



# Charter Schools Institute

*The State University of New York*

## Independent School Evaluation Visit Reports

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# **External Evaluation Report of Icahn Charter School 2**

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**Conducted by RMC Research  
on Behalf of  
the SUNY Charter Schools Institute**

**2008-09**

**June, 2009**



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## ***1. Executive Summary***

Icahn Charter School 2 (“Icahn 2”) was visited by an external school inspection team from RMC Research on behalf of the Charter Schools Institute on May 19 and 20, 2009. The school opened in 2007 and, at the time of the visit, served 147 students in kindergarten through third grade. There was a program in place for assessment, including both formal and informal assessments, the results of which were used to monitor student progress, identify students for targeted instruction, and group students for instruction and re-teaching needed skills. This was the first year that Icahn 2 administered the New York State third grade assessments in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. At the time of the visit, the principal reported that all third grade students scored at or above proficiency levels on the ELA assessment. The mathematics results had not yet been returned to the school. The principal met with teachers weekly to analyze the data and to use them to plan and monitor instruction. The assessment program at Icahn 2 was comprehensive and systematic.

Icahn 2 replicated the academic program successfully implemented at Icahn Charter School 1. Core Knowledge was the basis of the curriculum. Commercial programs in ELA, science, social studies and other areas were used as resources to teach the curriculum. The curriculum was aligned to New York state standards and was consistently implemented throughout the school.

The inspection team observed high quality instruction being implemented in most classes in the school. Instruction in the classes of several new teachers was not as rigorous. The model for instruction throughout the school included a whole group lesson followed by small group instruction organized by ability. Every class had either a full-time or shared educational assistant who worked with students in their small groups.

The principal provided strong instructional leadership. She was involved in all aspects of teaching and learning and had established high expectations for staff and students. The principal utilized resources effectively. She developed a system for evaluating teacher effectiveness and for providing professional support to improve teachers’ practices.

The program for at-risk students, including special education students and English language learners, was well developed. Students were supported in the classrooms through flexible grouping based on data and in small pull-out groups by targeted assistance teachers. Teachers also provided instruction for struggling students after school and on Saturdays. Icahn 2 had a pupil personnel committee (PPC), which met to discuss strategies to improve the performance of at-risk students.

Icahn 2 implemented a code of conduct which had been developed at Icahn 1. Additionally, the school was piloting a behavior control system in kindergarten and first grade for possible replication throughout the school. The school environment was safe and orderly, and behavioral expectations for students were high.

Professional development was primarily individualized to meet the needs of each teacher. The content of the training and support was based on student achievement data. A full-time literacy staff developer was hired during the 2008-09 school year to provide continuous, internal professional support. Outside consultants in literacy and mathematics also continued to improve

teachers' pedagogical skills. All evidence suggested that the professional development plan was comprehensive and effective.

All aspects of the school's mission and design elements were being implemented faithfully. The superintendent for Icahn schools provided guidance and support to ensure that the school replicated the successful program at Icahn 1 with integrity and fidelity.

Parents and students expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the school. The inspection team observed effective daily operations and noted that ample resources were maximized to support the strong academic program.

The board was experienced and knowledgeable about their role and responsibilities to provide oversight and support to Icahn 2.

## 2. *School Description*<sup>1</sup>

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approved the application to establish the Carl C. Icahn Charter School Bronx North on January 24, 2006, and its charter was subsequently issued by operation of law in September of that same year. Note: The school requested, and the State University Trustees approved, a charter revision changing the school's name to: Icahn Charter School 2 ("Icahn 2") in March of 2009. The school is located at 1535 Story Avenue in the Bronx, sharing a facility with P.S. 93.

Following a planning year (2006-07), the school opened in September of 2007 with an initial enrollment of 109 students in Kindergarten through second grade, adding a third grade in 2008-09 with an enrollment of 147 students. The school plans to add an additional grade each year, ultimately serving students in Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade with an expected enrollment of 216 students by the end of its initial charter term.

