

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 benchmarks¹:

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

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.

Other evaluation reports for this or other schools can be found on the Institute's website at 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 or 212-221-6332.

¹ 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>

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

HARLEM SUCCESS ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL 3

Visit Date
April 8 - 9, 2010



CONDUCTED BY CLASS MEASURES
ON BEHALF OF THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE



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EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

HARLEM SUCCESS ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Harlem Success Academy Charter School 3 (HSA 3) was visited by an external school inspection team from Class Measures on behalf of the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the Institute) on April 8 and 9, 2010. The school opened in 2008 and at the time of the visit served 247 students in grades kindergarten through 2.

An assessment program is in place at the school that is aligned to the school's curriculum and the New York State standards. The Success Charter Network ("the Network") selects and develops assessment tools and provides data management and analysis services for the school. According to the Network, assessments at the four currently operating HSA schools (three of which are authorized by SUNY) are identical with the exception of some in-class assessments that are developed by teachers. Assessment data are used extensively to inform classroom instruction and the school's Response to Intervention (RTI) program.

An established, rigorous, and well-documented curriculum is in place at HSA 3. The curriculum is aligned to the New York State standards. Curricular documentation is in place for all subject areas with the exception of art, which is being developed collaboratively through the work of art teachers from all HSA schools. Curricular materials are horizontally and vertically aligned within each content area. Curriculum documentation is developed, reviewed, and revised by the Network with input from school principals. Classrooms are well provisioned and teachers have access to a variety of quality curricular products necessary to support the instructional program. The curriculum is rigorous and supports the school's mission.

Instruction at the school reflected a focus on differentiation and concern for individual student needs. Teachers observed were competent in their subject areas and instruction was age appropriate. Lesson plans were closely aligned to the school's curriculum and the State standards. Differentiated instruction was observed with varying levels of implementation in all subject areas. Students were well behaved and interested in the lessons and participated well. Positive reinforcement of intellectual effort and successes were frequently observed. Learning time was effectively used and teachers were observed to use effective questioning techniques, frequently supporting higher level thinking processes.

Instructional leadership at HSA 3 is strong and the principal maintains high expectations for students and staff. The principal works with each teacher at the beginning of the year to develop short- and long-term goals, which are revisited several times during the year. Teachers are observed formally and informally with formal evaluations being conducted midyear and at the end of the school year. Effective instructional leadership is made possible by the Network's support of the school, allowing the principal to dedicate herself to supporting the academic program at the school.

Student support programs are in place at HSA 3. The school uses the RTI program as the primary intervention. At-risk students are supported at HSA 3 primarily through the RTI program, which has been completely implemented. Identification of students for inclusion in this program is conducted

through periodic collaborative review of data following assessments. Adequate staffing is in place at the school for effective implementation of the RTI program with some other student support services such as counseling and occupational and speech therapies being provided by Network staff.

Through interviews with stakeholders, the team determined that HSA 3 is a safe school. When entering the school, the team had to show identification to the school security police detail. Students were well-behaved and teachers used positive reinforcement and behavior management techniques that were consistent across the school. Behavior policies were identified clearly in the teacher handbook. The principal reported that she consciously works to promote school culture.

Professional development is provided at both the Network and the school level. Professional development topic selection is guided by student assessment data, school goals and collaborative discussions with the teaching staff. Professional development is focused on improving instruction within the school. Professional development is delivered during a three-week summer session, full-day professional development sessions, and each Wednesday, early release days for the school.

The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented all of the key elements designed to support the mission. The school has not defined any non-academic goals in its Accountability Plan for 2008-2014.

Parent and student satisfaction was evaluated through reports from the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) parent satisfaction survey and through parent and student interviews. Both parents and students expressed strong satisfaction with the school. Parents felt communication was readily available when they needed to communicate a concern to teachers, administrators, and the board. Recruiting of new students is conducted through a lottery managed by the Network. The school is fully enrolled and accepts only a small percentage of applicants due to high demand.

The school has sufficient organizational capacity to manage the school efficiently, and receives support from the Network in managing the school, including support in student recruitment, financial management, curriculum, assessment, professional development, human resources, and other areas. This model allows the principal to focus on her role as instructional leader.

