



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Renewal Report

Harlem Village Academy Charter School

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

REPORT INTRODUCTION

This report is the primary vehicle by which the Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) transmits to the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the “State University Trustees”) its findings and recommendations regarding a school’s application for renewal, and more broadly, details the merits of a school’s case for renewal. This report has been created and issued pursuant to the *Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University Board of Trustees* (the “State University Renewal Practices”).¹

Information about the State University’s renewal process, as well as an overview of the requirements for renewal under the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (“the Act”), are available in the Appendix of this report. Note too that the Institute’s website provides additional details and resources regarding renewal, including: the Institute’s comprehensive *Charter Renewal Handbook*, at: www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsRenewOverview.htm.

RECOMMENDATION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendation

Full-Term Renewal

The Charter Schools Institute recommends that the State University Trustees approve the Application for Renewal of the Harlem Village Academy Charter School (“Harlem Village Academy”) and renew the charter for a period of five years with authority to provide instruction to students in 5th through 12th grades with a maximum projected enrollment of 351 students, and consistent with the other terms set forth in its Application for Renewal, and subject to the following contingencies:

- The school shall only be authorized to provide instruction to students in 9th through 12th grades in a co-located high school facility with Leadership Village Academy Charter School if:
 1. Leadership Village Academy Charter School applies for a revision to its charter to allow instruction to students in 9th through 12th grades in a setting co-located with Harlem Village Academy, and such revision is fully approved by the State University Trustees and otherwise pursuant to the Charter Schools Act; and
 2. Harlem Village Academy secures an adequate facility for the co-located high school, submits the facility plans to the Institute, and the Institute approves same per the provisions of the charter agreement.

¹ The *Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University Board of Trustees* (revised December 13, 2005) are available at www.newyorkcharters.org.

Required Findings

Based on all the evidence submitted in the initial and current Short-Term Planning Year Renewal charter terms and as described in or submitted with the Application for Renewal, the Institute makes the following findings required by the Act. Harlem Village Academy as described in its Application for Renewal meets the requirements of the Act and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations. The school has demonstrated the ability to operate in an educationally and fiscally sound manner in the next charter period. Finally, given the programs it will offer, its structure and its purpose, approving the school to operate for another five years is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in Education Law subdivision 2850(2).

Consideration of School District Comments

In accordance with the Act, the Institute notified the school district in which the charter school is located regarding the school's Application for Renewal. As of the date of this Report, no comments were received in response.

Summary Discussion

Academic Success

During its charter period, Harlem Village Academy has outperformed the local school district and the city on the New York State Testing Program (NYSTP) assessments in English language arts and mathematics. In mathematics, Harlem Village Academy has sustained exceedingly strong results, meeting all of its Accountability Plan measures in the current year. Despite a relatively high proportion of free-lunch students, the school has also scored above the average for all public schools state-wide and has far outperformed similar schools state-wide. In addition, 90 percent of all the 8th graders passed the Regents Mathematics A examination. In English language arts, the school came close to meeting its Accountability Plan goal in the current year with students in the 7th and 8th grades outperforming similar schools state-wide and coming close to the state-wide average for all public schools. Harlem Village Academy met its absolute Accountability Plan measure in science but not in social studies. The school is deemed to be in Good Standing under the state's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system. The State Education Department named Harlem Village Academy as a "high performing/gap closing" school under the NCLB Act for its performance through 2005-06.

Over the life of the charter, Harlem Village Academy has developed assessment systems and used student data to inform instruction and curricular design. Harlem Village Academy has administered multiple assessments to monitor student learning and achievement. Additionally, Harlem Village Academy has developed well-defined methods to monitor student learning in relation to school standards and identified action plans to address student learning needs.

Harlem Village Academy is effective in utilizing assessment information to inform curricular and instructional design, identify students in need of remediation and implement school-wide changes. Since its inception, Harlem Village Academy has utilized assessment information to assign students to daily small group instruction periods.

Over the life of its charters, the school's espoused curriculum has been based on state performance standards. However, the renewal inspection team did not find clear and consistent evidence that teachers regularly utilize the Village Academies' Standards to guide their instruction. (Village

Academies Network, Inc. is the partner organization of both Harlem Village Academy and Leadership Village Academy Charter Schools.) As a result, it is unclear if the Village Academies' Standards or the scope and sequences serve as the precise definition of what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Although teachers had access to a multitude of resources when planning instruction, it was unclear which of these resources served as the primary guideline for teachers. Consequently, the extent to which the school's curriculum (as implemented) has been aligned from grade-to-grade varied.

In its fifth year of instruction and indicative of the school leaders' tendency to reflect on their practices, to frankly articulate areas in need of improvement and to make well-conceived modifications accordingly, Harlem Village Academy has identified strengthening of the English language arts program as an academic focus. Moreover, since the school's first year of instruction, the school leaders' prioritization of school culture has enabled school stakeholders to focus efforts on teaching and learning and instill high expectations for student learning.

Over the term of its charters instruction has improved at Harlem Village Academy. In the school's first and second years, the quality of instruction was inconsistent. However, at the time of the renewal visit, high quality instruction was present throughout the school.

Harlem Village Academy has dedicated significant time and resources to remedial programs designed to meet the needs of at-risk students. For instance, since its third year of instruction, the school has had a Saturday Academy in place for students at-risk of academic failure. And at the time of the renewal inspection visit the school provided considerable resources for students needing special education programs and services, including a part-time special education coordinator committed to manifesting a school-wide philosophy of assisting teachers serve students with special learning needs.

Another area that Harlem Village Academy has improved over the term of its charters is student order and discipline. In comparison to the first year of operation, the school's climate and student conduct improved in its second year. Further, in its fifth year of instruction Harlem Village Academy had instituted various initiatives to encourage students to approach their learning with self-discipline and a focus on academics.

Harlem Village Academy has provided remarkable levels of professional development to its teachers during its Summer Institute. The school's five-week professional development program familiarized teachers with the school's priorities and expectations for instructional planning. At the time of the renewal inspection visit teachers generally concluded that the Summer Institute was a valuable experience for inculcating teachers new to the school to Harlem Village Academy's core principles and school culture. Due in part to the identified need to provide more robust professional development during the academic year, school and instructional leaders had planned considerably more professional development during the school's fifth year of instruction, with a focused set of activities facilitated by content-area coaches.

Organizational Effectiveness and Viability

The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school's mission and specific goals by partnering with the Village Academies Network; however, in the day-to-day operations of the school, the two entities are largely indistinguishable. As a result, it is, at times, unclear which entity accepts accountability for the school's charter.

Harlem Village Academy appeared to be in general and substantial compliance with applicable law, rules and regulations and the terms of its charter at the time of the renewal inspection visit and during the term of its initial and extension charters, with certain exceptions. Also with a few minor exceptions, the school had implemented effective policies and procedures to ensure compliance with applicable laws, serve the needs of parents and students and provide compliance controls.

Fiscal Soundness

Harlem Village Academy has been in stable financial condition throughout its existence. The school's overall fiscal strength has been aided by its shared use agreement with the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) for the last two years, whereby the school receives space for \$1 per year. The school has no long-term debt and throughout its charter period has generated adequate cash flow to support operations. In addition, through its partner, Village Academies Network, the school has demonstrated capacity for effective fundraising. The school has never been cited for any material financial or internal control weaknesses as part of its annual audits. Harlem Village Academy's record of financial reporting has generally been timely and accurate.

Plans for the Future

In its Application for Renewal, Harlem Village Academy submitted plans to continue its high school expansion through the 12th grade, while continuing to offer instruction at 5th through 8th grades. The school would enroll 351 students in the final year of the next charter term. The proposal is unique in that the school envisions that its high school grades would be co-located with its sister school, Leadership Village Academy Charter School. The proposed model would enable a more enriching educational experience for the high school students, while allowing the two schools to benefit from shared resources and economies of scale.

Given the extensive and unique nature of the proposed expansion, the Institute has reviewed and discussed the plans with the school, and, through the Request for Amendment to the Application for Renewal process, will request certain detailed submissions for its review and approval to ensure clarity regarding the school's proposed academic program, organizational viability, and fiscal soundness. In particular, the Institute will work with the school board and staff to ensure that the board of Harlem Village Academy retains the capacity to independently govern the school. To the extent that certain of the school's plans may require future review by the Institute, such contingency has been incorporated into the Institute's renewal recommendation.

The school has successfully operated in a fiscally sound manner and is likely to continue to do so assuming continued access to a NYCDOE facility for its middle school program and the effective implementation of its continued expansion through 12th grade. The school has presented a reasonable and appropriate fiscal plan for the proposed new charter period including its continued expansion. In addition, based on its most recent application round and waiting list, Harlem Village Academy has demonstrated a sufficient level of enrollment demand to meet the projected enrollment for the next

charter period. Importantly, the school has exhibited strong enrollment demand with more than 350 students reportedly on its wait list year. The school's stable financial condition, conservative budgeting and history of close financial monitoring provide its proposed fiscal plan with a strong foundation and improves its chances for success. The plan projects an operating surplus and cash flow surpluses in each year.

The Institute's recommendation is contingent upon whether Leadership Village Academy Charter School applies for, and is granted, authority to allow instruction to students in 9th through 12th grades in a setting co-located with Harlem Village Academy Charter School. However, to the extent that Harlem Village Academy has achieved its key academic goals, continues to implement an educational program that supports achieving those goals, operates an effective and viable organization, and is fiscally sound, and fulfills the identified contingencies, its plans to implement the proposed educational program during the next charter period are reasonable, feasible and achievable.

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

The State University Trustees approved the charter for Harlem Village Academy on June 6, 2002. The charter was subsequently approved by the Board of Regents on September 13, 2002. Originally named East Harlem Academy Charter School, the school changed to its current name in the spring of 2005 through a charter revision. Following a planning year for 2002-03, the school opened in September 2003 with 76 students in 5th grade and added one grade per year thereafter. In the fall of 2006, Harlem Village submitted an Application for Short-Term Planning Year Renewal, requesting a charter renewal through July 2008 to account for the planning year taken during the first year of the original charter, as well as an extension through 9th grade. On March 20, 2007 the State University Trustees granted the school its requested Short-Term Planning Year Renewal through the 2007-08 academic year, which was subsequently approved by the Board of Regents on May 22, 2007. The school enrolled 233 students in 5th through 9th grades in the fall of 2007.

Harlem Village Academy was originally housed at the Harlem Council for Community Improvement, along with a nursery school and clinic, located at 413 East 120th Street in Harlem. The school then moved to 244 West 144th Street in Harlem within a NYCDOE facility (P.S. 194), and is now housed on the fourth floor. Upon the commencement of instruction for the 2007-08 academic year, the school added a second facility located at 509 West 129th Street in Harlem for its 9th grade only, with 5th through 8th grades remaining at the shared space in P.S. 194.

The school partners with Village Academies Network, Inc., a non-profit education organization to provide the school with the following eight core services: 1) principal training and support; 2) teacher recruiting; 3) professional development; 4) student enrichment; 5) curriculum and assessment development; 6) family and community outreach; 7) fundraising; and 8) operations support.

The mission of Harlem Village Academy, as stated in the original charter is as follows:

The mission of the East Harlem [Village] Academy Charter School is to prepare our students to graduate from college and to contribute meaningfully to their families, communities, and nation.