Icahn 2 partners with The Foundation for a Greater Opportunity ("The Foundation"). The Foundation is a not-for-profit organization which supports organizations that assist children from low income, financially needy families, including educational programs, with a specific commitment to charter schools in New York City. The Foundation has provided financial resources to the school, helping to defray start-up costs and cover the gap between expenses and revenue during the initial years of operation.

As of the date of the current evaluation visit, the school's board of trustees was comprised of the following individuals:

- Mr. Carl C. Icahn, President;
- Ms. Gail Golden, Vice-President;
- Ms. Julie Goodyear, Secretary;
- Ms. Tina Marsh, Treasurer;
- Ms. Tamara Delgado;
- Mr. Seymour Fliegel;
- Ms. Karen Mandelbaum;
- Mr. Robert Sancho; and
- Mr. Edward Shanahan.

Icahn Charter School 2 is a replication of Icahn Charter School 1 (formerly known as Carl C. Icahn Charter School), also located in the Bronx. The board members noted above also oversee Icahn Charter School 1, and two additional replication schools: Icahn Charter School 3 and Icahn Charter School 4.

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<sup>1</sup> This section was provided by the Charters Schools Institute for inclusion in this report.

The school’s mission statement is as follows:

*Icahn Charter School 2, using the Core Knowledge curriculum developed by E.D. Hirsch, will provide students with a rigorous academic program offered in an extended day/year setting. Students will graduate armed with the skills and knowledge to participate successfully in the most rigorous academic environments, and will have a sense of personal and community responsibility.*

Key design elements of Icahn Charter School 2 include:

- Core Knowledge curriculum;
- small class size (18 students per class);
- extended school day and year to have more time for instruction and reduce the loss of mastery over school vacations;
- employment of real life applications and hands-on learning opportunities to make curriculum “immediate” for students;
- high standards for instruction through ongoing and professional development;
- encouraging strong parental involvement; and
- offering numerous after school academic, recreational and sports programs as well as Saturday Academy classes in English language arts and Mathematics.

**School Year (2008-09)**

187 instructional days

**School Day (2008-09)**

8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Enrollment**

School Year	Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment <sup>2</sup>	Chartered Grades	Complying
2006-07	Planning year	Planning year	Planning year	Planning year
2007-08	108	109	K-2	Yes
2008-09	144	147	K-3	Yes
2009-10	180		K-4	
2010-11	216		K-5	

<sup>2</sup> Actual enrollment per the Institute’s Official Enrollment Table. Note that the New York State Education Department School Report Card and Database, upon which the Free and Reduced lunch figures are calculated, may represent slightly different enrollment levels depending on the date in which this data was collected.

**Demographic Data**<sup>3</sup>

	<b>2007-08</b>	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of CSD #8 Enrollment
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0
Black or African American	53.0	28.0
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	2.0	4.0
Hispanic	44.0	62.0
White	2.0	6.0
Multiracial	0	0
<b>Special Populations</b>		
Students with Disabilities	6.0	NA
Limited English Proficient	10.0	12.0
<b>Free/Reduced Price Lunch</b>		
Eligible for Free Lunch	57.0	75.0
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	24.0	9.0

<sup>3</sup> Source: 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08 School Report Cards (New York State Education Department). Note the State Education Department does not report special education data.