The team reviewed documents, including board meeting minutes and bylaws. An interview was also conducted with one of the ten board members. Although only one member was available for the interview, the board member interviewed was the chair of the boards of HSA 1, HSA 3, and the Network. The board was found to be in compliance with New York State public meeting laws, and holds six meetings per year. The board has not evaluated the principal. The board has also not conducted a self-evaluation. The board receives updates on student assessment results at board meetings and members actively review data as well as monitor the school's progress toward school goals.

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION¹

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	October 26, 2007
Date Charter Issued by Operation of Law	February 8, 2008
School Opening Date	August, 2008

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades at Location	District
2008-09 through present	141 East 111 th St. New York, NY	All	New York City CSD 4

Partner Organizations

	Partner Name	Partner Type	Dates of Service
Current Partner	Success Charter Network	Charter Management Organization	2007 - present

Current Mission Statement

The mission of Harlem Success Academy Charter School 3 is to provide New York City elementary students, particularly those from economically-disadvantaged neighborhoods, with the knowledge, skills, character, and disposition to meet and exceed New York State standards and give them the resources to lead and succeed in school, college, and life.

Current Key Design Elements

• A focus on student achievement;
• Research-based, results-driven curriculum;
• Monthly assessments in all core subjects;
• Extended school day and year;
• School leaders with the power to lead;
• Highly-qualified, highly-trained staff; and
• Strong school culture, including reinforcement of ACTION principles (Agency, Curiosity, Try and Try, Integrity, Others, and No Shortcuts).

¹ The information in this section was provided by the SUNY Charters Schools Institute.

School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Charter Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ²	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2008-09	155	NA	186	K-1	K-1	188
2009-10	245	NA	248	K-2	K-2	185

Student Demographics

	2008-09 ³		2009-10	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 4 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment ⁴	Percent of NYC CSD 4 Enrollment ⁵
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%	1%	0%	
Black or African American	65%	30%	60%	
Hispanic	27%	62%	31%	
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0%	5%	2%	
White	1%	2%	1%	
Multiracial	6%	0%	5%	
Special Populations				
Students with Disabilities ⁶	15%		10%	
Limited English Proficient	2%	13%	2%	
Free/Reduced Lunch				
Eligible for Free Lunch	60%	80%	59%	
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	10%	7%	15%	

Current Board of Trustees⁷

Board Member Name	Term	Position/Committees
Ben Appen	2008-2011	Trustee
Robert Azeke	2008-2011	Secretary

² 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.)

³ Source: 2008-09 New York State Report Cards.

⁴ Source: These statistics were provided by the school as they are not yet available publicly.

⁵ Aggregated District data not yet available for 2009-10 school year.

⁶ New York State Education Department does not report special education data. Statistics shown were provided by the school.

⁷ Source: Institute Board Records.

Board Member Name	Term	Position/Committees
Kathryn Croft	2008-2011	Trustee
Diana Elghanyan	2009-2012	Trustee
Joel Greenblatt	2008-2010	Chair
Doug Hirsch	2009-2012	Trustee
Daniel Nir	2009-2012	Vice Chair
Jason Peralta	2009-2010	Parent Representative
John Rennie	2008-2010	Trustee
Bryan Binder	2008-2010	Treasurer

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2008-09	Emily Gould, Principal
2009-10	Emily Gould, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2008-09	First Year Visit	Institute	February 25, 2009

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?

Benchmark 1B: Use of Assessment Data

The team found that assessments administered at HSA 3 were aligned to the school's curriculum framework and the state performance standards. The school uses a variety of assessments to evaluate and monitor student academic progress. Literacy was supported by several assessments, which were aligned to the school curriculum and learning standards, including the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment which all students take five times per year. The Steppingstones assessment is used for grade 1 students and grade 1 and 2 students also take the Roots assessment for reading. For mathematics, students take assessments provided by the Investigations in Mathematics curriculum as well as the benchmark assessments developed by the Network. The Network has also developed system-wide assessments for science in collaboration with the schools' science teams. In preparation for upcoming state assessments, students are assessed three times in grade 2 using an assessment aligned to State tests in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Students in grades kindergarten, 1, and 2 are administered the Terra Nova assessment twice annually as a summative assessment of progress in ELA and mathematics. Student data for all assessments except for the most minor in-class assessments is tracked and distributed by the Network.

