively).

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<sup>1</sup> If a grade-level cohort exceeds 75 percent at or above Level 3 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.

In 2007-2008, Harlem Link will administer these assessments in the spring only. We administered an additional assessment in fall 2006 in order to have baseline data, since we did not utilize *TerraNova* in 2005-2006. We decided to eliminate the *Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills* and replace it with *TerraNova*, since we believe the latter is a better predictor of the state performance assessment, and the former did not provide the information we sought from a nationally normed test, despite its rosy value-added conclusions.

The ELA components of *TerraNova* Multiple Assessments are divided into two sections: Reading and Language. Overall, Harlem Link's achievement was stagnant from November to June. The first grade's average NCE in Reading in June (42.5) was 1.3 NCEs lower than in the fall (43.8), while its average NCE in Language in June (48.0) was 4.9 NCEs higher than in the fall.

Second grade scores were lower in June than in the fall in both Reading and Language. Average NCEs in Reading fell 6.8 NCEs from the fall (50.3) to June (43.5), and average NCEs in Language fell 8.3 NCEs from the fall (54.8) to June (46.5).

Kindergarten scores reflected higher achievement than the other grades in the June assessment (45.6 average NCE in Reading, 56.8 average NCE in Language).

The general drop in *TerraNova* achievement was inconsistent with the administration of the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). In all grades, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the benchmark reading level increased from the first administration to the spring.

In kindergarten, the test was first administered in January, and approximately one-third of the students had achieved the most basic level (Level A), one-third had exceeded it, and one-third had not yet achieved it. By the June administration, 69.8% of students had met the new benchmark of Level C.

In 2006, the school set the June benchmark, following conventional texts, at Level B, and found the vast majority of students met this benchmark. We were disappointed with first grade achievement in the fall, however, and found that many students' reading levels dipped over the summer. Students at Level B in June were not necessarily prepared to meet the first grade October benchmark, Level D, without guaranteed intervention over the summer. Therefore, we raised the June benchmark in 2006-2007 to Level C. As the results of students using this benchmark are more consistent with results in other grades, we believe the higher standard of Level C is a more true representation of where students should be by the end of kindergarten.

First grade presented the greatest challenge in the fall, as implied above, with nearly 75% of students not meeting the October benchmark. By the June administration, 63.0% of students were meeting the Level H benchmark.

In the second grade, DRA performance also improved against the benchmark from fall to spring. In October, 61.7% of students had met the benchmark of Level I. By June, 64.2% of students had met the more strenuous benchmark of Level L.

In particular, second graders who were new to Harlem Link in 2006-2007 struggled on the DRA. In June, only 50% of the 16 second graders who were not with the school in 2005-2006 met the benchmark, while 70.3% of the 37 who were enrolled in the school's first year met the benchmark.

The first grade also exhibited a disparity between new students meeting or exceeding the benchmark (55.6%, N=9) and returning students doing so (64.4%, N=45).

*TerraNova* data confirmed the disparity in achievement between new students and those returning. First graders who returned to Harlem Link scored appreciably higher than new entrants in Reading and Language in June (7.7 NCEs and 11.9 NCEs, respectively). Returning second graders also outscored new entrants in Reading and Language, albeit not as dramatically as demonstrated by the DRA (0.5 NCEs and 0.6 NCEs, respectively).

In our analysis of the ELA data, we also found a great disparity between the two first grade classrooms: Classroom A had 81.5% of students reach the DRA benchmark, while Classroom B had only 44.4% achieve the benchmark.

## **SUMMARY**

Without state test data, it is difficult to come to a conclusion regarding Harlem Link's achievement of this goal, but we believe that the data indicate the school is making significant progress toward meeting the goal, and the make the way forward quite clear.

It is clear from both the DRA and the *TerraNova* that the school is adding value, assuming that the students entering the school in 2006-2007 entered at a similar ability level to those who entered in 2005. (We believe that this is a safe assumption, since baseline achievement level often correlates with eligibility for free and reduced price lunch, and the school's percentage of students eligible increased from 79% to 84% in the past year.)

In another sense, the *TerraNova* and DRA tell two different stories, the former depicting a dip in achievement and the latter a steady increase. DRA can be viewed as a more authentic assessment, since it recreates a reading experience that is common in a Harlem Link classroom, with a single story to read and the task of general comprehension orally assessed. The school did no test sophistication during the 2006-2007 school year, and while most students had seen the *TerraNova* in the fall, by the spring when they were asked to take a more rigorous level of the test, they appeared unprepared for the test format and types of questions asked.