### **3. Benchmark Analysis**

#### Use of Assessment Data

Icahn Charter School 2 had a program in place for assessment. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) was administered to students in kindergarten through third grade each spring. Additionally, incoming kindergarten students took the ITBS prior to entering school in September. The data resulting from the administration of the ITBS were used to identify students in need of targeted assistance. Fox in the Box was the English language arts (ELA) assessment used in all Icahn charter schools and by Icahn 2 through the fall of 2008. However, the school sought and received permission from the superintendent of the Icahn school network to pilot the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and the associated mCLASS: Reading 3D assessments for reading comprehension. These assessments were substituted based on the view of the administration that they would provide greater detail and more useful information than Fox in the Box. Icahn 2 purchased the technology services of Wireless Generation and three times a year, using a hand-held device to enter student responses, teachers were able to upload data into a computer program to receive almost instantaneous results. The printouts provided information about individual students' and class progress on all DIBELS measures. The mCLASS: Reading 3D assessments complemented the skill-based DIBELS assessments by measuring students' abilities to use the skills to access and understand text. Also available through the software package purchased by the school were links to instructional resources and instructional strategies to remediate deficiencies. The data from DIBELS and Reading 3D were used by teachers to regroup students and re-teach skills. Reading 3D also provided Fountas and Pinnell levels for independent reading. These data were also used to identify students for targeted instruction. Icahn 2 reported that the DIBELS and 3D assessments and the resources provided were aligned to the Macmillan/McGraw Hill Treasures literacy program.

The Treasures placement tests were administered to identify the appropriate instructional level of each student. The end-of-unit tests were administered every four weeks in kindergarten and the Treasures weekly assessments were administered in first through third grades. Icahn 2 also implemented the Waterford reading assessments in kindergarten through second grade as a supplemental evaluation of basic skills to provide additional information to teachers for flexible grouping. The Waterford results linked literacy skills to comprehension and were very easy to explain to parents. Waterford assessments were taken online by students and the printouts provided data that were also used by teachers to identify areas for re-teaching. The Macmillan/McGraw Hill Math Connect mid-chapter and end-of-chapter tests were used to assess mathematics instruction in kindergarten through third grade. Weekly assessment data were collected and entered onto a spreadsheet and comprised what staff referred to as "box scores." These provided both an overview of class and individual student progress as well as an item analysis to inform instruction. These data were also reported to be employed for re-teaching as necessary and for the creation of professional development to help teachers understand strategies to use. The school's staff developer indicated that it was helpful to document student performance in as many ways as possible as well as to "offer the students different modalities." In third grade, supplementary assessments to prepare students for the New York State assessments, Curriculum Associates Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies (CARS/STARS) materials, were used. They were reported by the principal and staff developer

to be embedded in the curriculum and were used as both an instructional tool and an assessment to monitor progress. This was the first year that students in Icahn 2 participated in the New York State Testing Program (NYSTP). At the time of the visit, the results of the third grade English language arts assessment were known and the principal reported that all students scored on or above proficiency levels.

The principal met with teachers every week to analyze all assessment data and to support teachers to identify needed strategies to improve instruction in the areas of concern, as identified by the results, and to assist teachers with strategies to spiral instruction. The preponderance of teachers maintained assessment binders containing data that were accessible to them for planning. Teachers understood the meaning of the results and their implications for classroom instruction. Assessment data were communicated to parents six times a year through progress reports.

### Curriculum

Icahn 2 used a clearly defined curriculum which was created at Icahn 1 and replicated at this school. The Core Knowledge program was the basis for the curriculum/scope and sequence in English language arts, science, social studies and other curriculum areas. All programs used were considered as resources to implement the Core Knowledge curriculum. Macmillan/McGraw Hill Treasures was used as the English language arts resource and Macmillan/McGraw Hill's Math Connect program was the resource used for mathematics in all grades. A series of curriculum units had been created at Icahn 1 which included developmentally appropriate project-based learning. Aligned to the curriculum scope and sequence, these units were implemented throughout the year. Three times a year, end-of-unit celebrations occurred in which students presented their final projects.

The curriculum was aligned to the New York state standards and was consistently implemented by all teachers throughout the school. The inspection team observed that teachers had access to all programmatic materials needed to implement the curriculum and saw evidence of articulation and collaboration among the classroom, targeted assistance and other support teachers to implement the curriculum. Teachers developed and used lesson plans that were aligned to the school's curriculum. School inspectors concluded that there was a comprehensive and clearly defined curriculum that was implemented with fidelity and integrity throughout the school.