The school planned to meet its mission by focusing on the following key design elements:

- The Academic Athlete: Students commit themselves to the demands of academic rigor, just as athletes who take their sport seriously, savoring challenge and hard work, and loving it. This feature includes a longer school day and year, rich liberal arts curriculum shaped by standards of excellence, increased instructional time for reading and math, college planning beginning in 6th grade, school uniforms, meaningful interim assessment program, and a promotion policy based on achievement.
- The School as Village: Small, respectful learning environment where every adult knows every student, teachers provide personalized attention, and students feel a sense of connection. The school focuses on small learning communities, advisors for students, the teaching of values, high expectations for respectful conduct and speech, a Village Council for debate and reflection, and strong connection and frequent communication with families.

- **Investing in Teachers:** A system and culture designed to recruit, develop, support and reward excellent teachers, including grade level and departmental Kounaikenshuu (Japanese collaborative instructional strategy), ongoing instructional coaching, master teacher mentoring, and rewarding teachers based on the quantity and quality of their students' work.

School Year (2007-08)

186 - 196 instructional days²

School Day (2007-08)

Grade 5: 8:00 a.m. to 4:50 p.m.

Grade 6: 7:45 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

Grade 7-8: 7:45 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Grade 9: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 pm. (Monday – Thursday); 8:30 a.m. to 1:50 p.m. (Friday)

Enrollment

	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment³	Original Chartered Grades	Revised Grades Served	Actual Grades Served	Complying
2002-03	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	YES
2003-04	104	76	76	6	5	5	YES
2004-05	208	125	105	6-7	5-6	5-6	YES
2005-06	312	151	155	6-8	5-7	5-7	YES
2006-07	416	241	199	6-9	5-8	5-8	NO
2007-08	240	240	233	5-9	5-9	5-9	YES

² The school has allocated 10 tentative Saturday instructional sessions, accounting for the range of instructional days within the school calendar.

³ Enrollment figures per the Charter School's Institute's official enrollment table, which are reported by the school. Figures used to calculate students populations may differ depending on the date of data collection.

Race/Ethnicity	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. Harlem Village	% of Enroll. Comm. District #4	% of Enroll. Harlem Village	% of Enroll. Comm. District #4	% of Enroll. Harlem Village	% of Enroll. Comm. District #4
American Indian or Alaska Native	2.9 %*	1 %	0 %	1 %	NA	NA
Black or African American	78 %	34 %	76 %	33 %	NA	NA
Hispanic	19 %	61 %	21 %	62 %	NA	NA
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	2.9%*	2 %	3 %	3%	NA	NA
White	0 %	2 %	0 %	2 %	NA	NA

Source: 2004-05, 2005-06: School Report Card (New York State Education Department); 2006-07: New York State Education Department Database.

*As indicated on the school's 2004-05 School Report Card, demographic subgroups for American Indian or Alaska Native and Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander were combined; therefore it is impossible to ascertain the specific percentage of students in each category thus they have been combined to display identical percentages.

Special Populations	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. Harlem Village	% of Enroll. Comm. District #4	% of Enroll. Harlem Village	% of Enroll. Comm. District #4	% of Enroll. Harlem Village	% of Enroll. Comm. District #4
Students with Disabilities	10.6 %	NA	12.5 %	NA	9.0 %	14.5 %
Limited English Proficient	0.0 %	11 %	0.0 %	12 %	0.0 %	11.0 %

Source: Students with Disabilities: Renewal Application - Statistical Overview (2004-05, 2005-06); New York State Education Department Database (2006-07). Limited English Proficient: 2005-06 New York State Education Department School Report Card (2004-05, 2005-06); New York State Education Department Database (2006-07).

Free/Reduced Lunch	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. Harlem Village	% of Enroll. Comm. District #4	% of Enroll. Harlem Village	% of Enroll. Comm. District #4	% of Enroll. Harlem Village	% of Enroll. Comm. District #4
Eligible for Free Lunch	60 %	0 %	55 %	77 %	53.0 %	64.2 %
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	23 %	0 %	22 %	7 %	17.5 %	5.0 %

Source: 2005-06 New York State Education Department School Report Card (2004-05, 2005-06); New York State Education Department Database (2006-07).

School Charter History

Charter Year	School Year	Year of Operation	Evaluation Visit	Feedback to School	Other Actions Taken
1 st Charter – 1 st Year	2002-03	Planning Year	NO	None	
1 st Charter – 2 nd Year	2003-04	1 st	YES	Prior Action Letter; End of Year Evaluation Letter	
1 st Charter – 3 rd Year	2004-05	2 nd	YES	End of Year Evaluation Report	Name of school changed
1 st Charter – 4 th Year	2005-06	3 rd	YES	End of Year Evaluation Report	
1 st Charter – 5 th Year	2006-07	4 th	NO	None	Granted Short-Term Planning Year Renewal for a period of one year and expansion through 9 th grade
2 nd Charter – Short-Term Planning Year	2007-08	5 th	YES	Initial Renewal Report	Recommended for Full-Term Renewal and expansion through 12 th grade

RENEWAL BENCHMARKS AND DISCUSSION

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
Benchmark 1A Academic Attainment & Improvement	<p>1A.1 English Language Arts: The school meets or has come close to meeting the English Language Arts goal in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.</p> <p>1A.2 Mathematics: The school meets or has come close to meeting the mathematics goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.</p> <p>1A.3 Science: The school meets or has come close to meeting the science goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.</p> <p>1A.4 Social Studies: The school meets or has come close to meeting the social studies goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.</p> <p>1A.5 NCLB: The school has made adequate yearly progress as required by NCLB.</p>

At the beginning of the charter period the school developed and adopted an Accountability Plan that set academic goals in the key subjects of English language arts and mathematics, as well as science and social studies. For each goal in the Accountability Plan specific outcome measures define the level of performance necessary to meet that goal. Furthermore, the Institute has established a set of required outcome measures that include the following three types: 1) the absolute level of student performance on state examinations; 2) the comparative level of student performance on state examinations; and 3) the value added to student learning according to year-to-year comparisons of grade level cohorts. The following table shows the outcome measures currently required by the Institute in each subject area goal, as well as a measure for NCLB. The school may have also elected to include additional optional goals and measures in its Accountability Plan.

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

The following data and discussion address the outcome measures under each of these five goals. As the basis for determining if a school has met the goals, the results of the various required and optional outcome measures provide the framework for evaluating the school's academic success under this renewal benchmark. If the school's Accountability Plan did not include measures similar to those currently required by the Institute, outcomes related to those additional measures are presented as well. Bold numbers appearing in the tables are the critical values for determining if a measure was met in a given year.

English Language Arts

Accountability Plan Goal: *Students at Harlem Village Academy will meet or exceed state performance standards for mastery of skills and content knowledge in the area of English language arts. Students will also demonstrate proficiency in advanced skills in the area of English language arts necessary for admission into and success in college.*

Outcomes: In absolute terms, last year during the fourth year of its charter, 53 percent of 7th and 8th grade students who had been enrolled for two or more years scored at the proficient level on the state examination. Notably, the percentage of proficient 8th grade students was greater than those in the 7th grade in contrast to state averages. The school exceeded the Annual Measurable Objective set by the state's NCLB accountability system and outperformed its local school district in both of the last two years. Harlem Village Academy performed about as well as predicted in comparison to demographically similar schools state-wide, though it performed better than predicted in the 7th and 8th grades. For the last three years the school has demonstrated consistent growth based on Stanford 9 results and performed above the national norm; however, last year none of the grade level cohorts achieved their growth target on the state examination.

Absolute Measures				
By the 5 th year of the charter, 75 percent of 7 th and 8 th grade students who have been enrolled in the school for two or more years will score proficient (i.e. at level three) on the New York State English language arts (ELA) assessment.				
Results (in percents)				
Grade	School Year			
	2003-04 (N=0)	2004-05 (N=0)	2005-06⁴ (N=43)	2006-07 (N=59)
3	-	-	-	-
4	-	-	-	-
5	-	-	-	-
6	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	60.5	50.0
8	-	-	-	54.1
All	-	-	60.5	52.5
Each year, Harlem Village Academy's aggregate Performance Index will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the state's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.				
Results (in percents)				
Index	School Year			
	2003-04 (N=0)	2004-05 (N=0)	2005-06 (N=151)	2006-07 (N=197)
PI	-	-	154	154
AMO	123	131	122	122

Comparative Measures				
Each year, the percentage of students who have been enrolled at Harlem Village Academy for at least two years performing at or above level 3 on the state ELA examination in each tested grade will be greater than that of the local community school district.				
Results (in percents)				
Comparison	School Year			
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06 (Grade 7)	2006-07 (Grades 7-8)
School	-	-	60.5	52.5
District	-	-	26.0	30.1
Each year, the school will exceed to at least a small degree its expected level of performance on the state ELA examination, according to a regression analysis controlling for students eligible for free lunch among all public schools in New York State.				
Results (in percents)				
Index	School Year			
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06 (Grades 5-7) (N=151)	2006-07 (Grades 5-8) (N=194)
Predicted	-	-	48.4	54.6
Actual	-	-	55.6	56.2
Effect Size	-	-	0.24	0.05

⁴ In 2005-06 New York State implemented English language arts and mathematics examinations in 3rd through 8th grade. Prior to that, examinations in these subjects were administered only in 4th and 8th grade.

Value-Added Measures				
For the 2005-06 through 2007-08 school years, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between their average NCE in the previous spring on the Stanford 9 reading assessment and an NCE of 50 in the current spring. If a grade-level cohort exceeds an NCE of 50 in the previous spring, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.				
Results (in percents)				
Mean NCE	School Year			
	2003-04	2004-05 (Grade 6) (N=48)	2005-06 (Grades 6-7) (N=80)	2006-07 (Grades 6-8) (N=130)
Baseline	-	59.2	60.8	51.6
Target	-	59.3	60.9	51.7
Actual	-	66.5	62.5	58.7
Cohorts Made Target				
	-	(1 of 1)	(2 of 2)	(3 of 3)
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 examination and 75 percent at or above level 3 on the current year's state ELA examination. 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.				
Results (in percents)				
Percent Level 3 & 4 on NYSTP	School Year			
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07 (Grades 6-8) (N=111)
Baseline	-	-	-	55.0
Target	-	-	-	65.0
Actual	-	-	-	57.7
Cohorts Made Target				
	-	-	-	(0 of 3)

Mathematics

Accountability Plan Goal: *Students at Harlem Village Academy will meet or exceed state standards for mastery of skills and content knowledge in the area of mathematics. Students will demonstrate further proficiency in advanced skills in mathematics necessary for admission into and success in college.*

Outcomes: Nearly all students at Harlem Village Academy scored at the proficient level on the state examination with a 95 percent proficiency rate in 2005-06 and 98 percent last year. In each grade the percentage of proficient students increased, culminating with 100 percent proficient in the 8th grade. The school has consistently achieved the Annual Measurable Objective set by the state's NCLB accountability system. It has exceeded the performance of the local school district by a wide margin, and performed far better than predicted in comparison to demographically similar schools state-wide. On the Stanford 9 students scored well above the national norm. In terms of growth on the state examination, all three cohorts achieved their target in 2006-07.