All assessment data was analyzed and managed centrally by the Network. This data is provided to teachers on the shared drive and in spreadsheet format. Teachers are provided training in groups and individually on accessing and analyzing data from these sources. The student achievement coordinator provides assessment support to teachers and staff. Each HSA school is assigned a student achievement coordinator by the Network. A review of the student achievement coordinator job description showed that the coordinator supports the staff in a number of ways including managing all information related to student assessment and special education services, overseeing faculty summer training and professional development, managing and synthesizing all data from all data meetings and assessments, and distributing, collecting, and insuring assessment materials have been completed correctly.

Teachers collaborate on the scoring of writing assessments at HSA 3. Network-developed rubrics are available for some open response writing assessments and teachers meet to collaboratively score this type of assessment, ensuring greater inter-rater reliability than if they were graded separately by individual teachers. Teachers meet following the receipt of benchmark and other assessment data approximately every 5 to 6 weeks to identify students for participation in the RTI program or to assess the progress of students already participating in RTI. Individual RTI plans are reevaluated for each student in the RTI program. Students who have shown substantial progress may place out of the program at this time.

The Network-developed school goals are based on the school's academic Accountability Plan Goals and were described by school leaders as being developed from, encompassing, and exceeding the expectations of the Accountability Plan Goals. The board receives updates on progress towards school goals as well as substantial reports on student data and academic progress. Parents receive progress

reports five times per year. School-wide assessment results and progress towards academic goals are not communicated to the school community as a whole.

Benchmark 1C: Curriculum

The team found that the school has a clearly defined curriculum framework for each grade and core academic subject, as well as physical education. The art teacher at HSA 3 reported that art teachers from all four HSA schools were in the process of developing and documenting the art curriculum. The curriculum was organized, cohesive, and aligned from grade to grade. Teachers stated that they were fully aware of the curricula that they were responsible to teach, and had access to the Network curricular documents through the schools' network server.

Curriculum documents provided by the school, as well as information provided by teachers, showed that core subject areas were aligned to State standards. The Success For All (SFA) and Investigations in Mathematics programs were explicitly aligned to the State standards. The grade 2 reading program, a balanced literacy program that uses tradebooks, and the K-2 writing program were also well documented and aligned, an improvement since the last visit by the Institute. Teachers aligned pacing at teachers' meetings and compared them across the Network. Curriculum documents made reference to assessments only in mathematics.

SFA formed the foundation of the literacy program; it was complemented through a balanced literacy and guided reading program. This was supported by the use of the Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment system and a wide selection of leveled readers. The school used TERC's Investigations in Mathematics in all grades. The social studies and science programs were developed by the HSA Network, were organized around the State frameworks' key ideas, and contained performance indicators, themes, and student learning objectives. Science instruction was provided five days per week.

The school used an informal process at the building level to analyze curriculum resources currently in use. Teachers reported that they had informal conversations with the principal, or discussed problems at grade level meetings, which the principal always attended. Areas of deficiency or misalignment in the curriculum were also reviewed at the Network level by the director of instructional development. Teachers mentioned they received strong peer support in helping to improve curriculum and instruction. They also stated that the student achievement coordinator was a resource to them in this process. Major curricular decisions were made at the Network level collaboratively by school leaders as a group.

The curriculum supported the school's stated mission. In interviews, students and parents indicated that the school did all that it needed to do to make students "smarter," and to ensure that they would succeed and be ready for college. Parents noted gains in their children's self-confidence. Students, in conversations with each other, readily acknowledged each other's learning progress: "You're already on that reading level? That's second grade and you're only in first grade!"

Benchmark 1D: Pedagogy

The team found that teachers demonstrated subject matter and grade level competency in all classes observed. For example, the team found teachers skilled in delivering small-group instruction in the SFA

program. The team also observed higher-order questioning in most classes and teachers used a variety of ways to check for student understanding. In one classroom, the team observed Bloom's taxonomy displayed in student-friendly language: "Help your brain bloom with these question and answer starters. What do I know? What do I understand? What can I do? What can I break down? What can I create?"

In addition, the team found that teachers challenged students with questions that promoted academic rigor. For example, one mathematics teacher told students: "We are peeling the words off the page" to improve comprehension and to aid in the identification of evidence for use in answering word problems. Metacognitive skills were taught in reading lessons with the expectation that the students would develop these to become better readers. The team observed other questioning techniques that checked for depth of understanding and promoted higher-level thinking: "How do eggs get to the grocery store? What does it mean to work efficiently?" Student projects throughout the school displayed work that was the result of challenging investigations using real-life data.

