



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

New Roots Charter School

School Evaluation Report 2010-11

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INTRODUCTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (“SUNY Trustees”), jointly with the New York State Board of Regents, are required by law to provide oversight sufficient to ensure that each charter school that the SUNY Trustees have authorized is in compliance with applicable law and the terms of its charter. The SUNY Trustees, however, consistent with the goals of the Charter Schools Act of 1998, view their oversight responsibility more broadly and positively than purely monitoring compliance. Accordingly, they have adopted policies that require the Charter Schools Institute (“the Institute”) to provide ongoing evaluation of SUNY authorized charter schools. By providing this oversight, the SUNY Trustees and the Institute seek to accomplish three goals:

- **Document Performance.** The Institute collects information to build a database of a school’s performance over time. By evaluating the school periodically, the Institute can more clearly ascertain trends, determine areas of strength and weakness, and assess the school’s likelihood for continued success or failure. Having information based on past patterns, the Institute is in a better position to make recommendations regarding the renewal of each school’s charter, and the State University Trustees are better informed in making a decision on whether a school’s charter should be renewed. In addition, a school will have a far better sense of where they stand in the eyes of its authorizer.
- **Facilitate Improvement.** By providing substantive information about the school’s academic, fiscal and organizational strengths and weaknesses to the school’s board of trustees, administration, faculty and other staff, the Institute can play a role in helping the school identify areas for improvement.
- **Disseminate Information.** The Institute disseminates information about the school’s performance not only to its board of trustees, administration and faculty, but to all stakeholders, including parents and the larger community in which the school is located.

This annual School Evaluation Report includes three primary components. The first section, titled Executive Summary of School Evaluation Visit, provides an overview of the primary conclusions of the evaluation team regarding the current visit to the school, summarizing areas of strength and areas for growth. A summary of conclusions from previous school evaluations is also provided, as background and context for the current evaluation. The second section, titled School Overview, provides descriptive information about the school, including enrollment and demographic data, as well as summary historical information regarding the life of the school. Finally, in a third section entitled School Evaluation Visit, this report presents the analysis of evidence collected during an evaluation visit conducted in the current school year, with an italicized paragraph that introduces each specific benchmark and provides a summarizing conclusion.

Because of the inherent complexity of an organization such as a school, this School Evaluation Report does not contain a single rating or comprehensive indicator that would indicate at a glance the school’s prospects for renewal. It does, however, summarize the various strengths of the school and notes areas in need of improvement with respect to the school’s performance as compared to the State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks. To the extent appropriate and useful, we encourage school boards to use this evaluation report in ongoing planning and school improvement efforts.

Background

Institute evaluations of SUNY authorized charter schools are organized into a set of benchmarks that address the academic success of the school, including teaching and learning (e.g., curriculum, instruction, and assessment), and the effectiveness and viability of the school as an organization, including such items as governance and management. Entitled the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks, these established criteria are used on a regular and ongoing basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

While the primary focus of the visit is an evaluation of the school's academic program and organizational capacity, issues regarding compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations may be noted (and subsequently addressed); where the Institute finds serious deficiencies in particular relating to student health and safety, it may take additional and immediate action. However, monitoring for compliance is not the principal purpose of the visit.

This is an analysis of the observations and conclusions from this year's evaluation, along with supporting evidence. Some benchmarks are covered in greater detail than others in an effort to highlight areas of concern at the school and provide additional feedback in these areas. Finally, information regarding the conduct of the evaluation, including the date of the visit and information about the evaluation team, is provided.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

The Charter Schools Institute conducted a school evaluation visit to New Roots Charter School (“New Roots”) on March 25th, 2010. The evaluation team observed classrooms; interviewed administrators, board members and teachers; and reviewed student work and other documents. Following the 2010 evaluation visit, a report was provided to the school’s board of trustees outlining the major conclusions from the visit. The conclusions provided at that time are briefly summarized below.

Use of Assessment Data (Benchmark 1.B)

Teachers used assessments within their classrooms, but the school had not developed a systematic approach to using assessment data in order to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.

Curriculum (Benchmark 1.C)

The school had begun to develop a curriculum and used it to prepare students to meet state performance standards. Teachers had significant discretion in selecting and developing instructional materials.

Pedagogy (Benchmark 1.D)

High quality instruction was evident in some classes. Teachers implemented purposeful lessons with objectives aligned to state standards and the school’s curriculum. Students actively answered questions during discussions and were continually engaged.

Instructional Leadership (Benchmark 1.E)

Effective instructional leadership was beginning to emerge. School leaders instilled high expectations for teacher performance and student achievement. Instructional leaders conducted regular evaluations that accurately identified teachers’ strengths and weaknesses and were starting to provide teachers with generally effective support.