### Pedagogy

In most classes, team members observed instruction that was rigorous and differentiated to meet the needs of students. In two cases, teachers new to the school who were still learning to use the programs were not yet familiar with all aspects of the lessons as outlined in the teachers' guides. These teachers were also observed providing incorrect information to students and accepting incorrect answers. In nearly all classes, pacing of the lessons was appropriate. Students were engaged and lessons followed the scope and sequence of the curriculum. In many classes, teachers were asking thought provoking questions that required students to make inferences and explain their answers. The exceptions were some new teachers who, at times, asked literal questions that did not require full explanations. Every classroom had either a full or part-time educational assistant. The school format for instruction began with a whole group lesson,

followed by small group instruction organized by ability. In most cases, the team observed that these small group lessons were led by the teachers, the educational assistants and push-in targeted assistance teachers. Evidence suggested that there was high quality instruction occurring in the preponderance of classes.

### Instructional Leadership

The principal was selected for her position in December 2006, during the school's planning year. She was recruited to replicate the design and curriculum of Icahn 1. The principal recruited and trained staff and opened the school in September 2007. The inspection team observed her to be a strong instructional leader who was involved in all aspects of teaching and learning in the school. The team recognized that the school was in existence for less than two years and was in the early stages of development. The principal was still leading the staff to develop school routines and procedures to provide effective instruction that would be embedded throughout the building. She had established high expectations for staff and students and had already developed a system for evaluating teacher effectiveness and for providing professional support to improve teachers' practices. During the 2008-09 school year, recognizing that the relatively new staff needed additional support and since there was no assistant principal, the principal hired a full-time literacy staff developer to work with her as part of the administrative team. The staff developer shared responsibility for supporting the implementation of the ELA curriculum with the principal. She focused primarily on the early childhood grades and made suggestions to the principal about changes and improvements to the school's literacy program. The staff developer had brought DIBELS and Reading 3D to the attention of the principal, both of which were adopted and being used in the school at the time of the visit. The principal regularly conducted a minimum of two formal observations, using an evaluation checklist developed at Icahn 1, which provided written feedback to teachers. The principal also conducted informal observations during daily walkthroughs. Feedback to teachers about what was observed occurred through conversations during the day and sometimes through "modeling on the spot" if the principal observed an instructional practice that required correction. Additionally, she met with teachers weekly to provide support in using data to modify their instruction. The principal worked with the staff to construct a comprehensive professional development program that was responsive to the needs of students and teachers. She structured a system for providing scaffolded services for struggling students and ensured that adequate resources were provided to all teachers to allow them to function at high levels. The inspection team concluded that Icahn 2 had effective instructional leadership that has the potential to support the continuous positive development of the school.

### At-Risk Students

Icahn 2 had established a strong system to support at-risk students. At the time of the visit, there were two students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) and ten students identified as English language learners (ELLs). The principal reported that, since the school opened, five students formerly identified as ELLs had tested out of the program and were effectively decertified. The students still identified as ELLs were making progress and were considered to be advanced and potentially ready to test out of the program as well. A special education teacher from the New York City Department of Education came to the school twice a week to provide two and a half hours of special education teacher support services (SETSS) to the identified

students. The ELLs were served by a certified English as a second language (ESL) teacher on staff. She taught students in both push-in and pull-out models using the Scott Foresman ESL program as a resource for instruction. These students and others at risk were supported by their classroom teachers through flexible grouping based on data. They received additional support from targeted assistance teachers on staff designated to provide instruction to remediate their specific areas of deficiency. The composition of targeted assistance groups was also flexible and dynamic based on the most recent assessment data. Students at risk were served in the regular classrooms, in small pull-out groups, after school and on Saturdays. In addition, the school had a pupil personnel committee (PPC), consisting of the principal, the staff developer, the ESL teacher and the involved classroom teacher meeting once a month or more often, if needed, to discuss strategies to improve the academic and behavioral performance of identified students. As noted earlier, time was scheduled for teachers to articulate and coordinate with intervention and other support teachers. This coordination also occurred at weekly data analysis meetings during which the course of instruction for the following week was determined. Icahn 2 consistently assessed and examined data for student progress and to determine instructional interventions for struggling students.