Absolute Measures				
By the 5 th year of the charter, 75 percent of 7 th and 8 th grade students who have been enrolled in the school for two or more years will score proficient (i.e. at level three) on the New York State mathematics assessment.				
Results (in percents)				
Grade	School Year			
	2003-04 (N=0)	2004-05 (N=0)	2005-06⁵ (N=43)	2006-07 (N=60)
3	-	-	-	-
4	-	-	-	-
5	-	-	-	-
6	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	95.3	95.7
8	-	-	-	100.0
All	-	-	95.3	98.3
Each year, Harlem Village Academy's aggregate Performance Index will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the state's NCLB accountability system.				
Results (in percents)				
Index	School Year			
	2003-04 (N=0)	2004-05 (N=0)	2005-06 (N=153)	2006-07 (N=192)
PI	-	-	178	183
AMO	136	142	86	86

Comparative Measures				
Each year, the percent of students who have been enrolled at Harlem Village Academy for at least two years performing at or above level 3 on the state mathematics examination in each tested grade will be greater than that of the local community school district.				
Results (in percents)				
Comparison	School Year			
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06 (Grade 7)	2006-07 (Grades 7-8)
School	-	-	95.3	98.3
District	-	-	34.0	38.0
Each year, the school will exceed to at least a small degree its expected level of performance on the state mathematics examination, according to a regression analysis controlling for students eligible for free lunch among all public schools in New York State.				
Results (in percents)				
Index	School Year			
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06 (Grades 5-7) (N=153)	2006-07 (Grades 5-8) (N=193)
Predicted	-	-	51.8	62.2
Actual	-	-	81.7	83.9
Effect Size	-	-	1.30	1.03

⁵ In 2005-06 New York State implemented English language arts and mathematics examinations in 3rd through 8th grade. Prior to that, examinations in these subjects were administered only in 4th and 8th grade.

Value-Added Measures				
For the 2005-06 through 2007-08 school years, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between their average NCE in the previous spring on the Stanford 9 mathematics assessment and an NCE of 50 in the current spring. If a grade-level cohort exceeds an NCE of 50 in the previous spring, the cohort is expected to show at least an increase in the current year.				
Results (in percents)				
Mean NCE	School Year			
	2003-04	2004-05 (Grade 6) (N=48)	2005-06 (Grades 6-7) (N=80)	2006-07 (Grades 6-8) (N=130)
Baseline	-	80.9	83.0	67.6
Target	-	81.0	83.1	67.7
Actual	-	84.3	78.9	77.8
Cohorts Made Target	-	(1 of 1)	(0 of 2)	(1 of 3)
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 mathematics examination and 75 percent at or above level 3 on the current year's state mathematics examination. 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.				
Results (in percents)				
Percent Level 3 & 4 on NYSTP	School Year			
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07 (Grades 6-8) (N=112)
Baseline	-	-	-	83.0
Target	-	-	-	83.1
Actual	-	-	-	92.0
Cohorts Made Target	-	-	-	(3 of 3)

Science

Accountability Plan Goal: *Students at Harlem Village Academy will meet and exceed state standards for mastery of skills and content knowledge in the area of social studies.*

Outcomes: In 2006-07, the first year that Harlem Village Academy had an 8th grade, it achieved its absolute target with 76 percent of 8th grade students performing at the proficient level on the state examination. Comparison data for the local school district are not available.

Absolute Measures				
In each year, 75 percent of 7 th and 8 th graders who have been enrolled in the school for two or more years will perform at or above level 3 on the New York State science examination. ⁶				
Results (in percents)				
Grade	School Year			
	2003-04 (N=0)	2004-05 (N=0)	2005-06 (N=0)	2006-07 (N=37)
8	-	-	-	75.7

Comparative Measures				
Each year, the percent of students who have been enrolled in the school for two or more years and performing at or above level 3 on the state science examination will be greater than that of the local community school district.				
Results (in percents)				
Comparison	School Year			
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07 (Grade 8)
School	-	-	-	75.7
District	-	-	-	NA

Social Studies

Accountability Plan Goal: *Students at Harlem Village Academy will meet and exceed state standards for mastery of skills and content knowledge in the area of social studies.*

Outcomes: The school came close to achieving its absolute measure with 62 percent of 8th grade students scoring at the proficient level on the state examination. Comparison data for the local school district are not available.

Absolute Measures				
In each year, 75 percent of 7 th and 8 th graders who have been enrolled in the school for two or more years will perform at or above level 3 on the New York State social studies examination. ⁷				
Results (in percents)				
Grade	School Year			
	2003-04 (N=0)	2004-05 (N=0)	2005-06 (N=0)	2006-07 (N=37)
8	-	-	-	62.2

⁶ The school's Accountability Plan measure refers to 7th grade performance in science; however, the state only administers science examinations in the 4th and 8th grades.

⁷ The school's Accountability Plan measure refers to 7th grade performance in social studies; however, the state only administers social studies examinations in the 5th and 8th grades.

Comparative Measures				
Each year, the percent of students who have been enrolled in the school for two or more years and performing at or above level 3 on the state social studies examination will be greater than that of the local community school district.				
Results (in percents)				
Comparison	School Year			
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07 (Grade 8)
School	-	-	-	62.2
District	-	-	-	NA

NCLB

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

Outcome: Harlem Village Academy has achieved this goal; it was deemed to be in good standing in each of the last four years.

Absolute Measures				
Under the state's NCLB accountability system, the school's Accountability Status will be "Good Standing" each year.				
Results (in percents)				
Status	School Year			
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Good Standing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

<p>Benchmark 1B Use of Assessment Data</p>	<p>1B The school has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and to use it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.</p>
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Harlem Village Academy has administered multiple assessments to monitor student learning and achievement. In addition to administering the New York State Testing Program (NYSTP) examinations, the school administers diagnostic assessments on a regular basis throughout the academic year, as well as weekly in-class assessments. In addition, Harlem Village Academy administered monthly Leveled Reading Assessments (LRAs). The latter reflects an extraordinary effort to develop internal reading assessments to monitor students' reading progress that, according to school leaders, has been adopted by New Leaders for New Schools and various high-performing charter schools.

In particular, evidence collected over the school's charter term indicates that the school's diagnostic assessment program has been the primary method through which Harlem Village Academy monitors its instructional program and predicts student mastery of state performance standards. However, while the school is to be commended for its commitment to this effort, the program lacks systematic implementation in the school's fifth year of instruction. For example, the school asserted that reading and mathematics had been the school's priority, while other subject area assessments were weak or non-existent. In particular, the school noted that it had struggled with imperfections in its writing assessments. Furthermore, the interval at which students are given the assessments has changed each year ranging between four and eight times a year over the term of the school's charter. According to school principals, it has been largely at the discretion of individual teachers as to when to implement them. At the time of the renewal inspection visit, and in the school's fifth year of instruction, diagnostic assessments had yet to be put into place school-wide.

Further, at the time of the renewal inspection visit, the school did not yet have a set of diagnostic assessments that were administered from year-to-year. Instead, teachers generally appeared to create assessments on an ongoing basis to cover material that would be or had been taught in their classes over the course of the interval. While school principals stated that teachers could refer to assessments that have been administered in the past, in practice, teachers reported that they did not administer diagnostic assessments that have been utilized in prior years. Because the diagnostic assessments were created at various points during the academic year and by individual teachers on an annual basis, it is unclear the extent to which the assessments would be valid and reliable measures of student mastery of state performance standards.

Despite the questionable reliability and validity of the diagnostic assessments in determining student mastery of state performance standards, Harlem Village Academy has developed well-defined methods to monitor students and to identify action plans to address student learning needs based upon an analysis of student performance on the diagnostic assessments. Specifically, the school has developed a protocol referred to as DIP, or Data-driven Instructional Planning, based on diagnostic assessments. In interviews, school principals explained that the protocol requires teachers to input student assessment data from diagnostic assessments into a spreadsheet that performs an analysis of student mastery of Village Academies' Standards and enables teachers to analyze the results by standard, student, or class. Renewal inspection team members collected evidence that some teachers composed a summary document analyzing the results by curriculum standard and student, and then

created an action plan for addressing standards that need to be re-taught in whole class and small group instruction. Teachers also: identified each student by their level of mastery over all the standards; stated when students would receive additional instruction; articulated which instructional strategies the teacher would employ; and identified whether the teacher would need additional assistance, resources, or materials to deliver the remedial instruction. The protocol required that teachers would then meet with school principals to discuss results and the plans. Harlem Village Academy has in place a clear system for analyzing student achievement data to inform instructional decisions.

The school has utilized this system, along with samples of previous state assessments, and an analysis of past performance on those exams, to inform instruction and school practices. For example, at the time of the renewal inspection visit, teachers reported that previous state performance examinations were given to them during the professional development offered each summer in order to inform teachers of important skills that their students should learn. Teachers then developed their scope and sequences accordingly, ensuring that the teaching of such skills was included in the teachers' planning for the school year. Moreover, Harlem Village Academy used state assessments to analyze the performance of the school as a whole and to make school-wide changes. For instance, partly due to the school's historically lower performance on English language arts state test scores as compared to that of mathematics, the school hired a literacy director in its fifth year of instruction.

Additionally, Harlem Village Academy collects student information through the Student Intervention and Action System (SIA). Although not explicitly linked to the monitoring of students' academic progress, the school utilizes the Student Information and Action System to gather student data on attendance, tardiness, homework completion, demerits/deductions, and other indicators. In place since the school's first year of instruction, the SIA system allows the school to monitor non-academic challenges that may impact students' academic performance, and provides a forum for the staff to problem-solve with students and their families around those challenges.

<p>Benchmark 1C</p> <p>Curriculum</p>	<p>1C</p> <p>The school has a clearly defined and aligned curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards.</p>
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Over the life of the charter, the school’s espoused curriculum has been based on state performance standards. In the school’s second year, school inspectors noted that the school’s staff demonstrated a widespread understanding and use of academic standards. According to the Institute’s Second Year Report, the school’s curriculum (referred to as the Village Academies’ Standards and created by the Village Academies Network) was originally based on the state and city English language arts and mathematics standards. At that time, individual teachers were making modifications to the Village Academies’ Standards by backwards planning based on the assessment results from the NYSTP. Inspectors noted that, by the time of the third year school evaluation visit, the Village Academies’ Standards were aligned to state standards and also identified the skills and knowledge that students were expected to have acquired at the end of each grade.

Consistent with that conclusion, the school’s executive director and school principals stated that through the Village Academies’ Standards they have identified what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. However, the renewal inspection team did not find clear and consistent evidence that teachers regularly utilize the Village Academies’ Standards to guide their instruction. The school’s curriculum (as implemented) remained largely undefined. Although school principals stated that teachers have access to scope and sequences to guide them in their lesson and unit planning, it was not apparent to school inspectors that this was the case. Teachers did not appear to have access to such scope and sequences. Further, requests by renewal inspectors for copies of the scope and sequences resulted in a range of materials, including a list of student learning objectives for 7th grade mathematics, and a copy of state performance standards for 8th grade mathematics, among other documents. In the absence of scope and sequences, there were (in some cases) lists of Village Academies’ Standards. However, the full set of Village Academies’ Standards was not made available to the renewal inspection team before, during, or after the renewal inspection visit. As a result, it was unclear if the Village Academies’ Standards or the scope and sequences serve as the precise definition of what students should know and be able to do at each grade level.

Consequently, it appeared that Harlem Village Academy has relied upon its teachers to continuously develop and refine their scope and sequences; this was true for content areas at both existing and new grade levels. Over the life of the charter, teachers at the school have utilized a variety of resources to create or revise scope and sequences across content areas and grade levels. When asked, “How do teachers know what to teach and when to teach it?,” one principal stated, “In math there has been a footprint to follow and materials from previous years and a solid teacher. In reading and writing, I think it has been a problem.” He later stated, “The reading and writing program is changing, so it is being worked on as teachers go along.” In fact, the school’s recently hired literacy director stated, “The curriculum is important to me because the teachers are working so hard to create, create, create.” Documentary evidence provided by the school subsequent to the renewal visit included an abundance of lesson plans, class work and homework assignments, as well as assessments, across content areas, but no clear set of scope and sequences for each content area and grade level. Furthermore, the leader of the school’s writing curriculum stated, “pieces of the [writing] curriculum were passed on, and that’s how it was developed [in the past].” As a result, although teachers had access to a multitude of resources when planning instruction, it is unclear which of these resources served as the primary guideline for teachers.