Student Order and Discipline (Benchmark 1.G)

New Roots was beginning to develop a culture of learning. The school was safe and orderly, students were respectful and the transitions between classes were smooth. However, the school’s discipline system was inconsistently applied. Teachers had differing perceptions of discipline procedures and protocols.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF CURRENT SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

The Charter Schools Institute conducted a school evaluation visit to New Roots May 17th-19th, 2011. New Roots is in its second year of operation and in the second year of its current four-year accountability period. While New Roots is only in its second year of operation, the Institute holds all schools accountable to the Renewal Benchmarks with consideration given to its point in the charter period. A school in its second year is expected to continue building systems and procedures that provide a platform for delivering effective instruction to improve student learning and achievement. Based on the analysis of evidence from the evaluation visit, New Roots is on a trajectory toward meeting its Qualitative Educational Benchmarks (a component of the Renewal Benchmarks) by the time of renewal. This conclusion is drawn from a variety of indicators discussed more fully later in this report. Some of the more salient indicators include the following.

Use of Assessment Data (Benchmark 1.B)

New Roots regularly administers teacher-developed assessments aligned to the school's curriculum. While each teacher analyzes the results of his/her own assessments and school leaders review individual student report cards and work products, the leadership does not systematically monitor student achievement with regard to meeting state performance standards.

Curriculum (Benchmark 1.C)

New Roots has an organized curriculum framework aligned to New York State and sustainability education standards. Teachers develop, with limited oversight, scope and sequences based on learning targets that guide further curriculum development. The school is beginning to develop a process to review and revise its curriculum.

Pedagogy (Benchmark 1.D)

Teachers provide quality instruction in most classes. Teachers generally develop useful lessons and learning activities to support the attainment of learning targets. Lessons encourage higher-order thinking and problem solving. Teachers have good rapport with students and effectively engage most students by integrating different learning modes and including multiple opportunities for student-to-student interaction.

Instructional Leadership (Benchmark 1.E)

School leaders instill high expectations for teacher performance and student learning but provide limited instructional leadership. While the school offers relevant professional development, the leadership does not provide sustained and systematic coaching. The lack of available assessment data limits the leadership's ability to effectively hold teachers accountable for student achievement.

At-Risk Students (Benchmark 1.F)

New Root's overall culture and environment provides support to at-risk students; however, the school's targeted services do not meet the specific academic needs of these students.

Student Order and Discipline (Benchmark 1.G)

New Roots promotes a culture of learning. Teachers have effective classroom management skills to promote learning and create a safe, orderly environment throughout the school. The school has a discipline policy that encourages students to take responsibility for their actions. However, the school staff does make exceptions to the discipline policy based on individual student's personal circumstances.

Organizational Capacity (Benchmark 2.C)

As New Roots grows, it continues to implement numerous design elements from its charter; however, the school does not have a strategic approach for addressing academic priorities, nor an organizational structure able to support clear lines of accountability. The roles and responsibilities of the school leadership are fluid.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	September 9, 2008
Date Initial Charter Approved by: Operation of Law	February 23, 2009
School Opening Date	September, 2009

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades	District
2009- Present	116-120 North Cayuga Street, Ithaca, NY	All	Ithaca City School District

Current Mission Statement

New Roots Charter School will prepare our diverse student body to meet the challenges of citizenship, work, and life-long learning in the 21st century. Our interdisciplinary academic program will feature hands-on, community-based learning that supports students in solving real-world problems. New Roots Charter School students will earn a Regents diploma and demonstrate readiness for higher education by earning college credit and creating a graduation portfolio that demonstrates that they have met or exceeded all 28 New York State Learning Standards. Our school community will create a model of secondary education that integrates best practices in sustainability education with those proven to support educational equity.

Current Key Design Elements

- An integrated curriculum;
- Service learning requirements;
- Mentoring communities;
- Concurrent enrollment for college credit;
- Use of the Environment as Integrating Context model for curriculum development;
- Following the Expeditionary Learning model; and
- Demonstrating achievement through exhibitions and digital portfolios.