Teacher directions to students were clear and presented in student-friendly language. In some classrooms, teachers were slowing the pace of their speech to increase the accessibility of the lesson content to younger students. Some teachers asked students to restate what the learning expectations were, using their own words. Teachers also asked students to demonstrate what they had learned in a wide variety of creative ways. Displays of student projects that filled classrooms and hallways also demonstrated the high quality of student achievement. Many also contained positive teacher comments.

The team found that lesson plans and instruction were closely aligned to the school's curriculum framework, State standards and performance indicators. Teachers stated that by posting their lesson plans on the Network server, they had developed a rich source of lesson plans and activities. Similarly, videotaped lessons provided models of good practice, which they reported that they frequently used.

The students were actively engaged in core academic classes and displayed lively and spirited interest in the topics being presented. Children eagerly raised their hands to participate in classroom discussions and answer questions. The teachers used multiple methods to engage and maintain student attention. Student behavior modifications designed to promote student thought processes, such as "Get into thinking position" and "Kiss your brain" were observed being used by many teachers.

Learning time was maximized and transitions were well-managed and efficient with the use of songs, chants, and drumming, usually led by the students. The team observed appropriate pacing in classrooms with alerts regarding upcoming changes, the use of timers, and reminders about staying on task. Continuity between lessons and among classes was observed by the team, and consistency across the grade level instruction was promoted through weekly grade level meetings and common planning time.

The team found that teachers differentiated instruction at HSA 3. In reading, multiple levels of student ability were addressed through the use of skill groups in the SFA reading program. Leveled readers were used in all classrooms as part of the balanced literacy and guided reading programs. The team observed that the library was well provisioned and provided a wide readability range. The presence of associate teachers at each grade level also provided opportunities for small group instruction in mathematics. Mathematics and sciences classes were reduced in size so that teachers could focus on improving the writing skills of students in these classes. In bi-monthly RTI meetings, teachers re-examined student performance data to develop individual differentiation plans for students.

Benchmark 1E: Instructional Leadership

The principal at HSA 3 provided strong leadership that emphasizes professionalism, reflective practice, and personal relationships enhanced by the school's ACTION principles—Agency, Curiosity, Try and Try, Integrity, Others, and No Shortcuts—listed as part of the current key design elements included in the school description section of the report. The principal stated that the school sets high expectations for students by first looking at what students need to know and then assessing the skill levels of their newly enrolled students. The school leader, working with the teachers, sets both short-term and long-term goals that are based on rigorous expectations. The principal stated that this year the school has started including students, parents and guardians in the goal setting process. The principal gave an example from the reading program where each first grade child had a bookmark that stated: *My current [reading] level is...* and below it *My goal is...* Additionally, she said that when students moved up a level in reading, they go into the school conference room and move a post-it note with their name to the new, higher level on the data chart on the wall. Students interviewed by the team said that they worked hard to move up reading levels and knew which level they were on.

The principal said that she is transparent about her expectations for her staff. She reported holding them accountable for their professional goals, the school culture goals, and student achievement goals. She expected them to be professionals who work well with their teammates. Teachers interviewed by the team stated that the principal was the instructional leader of the school and that she held them to high standards both personally and professionally through a goal setting process.

The school had a teacher evaluation system in place that is based on the Kim Marshall rubric. The rubric was organized around six domains of teacher performance: planning and preparation for learning; classroom management; delivery of instruction; monitoring, assessment, and follow-up; family and community outreach; and professional responsibilities. The rubric used a four level rating scale with the following labels: 4-expert; 3-proficient; 2-needs improvement and 1-does not meet standards.

Since it was too early for final evaluations to be completed, the team did not review them; however, the team did review sample feedback provided to teachers after the principal had observed lessons, feedback sent via leadership contact logs. The leadership contact logs offer the teacher detailed and specific feedback about the “great stuff” the principal observed as well as “the next steps” the teacher should take, such as thinking about how the teacher can push students’ thinking in the wrap-up of the lesson, rather than it being a summary of what was worked on.

The principal stated that the evaluation process began when she met with each teacher at the beginning of the year to set professional goals. The goals were developed collaboratively between the principal and teacher and included the school’s academic and culture goals. During the school year, the principal observed teachers in the classroom and provided feedback; there was a mid-year evaluation meeting and a formal evaluation meeting at the end of the year.