Consequently, the extent to which the school's curriculum (as implemented) has been aligned from grade-to-grade varied. In interviews conducted at the time of the renewal visit, principals noted that the extent to which instruction was vertically aligned differed by department. As one English language arts teacher reported: "There is no vertical connection to what teachers are doing above or below me." The social studies teachers reported that they only once discussed what skills to teach at each grade level, and mathematics teachers stated that they work on curriculum together only on an informal basis.

However, in its fifth year of instruction, the school recognized the curriculum gap (particularly in English language arts) and has, as a result, hired a literacy director and identified a mathematics director. The literacy director cited his two most urgent priorities for the school as equalizing the awareness of New York State standards across the school and beginning a scope and sequence across the grades. With respect to the school's writing curriculum, evidence that the school had begun to engage in a sound process of curriculum alignment was present at the time of the renewal inspection visit. Teachers of English language arts, in particular, reported looking forward to regular, focused content meetings with the literacy director as a support for curriculum development.

<p>Benchmark 1D</p> <p>Pedagogy</p>	<p>1D.1 The school has strong instructional leadership.</p>
	<p>1D.2 High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.</p>
	<p>1D.3 The school has programs that are demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically to meet the school's academic Accountability Plan goals, including programs for students who require additional academic supports, programs for English Language Learners and programs for students eligible to receive special education.</p>

Instructional Leadership

In the fifth year of instruction, the school had identified and prioritized the need to strengthen the English language arts program. In fact, members of the school’s leadership team unanimously identified improvement of the Harlem Village Academy English language arts program as a school priority. Moreover, school leaders have taken exceptional actions in line with that priority including: the hiring of a literacy director, which is shared with Leadership Village Academy Charter School (Harlem Village Academy’s sister school); the hiring of a master writing teacher to serve as a part-time writing coach; re-writing the school’s 5th through 8th grade writing curriculum; the development of multiple writing rubrics, including an interdisciplinary writing rubric to be used across content areas; the addition of a co-graded writing assessment; increased student accountability for the use of correct grammar in context; scheduled, in-house professional development for English language arts teachers, led by the part-time writing coach and/or literacy director; an additional 45 minutes of writing instruction in the 7th and 8th grades; the hiring of an additional 5th grade reading teacher to work with students receiving special education programs and/or services and low-level readers; increased student accountability for independent reading; the establishment of “reading nooks” in each classroom; field trips to local library branches; a school trip to a local bookstore, where students are given a certain amount of money to spend on books of their choice that are approved by classroom reading teachers; and bi-annual book fairs held at the school.

Throughout the life of the charter, the establishment and strengthening of the school’s culture has also been a top priority of the school and its leaders, teachers and students. At Harlem Village Academy, “school culture” refers to the disciplinary systems, the overall code of conduct of the teachers and students, the sense people (all school stakeholders and other school visitors) get when they enter the school, and how the school is perceived in the local neighborhood. Teachers’ highly routinized ways of delivering instruction and comporting themselves in the classroom and school has been part of a conscious and purposeful methodology to provide students with a highly structured learning environment in order to encourage students to act in respectful ways and enable a learning environment in which teachers have total control. Additionally, methods for promoting school culture play a central role in the Summer Institute, Faculty Handbook, Parent and Student Handbook. The school has invested time and resources in teaching all members of its community about its expectations with regard to school culture.

In addition, the school leadership has maintained a set of high expectations and high standards around student learning. In the school's third year, as described within the Third Year Report, inspectors noted that there were high expectations for appropriate student behavior, as outlined in the school code, and for student self-discipline, which included detailed rules and routines for homework, preparation, academic effort and behavior. In the fifth year school leaders continued to expect, and the school primarily produced, classrooms and a school environment focused on learning rather than behavioral problems. As one teacher said: "The three major priorities here are time on task, time on task, and time on task." In fact, the sense of extreme order in 9th grade classes and the high levels of student engagement in the classroom demonstrated to inspectors that students had internalized the school's norms over time.

Further, the school leadership has high expectations for student achievement. For instance, any score less than 80 percent is considered not passing. Members of the school's community, including principals, teachers, parents and students were clear in their understanding that were a student to generally garner Bs as final marks but receive a C+ in one class, that student would be considered not having passed that grade and would be offered summer school as a last chance to improve the deficient mark in order to be promoted to the next grade. As one teacher commented, "in other places, students just get moved along and schools are afraid to retain them, which basically passes the problem along. Here, the school sets high expectations and holds teachers and students accountable for performance."

Though there was a culture of high expectations and high level of accountability for students at Harlem Village Academy, there was not yet a system of high accountability for teachers at the school. Although the school has declined to renew contracts for underperforming teachers, and has provided the highest performing teachers with promotions and opportunities for career growth, formal qualitative evaluation of teachers' pedagogical skills at Harlem Village Academy remains a work in progress. In the school's third year of instruction, school inspectors noted that formal teacher observations were not fully implemented. This remained an issue at the time of the renewal inspection visit. In fact, school leaders saw themselves more as coaches than as evaluators. Furthermore, teachers at Harlem Village Academy have not received a formative or summative written evaluation of their pedagogical skill. Although the school has a Faculty Accountability Plan, which is based on the school's charter accountability plan goals, in an interview the school's executive director affirmed that teachers do not receive written evaluations (formative or summative) of their pedagogical skill in relation to the school's expectations for the delivery of instruction. Notably, in teacher interviews at the time of the renewal visit, teachers could not describe what the coming year would include in terms of evaluation, the basis upon which they would or would not be retained, or how their performance bonus would be determined. Nor were teachers familiar with the Faculty Accountability Plan.

Over the term of the charter, school principals have not had the time, training or experience to provide amply targeted coaching and feedback to teachers. This was especially true for the latter years of the charter period. In interviews, principals acknowledge having spent more time on organizational duties than on instructional coaching. Further, since at least the second year of the school's operations, the acting principals had no formal principal training (other than support from the school's executive director) on how to observe classrooms, provide high value coaching, conduct proper evaluations or insure vertical curriculum alignment. As the school's executive director stated, "We've realized that our best leaders come from within, but they don't automatically have all the skills and information to go into a new position just because they have the potential." For example, the school's current middle school principal, a former teacher at the school who demonstrated

leadership potential, reported that the school's executive director provides him with training related primarily to program and organizational management as opposed to leadership of the academic program. In contrast, he reported that the school's new literacy director is providing the principal with some training on how to be an academic leader: "On the instructional side I get a lot from [the new literacy director]. He has a strong background in what works in the classroom. We observed some classes together, and compared notes." However, although the school's literacy director has the experience to provide instructional leadership throughout the school organization, he commented to inspectors that his primary responsibility is to serve as a coach for the school's reading and writing programs, and that a secondary role is to provide support to the school's principals in terms of "how to look at literacy instruction."

The addition of the literacy and mathematics director positions in the school's fifth year provides a timely structure through which teachers may receive needed content-based coaching and feedback (particularly in English language arts). This organizational structure increases the likelihood that teachers will receive needed content-based coaching and feedback. The school's former middle school principal and current high school principal planned on transitioning into the role of mathematics director for the Village Academies Network, making him responsible for: scheduling observations and coaching sessions with mathematics teachers; providing assistance with writing diagnostic assessments and the DIP protocol; and reviewing lesson plans. Similarly, the school's literacy director described his primary role and responsibilities as the following: serving as a coach for all reading and writing teachers; facilitating team meetings among grade level and content area teachers; providing support to teachers with the administration of diagnostic assessments; modeling lessons; and providing support during curriculum development and alignment. This model has the potential to provide teachers, especially in English language arts, with robust content-based coaching and feedback that they have not received in the past.

Harlem Village Academy Charter School has experienced high levels of teacher turnover. Based on document review conducted at the time of the renewal inspection visit, inspectors concluded that between the first and second years of the school, Harlem Village Academy retained 60 percent of its teaching staff (3/5 teachers).⁸ However, teacher retention rates dropped significantly in the school's second year, and then increased slightly in subsequent years. At the time of the visit, the teacher at the school with the longest tenure had just begun her fourth year of employment with Harlem Village Academy. All remaining teachers were in their first or second year of employment. Members of the school community speculated that teacher turnover resulted from a variety of factors, including: promotion to administrative positions; pursuit of opportunities for higher education and professional advancement; life changes; relocation; contract non-renewal; a lack of instructional support; an overwhelming workload; a lack of a balance between work and life, and insufficient compensation for the demands put upon teachers (less money per hour worked than other schools and no state pension or benefits program). School principals and teachers stated that the ongoing teacher turnover has become a primary concern.

Consequently, school leaders have had to continually dedicate significant school resources to support teachers new to the school. The school has had to expend considerable resources on inculcating new teachers into the social and behavioral mores of the school. Also, because curricular development has largely been left to teachers, the consistent introduction of new teachers has led to significant annual curriculum revisions (especially in English language arts) thus contributing to instruction that

⁸ Not including teachers who were promoted to administrative positions.

was not always aligned vertically. Further, one principal indicated that teacher turnover “contributes to a lack of academic success” and exacerbates other issues at the school: “The amount of training that goes on, teachers creating new curricular materials, it increases their preparation time. It’s a huge drain on the resources of the school.” Also, teachers appeared to be generally concerned about teacher turnover. “It’s the undiscussed elephant in the room,” said one teacher. In fact, several teachers reported teacher turnover, or the need to keep existing teachers on staff, as a critical issue for the school.

In the fifth year of the school’s charter, some evidence suggested that school leaders have highly prioritized the recruitment and hiring of experienced teachers who have expertise teaching in their content areas. Additionally, the school has purposefully sought, and successfully secured, teachers with what school leaders call “passion” for the content area. In fact, many teachers interviewed by school inspectors during the school’s fifth year described being actively recruited while they were teaching elsewhere and being very impressed by the leadership, the “feel” of the school, and the promise of “extended” professional development.

Quality of Instruction

At the time of the renewal visit, high quality instruction was indeed evident and common at the school. The teaching format was standardized from class-to-class and student learning objectives were clear in every class. All classroom instruction followed a consistent format, including a do now, guided practice, mini-lesson, cool down and homework. Similarly, classrooms contained identical postings, such as VALUES (compassion, integrity, respect, community, leadership, effort), FOCUS (follow with eyes, on task, concentrate, up in my seat, silent until called on), Student Organization Checklist, Village Academies Core Values, and expectations for Warm Up and Cool Down activities. An academic aim, aligned to a state and/or Village Academies’ Standards, was posted on the whiteboard of each classroom visited. Teachers used instructional time efficiently and generally kept students on-task and engaged. Students were generally willing and compliant and seemed to understand what is required of them, especially behaviorally, while teachers were consistent in their insistence on focus and participation.