School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Charter Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ¹	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2009-10	125	N/A	97	9-10	9-10	180
2010-11	175	N/A	115	9-12	9-12	180

¹ Source: SUNY Charter School Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

Student Demographics

	2009-10 ²	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of Ithaca School District Enrollment
Race/ Ethnicity		
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	1
Black or African American	12	11
Hispanic	3	5
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0	12
White	83	70
Multiracial	3	1
Special Populations		
Students with Disabilities	25	12
Limited English Proficient	0	5
Free/Reduced Lunch		
Eligible for Free Lunch	37	26
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	3	6

Current Board of Trustees³

Board Member Name	Term Expires	Position/Committees
Jason Hamilton	6/30/2013	Chair
Peter Bardaglio	6/30/2012	Vice Chair
Jennifer Bokaer-Smith	6/30/2011	Trustee
Karl Madeo	6/30/2013	Secretary
Conrad Metcalf	6/30/2012	Trustee
Roger Richardson	6/30/2013	Trustee
Synnove Heggoy	6/30/2011	Trustee
Timothy Turecek	6/30/2012	Trustee
Granger Macy	6/30/2011	Trustee
Tina Nilsen-Hodges		Ex-Oficio
Sarah Reistetter	6/30/2011	Ex-Oficio, Parent Trustee
Kelsie Torello	6/30/2011	Ex-Oficio, Student Trustee

² Source: School Report Cards, New York State Department of Education

³ Source: Institute Board Records.

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2009-10 to present	Tina Nilsen-Hodges, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2009-10	First Year	Institute	March 25, 2010
2010-11	Second Year	Institute	May 17-19, 2011

SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

Benchmark Conclusions and Evidence

Use of Assessment Data (Benchmark 1.B)

New Roots regularly administers teacher-developed assessments that align to the school's curriculum. While teachers analyze the results of their own assessments and school leaders review individual student report cards and work products, the leadership does not systematically monitor student achievement in meeting state performance standards. Further, the school does not have specific assessments to evaluate student preparation for meeting the required academic accountability measures.

The school administers the Terra Nova test to all incoming students as a diagnostic tool and at the end of the year to all students as a student growth measure. Aside from this standardized assessment, teachers create, administer and analyze their own formative assessments such as warm-ups, exit-tickets and quizzes in order to gauge learning during the delivery of curriculum units. Teachers also administer regular exams and evaluate student projects and work samples with rubrics. The school has begun implementing student portfolios with a focus on college preparedness. While the school works to develop and refine a variety of assessment tools to serve multiple purposes, none are specifically focused on monitoring student preparation for Regents exams.

Teachers specify the criteria for meeting the school-developed learning targets and provide the school leadership with a reflective response on how they will address the problems of those who have not met the target. Teachers will correlate this information with Regents results using the school's digital portfolio. In a related process, the school leadership regularly reviews individual student assignments and class grades. Both approaches, mediated by teachers, are unreliable and likely to be idiosyncratic. Each teacher employs a different informal process for using assessment results to modify instruction and identify students for remediation or enrichment. The school leadership still does not systematically analyze assessment results; rather, teachers continue to collect and maintain data using various methodologies, interpretations and analyses of results.

Curriculum (Benchmark 1.C)

New Roots has an organized curriculum framework aligned to state and sustainability education standards. Teachers, with limited oversight, develop scope and sequences based on learning targets that guide further curriculum development. The school has a process to develop interdisciplinary curriculum within grade levels; however, the school provides limited opportunities to ensure content area alignment across grades. The school is beginning to develop a process to review and revise its curriculum.

The principal currently works to update the curriculum framework to address the Common Core state standards and to align them to additional environmental sustainability standards. Teachers have significant latitude to develop learning targets based on the standards in the framework and to develop scope and sequences of trimester unit plans that include essential questions, activities and assignments. At the beginning of the year, the principal oversaw the

development of some teachers' scope and sequences and initial trimester plans. However, the inconsistent quality and completeness of individual course curriculum binders and evidence from teacher interviews both indicate that the principal does not provide sufficient curriculum oversight.

During the summer, teachers meet by grade level to discuss the interdisciplinary relationship of subjects in order to emphasize curricula connections. This process continues informally throughout the school year during weekly grade level meetings. The school also integrates mission-driven elements like the school's Farm-to-School program into core class curriculum where such themes apply. The school does not have an academic department structure, and teachers report not having a process or scheduled time set aside to discuss and plan curriculum in the same subject across grade levels. Currently, no procedures exist at the school to review and revise the school's curriculum; however, documentation and interviews indicate that leadership will review curriculum during the summer.

Pedagogy (Benchmark 1.D)

Teachers provide quality instruction in most classes. Teachers generally develop useful lessons with learning activities to support the attainment of learning targets and encourage higher order thinking and problem solving. Teachers have good rapport with students. Notwithstanding some student withdrawal during lessons, teachers effectively engage most students by integrating a variety of learning modes including multiple opportunities for student-to-student interaction.

Teachers plan purposeful lessons and report using lesson plans to support their instruction. The plans generally include at least one learning target for the day, essential questions addressing the learning target and a list of activities such as do-nows, scaffolding and independent learning activities.

Teachers engage most students during lessons and establish classroom environments where students feel comfortable and respected to take risks in asking and answering questions. Teachers also use multiple instructional modes to appeal to different learning styles. For example, teachers use manipulatives, have students demonstrate concepts through writing and pictures and provide frequent student-to-student learning opportunities. While most students participate, one or two students in most observed classes withdraw from the class activity without sufficient teacher redirection.