### *Student Order and Discipline*

Icahn 2 utilized the code of conduct which had been developed at Icahn 1. This code of conduct was published in a student handbook and was understood and utilized by teachers in all classrooms. Since the prior external visit, Icahn 2 had taken steps to develop a comprehensive system of discipline throughout the school. In order to help students monitor their own behaviors, the school's behavior control system consisted of charts that listed different categories of behavior such as "radical red," "okay orange," and "bad news blue." It was being piloted in kindergarten and first grade for potential replication in all grades. At the time of the visit, the reactions to the effectiveness of this behavior monitoring system were positive from teachers, parents and students. The quality of classroom management was consistently high throughout the school. The inspection team concluded that Icahn 2 had clearly established a safe and orderly environment that supported teaching and learning.

### *Professional Development*

The inspection team noted that Icahn 2 had developed a comprehensive professional development plan that was data driven to meet the needs of the students and was largely differentiated to address the needs of teachers. As an example, when test results demonstrated difficulty on the part of students to understand and use word endings such as "y" and "ies" appropriately, professional development sessions were planned to help teachers understand how to better address this issue. During the 2008-09 school year, a full time staff developer was hired to build the school's internal capacity to support staff and not be solely reliant on outside consultants. The staff developer focused primarily on literacy and intercurricular connections. She worked with teachers in kindergarten through second grade and, at the time of the visit, was providing intensive support to new teachers in the first grade. She coached and modeled best practices and provided direct instruction to small groups of students. In addition to performing her services in classrooms, she met with the teachers to help them plan for effective instruction. The literacy consultants from Mondo and the mathematics consultant from the New York City math project at Lehman College continued their work with teachers at the school. The consultant

from the math project came to the school two days a week during which time she observed teachers, modeled for them and helped them to plan their mathematics instruction. Using a residency model, the Mondo consultant came to the school for three to four days consecutively to train teachers to implement the writing process and teach them strategies for looking at student work. In addition, teachers at Icahn 2 were involved in the New York State Reading Academy, the online professional development course designed for Reading First schools, to better understand the components of reading instruction and to learn new strategies to help students learn to read. A consultant from the Regional School Support Center (RSSC) came to the school to facilitate the New York State Reading Academy course after school.

In the fall, the principal administered a needs assessment to all teachers to identify the areas in which they believed further professional development was needed. The results of this assessment were used to plan differentiated and individualized training throughout the year. During the 2007-08 school year, professional development was provided to second grade teachers on the format of the New York state assessments in anticipation of those teachers looping to grade three during the 2008-09 school year. This training was continued in September 2008 with the goal of providing those teachers with a clear understanding of the content and format of the third grade New York State English language arts assessment. The principal and teachers reported and team members observed that professional development was continuous and was primarily provided on an individual basis to meet the specific needs of teachers and their students. Third grade teachers reported that the principal provided them with intensive support to prepare the students for the state assessments by visiting the classrooms daily, working individually with teachers and students, following up with teachers on student progress, maintaining an ongoing dialogue with teachers regarding the progress of the class and individual students, and working with teachers to review why some students were having difficulties. Team members found that the professional development program at Icahn 2 was effective and personalized to support teachers at various stages of their development.

### Mission and Key Design Elements

Icahn 2 was committed to replicating the design elements and instructional programs successfully implemented at Icahn 1. To assist Icahn 2 in ensuring that the school was faithful to the original design and to the curriculum, the former principal of Icahn 1 was designated as superintendent to support a new principal in Icahn I and principals of all Icahn network schools as the network continues its efforts to replicate this model. Every teacher, parent and student interviewed understood the Core Knowledge curriculum. Classes were capped at eighteen students. Further, the school was committed to providing individualized attention to students and teachers, extra instructional time and intensive professional development. Icahn 2 met academic goals for students during this second year of operation.