At-risk Students

Over the charter term, Harlem Village Academy has dedicated significant time and other resources to remedial programs designed to meet the needs of at-risk students. In the school’s second year of instruction, Harlem Village Academy established an inclusion model of providing services and programs to students with disabilities. In the school’s third year, inspectors observed teachers across the school implementing a variety of strategies that addressed the needs of diverse learners. At that time, the needs of students with diverse learning levels and instructional needs were met primarily through a multi-faceted approach that included re-teaching the whole class or individual students (depending on the results of monthly diagnostic assessments), small group instruction during the school day by content teachers, frequent checking for understanding, and pullout support in English language arts from the learning specialist for students who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and others who were struggling, as well as those students who needed speech-language support. Based on results of diagnostic assessments, as well as class work, mandatory after-school or weekly Saturday school was assigned. Summer school was also available for students whose promotion to the next grade was marginal.

In its fifth year of instruction, the school continued to devote substantial resources to providing students with special education needs with appropriate services. Through the Village Academies' Network, the school had access to a part-time special education coordinator committed to creating a philosophy of helping kids and assisting teachers serve students with special learning needs. The school had taken a proactive approach to addressing student needs by convening a team to collect data about a student's performance both in-class and on assessments, suggesting immediate strategies and interventions for teachers to implement, then measuring the effectiveness of any interventions. The special education coordinator organized the submission of any referrals. In addition, the coordinator had ensured that teachers received copies of all IEPs for students with special education needs, a fact sheet on each of the students' disabilities, a set of resources and strategies that have demonstrated success with those students and a glossary of special education jargon to help teachers interpret additional resources. The coordinator also met with grade-level teams to discuss individual students' needs at the beginning of the academic year and provided a general training to teachers during the Summer Institute to describe how student learning disabilities would impact the overall classroom learning environment. He summarized his approach to program oversight by stating, "If a kid has an IEP, I want it to mean something; I want the teachers to understand how to help their students. It's not just extra time on tests." Further, the special education coordinator reported Harlem Village Academy "embraces" special education, which is markedly different from the approach of other schools. For instance, special education teachers at Harlem Village Academy were called "academic coaches" to broaden their responsibility and lessen the stigma of students who met with them. As a result, according to the coordinator of special education, Harlem Village Academy students with disabilities requiring special education talk about how "brilliant" they are, a refrain which is not typical among such students in most schools.

At the time of the renewal inspection visit, the school reported that it had not identified any students as English language learners.

Harlem Village Academy has used creative approaches to secure additional support services for its students. Through the Village Academies' Network students have access to a social worker. The school also collected counseling Related Service Authorization vouchers (distributed by the community school district) from students' families and pooled them together to attract and hire an additional social worker. The school also pursued the formation of a cooperative with other area charter schools to aggregate vouchers for occupational and physical therapists. Additionally, utilizing surplus funds, in the summer of 2007 the school provided private tutors, some of whom went directly to students' homes, to work with students at-risk of academic failure.

Small group instruction (SGI, also known as "flex block"), was another example of the ways in which Harlem Village Academy provided additional academic support to students. Although the renewal inspection team was unable to observe SGI on the days of the renewal inspection visit, school administrators stated that remedial instruction in SGI could take a variety of forms, including homework help, a mini-lesson followed by additional guided practice, additional independent practice, and tutoring. A principal stated that classroom teachers were expected to administer informal assessments to their students over the course of each lesson and that teachers were to identify students for SGI based on these informal assessments. Additionally, mathematics teachers used the results of weekly informal assessments and quarterly diagnostic assessments to refer struggling students to SGI. Other teachers reported similar criteria for the use of SGI, almost exclusively identifying weekly assessments and student work.

Notably, since its second year of instruction, the school has had a Saturday Academy in place for students at-risk of academic failure. The Saturday program consisted of a four-hour block for six to eight Saturdays in the fall and then another several months in the spring. The ethos was to provide small groups of students focused attention to meet their needs. Instruction was planned by Harlem Village Academy teachers and staffed by teachers and tutors not employed by the school during the regular week. Based on classroom grades and student reading levels, school staff reported that approximately one-third of the student population had been invited to attend Saturday school at the time of the renewal inspection visit. The school also offered eight mandatory Saturday Academy sessions for all students of the school, taught by Harlem Village Academy teachers, in preparation for the NYSTP assessments.

Benchmark 1E	
Student Order & Discipline	1E The school’s culture allows and promotes a culture of learning.

Over the term of the charter, student order and discipline have improved dramatically. In comparison to the first year of operation, the school’s climate and student conduct improved in its second year. The school devoted time at the beginning of the second year to training students in appropriate behavior although classroom management improvement was still needed and inspectors observed numerous instances of students who opted out of learning at the time of the school’s Second Year Visit Report. Additionally, while inspectors observed numerous instances of awarding demerits, they did not observe instances of positive reinforcement in the school’s second year. At the end of the third year, school inspectors noted that in multiple instances, teachers needed to redirect students who were off task, slightly disruptive or slow to begin their assigned work. At that time, the inspection team was particularly concerned that some students had not yet internalized the school’s behavioral expectations, considering that the visit occurred in early May, at a time of year when patterns of classroom management should have been clearly established. School leaders acknowledged that this was an area of concern and that it seemed most prevalent in 5th grade.

In contrast, in the school’s fifth year of instruction, Harlem Village Academy had instituted various initiatives to encourage students to approach their learning with self-discipline and a focus on academics. When asked what aspect of the school he was most proud of, a principal stated, “Our 9th graders. Socially they are nice kids, they are smart. We’ve done a nice job educating these kids.” Similarly, the school’s founder and executive director responded in this way to the same question: “Student character. Our 9th graders are poised and polite... We’ve nurtured them deeply ... We’re raising children, we’re not just a school teaching subjects.” She elaborated: “I say we want joy and nurturing and strict discipline. All the rules are around a feeling of respect and love in the class and also rules that support learning. We try to teach them it’s not just a Village thing, it’s a polite thing to do... the behavior is not just about a rule, it is about being a person of character and a sophisticated person who could walk into a college campus and fit right in.”

Further, at the time of the renewal inspection visit, Harlem Village Academy was working toward diminishing the punitive aspects of its demerit system. The school had taken action to reaffirm desired behaviors in students by creating opportunities for student recognition, such as awarding 5th graders certificates and pencils for certain accomplishments, and all students with star patches that could be placed on their book bags as cumulative, quantifiable indicators of student recognition. The school had given each student a Scholar Score of 100 and encouraged students to maintain points in their scholar score as opposed to losing points for various deductions (formerly known as demerits). In addition, the school had created a set of logical consequences related to various behavioral infractions, such as homework detention to make up for missing homework assignments and late detention for students who are tardy to school. In fact, teacher interviews in the school’s fifth year indicated that several teachers accepted teaching positions at the school because they believed the school’s student order and discipline would allow teachers to focus intensively on academics.

<p>Benchmark 1F</p> <p>Professional Development</p>	<p>1F</p> <p>The school’s professional development program assists teachers in meeting student academic needs and school goals, by addressing identified shortcomings in student learning and teacher pedagogical skill and content knowledge.</p>
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The school provided a five-week Summer Institute prior to the start of each academic year to inculcate teachers to the school’s priorities and enable instructional planning. At the time of the renewal inspection visit teachers generally concluded that the Summer Institute was a valuable experience though many school staff expressed a desire for more content-focused professional development.

Over the life of the school’s charter, the Summer Institute has been one of Harlem Village Academy’s professional development delivery mechanisms. Each year, the Summer Institute typically consisted of three primary activities: orienting new teachers to the school’s system of preventative discipline, familiarizing teachers to the school’s expectations for the delivery of instruction and providing teachers with an opportunity to begin their instructional planning. Reflective of the teachers’ and school leaders’ overall dedication to the school, and a distinguishing factor from other schools, Harlem Village Academy teachers have foregone half of their summer vacation to participate in the Summer Institute. According to school staff, those five weeks of professional-development-related work represented more time than many other schools commit to professional development before and during the academic year. School leaders admitted that, because the Summer Institute was designed and led by school leaders who are extremely busy running the school during the school year, the Summer Institute could be better planned and executed in the future.

At the time of the renewal visit, teachers concurred that the Summer Institute was a valuable experience for inculcating teachers who were new to the school to Harlem Village Academy’s core principles and school culture. One teacher new to the school reported that the Summer Institute was “pretty good” and “I really liked getting exposed to the culture.” Another teacher said “I loved [the Summer Institute] because I felt I got the culture and it helped me feel prepared.” However, many school staff expressed a desire for more content-focused professional development. Teachers appreciated the time to develop the first few months of their classroom learning objectives. As one teacher stated, “The Summer Institute needed much more content, conversation and debate.” In fact, one of the principals stated that he would rate the Summer Institute’s effectiveness as “low.... I don’t think the tasks we’ve asked teachers to do are high level enough for there to be good gain.... It’s different every year, which is further evidence that we don’t [yet] know what works.”

During the academic year, the school was working on providing sufficient ongoing professional development in line with student learning needs and teachers’ professional practices and goals. There have been additional professional development opportunities in the form of teacher visits to other “excellent/model” schools, among several others. Also referred to as “Boundaryless Learning,” during the course of the school year, all teachers have been provided with, and take advantage of, certain “free” days to visit “high performing charter schools” to learn best practices. The school has not defined the formal expectations involved when visiting other schools nor any follow-up activities related to the visits, and indicated that the value of the visits rests in informal observation and assimilation of best practices. Additionally, although the school had provided intense support and feedback to teachers related to school and classroom culture building, there were no clearly

articulated and implemented teacher-specific professional development goals aligned with teacher needs. For instance, over the term of the charter, Friday afternoons have featured scheduled time for teacher professional development. Yet in practice many of those sessions appear to have focused on school culture and discipline issues rather than academic issues and needs. In fact, according to one school leader, the literacy director was hired, in part, based on his strength in professional development, an area school leaders identified in need of improvement.

Consequently, in its fifth instructional year, the school is planning more robust professional development during the academic year, with a focused set of professional development activities facilitated by content-area coaches. This included two hour professional development sessions every two weeks for English language arts teachers. Further, documentation submitted to the renewal inspection team after the conclusion of the renewal visit included a schedule of regular observations of teachers and teacher meetings with content-area coaches.

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
Benchmark 2A School Specific Non-Academic Goals	2A The school meets or has come close to meeting the Unique Measures of non-academic student outcomes that are contained in its Accountability Plan over the life of the charter (if any).

The school has no non-academic goals in its Accountability Plan.

Benchmark 2B Mission & Design Elements	2B The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.
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Harlem Village Academy has taken deliberate action to carry out, and largely meet, the components of its mission statement and key design elements.

During its initial charter period, the school’s mission was:

to prepare students to graduate from college and to contribute meaningfully to their families, communities, and nation.

It is difficult to measure to what extent the school tries to create students that contribute meaningfully to their families, communities and nation. However, the school indeed has attempted to instill in students a sense of the importance and attainability of post-secondary education. Additionally, numerous field trips to colleges took place in the fourth year of the charter and further trips were planned for the fifth year. Noteworthy is the fact that these trips are to colleges that are generally regarded as among the best in the country, including several Ivy League schools, thus helping to set student expectations of attending high caliber institutes of higher learning.

The school planned to meet its mission by focusing on the following key design elements:

- The Academic Athlete: Students commit themselves to the demands of academic rigor, just as athletes who take their sport seriously, savoring challenge and hard work, and loving it. This feature includes a longer school day and year, rich liberal arts curriculum shaped by standards of excellence, increased instructional time for reading and math, college planning beginning in 6th grade, school uniforms, meaningful interim assessment program, and a promotion policy based on achievement.
- The School as Village: Small, respectful learning environment where every adult knows every student, teachers provide personalized attention, and students feel a sense of connection. The school focuses on small learning communities, advisors for students, the teaching of values, high expectations for respectful conduct and speech, a Village Council for debate and reflection, and strong connection and frequent communication with families.
- Investing in Teachers: A system and culture designed to recruit, develop, support and reward excellent teachers, including grade level and departmental Kounaikenshuu (Japanese collaborative instructional strategy), ongoing instructional coaching, master teacher mentoring, and rewarding teachers based on the quantity and quality of their students’ work.