Teachers provide rigorous instruction in most classes. For example, students are asked to consider challenging questions about morality, evaluate the work of their peers in a structured way and interpret primary documents to draw conclusions about sustainability.

Instructional Leadership (Benchmark 1.E)

New Roots has limited instructional leadership. School leaders instill high expectations for teacher performance and student learning. While the school offers relevant professional development, the leadership does not provide sustained and systematic coaching. Instructional leaders inform teachers of the criteria for evaluation and regularly evaluate them. The lack of available assessment data limits leadership's ability to effectively hold teachers accountable for student achievement.

The school's mission to prepare students for higher education is manifest in the leadership's high expectations for teacher performance and student learning. Teachers understand that they are expected to instill a belief in students of their ability to attend college. In professional development, the leaders have established an agenda for developing instructional competencies for teachers to enable students to prepare for college level work. The school's policies reflect high expectations, especially in its college ready course of study and rigorous promotion requirements.

The school leadership provides a comprehensive professional development program, is available to offer general advice to teachers, is responsive to teacher requests and conducts occasional informal classroom observations with some verbal feedback. Notwithstanding these efforts, the principal and lead teachers do not provide ongoing, clinical instructional support. The principal limits instructional supervision to formal teacher evaluations with structured follow-up meetings. Teacher's report finding the lead teacher's feedback to informal observations helpful; however, they indicate that his focus lacks continuity from one observation to the next. The school does not provide ongoing, sustained coaching or mentoring, especially for new teachers. In response, teachers report turning to experienced colleagues for advice, but such collegial advice does not provide feedback based on direct, continual observation.

The school leadership conducts mid-year and end-of-year teacher evaluations. Teachers confirm that the evaluations follow the expected process are based on a set of standards of teacher performance of which they are aware. The evaluations include personal goals set at the beginning of the year and reviewed mid-year, but some teachers report that leadership does not review their goals throughout the school year. The school generally uses the mid-year evaluations to encourage teacher growth and improvement rather than to explicitly inform teachers of their specific areas of weakness. The principal's teacher assessments generally match the observations of the visiting team.

As a second year school with little Regents data to report or track, teacher evaluations do not consider student Regents performance. While the school leadership anecdotally notes teacher's ability to facilitate individual student progress toward meeting learning targets, they are currently unable to determine whether students meet absolute standards

At-Risk Students (Benchmark 1.F)

New Root's overall culture and environment provide support to at-risk students; however, the school's targeted services are not adequate to meet their specific academic needs, nor does the school have a formal process to identify students with disabilities. The school identifies struggling students through a variety of academic criteria that are applied in combination with consideration of students' affective characteristics. The school has multiple strategies for serving the emotional needs of students. New Roots does not have effective communication to enable at-risk and classroom teachers to coordinate their interventions.

The school's overall environment supports the affective needs of at-risk students through small class sizes and a staff structure in which every student has an adult advocate. Additionally, teachers and administrators demonstrate an understanding of, and commitment

to, working with troubled youth. However, the school's services do not meet the academic needs of all students.

The school does not have a formal process to identify students in need of special education services. The school identifies students at-risk of academic failure through Terra Nova assessment results, incoming student transcripts, performance on Regents exams and teacher discussion at grade level team meetings. The school currently implements a response to intervention plan to determine the type of support offered to students; however, a number of teachers do not understand the plan, limiting its effectiveness. The school leadership exercises a large degree of discretion on how to respond to the needs of individual students. In addition to academic measures and teacher input, the school's leadership considers factors including student behavior and emotional needs to determine the level of academic support provided.

Services for academically struggling students are still developing, with significant change in services since the beginning of the third trimester. New interventions include a homework support class and Saturday school. The school leadership team has also redesigned the academic intervention services (AIS) program to better address specific skills and content in mathematics and English language arts and to target the needs of individual students. Students with significant needs who are not sufficiently supported by these programs receive external academic tutoring or counseling. A special education teacher provides mandated services through a resource room setting.

Teachers are aware of students with disabilities' individual education programs, and report addressing required modifications in the classroom. However, teachers report lacking adequate time, systems or communication for coordinating activities between general education teachers and teachers specifically serving academically at-risk students. While the school has started using an online program to facilitate the sharing of assignments between staff members, the school has no formal process to ensure direct communication between the school's AIS teachers and core content teachers.

Student Order and Discipline (Benchmark 1.G)

New Roots promotes a culture of learning. Teachers have effective classroom management skills to promote learning, creating a safe, orderly environment throughout the school. The school has a discipline policy that encourages students to take responsibility for their actions. The school staff takes a student's individual circumstances and history into account when determining disciplinary actions.