The school evaluation team found a strong support system in place to provide coaching and to model instruction for teachers. The principal and the leadership resident reported that they were in each classroom once a week and provided feedback following their observations. They told the team that whenever possible they provided this feedback through conversation with each teacher. They reported linking the feedback to the each teacher’s goals and to previous feedback to see if the teacher was following instructional advice. Interviewees indicated that leadership residents act as quasi-assistant

principals and may be appointed as principals at new HSA schools. A review of the job description for leadership residents showed that they develop lesson plans and spend 25 percent of the time teaching. In addition, they are responsible for mastering the curriculum, mastering the use of data to drive and improve instruction, mastering the teacher observation and feedback process, mastering the school culture, and participating in mentoring activities with staff and the principal.

Teachers interviewed said that they were frequently observed by leaders and received feedback in a variety of ways including written and oral comments and discussion. They stated that written feedback focused on what went well and the next steps the teacher should take to improve his or her instruction practices. One teacher said that the feedback was always helpful and that she never felt bad about any criticism she received. The principal attended grade level common planning meetings and also reviewed lesson plans. Teachers reported that the principal, to recognize and use the strengths of a specific teacher, sometimes paired teachers. For example, if one teacher was particularly good at behavior management techniques, the principal might pair that teacher with one who needed to strengthen behavior management skills. The principal modeled lessons and the teachers also had access to videotaped lessons of other Network teachers, which were used to critique and improve instruction. Teachers described this program, called EduTube, as an amazing opportunity for sharing best practices and great lessons. Teachers were able to videotape themselves and view their lesson critically. The principal stated that working through video allowed both her and the teacher to view the same instructional moment simultaneously and also allowed them to pause the video and discuss one part of the lesson before moving to the next. One teacher told the team that she was able to watch the video of herself teaching sequentially from the beginning of the year and was able to note her professional growth. Teachers reported that EduTube is used Network wide. Teachers from all Network schools post lessons on the Network server and all teachers were able to access and learn from the videos. Teachers said they could watch a video that would allow them to learn to teach a particular lesson or to improve a lesson they were working on.

According to the teachers interviewed by the team, the principal is always available to support and solve problems. Teachers stated that they had a voice in their school and that the principal listened and was receptive to their ideas. One teacher said that she thought the school would benefit by instituting a school wide community circle. In response to this suggestion, the principal told her to research the idea and develop a proposal for implementation. The school now comes together each Wednesday for community circle. Parents interviewed by the team said that the principal had an open door policy and was accessible to parents each morning and at dismissal when she shook hands with each student.

Benchmark 1F: At-Risk Students

The school has developed an efficient system to support students who were struggling academically or behaviorally. A review of the school description shows that two percent, or about five students, were identified as Limited English Proficient for school year 2009-10. The student achievement coordinator is responsible for identifying and determining support for LEP students, including RTI referrals. According to a special education teacher at the school, approximately 29 students had individual educational programs (IEPs) Special education services were primarily delivered through pull-out instruction, although some push-in services were provided. Other support staff, shared among all of the schools in the network, were available for occupational and speech therapies and counseling. Associate teachers also provided small group support as needed at all grade levels. The team observed other staff also assisting or team-teaching in classes; for example, the dance teacher provided small-group SFA

reading instruction and the athletics coach taught mathematics in a grade 1 classroom. Mathematics tutoring support was also available from 4:30-5:00 PM each day.

The school follows the RTI model with ongoing consultation and training occurring between special education and regular education staff in order to design interventions to meet the needs of at-risk students. At bi-monthly meetings, following analysis of individual student assessment data, all teachers and support staff reviewed and revised differentiation plans for students who were below grade level, as well as for students who exceeded grade level expectations. The team observed grouping as the primary differentiation strategy, although teachers reported that they used a variety of approaches. While learning expectations were high, it was evident to the team that teachers were very familiar with the students' starting points and accommodated their learning needs within each lesson.

Teachers described, and the documentation reviewed by the team supported, a clearly defined screening procedure for identifying at-risk students. Every eight weeks, all teachers met to review student performance data and determine whether the interventions currently in place were effective in improving student performance. If not, the intervention was adapted or students were moved to the next tier of intervention. Recommendations for inclusion in the third RTI tier resulted in a referral for possible special education services.

Teachers reported receiving students' IEP goals and reviewing these with a special education teacher. They also reported strong collaboration among special education providers and co-monitoring of student progress.