The ethos of becoming an “Academic Athlete” is to develop students’ self-discipline, hard work and a passion for learning just as a top athlete would train for his sport. Harlem Village Academy indeed focused on and promoted high degrees of self-discipline in its students. In fact, much of the focus of the 5th grade year at Harlem Village Academy has been on building self-discipline to behave appropriately, stay focused on the teacher and lesson, and arrive at school on time and complete homework. During a parent focus group at the time of the renewal inspection visit, several parents

noted a marked improvement in their children's self-comportment and self-discipline within just weeks of attending the school. Further, according to participants in the parent focus group and the Institute's Third Year Report, Harlem Village Academy students had a heavy workload, including significant homework during the academic year and summer and mandatory attendance at Saturday sessions one or two months per year to prepare for the state tests.

The "School as Village" philosophy was reflected in the ways in which the school has taught students to create a community of caring and respect. This was especially true at the end of the fourth year and during the fifth year of the school's operation. In the spring of 2007, parents of children who were admitted to the incoming 5th grade cohort were invited to attend one of several two-hour sessions with the incoming middle school principal in which the principal presented the ethos of the school, expectations, hard work expected of students, etc. Also, the newly hired Harlem Village Academy 5th grade director visited the home of every 5th grade student in order to meet the parents and welcome the parents and students to Harlem Village Academy. Additionally, Harlem Village Academy has demonstrated that it is responsive to parents' needs. For example, the school eliminated a four-week intersession between the second and third trimesters because the deviance from the New York City Department of Education school calendar was deemed too disruptive for families with students in other public schools.

In its fifth year of instruction, Harlem Village Academy was still working on fully meeting its "Investing in Teachers" principle. In its Application for Renewal, the school states "we firmly believe that effective teachers are the single most important factor in ensuring students' achievement. Providing each student with a team of highly motivated, highly competent teachers is more important than replicating successful programs or curriculum." While Harlem Village Academy has indeed invested significant effort into recruiting qualified teachers, the high rate of teacher turnover suggests that this is an area in need of improvement.

<p>Benchmark 2C</p> <p>Governance</p>	<p>2C.1 The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school’s mission and specific goals.</p>
	<p>2C.2 The board has implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes and has abided by them.</p>

The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school’s mission and specific goals by partnering with the Village Academies Network. During the Initial and Short Term Planning Year Renewal charter terms, the school board has maintained stable board membership, and has worked with the Village Academies Network to secure additional resources for the school. These included providing “back office” and other support services personnel that have allowed school employees to focus exclusively on teaching and learning, as well as fundraising support.

However, in the day-to-day operations of the school, the two entities have been largely indistinguishable. In fact, at the time of the renewal inspection visit, it was difficult for inspectors to identify which staff members were employees of Harlem Village Academy and which staff members were employees of the Village Academies Network. For example, during interviews conducted at the time of the renewal inspection visit, employees themselves were unable to confirm which entity employed them, including one of the Harlem Village Academy principals. The Institute notes that both the school and the network share the same executive director.

The blurring of lines between the two entities extended beyond formal lines of accountability however. Student uniforms at the school were embroidered with the “Village Academies” logo (instead of the name of the school, “Harlem Village Academy Charter School”), as were other materials present throughout the school, including classroom posters and other school materials distributed to teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Further, school community members regularly refer to the school as “Village Academy.”

When questioned by renewal inspectors about the practice of confounding the two entities, the school’s executive director and board members attributed the tendency to do so to the network’s desire to replicate the school’s model over time. However, at times, it has been unclear which entity accepts accountability for the school’s charter.

With certain exceptions, the Harlem Village Academy’s board of trustees has instituted and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes, and the school appears to have abided by them. Current policy status included the following.

- The fingerprint policy did not include proper provisions for emergency conditional appointment of new employees.
- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) policy and procedures did not include an access log that should be kept with each student’s folder to detail access. The school also had yet to develop request forms for changes to records, and did not have a list of persons with regular access available per federal regulations. Other minor deficiencies were present.

- The Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) policy had some minor deficiencies including the lack of required FOIL regulations.
- The discipline and attendance policies contained language that could be viewed as being in violation of due process or decisional law depending upon the application thereof. As a result, the Institute will review same and work with the school to amend the policies and clarify their nexus to the school's promotion policy. This process was used previously when the State Education Department raised an issue regarding the application of the school's dress code. The Institute notes that the school finds these policies central to school culture and academic success, and does not want to substitute the Institute's judgment for the school's.
- Neither the complaint policy nor the Institute's guidance on complaint appeals was available in the school office, which is a minor charter violation.
- The school had a sufficient employee manual.
- The only Open Meetings Law policy was the one in the charter.

Over the term of the school's charters, the school board, officers and employees appeared to be abiding by the school's code of ethics and by-laws including the conflicts of interest provisions during the term of the school's charters. As disclosed by Harlem Village Academy, individual school trustees personally lent the school funds in 2005 to assist in the purchase of a school facility. The school's outside auditor determined the interest rate on the loans and the school has stated the arrangement would not be repeated. The school's code of ethics was in need of some minor updates, but the by-laws were properly updated during the charter terms and the school appeared to be in compliance with both. The school board has also specifically reviewed school policies.

Benchmark 2D	2D	Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.
Parents & Students		

Several sources of information indicate that the parents of Harlem Village Academy students are satisfied with the school’s program, including parent satisfaction surveys, a parent meeting at the time of the renewal visit and waiting list data.

Each spring since 2005 the school has conducted a parent satisfaction survey. While the survey respondents represented only a portion of parents, the results indicated that each year over 87 percent of those responding rated Harlem Village Academy as an “A” or a “B,” including 99 percent of responding parents in June of 2007 (the school’s most recent survey administration).

During the renewal visit, inspectors facilitated a focus group in which parents were invited to share their perspectives on the school. Parents who attended were extremely satisfied with the school. They praised the academic program presented in a disciplined environment, and stated that they chose the school based on its reputation for academic rigor. They also indicated that their children are challenged to work for their education, citing difficult homework tasks and other assignments students have been expected to complete over the summer or during school vacations. Parents in attendance also praised the school for its focus on developing student character, and provided numerous examples of positive changes they have observed in their students since attending Harlem Village Academy.

Parents with students enrolled keep their children enrolled year-to-year. According to the Application for Renewal, over 83 percent of students returned to the school in its second and third years of operation. The student persistence rate dropped to 68 percent in the school’s fourth year of instruction due to a move from East Harlem to the school’s new facility in Central Harlem. Moreover, the high level of parent and community satisfaction is evidenced in exceptionally high enrollment demand. For the school’s fifth year of instruction, the school received 411 applications for just 60 open seats.

While these results are positive, attendees at a focus group conducted at the time of the renewal visit and survey responders represent only a small portion of parents. As such, the results and conclusions cannot be generalized to the parent population as a whole.

<p>Benchmark 2E Legal Requirements</p>	<p>2E The school has substantially complied with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.</p>
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During the term of Harlem Village Academy’s Initial and Short-Term Planning Year Renewal charters, a very small number of parents raised issues regarding the school’s application of its discipline policy. Alternative instruction and due process for suspended students were found to be deficient by the Institute but the school remedied the issues by working with the Institute. During the last year of the charters there were no complaints to the Institute or related issues.

Early in the school’s initial charter, the school often submitted items to the Institute late, and explained the tardiness by stating that the school was singularly focused on raising student achievement. As the charter term progressed the school’s response record improved and its performance in this regard is now on par.

As part of its renewal legal review, the Institute examined the Harlem Village Academy staff records for compliance with the teacher certification and fingerprint supported background check provisions of the Act as follows.

- One employee whose fingerprints had not yet cleared did not have a proper emergency conditional appointment.
- The school appeared to be in substantial compliance with the teacher certification provisions of the Act and the highly qualified teachers’ requirements of the NCLB. A few instructors had completed all requirements but were awaiting State Education Department review.

The school stated that it has retained Proskauer Rose LLP, a large New York City law firm, and contacts counsel frequently in areas such as human resources, facility development and general operations.

With the exceptions noted above and under Benchmark 2C.2, at the time of the renewal inspection visit, the school appeared to be in, and to have compiled a record of, general and substantial compliance with applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations and the terms of its Initial and Short-Term Planning Year Renewal charters. Also, the school generally has maintained effective systems and controls for legal compliance.

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
Benchmark 3A Budgeting and Long Range Planning	3A The school has operated pursuant to a long-range financial plan. The school has created realistic budgets that are monitored and adjusted when appropriate. Actual expenses have been equal to or less than actual revenue with no material exceptions.

For the term of its Initial and Short-Term Planning Year Renewal charters, the school has operated pursuant to long range plans, most recently revisited in the winter of 2006-07. Annual budgets have provided a realistic framework for the school’s spending activities and monitoring procedures are in place. The school has clearly articulated that the annual operating budget is driven by the needs of the academic program. Harlem Village Academy has implemented a comprehensive annual budget process that involves key school employees and includes a discussion of the school’s financial performance and academic priorities. Final budgets have been approved in a timely manner after incorporating feedback from the board.

The school has also implemented procedures for reviewing variances from the operating budget on a monthly basis. As part of the monthly review, the controller produces a forecast based on actual year-to-date spending, future spending commitments made by the school and the latest available revenue data. If shortfalls were expected in any expense categories monies were moved from other expense categories. In no case did the school increase its total operating budget.

Each quarter, the school board is provided with a quarterly financial report reviewed by the chief financial officer, executive director and controller. This financial information is typically reviewed with the school’s board treasurer prior to the board meeting. Any questions or concerns that the other members of the school board had are addressed during the board meetings.

<p>Benchmark 3B</p> <p>Internal Controls</p>	<p>3B</p> <p>The school has maintained appropriate internal controls and procedures. Transactions have been accurately recorded and appropriately documented in accordance with management’s direction and laws, regulations, grants and contracts. Assets have been and are safeguarded. Any deficiencies or audit findings have been corrected in a timely manner.</p>
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Based on interviews with staff and review of documentation, the school has established appropriate processes and controls related to payroll, procurement, safeguarding of assets and other financial matters. The school has a written financial practices manual that has been clarified and updated over time. Harlem Village Academy, through its direct relationship with Village Academies Network and indirect relationship with Leadership Village Academy Charter School, has been able to obtain experienced and high quality “back office” staff to effectively implement the fiscal, operational and strategic plans and activities of the school. A stand alone school of similar size would simply be unable to afford equivalent resources.

The financial duties are appropriately segregated amongst a wide number of staff including the controller, staff accountant, chief financial officer, vice president of business management, executive director, principal, director of business analysis, and the school board. The school has established appropriate processes to ensure that grant funds are properly accounted for and expenditures are made in accordance with grant requirements.

<p>Benchmark 3C</p> <p>Financial Reporting</p>	<p>3C</p> <p>The school has complied with financial reporting requirements. The school has provided the State University Board of Trustees and the State Education Department with required financial reports on time, and such reports have been complete and have followed generally accepted accounting principles.</p>
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The school’s record of compliance with financial reporting deadlines has been strong in the latter part of the original charter term. In the first years of operation, the school occasionally missed the deadlines for financial reporting. As the school moved out of its start-up phase and was able to hire more financial staff, the school’s record has been excellent with no material deficiencies.