### Parents and Students

Parents interviewed expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the school. Some parents indicated that they heard about the success of Icahn 1 and were excited to have the opportunity to enroll their children in Icahn 2. Other parents came to the school based on the opportunity to enroll their children in what they considered to be “a private school without tuition.” Parents were happy about the close communication between the teachers and themselves, as well as the

individual attention they perceived their children were receiving in school and after school. They expressed that their children were learning more than other children in the same grades at other schools. They cited examples from the Core Knowledge curriculum. Icahn had a waiting list and the parents interviewed expressed their good fortune that their children were selected. Students reported that they liked the school and that they were “learning a lot.” They indicated that “the teachers try to help us” and “they give positive criticism and encourage us to work hard.”

### Organizational Capacity

At the time of the visit, Icahn 2 served 138 in kindergarten through third grade. The school was located in the south Bronx and was situated primarily on the second floor of a building in which space was shared with an existing public school. The two third grade classes were located on the fourth floor of the building. It was reported that a new building had been constructed in the north Bronx into which Icahn 2 would move in the 2010-11 school year. The inspection team observed effective daily operations at Icahn 2. The mission of the school was inculcated in staff members and in all parents interviewed. The principal had established effective communication practices with staff and parents. Sufficient resources, including personnel, books and materials, had been allocated to provide effective instruction. All interviewed staff were clear about their roles and responsibilities and those of the administrator. In addition, Icahn 2 had the benefit of the superintendent and the staff of Icahn 1 for support and guidance during the development process. The team observed that Icahn 2 was an effective organization and that it had the capacity to accomplish a rigorous academic program.

### Board Oversight

The board of trustees consisted of eight members, one of whom was a parent representative. Except for the parent representative, the other members also served as the board of trustees for Icahn 1 and, together with the superintendent, developed the application to establish Icahn 2 as a replication. The board included members of and partnered with the Foundation for Greater Opportunity. Four members of the board were interviewed during this visit and were very articulate about their ability to provide oversight to both schools. They indicated that the key elements of Icahn 1, including individual attention and extra time for students, a strong curriculum based on Core Knowledge, continuous assessment and a culture that promotes personal interest and caring were the reasons for the success of Icahn 1 and would be the prescription for the success of Icahn 2. The board of trustees generally met monthly and relied on the superintendent to oversee the selection of staff to bring to the board for approval and to monitor the implementation of the school program. He reported progress to them at each meeting and they reported that they had “a lot of faith in him.” The principal also made presentations at each meeting and the board reported that they received information about assessments, enrollment and other issues prior to their meetings. This board understood their role and expressed that, “Boards are for policies. We do not want to micromanage.” The inspection team viewed the members as knowledgeable about the development of the school and issues, such as space, that had an impact on school operations. The members were also clear about their expectations for the current schools and for other Icahn schools being planned. They expressed that they look at results of student achievement and expect the same level of performance that was achieved by Icahn 1 from all schools. The board reported that they

evaluated the superintendent and that he evaluated the principals. They indicated that there was no form but that the factors for evaluation included parent satisfaction, assessment results on the New York state tests, the financial health of the school and how they presented at the board meetings. The members present were passionate about serving the school's population and ensuring that their schools addressed the "whole child."

### Governance

The members of the board of trustees who were interviewed expressed their priorities clearly to the inspection team, which focused on creating schools that prepared students to participate in the most rigorous academic environments. The board changed the structure of the organization of schools to create the positions of superintendent and director of operations to support and monitor the principals and business managers of the new schools. The board was strong and experienced. Based on a review of minutes of board meetings by team members, evidence indicated that the board had followed all required procedures. Board members were satisfied that the parent satisfaction surveys were positive and that no complaints had been brought to them by the parent representative or the superintendent.