## **ACTION PLAN**

In 2007-2008, Harlem Link will take several steps to ensure that the school reaches this important accountability goal.

- Assessment Coordinator

The school has promoted a teacher to a new position, Assessment Coordinator. She has begun the task of streamlining assessment at the school to ensure that all our assessments are valid and reliable, and planning curriculum to ensure that students are prepared for the format of the state test. The school began this process in 2006-2007, tasking two interns from Columbia University Teachers College with analyzing the state ELA exam and making recommendations for curriculum improvement. The document they created was not integrated into the school's curriculum, but the Assessment Coordinator will ensure it is in 2007-2008.

Below are excerpts of the Assessment Coordinator's initial report on the June 2007 ELA data:

**First Grade Reading/Language Arts Strength Areas:**

- **Literal and Interpretive Oral Comprehension:** Students demonstrated a very good understanding of passages that were read aloud. They answered above the national average in questions of a literal or interpretive nature after a teacher-read passage. They did GREAT on this section!
- **Basic Understanding of a Passage:** 98% of students answered the word recognition graphics question correctly. They also did pretty well in identifying the stated information from a passage using a graphic. The key to this strength area is "**graphic**". The items that did not include a graphic are not a strength area.
- **Sound/Visual Recognition**
- **Editing Skills:** Students scored above the national average on usage, punctuation, and capitalization questions.
- **Sequence and Relevance**

**First Grade Reading/Language Arts Growth Areas:**

- **Analyzing Text:** Although students scored around the national average in the drawing conclusions and one cause and effect question, they struggled with main idea/theme of a passage and the other cause and effect questions.
- **Vocabulary skills, Graphic Strategies, Applying and Extending Meaning**
- **Subject/Predicate**
- **Understanding Stated Information from a Passage WITHOUT a graphic**
- **Constructed Response Questions:** Overall, the students need work on constructing their own responses to questions. No more than 57% of students got the full points for any of these questions. Most of them were much lower than 57%. The areas are: sequencing, story elements (character), critical assessment, sound/visual recognition, sentence structure, editing skills.  
**NOTE:** Some of these areas are strengths in the selected response items (see strength section).

**Second Grade Reading/Language Arts Strength Areas:**

- **Drawing Conclusions**
- **Story Elements/Characters**
- **Cause/Effect**
- **Generalizing Meaning from a Passage**
- **Using Graphic Reading Strategies**
- **Word Analysis:** Although students did not perform well on one question in this section, overall they did well with this.
- **Sequencing as a Writing Strategy**
- **Capitalization:** with the exception of one question, that also has a very low national average students performed well in this section

- **Constructed Response for Vocabulary and Summarizing**

**Second Grade Reading/Language Arts Growth Areas:**

- **Sequencing in Reading**
- **Main Idea/Theme of a Passage**
- **Critical Assessment after Reading a Passage**
- **Predicting (Hypothesizing) future events after Reading a Passage**
- **Extending and Applying Meaning after Reading a Passage**
- **Sentence Structure: Complete/Run-on/Sentence Fragments, Sentence Combining**
- **Relevance as a Writing Strategy**
- **Punctuation**
- **Constructed Response:** Except for Vocabulary and Summarizing (see Strengths), students need work with story elements, applying meaning, word analysis, sentence structure, and proofreading skills in the constructed response section.

- **Instructional Leadership**

Changes in instructional leadership will be discussed in more detail in the Mathematics section below.

An important highlight here, however, is the role of the Student Support Coordinator. In analyzing the disparity between achievement in first grade classrooms, we found that the majority of students who were identified as needing special education services (all but one) or Academic Intervention Services (AIS) in the first grade were placed in this class. Most of these students were not identified as such before the school year began, due to our own referral during the year for special education services or due to parents not being forthcoming with information about IEPs before the year began. We believe that despite the resources offered to this class—which amounted to Title I, AIS and SETSS pullout, we did not provide enough instructional support for this class, which began the year with only 18.5% of students meeting the DRA benchmark, with so many struggling students. To rectify the situation not only with this cohort but across the school, we have adjusted our hiring and will be implementing a Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) class in each grade, and attempting to place the majority or all of our students with special education needs in this class, with a certified special education teacher among the co-teaching pair. The Student Support Coordinator will be able to provide assistance in ensuring that modifications and accommodations are made so that all students in this setting can access the curriculum.