Each financial statement audit report for the school has received an unqualified opinion. An unqualified opinion on the financial statements indicates that, in the auditor’s opinion, the school’s financial statements and notes fairly represent, in all material respects, the financial position, changes in net assets and its cash flows in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. All statements required by generally accepted accounting principles were included in the school’s financial statements.

The school’s annual audit reports on internal controls over financial reporting and compliance with laws, regulations and grants did not disclose any deficiencies in internal controls or instances of non-compliance. The lack of deficiencies in these independent reports provides some, but certainly not absolute, assurance that the school has maintained adequate internal controls and procedures. The purposes of the reports are not to provide assurance on internal control over financial reporting or an opinion on compliance.

Benchmark 3D Financial Condition	3D	The school has maintained adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations and has monitored and successfully managed cash flow. Critical financial needs of the school are not dependent on variable income (grants, donations and fundraising).
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The school completed the 2006-07 school year in stable and improved financial condition. Harlem Village Academy's overall fiscal strength has been aided by its shared use agreement with the NYCDOE for the last two years. The school's total net assets increased by \$119,085 and it finished with total net assets of \$343,927. The school increased its cash position by \$13,114. The school has property and equipment (net of accumulated depreciation and amortization) totaling \$175,873 that consists of furniture and fixtures, equipment, software and construction in progress.

The school has no long-term debt and leases space from the NYCDOE for \$1 per year. This shared use agreement has allowed the school to strengthen its financial condition over time. Harlem Village Academy has been prudent in its spending and done a fairly good job of maximizing the amount of funds spent on its program. The school has expendable net assets of \$168,048⁹ or 6 percent of its FY 2008 budget.

The school has generated adequate cash flow to support operations. Spending per student (total expenses, including grant related, divided by the revised approved enrollment) in each year was as follows:

<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>
\$ 18,432	\$ 10,999	\$ 13,489	\$ 9,996

⁹ Unrestricted net assets of \$343,921 subtracted by net property and equipment (\$175,873).

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	Renewal Question 4 Should the School's Charter Be Renewed, What Are Its Plans for the Term of a Future Charter?
Benchmark 4A Plans for the School Structure (mission, enrollment, schedule)	4A Key structural elements of the school's plans for the next charter period are reasonable, feasible and achievable.

Harlem Village Academy proposes a modification to its mission statement from:

Harlem Village Academy's mission is to prepare our students to graduate from college and to contribute meaningfully to their families, communities, and nation.

to:

The school's mission is to develop students of fine character who graduate from college and make a positive contribution to society.

Over the term of its next charter, Harlem Village Academy has proposed a unique and innovative structure which will ultimately allow it to create a 5th through 12th grade school. The school would continue to provide instruction in 5th through 8th grades over the full term of its renewal charter. In addition, the school has proposed to continue the expansion of the high school grades originally contemplated in its original charter application, growing by one grade for the remainder of the term of its charter and ultimately providing instruction through 12th grade by the third year of its renewal charter (2010-11). The high school program, however, would be co-located with its sister school, Leadership Village Academy Charter School.

The proposed model would enable a more enriching educational experience for the high school students, while allowing the schools to benefit from shared resources and economies of scale. At full enrollment, Harlem Village Academy students would comprise approximately 50 percent of the total high school enrollment (approximately 120 students out of a total 240 students). Leadership Village Academy Charter School would contribute the remaining 120 students. If approved for 5th through 12th grades, Harlem Village Academy would ultimately enroll 351 students in the last year of its proposed charter term (2012-13).

Harlem Village Academy plans to continue to offer its students an extended school year of approximately 190 instructional days. Students in 5th through 8th grades would attend school from approximately 7:40 a.m. through 4:45 p.m., and students in 9th through 12th grades would attend school from 8:30 a.m. through 5:00 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays, and 8:30 a.m. through 1:50 p.m. on Fridays.

Proposed daily and weekly schedules submitted by the school reflect that students in the proposed grade levels will meet or exceed minimum instructional time requirements for each subject. In addition, the school will submit requirements for graduation that are consistent with the standards set by the Board of Regents.

Therefore, the Institute concludes that key structural elements of the school's plans for the next charter period are reasonable, feasible and achievable.

Benchmark 4B Plans for the Educational Program	4B The school has clearly laid out its plans for its educational program, shown that it can implement that program and such program will allow the school to meet its Accountability Plan goals.
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In its Application for Renewal, Harlem Village Academy proposes the following key design elements:

- a rigorous liberal arts curriculum based on aligned academic standards;
- a longer school day allowing students time to master advanced content knowledge and explore their subject areas in depth;
- frequent assessment of student progress that drives continual improvement in instructional practice;
- tutoring and after-school programs for students needing extra attention;
- a small, safe, nurturing environment where every adult knows every child;
- a school culture emphasizing traditional values such as kindness, integrity, and responsibility;
- a personal advisor for each student and family;
- school uniforms that promote a culture of respect, scholarship, and community; and
- teachers who are masters of – and passionate about – their subject areas.

The school’s program would continue to be based on a traditional liberal arts curriculum. In the proposed high school, students would study English language arts, history, mathematics, science and Latin. Using the Institute’s curriculum framework template, Harlem Village Academy has submitted a curriculum crosswalk to New York State performance standards, which would serve as the basis for continued development of curriculum guidelines.

Harlem Village Academy would continue to base its instructional strategy on *kounaikensuu*, a Japanese practice of collaborative instructional planning. Further, the school would continue to administer its diagnostic assessments across all grade levels, and subsequently analyze student performance on those assessments using the DIP protocol. The school would continue its practice of providing small group instruction and after-school tutoring sessions for students who struggle, and would provide required IEP services within the school setting.

The school also plans to continue its commitment to school culture at the proposed grade levels, and intends to develop a character development course as part of the high school curriculum. In addition, the high school will strive to instill in its students a respect for community service in an effort to invest the relationship that its students have with community service by making them the providers instead of the recipients. The school will also cultivate internship opportunities and extracurricular activities for students in the high school grades.

Currently, the former principal of the Harlem Village Academy middle school serves as principal of the high school facility. As he transitions to the role of mathematics director, the executive director will recruit and hire a new high school principal.

With regard to professional development, teachers will continue to participate in the school's Summer Institute. In addition, teachers across all grade levels will receive individual instructional coaching through the recently hired literacy and mathematics directors.

In addition, the school has submitted a draft Accountability Plan. However, the plan requires significant revision should the school's charter be renewed. As a result, the Institute will work with the school board to ensure that an acceptable Accountability Plan will be submitted by May 15, 2008.

Benchmark 4C Plans for the Governance Structure	4C The school has provided a reasonable, feasible and achievable governance structure for the term of the next charter.
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Harlem Village Academy has submitted additional information regarding the school’s by-laws, code of ethics, board organizational chart, and a memorandum of understanding with the Leadership Village Academy Charter School. Although the Institute has conducted an initial analysis of these materials and found that they will provide a reasonable, feasible and achievable governance structure for the term of the next charter, it will also engage in an in-depth review of any additional materials developed prior to the commencement of the high school program.

The school has provided information on how the school board will continue to oversee the academic and fiscal performance of the school through a unique structure with Harlem Village Academy remaining accountable for the academic performance of its students in a co-located high school. First, it is noted that Harlem Village Academy and Leadership Village Academy Charter Schools share the same executive director and school board members. As part of its Application for Renewal, Harlem Village Academy has submitted a draft memorandum of understanding “to define the relationship, roles and responsibilities of the parties with respect to the educational program and management of their co-located 9th through 12th grades.” The Harlem Village Academy board would manage the affairs of the middle and high school grades in the traditional manner, and would execute a memorandum of understanding with the board of Leadership Village Academy Charter School. The draft memorandum of understanding states that the boards of both charter schools will “hire an executive director to manage the operation of the co-located grades, and furthermore delegate such powers to the executive director as necessary to manage the educational program, administration, and other activities of the co-located grades. The executive director must be confirmed by a majority vote of both parties’ respective board of trustees.” The school boards would agree to share the operating costs of the co-located grades based upon a percentage of total paid student enrollment. As stated within the draft memorandum of understanding, all employees of the co-located grades would be, for all purposes, active employees of Harlem Village Academy. Significant educational benefits as well as economies of scale would result from this arrangement.

The Institute has inquired about and has required further evidence to demonstrate that the board of Harlem Village Academy will retain full and active oversight over the school’s academic program, organizational viability, and fiscal soundness. The Institute also notes the potential for Harlem Village Academy board members to have conflicts of interest under the new school structure. The Institute has determined, however, that adequate provisions exist in the school’s charter, by-laws or code of ethics to handle such situations, and that the board members understand their duty of loyalty to each separate school.

The Institute’s recommendation as to the co-location of the high school is contingent upon whether Leadership Village Academy Charter School applies for, and is granted, authority to allow instruction to students in 9th through 12th grades in a setting co-located with Harlem Village Academy Charter School, and on provision and approval of adequate facility plans.

<p>Benchmark 4D Fiscal & Facility Plans</p>	<p>4 D The school has provided a reasonable, feasible and achievable appropriate five-year fiscal plan for the term of next charter, including plans for an adequate facility.</p>
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The school has presented a reasonable and appropriate fiscal plan for the proposed new charter period. The plan provides ample support to the school’s program with increased support for professional development and basic skills support. Long-range fiscal projections are more susceptible to error than those for a single year. Such projections are subject to revision due to changes in local conditions, objectives, and laws. The school will be required to develop and adopt annual budgets based on known per pupil amounts. A high percentage of the school’s five year budgets are devoted to personnel costs (more than 75 percent of total expenses), which is consistent with the school’s current budget and actual expenses last year.

The plan relies on continued high demand for enrollment in the school, which has been demonstrated by a reported waitlist of more than 350 students. Extending the current facility arrangements with the NYCDOE would also be necessary, as well as a seamless rollout of the high school program, including its integration with Leadership Village Academy Charter School. The school’s fiscal proposal shows the net cost of the integrated high school with Leadership Village Academy Charter School paying a prorated share of costs based on student enrollment. Without its sister school to help defray the costs of the high school program, Harlem Village Academy would need to consider adding new students to the high school to make the project viable. Given the limited number of open enrollment high schools in Harlem, it is highly likely that demand would far outstrip any available seats.

The school’s per pupil revenue projections start from current year revenue and increase by 3 percent per year, significantly less than the historical average increase over the life of the school (6.8 percent). The school, in conjunction with Village Academies Network, has already secured \$230,000 of additional startup grant funding that will help the school further develop its high school and provide a high quality educational program.

The school has proposed an appropriate staffing structure and projected non-personnel costs are based on the latest operating budget of the school as adjusted for inflation and an increase in students. The high school is expected to move into its own building in the 2010-11 school year. No facility capital costs are assumed as it is projected that fundraising will cover such costs. Village Academies has already obtained substantial financial commitments for the facility project totaling more than \$9 million. However, facility operations costs are assumed for custodial services, security and utilities. A contingency of 5 percent of revenues is assumed in the 2009-10 school year and in the ensuing years. Working capital is expected to increase each year in proportion to revenues. Capital expenditures are projected to be approximately \$80,000 each year during the renewal term. This covers both the replacement of current assets as well as incremental assets for the new students.