Adults monitor common areas in the building throughout the school day ensuring a safe environment. Although teachers do not explicitly use classroom management techniques to redirect students, the students behave well. The school's leaders and teachers report that the school has developed a series of classroom management protocols such as a hand sign to go to the bathroom, to create consistency in classroom management throughout the school.

New Roots has a three-tiered discipline policy based on the Restorative Justice program that encourages students to take responsibility for their actions through opportunities for self-reflection. The program addresses low-level behavior by placing students in a reflection room to consider their actions before returning to class. The school has a documented system

to suspend students who do not respond to the discipline policy through a superintendent's hearing. Teachers report that they believe the discipline system is inconsistently implemented in that school leaders take into consideration students' individual circumstances before initiating high level disciplinary action. In addition, there is no regular communication between staff members who take disciplinary action outside of the classroom and classroom teachers. While school administration acknowledges consideration of individual student circumstances in initiating disciplinary actions, they report that students whose behavior could impact the safety or wellbeing of other students are called to a hearing and may face long-term suspension from the school.

Professional Development (Benchmark 1.H)

The school has a comprehensive professional development program that assists teachers in implementing the school's curriculum and in methods of instruction. Some non-classroom instructional staff members do not receive sufficient professional development.

The school's professional development program provides comprehensive support for the classroom instructional program. It consists of pre-service training, weekly staff meetings, and periodic superintendent's days. Examples of topics covered include: education for sustainability, using the Richer Picture online digital portfolio program, human rights curriculum training, conflict resolution and positive classroom management. Depending on the topic, school personnel or external groups provide the professional development training. For example, some staff members who attend an Expeditionary Learning conference present their findings to colleagues during team meetings. The principal says, and the professional development calendar demonstrates, that training in many of these topics is sustained by reviewing topics throughout the school year. The principal selects professional development topics taking into consideration the school's mission, perceived staff need and staff input. The principal and the lead teacher monitor the effectiveness of professional development during classroom observations and discussions with teachers.

Some teachers, who do not teach core classes, report that they do not receive sufficient or any professional development specific to their function in the school.

Mission (Benchmark 2.A)

New Roots is faithful to its mission.

The school devotes considerable time and resources to carrying out its mission. A director of community programs develops and coordinates internship opportunities for students to experience "hands-on, community-based learning that supports students in solving real-world problems." A farm-to-school food service program centering on local farming and the environment supports the school's sustainability focus. Additionally, the school integrates sustainability into the curriculum and teachers receive professional development on implementing sustainability themed lessons. Moreover, the school commits to helping students earn college credit through course opportunities at Tompkins County Community College.

Parent & Student Satisfaction (Benchmark 2.B)

Based on limited evidence, parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.

Parents, in a group interview, say they appreciate the support their children receive at New Roots, especially that the school monitors individual progress. Parents note the absence of bullying and cliques and praise the school's sense of community. The parents report that their children engage in deeper thought processes about what they are learning, no longer worry about just passing and feel their opinion is valued. Two parents report that their children now express an interest in becoming teachers. The parents express gratitude for the access to, and responsiveness of, the school administration and teachers. The parents note that while they are well informed about their children's academic performance, the school's communication about upcoming events is not sufficiently timely.

Students also participating in a group interview report satisfaction with the school. They consistently note the small school environment, rigorous classes, connections to the community and opportunities to take part in school decision-making as reasons why they attend New Roots.

Organizational Capacity (Benchmark 2.C)

As New Roots continues to grow, it is implementing numerous design elements from its charter; however, the school does not have a strategic approach for addressing academic priorities, nor an organizational structure able to support clear lines of accountability. The roles and responsibilities of the school leadership are fluid. The school informally monitors and evaluates its programs and makes changes as needed. The school is under enrolled.

The school has an organizational structure that reflects the numerous components of its mission and key design elements. However, the school has undertaken its multifaceted development without a strategic sense of the time it takes to adequately establish the individual systems. The school's board and leadership affirm the ultimate goal of enabling students to earn a Regents diploma and demonstrate readiness for higher education and recognize the supportive, yet ancillary nature of other features of the mission. Given the complexities of starting and growing a high school, the Institute has concern that the school focuses too many resources on programs that do not directly impact student achievement.

While the school has established non-academic leadership positions, the only academic leadership positions are the principal and academic advisor/lead teacher. Aside from the lead teacher, the school does not have department or at-risk-service leaders and only recently introduced a team of grade level faculty leaders. Further, the school has a relatively high rate of teacher attrition, which is a detriment to gaining organizational traction and developing leadership within the school.