- **Increase in Content**

Vocabulary, main idea, use of graphic organizers, constructed response—these skills cannot be taught well in isolation, and through recent strategic analysis by our Leadership Team, we have come to see that our ELA instruction has become disproportionately skills-based.

In 2007-2008, we will move closer to achieving the true spirit of our charter agreement by teaching more ELA through content, integrated with Social Studies. We are promoting a teacher to become Social Studies Department Chair, and developing a new Social Studies Scope and Sequence over the summer along with four Units of Study for

each grade. This modification in curriculum, consistent with our charter, will provide additional contextual opportunities for students to improve their language skills.

### ***Mathematics***

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

#### **Absolute Proficiency**

##### ***Required outcome measures***

For the 2007-08 through 2009-10 school years, each year 75 percent of third through fifth graders who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Mathematics examination.

Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State math exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.

#### **Comparative Proficiency on State Exams**

##### ***Required outcome measures***

Each year, the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State Math exam in each tested grade will be greater than that of the local school district.

Each year, the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State Math exam by at least a small Effect Size (performing higher than expected to small degree) according to a regression analysis, performed by the Charter Schools Institute, controlling for students eligible for free or reduced lunch among all public schools in New York State.

#### **Value Added to Student Learning**

##### ***Required outcome measure***

For the 2007-08 through 2009-10, each year grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 on the previous year's State Math exam and 75 percent at or above Level 3 on the current year's State Math exam.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Method / Results / Evaluation**

Harlem Link did not administer the state ELA exam in 2006-2007.

#### **Additional Evidence**

Harlem Link administered the *TerraNova* Multiple Assessments in November 2006 to grades 1 and 2, and June 2007 to grades K to 2. In the spring, the first and second grades

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<sup>2</sup> If a grade-level cohort exceeds 75 percent at or above Level 3 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.

were administered the next highest level assessment (11C and 12C, respectively) from the ones given in the fall (10C and 11C, respectively).

As noted above, in 2007-2008, Harlem Link will administer these assessments in the spring only, with the additional assessment in fall 2006 administered in order to have baseline data in the wake of eliminating the *Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills*. The school also did not utilize the *Early Childhood Assessment of Mathematics* in 2006-2007, deeming it limited in scope and usefulness for guiding instruction.

Overall, Harlem Link's achievement in math was stagnant from November to June, with increases in the first grade and decreases in the second grades. The first grade's average NCE in Mathematics in June (43.8) was 6.9 NCEs higher than in the fall (36.9), while the second grade dropped 5.0 NCEs from November (43.2) to June (38.2).

Value-added data was demonstrated by the *TerraNova* in Mathematics in June 2007, with students who attended Harlem Link in 2005-2006 outscoring new students by 8.5 NCEs in the first grade (45.3 to 36.8) and 0.4 NCEs in the second grade (38.3 to 37.9).

### **SUMMARY**

Again, without state test data, it is difficult to come to a conclusion regarding Harlem Link's achievement of this goal. The value added data is quite strong in the first grade, but the school clearly needs to make more progress with the second grade cohort.

### **ACTION PLAN**

In 2007-2008, Harlem Link will institute a number of changes that will address the Mathematics issue. These changes will also help ensure that the school meets the ELA goal.

- **Internal Assessments**: The school will continue to develop internal assessments that are consistent with our standards and curriculum. This process began in 2006-2007 but will be completed with the assistance of our Assessment Coordinator this year. Below are the Assessment Coordinator's comments on the *TerraNova* June administration, which will be a guide in the first round of designing assessments:

#### **First Grade Mathematics Strength Areas:**

- **Counting**
- **Recognizing Numbers**
- **Ordinal Numbers**
- **Computation in Context**
- **Calendar**
- **Length, Distance**
- **Reading a Table, Chart, Diagram**
- **Comparing Data**
- **Reading a Bar Graph**
- **Geometric Patterns**
- **Sorting/Grouping**
- **Plane Figures**

- **Visual/Spatial Reasoning**

**First Grade Mathematics Growth Areas:**

- **Computation with Money**
- **Time**
- **Using Data to Solve Problems**
- **Deductive/Inductive Reasoning** (Problem Solving)
- **Computation** (Around the National Average but needs some improvement)
- **Constructed Response Items:** Although in some areas 74% of students got full points awarded (Producing a Data Display, Modeling Math Situations), in most areas students need help constructing proper responses to measurement, geometry, number relations, problem solving, and missing element questions.