#### **4. Methodology**

The inspection of Icahn Charter School 2 was conducted on May 19 and 20, 2009 by an independent team of experienced educators from RMC Research, New York, New York. The team was comprised of the following individuals:

- **Sandra Kase, Ed.D.** (Team Leader) is an educational consultant currently providing regular services for RMC Research. Dr. Kase began her career in the New York City public schools as a teacher, staff developer and district administrator. She served as principal of the Claremont Community School for 14 years before moving to the New York City Board of Education as an Assistant to the Chancellor for School Improvement and later Supervising Superintendent of the Chancellor's District. During that time Dr. Kase focused on improving the lowest performing schools in the city and creating high quality new schools designed to provide rigorous educational opportunities for traditionally underperforming students. During 2003, Dr. Kase worked with the incoming Chancellor and his staff to support the transition to the newly created Department of Education. In March 2004 she began to work in Peekskill, New York to support the efforts of the superintendent to raise the academic achievement of the students in that community. Dr. Kase has developed a wide array of programs, including: gifted and talented programs designed to provide opportunities for underserved students; courses at museums such as the American Museum of Natural History; university based programs for K-12 students; and extended day and year programs which blended cultural experiences with demanding learning standards to raise the academic levels of all participants. Dr. Kase holds a Doctor of Education Degree in Educational Leadership, Administration and Policy from Fordham University.
- **Janice M. Imundi** is a Research Associate for RMC Research. She also serves as a member of the Adolescent Literacy Team for the New York Comprehensive Center (NYCC), a USED contracted project of RMC Research. Currently, she is working with the New York State Education Department to review the English Language Arts Standards. Her career of over 30 years in education was spent working with students in the New York City public schools. Ms. Imundi was a teacher in a junior high school, an assistant principal in both an elementary and middle school, and a principal in a middle school. During her career, Ms. Imundi also served as an Adjunct Professor in the School of Education at Mercy College and at Long Island University. Prior to joining RMC, she worked with aspiring principals and first year principals as a mentor with *New Visions for Public Schools* and the *New York City Leadership Academy*. Ms. Imundi holds a Masters Degree in Secondary Education and a Professional Diploma in Administration and Supervision.
- **Ellen Rosenbaum** is a Research Associate for RMC Research. With over 33 years of experience in the New York City schools, Ms. Rosenbaum has served as an elementary school teacher, teacher trainer and district administrator. As the Director of School Improvement for Community School District 8 in New York City, she worked with school leaders to use data to inform instruction and to develop school reform initiatives. Ms. Rosenbaum holds a Master's Degree in Education and a Professional Diploma in School District Administration.

- **Andrea Hoffman** is an educational consultant currently providing ongoing services for RMC Research. Ms. Hoffman served as a teacher, staff developer, literacy coach and academic intervention specialist for many years. She has also served as a consultant to provide support to administrators, librarians and teachers to facilitate the alignment of instruction taking place in school libraries with literacy implementation throughout the schools. Additionally, Ms. Hoffman works in the New York City Department of Education's Peer Observation and Evaluation Program for RMC Research to conduct observations of teachers in need of improvement and to create individualized professional development plans. Ms. Hoffman has had specialized training in literacy and holds a Masters Degree in Elementary Education.

The team used the Qualitative Educational Benchmarks (QEB), a subset of the State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks, as the guides for its evaluation. In addition, the team relied on a set of framework questions to structure the Benchmark Analysis section of this document. Prior to the two-day visit, the team reviewed the school's documents, including its annual Accountability Plan Progress Report and reports from previous site visits by the Charter Schools Institute or other entities, such as the New York State Education Department.

During the visit, the team used a triangulated approach to collect data, including observing classes, interviewing school administrators, board of trustees members, teachers, staff, parents and students and reviewing student work, curriculum and other school documents, such as board minutes, teacher evaluations, assessment data, school policies and school organization documents to understand the efforts the school is making to achieve its academic and organizational goals. Notes were taken by each team member during each of the activities noted above.

In order to analyze the data and generate conclusions, the team reviewed and examined the notes taken by each of the team members during classroom observations, interviews or while reviewing relevant documents for information and for data collection reliability. Team members analyzed data for patterns, correlated evidence gathered with the Renewal Benchmarks and grouped data into relevant categories. All data were verified through multiple sources.