On the current organizational chart, all staff report to the principal with the exception of the at-risk staff who reports to the lead teacher. In addition, the reporting structure has shifted with the lead teacher's changing responsibilities. Some teachers report that these shifting staff responsibilities negatively affect the quality of communication between the school's

leadership and staff. Teachers claim to be unclear about their current responsibilities and do not know who to approach among school leadership to address specific issues.

Despite the absence of Regents data, school leaders monitor the instructional program and take action as needed. The board has conducted an analysis of Terra Nova results which have prompted the development of a remedial program. The school recently revamped its AIS program, re-focused its response to intervention (RTI) process and reconstituted its Regents math courses.

Governance (Benchmark 2.D-E)

The school board works effectively to achieve the school's mission and provides oversight to the total educational program. The board has adequate skills, structures and procedures to govern the school. Board members have expertise in education, non-profit management and business. The board is fully cognizant of the school's Accountability Plan and monitors attainment of the plan's goals.

Board members have expertise in education, non-profit management and business. The board operates with a committee structure including executive, nomination, finance, personnel, facilities, development and accountability committees. The board's priorities focus on establishing school policies and securing a suitable facility. Recently, with the support of a consultant, the board has turned its attention to long run strategic planning. The board is developing a dashboard to monitor student performance and reports that it has evaluated the principal.

The board works with the school leader to set mission goals. The board is reflective about its functioning and has a thoughtful planning structure for instituting program changes in consultation with the school leader. Members are aware of the standards in its Accountability Plan and the critical role they play in relation to the school's mission. The board carries out its oversight responsibilities by working with school leadership to develop the school program in regards to changes in student enrollment and emerging academic needs.

Conduct of the Visit

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the school evaluation visit at New Roots on May 17th-19th, 2011. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit:

Team Leader: Ron Miller is the Vice President for Accountability at the Charter Schools Institute. After teaching for seven years in New York City public schools, Dr. Miller joined the central offices of the New York City Department of Education, where he conducted evaluative research and organizational studies. As Director of the Office of School Planning and Accountability, he served as the educational accountability officer for the Department. In that capacity, he developed school accountability reports for the city schools and coordinated staff development on their use for district administrators in all the high school and community school districts. In addition, he worked with school leaders to develop their competence to use data for school improvement. In this role he developed PASS, a school performance review system which was adopted in 600 city schools. Dr. Miller has regularly

presented papers at annual meetings of the American Educational Research Association and has served as Adjunct Assistant Professor at Teachers College Columbia University and Pace University. He holds a BA degree from the University of California at Berkeley and a Ph.D. in Applied Anthropology from Columbia University.

Institute Team Member: Sean Fitzsimons is a Program Analyst for the SUNY Charter Schools Institute. He supports SUNY's new charter school application process by addressing questions from applicants, reviewing and analyzing new applications, coordinating the review of applications to establish new charter schools by Institute staff and external educational experts, and drafting application summaries and other related documents. Mr. Fitzsimons most recently served as Chair of the Social Studies Department at Manassas Park Middle School in Manassas Park, Virginia where he guided curriculum sequencing and pacing to align the school's courses with state standards, trained and mentored faculty, and designed and implemented courses in Civics and Economics, American Studies, American History, and World Geography. He also taught remedial reading curriculum to special education students and English language learners. Prior to this, Mr. Fitzsimons was an Administrative and Research Assistant at the Embassy of Japan in Washington, D.C. In addition, Mr. Fitzsimons was a visiting instructor at Shanghai Teachers University in Shanghai, China, where he designed and taught curriculum for English language learners. Mr. Fitzsimons received his Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction and Secondary Education Social Studies from George Mason University and his Bachelor of Arts degrees in International Relations and Political Science from the State University of New York, College at Geneseo.

APPENDIX A: RENEWAL BENCHMARKS USED DURING THE VISIT

An excerpt of the State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks follows.

Visit the Institute’s website at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/documents/renewalBenchmarks.doc> to see the complete listing of Benchmarks.

Benchmarks 1B – 1H, and Benchmarks 2A – 2E were using in conducting this evaluation visit.

Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>State University Renewal Benchmarks</u>
State University Renewal Benchmark 1B Use of Assessment Data	<p>The school has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and uses it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school regularly uses standardized and other assessments that are aligned to the school’s curriculum framework and state performance standards; • the school systematically collects and analyzes data from diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, and makes it accessible to teachers, school leaders and the school board; • the school uses protocols, procedures and rubrics that ensure that the scoring of assessments and evaluation of student work is reliable and trustworthy; • the school uses assessment data to predict whether the school’s Accountability Plan goals are being achieved; • the school’s leaders use assessment data to monitor, change and improve the school’s academic program, including curriculum and instruction, professional development, staffing and intervention services; • the school’s teachers use assessment data to adjust and improve instruction to meet the identified needs of students; • a common understanding exists between and among teachers and administrators of the meaning and consequences of assessment results, e.g., changes to the instructional program, access to remediation, promotion to the next grade; • the school regularly communicates each student’s progress and growth to his or her parents/guardians; and • the school regularly communicates to the school community overall academic performance as well as the school’s progress toward meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals.
State University Renewal Benchmark 1C Curriculum	<p>The school has a clearly defined curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has a well-defined curriculum framework for each grade and core academic subject, which includes the knowledge and skills that all students are expected to achieve as specified by New York State standards and performance indicators; • the school has carefully analyzed all curriculum resources (including commercial