**Second Grade Mathematics Strength Areas:**

- **Ordinal Numbers**
- **Expanded Notation**
- **Counting**
- **Computation** (with and without money)
- **Plane Figure**
- **Transformations**
- **Solid Figures**
- **Reading a Bar Graph**
- **Modeling a Problem Situation**
- **Missing Element**

**Second Grade Mathematics Growth Areas:**

- **Odd and Even Numbers**
- **Compare and Order Numbers**
- **Money**
- **Estimation**
- **Combine/Subdivide Shapes**
- **Using Data to Solve Problems**
- **Interpreting Data Display**
- **Deductive/Inductive Reasoning** (Problem Solving)
- **Constructed Response Items:** Students need help constructing responses to the following types of problems: Computation, Estimation, Geometry, Problem Solving, Data Displays, Statistics/Probability, Number Patterns, and Using a Ruler.

- **Increased Teacher Capacity:** In 2007-2008, several factors point toward our school having increased teacher capacity to work with a difficult but rewarding curriculum. In 2005-2006, the school began utilizing the TERC Mathematics curriculum, which is very demanding on teachers and requires them to have a great deal of background knowledge and experience. However, training for the staff was inadequate (five sessions from an inexperienced staff developer through Mathematics in the City), and the school made it a priority to change staff developers and increase the number of days she would be on site to 20. For the coming year, the same staff developer (who has 30 years experience working in excellent schools, received extremely high marks in internal teacher feedback, and has begun developing internal assessments consistent with our curriculum and new scope and sequence as noted above) will return for an increase to 30 days.

We are also sending six teachers (for the first time since 2005) to the Mathematics in the City Summer Institute for training in teaching constructivist mathematics with a skills component. Finally, the simple fact of using TERC for two years along with our high teacher retention (six of our eight original classroom teachers remain with us, and six of the seven we have hired since then are also still with us) means that our teachers have a higher level of experience with the curriculum at our school than has been possible thus far.

- Diversified Instructional Leadership: In 2006-2007, we found that teachers in many instances underutilized the TERC program, interfering with their own development of capacity to teach the curriculum. This issue was symptomatic of larger problems, including a need for increased staff development as noted above, and an instructional leader who was singularly responsible for supervising and evaluating all 17 teachers (14 of whom were full time) and the six co-teaching teams. There simply wasn't time for one person to completely address or even prioritize the issue of whether teachers were fully implementing the prescribed curriculum. In 2007-2008, as a result of strategic analysis, the school has increased the number of administrators supervising and evaluating teachers to four:
  - Co-Director for Instruction (CDI): will continue to be responsible for overall supervision and instruction, and will supervise the first and second grade teachers.
  - Co-Director for Operations (CDO): will continue to supervise the back office, and with the addition of a full time Business Manager, will be able to also supervise the third grade teachers.
  - Student Support Coordinator (SSC): this position was part-time in 2006-2007, and has been elevated to full time status. With each grade level in 2007-2008 maintaining a Collaborative Team Teaching class, the SSC will report to the CDI, and have four teachers to supervise and evaluate; he will also supervise the student support teachers, who provide Title I reading instruction and Academic Intervention Services.
  - Lower School Director: this position has been created due to the need to expand to a second site for our kindergarten. The Lower School Director, who has 18 years of education experience including several years as an Assistant Principal and staff developer, will supervise the kindergarten teachers and report to the CDI.
- Sensible Test Sophistication: As in ELA, we believe our students were unprepared for the format and questioning inherent in the *TerraNova* assessment and, by extension, the coming state assessment in mathematics. Part of the Assessment Coordinator's and CDO's work will also be to ensure that third graders are adequately prepared for the test format, time constraints and appropriate strategies.

## ***Science***

**Goal:** Students will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of scientific reasoning.

**Absolute Proficiency*****Required outcome measures***

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.

**Comparative Proficiency on State Exams*****Required outcome measure***

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

**Method / Results / Evaluation / Summary**

Harlem Link did not administer the state Science exam in 2006-2007.

***Social Studies***

**Goal:** Students will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of social studies concepts.

**Absolute Proficiency*****Required outcome measures***

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.

**Comparative Proficiency on State Exams*****Required outcome measure***

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.

**Method / Results / Evaluation / Summary**

Harlem Link did not administer the state Social Studies exam in 2006-2007.

***Additional Required Academic Measure******Required outcome measure***

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

**Evaluation**

Although the school has not administered the state performance benchmarks, the school does have “Good Standing” status with the State Education Department.