APPENDIX

An Overview of Renewal Requirements

The New York State Charter Schools Act of 1998 (as amended) (the “Act”) authorizes the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York to grant charters for the purpose of organizing and operating independent and autonomous public charter schools. Charter schools provide opportunities for teachers, parents, and community members to establish and maintain schools that operate independent of existing schools and school districts in order to accomplish the following objectives:

- improve student learning and achievement;
- increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at-risk of academic failure;
- provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system;
- create new professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators and other school personnel;
- encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods; and
- provide schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance based accountability systems by holding the schools accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.¹

In order to assist them in carrying out their responsibilities under the Act, the State University Trustees authorized the establishment of the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Among its duties, the Institute is charged with evaluating charter schools’ applications for renewal and providing its resulting findings and recommendations to the State University Trustees.

This report is the primary vehicle by which the Institute transmits to the State University Trustees its findings and recommendations regarding a school’s renewal application, and more broadly, details the merits of a school’s case for renewal. This report has been created and issued pursuant to the *Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University Board of Trustees* (the “State University Renewal Practices”).²

Statutory and Regulatory Considerations

Charters may be renewed, upon application, for a term of up to five years. There is no limitation upon the number of times that a charter may be renewed. The Act prescribes the following requirements for a charter school renewal application, whether such application be for an initial renewal or any subsequent renewal:

¹ See § 2850 of the New York Education Law.

² The *Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University Board of Trustees* (revised December 13, 2005) are available at www.newyorkcharters.org.

- a report of the progress of the charter school in achieving the educational objectives set forth in its charter;
- a detailed financial statement that discloses the cost of administration, instruction and other spending categories for the charter school that will allow a comparison of such costs to other schools, both public and private;
- copies of each of the annual reports of the charter school including the charter school report cards and certified financial statements; and
- indications of parent and student satisfaction.³

The Institute’s processes and procedures mirror these requirements and meet the objectives of the Act.⁴

As a charter authorizing entity, the State University Trustees can renew a charter so long as the Trustees can make each of the following findings (“Required Findings”):

- the charter school described in the application meets the requirements of the Act and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations;
- the applicant can demonstrate the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner;
- granting the application is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act; and,
- (if applicable) in a school district where the total enrollment of resident students attending charter schools in the base year is greater than five percent of the total public school enrollment of the school district in the base year: (i) granting the application would have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the proposed charter school; or (ii) the school district in which the charter school will be located consents to such application.⁵

Where the State University Trustees approve a renewal application, they are required under the Act to submit the application and a proposed charter to the Board of Regents for its review.⁶ The Regents may approve the proposed charter or return the proposed charter to the State University Trustees with the Regents’ comments and recommendation(s). In the former case, the charter will then issue and become operational on the day the current charter expires. In the latter case (return to the State University Trustees), the State University Trustees must review the returned proposed charter in light of the Regents’ comments and respond by resubmitting the charter (with or without modification) to the Regents, or by abandoning the proposed charter. Should the State University Trustees resubmit the charter, the Regents have thirty days to act to approve it. If they do not approve the proposed charter, it will be deemed approved and will issue by operation of law; as above, it will become operational upon expiration of the current charter.⁷

³ Education Law § 2851(4).

⁴ Further explication of these policies and procedures is available on the Charter Schools Institute’s website. See www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsRenewOverview.htm.

⁵ See Education Law § 2852(2).

⁶ See Education Law § 2852(5).

⁷ See Education Law §§ 2852(5-a) and (5-b).

Process for Initial Renewals

While the Initial Renewal process formally commences with submission of a renewal application, a school must work to make the case for renewal from the time it is chartered. From its inception, the school must build its case for renewal by setting educational goals and thereafter implementing a program that will allow them to meet those goals.

Under the State University's accountability cycle, a school that is chartered enters into a plan (the "Accountability Plan")⁸ setting forth the goals for the school's educational program (and other measures if the school desires) in the first year of the charter. Progress toward each goal is determined by specific measures. Both goals and measures, while tailored in part to each school's program, must be consistent with the Institute's written guidelines. When the Accountability Plan is in final form, it receives approval from the Institute.

Thereafter, the charter school is required to provide an annual update on its progress in meeting its Accountability Plan goals and measures (the "Accountability Plan Progress Report").⁹ This permits the school not only the ability to provide all stakeholders with a clear sense of the school's progress, but forces the school to focus on specific academic outcomes. In the same vein, both the Institute and the State Education Department conduct visits to the school on a periodic basis. The main purpose of the Institute's visits is to determine the progress the school is making in implementing successfully a rigorous academic program that will permit the school to meet its Accountability Plan goals and measures and to provide feedback to the school on the Institute's conclusions. Reports and debriefings for the school's board or leadership team are designed to indicate the school's progress, its strengths and its weaknesses. Where possible, and where it is consistent with its oversight role, the Institute identifies potential avenues for improvement. To further assist the school in this regard, the Institute may contract with third-party, school inspection experts to conduct a school visit to look specifically at the strength of the school's program and the evidence it is accumulating to support the school's case for renewal. The number, breadth and scope of visits that the Institute conducts depend primarily on the school's performance on standardized assessments.

By the start of the last year of a school's charter (as set forth above), the school must submit an application for charter renewal, setting forth the evidence required by law and the State University Trustees. Applicant charter schools are asked to formulate and report evidence of success in answer to four renewal questions:

1. Is the school an academic success?
2. Is the school an effective, viable organization?
3. Is the school fiscally sound?
4. What are the school's plans for the term of the next charter and are they reasonable, feasible and achievable?

The application is reviewed by Institute staff. The staff also conducts a desk audit to both gather additional evidence as well as verify the evidence the school has submitted. This audit includes examination of the school's charter, including amendments, Accountability Plan, Accountability Plan

⁸ See <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsAccountability.htm> for detailed information on Accountability Plan guidelines.

⁹ See <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsAccountability.htm> for a model Accountability Plan Progress Report.

Progress Reports, Annual Reports and internal documents (such as school handbooks, policies, memos, newsletters, and board meeting minutes). Institute staff also examines audit reports, budget materials, and reports generated over the term of the school's charter both by the Institute and the State Education Department.

Thereafter, the Institute conducts a multi-day site visit to the school. Based on a review of each school's application for charter renewal, the leader of the Institute's renewal visit team works with the school's leadership to design a visit schedule and request any additional documentation the team may require to ensure that analysis of the school's progress is complete. Renewal visit team members conduct a variety of activities to get a sense of the educational program and determine if there are material deficiencies. These activities include: visiting classes, observing lessons, examining student work and other documents, observing school meetings, interviewing staff members and speaking informally with students. In addition, the team conducts extensive interviews with the school's board of trustees and administrators.

The evidence that the Institute gathers is structured by a set of *Qualitative Education Benchmarks*, often referred to as the "Renewal Benchmarks," that are grouped under the four renewal application questions listed above. These benchmarks are linked to the Accountability Plan structure and the charter renewal requirements in the Act; many are also based on the correlates of effective schools.¹⁰

Following the visit, the Institute's renewal team finalizes the analysis of all evidence generated regarding the school's performance. The Institute's renewal benchmarks are discussed and the lead writer uses the team's evidence and analysis to generate comments under each renewal benchmark. The team members' completed benchmark comments present a focus for discussion and a summary of the findings. The benchmarks are not used as a scorecard, do not have equal weight, and support—but do not individually or in limited combination provide—the aggregate analysis required for the final renewal recommendation. The Institute then prepares a draft report and provides a copy to the school for its review and comment. The draft contains the findings, discussion and the evidence base for those findings, as well as a preliminary recommendation.

The following renewal outcomes are available to schools that are in their first charter period.¹¹ Each outcome contains specific criteria that a school must meet in order to be eligible for that outcome. These criteria are keyed to one or more of the Required Findings. In addition to any specific criteria set forth in a particular outcome, a school, to be eligible for any type of renewal, must be able to provide evidence that permits the State University to make *each* of the Required Findings:

- *Early Renewal*: available to a school that after three years of operation has accumulated three years of data in multiple grades on all or nearly all of the standardized assessment measures set forth in its Accountability Plan and for the last two years has met or come close to meeting its Accountability Plan academic goals based on its performance on those measures. In addition, the State University must find that the educational program, as assessed by the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, is sound and effective. Early Renewal will be for a full-term of five years only.
- *Short-Term Planning Year Renewal*: available to a school that has taken one or more planning years and has yet to be renewed. The renewal term will be equal in length to the

¹⁰ See <http://www.effectiveschools.com>.

¹¹ A school that is awarded a short-term planning year renewal is still considered a school in its initial charter period when it comes again to renewal in its fifth full year of operation.

number of planning years the school has taken. The State University Trustees must be able to determine that the educational program will be sound during the next charter period based on the available outcomes on the standardized assessment measures and any data available as gathered using the Qualitative Education Benchmarks.

- *Full-Term Renewal*: available to a school in its fifth year, Full-Term Renewal is for the maximum term of five years. In order for a school to be eligible for Full-Term Renewal, a school must at the time of renewal either (a) have compiled a strong and compelling record of meeting or coming close to meeting its Accountability Plan academic goals, and have in place at the time of the renewal review an educational program that, as assessed by the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, is effective or (b) made strong overall progress towards meeting its Accountability Plan academic goals and have in place at the time of the renewal review an educational program that, as assessed by the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, is particularly strong and effective.
- *Renewal with Conditions*: available to a school that (a) meets the standards for Full-Term Renewal or Short-Term Renewal as regards its educational program, but that has material legal, fiscal or organizational deficiencies that cannot be fully corrected by the time of renewal — so long as such deficiencies are not fatal to making each and every other required finding, or (b) meets the standards for Full-Term Renewal or Short-Term Renewal as regards some portion of its educational program, but requires conditions to improve the academic program. Such conditions may include, but are not limited to, restrictions on the number of students and grades served. Conditions may also be imposed that are consonant with the requirements of NCLB as to schools requiring corrective action. Where appropriate, conditions may be imposed which if not met by the school shall be deemed a substantial and material violation of the school's charter and therefore expose the school to probation or charter revocation.
- *Short-Term Renewal*: available to a school in its fifth year that (a) has compiled an ambiguous or mixed record of educational achievement as measured by the school's progress toward meeting its Accountability Plan academic goals, but that has in place and in operation at the time of the renewal review an academic program of sufficient strength and effectiveness, as assessed by the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, that will likely result in the school's being able to meet or come close to meeting those goals with the additional time that renewal would permit or (b) has compiled an overall record of meeting or coming close to meeting its Accountability Plan academic goals but that at the time of the renewal visit, has in place an educational program that, based on its assessment pursuant to the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, is inadequate in multiple and material respects. Typically, but not always, Short-Term Renewal will be for two years. Short-Term Renewal may also be coupled with conditions relating to educational, organizational, fiscal or legal deficiencies.
- *Restructuring Renewal*: available to a school that does not meet the standards for any type of renewal but which submits plans to the State University Trustees for a restructuring of the school that legally commits the school to implementing a wholesale restructuring of the education corporation, including, but not necessarily limited to, a new board of trustees, administrative team, academic program, organizational structure, and such plans, if implemented, would lead to the school likely meeting its standardized

assessment measures set forth in its Accountability Plan during the next charter period. Whether to permit a school to submit an application for a Restructuring Renewal is at the discretion of the State University.

- *Non-Renewal*: where a school does not present a case for any kind of renewal, the charter will not be renewed and the charter will be terminated upon its expiration.

Upon receiving a school's comments on the draft report, the Institute reviews its draft, makes any changes it determines are necessary and appropriate and renders its findings and recommendations in their final form. The report is then transmitted to the Committee on Charter Schools of the State University Board of Trustees, the other members of the State University Trustees and the school itself. This report is the product of that process.