<p style="text-align: center;">State University Renewal Benchmark 1D</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pedagogy</p>	<p>materials) currently in use in relation to the school’s curriculum framework, identified areas of deficiency and/or misalignment, and addressed them in the instructional program;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the curriculum <i>as implemented</i> is organized, cohesive, and aligned from grade to grade; • teachers are fully aware of the curricula that they are responsible to teach and have access to curricular documents such as scope and sequence documents, pacing charts, and/or curriculum maps that guide the development of their lesson plans; • teachers develop and use lesson plans with objectives that are in alignment with the school’s curriculum; • the school has defined a procedure, allocated time and resources, and included teachers in ongoing review and revision of the curriculum; and • the curriculum supports the school’s stated mission. <p>High quality instruction is evident in all classes throughout the school.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers demonstrate subject-matter and grade-level competency in the subjects and grades they teach; • instruction is rigorous and focused on learning objectives that specify clear expectations for what students must know and be able to do in each lesson; • lesson plans and instruction are aligned to the school’s curriculum framework and New York State standards and performance indicators; • instruction is differentiated to meet the range of learning needs represented in the school’s student population, e.g. flexible student grouping, differentiated materials, pedagogical techniques, and/or assessments; • all students are cognitively engaged in focused, purposeful learning activities during instructional time; • learning time is maximized (e.g., appropriate pacing, high on-task student behavior, clear lesson focus and clear directions to students), transitions are efficient, and there is day-to-day instructional continuity; and • teachers challenge students with questions and assignments that promote academic rigor, depth of understanding, and development of higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills.
<p style="text-align: center;">State University Renewal Benchmark 1E</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Instructional Leadership</p>	<p>The school has strong instructional leadership.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school’s leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for student achievement; • the school’s leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance (in content knowledge, pedagogical skills and student achievement); • the school’s instructional leaders have in place a comprehensive and on-going system for evaluating teacher quality and effectiveness; • the school’s instructional leaders, based on classroom visits and other available data, provide direct ongoing support, such as critical feedback, coaching and/or modeling, to teachers in their classrooms; • the school’s leadership provides structured opportunities, resources and guidance for teachers to plan the delivery of the instructional program within and across grade levels as well as within disciplines or content areas; • the school’s instructional leaders organize a coherent and sustained professional development program that meets the needs of both the school and individual

<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 1F</p> <p>At-Risk Students</p>	<p>teachers;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school’s leadership ensures that the school is responding to the needs of at-risk students and maximizing their achievement to the greatest extent possible in the regular education program using in-class resources and/or pull-out services and programs where necessary ; and the school’s leadership conducts regular reviews and evaluations of the school’s academic program and makes necessary changes to ensure that the school is effectively working to achieve academic standards defined by the State University Renewal Benchmarks in the areas of assessment, curriculum, pedagogy, student order and discipline, and professional development. <p>The school is demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school deploys sufficient resources to provide academic interventions that address the range of students’ needs; all regular education teachers, as well as specialists, utilize effective strategies to support students within the regular education program; the school provides sufficient training, resources, and support to all teachers and specialists with regard to meeting the needs of at-risk students; the school has clearly defined screening procedures for identifying at-risk students and providing them with the appropriate interventions, and a common understanding among all teachers of these procedures; all regular education teachers demonstrate a working knowledge of students’ Individualized Education Program goals and instructional strategies for meeting those goals; the school provides sufficient time and support for on-going coordination between regular and special education teachers, as well as other program specialists and service providers; and the school monitors the performance of student participation in support services using well-defined school-wide criteria, and regularly evaluates the effectiveness of its intervention programs.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 1G</p> <p>Student Order & Discipline</p>	<p>The school promotes a culture of learning and scholarship.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school has a documented discipline policy that is consistently applied; classroom management techniques and daily routines have established a culture in which learning is valued and clearly evident; low-level misbehavior is not being tolerated, e.g., students are not being allowed to disrupt or opt-out of learning during class time; and throughout the school, a safe and orderly environment has been established.
<p><u>State University Renewal Benchmark 1H</u></p> <p>Professional Development</p>	<p>The school’s professional development program assists teachers in meeting student academic needs and school goals by addressing identified shortcomings in teachers’ pedagogical skills and content knowledge.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school provides sufficient time, personnel, materials and funding to support a comprehensive and sustained professional development program; the content of the professional development program dovetails with the school’s

	<p>mission, curriculum, and instructional programs;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual professional development plans derive from a data-driven needs-assessment and staff interests; • professional development places a high priority on achieving the State University Renewal Benchmarks and the school’s Accountability Plan goals; • teachers are involved in setting short-term and long-term goals for their own professional development activities; • the school provides effective, ongoing support and training tailored to teachers’ varying levels of expertise and instructional responsibilities; • the school provides training to assist all teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities, English language learners and other students at-risk of academic failure; and • the professional development program is systematically evaluated to determine its effectiveness at meeting stated goals.
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Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?	
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<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>State University Renewal Benchmarks</u>
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State University Renewal Benchmark 2A Mission & Key Design Elements	<p>The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stakeholders are aware of the mission; • the school has implemented its key design elements in pursuit of its mission; and • the school meets or comes close to meeting any non-academic goals contained in its Accountability Plan.
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State University Renewal Benchmark 2B Parents & Students	<p>Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has a process and procedures for evaluation of parent satisfaction with the school; • the great majority of parents with students enrolled at the school have strong positive attitudes about it; • few parents pursue grievances at the school board level or outside the school; • a large number of parents seek entrance to the school; • parents with students enrolled keep their children enrolled year-to-year; and • the school maintains a high rate of daily student attendance.
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State University Renewal Benchmark 2C Organizational Capacity	<p>The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure with staff, systems, and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school demonstrates effective management of day-to-day operations; • staff scheduling is internally consistent and supportive of the school’s mission; • the school has established clear priorities, objectives and benchmarks for achieving
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	<p>its mission and Accountability Plan goals, and a process for their regular review and revision;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has allocated sufficient resources in support of achieving its goals; • the roles and responsibilities of the school’s leadership and staff members are clearly defined; • the school has an organizational structure that provides clear lines for accountability; • the school’s management has successfully recruited, hired and retained key personnel, and made appropriate decisions about removing ineffective staff members when warranted; • the school maintains an adequate student enrollment and has effective procedures for recruiting new students to the school; and • the school’s management and board have demonstrated effective communication practices with the school community including school staff, parents/guardians and students.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2D</p> <p>Board Oversight</p>	<p>The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school’s mission and provide oversight to the total educational program.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school board has adequate skills and expertise, as well as adequate meeting time to provide rigorous oversight of the school; • the school board (or a committee thereof) understands the core business of the school—student achievement—in sufficient depth to permit the board to provide effective oversight; • the school board has set clear long-term and short-term goals and expectations for meeting those goals, and communicates them to the school’s management and leaders; • the school board has received regular written reports from the school leadership on academic performance and progress, financial stability and organizational capacity; • the school board has conducted regular evaluations of the school’s management (including school leaders who report to the board, supervisors from management organization(s), and/or partner organizations that provide services to the school), and has acted on the results where such evaluations demonstrated shortcomings in performance; • where there have been demonstrable deficiencies in the school’s academic, organizational or fiscal performance, the school board has taken effective action to correct those deficiencies and put in place benchmarks for determining if the deficiencies are being corrected in a timely fashion; • the school board has not made financial or organizational decisions that have materially impeded the school in fulfilling its mission; and • the school board conducts on-going assessment and evaluation of its own effectiveness in providing adequate school oversight, and pursues opportunities for further governance training and development.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2E</p> <p>Governance</p>	<p>The board has implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes, and has abided by them.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school board has established a set of priorities that are in line with the school’s goals and mission and has effectively worked to design and implement a system to achieve those priorities;

- the school board has in place a process for recruiting and selecting new members in order to maintain adequate skill sets and expertise for effective governance and structural continuity;
- the school board has implemented a comprehensive and strict conflict of interest policy (and/or code of ethics)—consistent with those set forth in the charter—and consistently abided by them through the term of the charter;
- the school board has generally avoided creating conflicts of interest where possible; where not possible, the school has managed those conflicts of interest in a clear and transparent manner;
- the school board has instituted a process for dealing with complaints (and such policy is consistent with that set forth in the charter), has made that policy clear to all stakeholders, and has followed that policy including acting in a timely fashion on any such complaints;
- the school board has abided by its by-laws including, but not limited to, provisions regarding trustee elections, removals and filling of vacancies;
- the school board and its committees hold meetings in accordance with the Open Meetings Law, and minutes are recorded for all meetings including executive sessions and, as appropriate, committee meetings; and
- the school board has in place a set of board and school policies that are reviewed regularly and updated as needed.