Sufficient time for collaboration was provided for special educators and classroom teachers; this usually occurred during weekly grade level meetings and the bi-monthly evaluations of student differentiation plans. During these bi-monthly meetings, the school also evaluated the effectiveness of its intervention programs using student performance on the Fountas and Pinnell reading tests and the mathematics unit tests.

Benchmark 1G: Student Order and Discipline

Teachers have established warm and caring relationships with their students at HSA 3 and consistent reward and behavior management systems are in place in all classrooms. Both in classrooms and in hallways, the school evaluation team observed patient and positive interactions between staff and students. Teachers observed by the team encouraged students by giving high fives, asking students to "kiss their brains" after answering correctly, and using a gentle touch and direct eye contact to redirect them. Harlem Success Academy has a documented discipline policy that lays out clear expectations and consequences for behavior. Teachers use songs, chants and hand signals to effectively redirect student behavior.

The principal stated that she intentionally promoted a positive school culture. She wanted the school community to take pride in the school and to celebrate the accomplishments of each member of the school community. She told the evaluation team that as students get older, she wants them continue to be excited to come to school.

HSA 3 has implemented a community circle to build school-wide community with an emphasis on the school's action values and celebrating growth. Each month a different class leads the circle and focuses on a different value. Students sing, perform skits, and receive awards for exhibiting the values.

The school has set school culture goals that focus on the following culture areas: scholar attendance, scholar lateness, family event attendance, dress code, reading log completion, homework completion, NYCDOE survey completion rates, and returning parent phone calls/inquiries. The administration has set end of year targets for each area. All stakeholders interviewed by the team said that HSA 3 is a safe environment where children can learn.

Benchmark 1H: Professional Development

HSA 3 had a professional development program in place that provided enough time and budgetary allotment to sufficiently support its teaching staff. Professional development sessions were found by the team to provide instruction designed to improve teacher instruction and content knowledge, and were sometimes linked to the individual teacher goals that are set at the beginning of the year as part of the evaluation process.

Professional development was offered network-wide as well as for individual schools. There are three to four weeks of professional development during the summer for teachers before school opens. These sessions focus on school culture, behavior management, and curricular programs such as mathematics, reading and writing. Each Wednesday, students are released at 2 PM and teachers receive three hours of professional development. A review by the team of Wednesday professional development agendas indicated topics had included literacy, mathematics, and writing. Additionally, the principal reported that teachers participated in a professional book club where they get to choose between several books suggested for them to read and discuss with colleagues. Some of the books on that reading list include: *The Trouble with Boys*; *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen*; *Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun and Whatever It Takes*. Teachers also may request to attend professional development conferences external to the Network. For example, the network art teachers were scheduled to attend a national conference. Teachers interviewed told the team that they also had the opportunity to observe classes at other network schools to promote their professional growth. There are six to eight full days for professional development during the year in addition to the summer and Wednesday programs. The school has also invested in EduTube, and online video system that allows teachers to upload teaching best practices.

According to the principal, she and the other HSA principals observe classes at other schools in the Network and meet to discuss issues teachers are struggling with in their classrooms. This forum provides the needs assessment that informs the selection of professional development offerings. Attendees evaluate each professional development session.

Renewal Question 2

Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?

Benchmark 2A: Mission and Key Design Elements

The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter. The mission was clear to all stakeholders interviewed, and was driven by a vision that graduates would meet the state academic requirements and have the skills to succeed in life.

The school has implemented all of its key design elements in support the school's mission. These included:

- The school administers a variety of assessments to students throughout the school year. These assessments include Network developed benchmark assessments, summative assessments such as the Terra Nova and assessments specifically designed to assess students in subject areas. Subject area assessments may be those included in the curricular program in place at the school and include unit assessments and quizzes. The frequency of assessments in each core area meets the once monthly measure defined by the design elements.
- The Network manages assessments and assessment data for all HSA schools. The team found that assessment data provided important insights into the progress of students. The RTI program, the school's primary intervention, was guided through the review of periodic benchmark and other assessment results.
- The two primary curricular programs, SFA and Investigations in Mathematics, are research-based, as are those for other curricular areas.
- HSA 3 maintains an extended daily schedule and school year.
- The Network provides substantial managerial and academic support to the principal in keeping with the philosophy that the principal should function primarily as the instructional leader.
- The HSA 3 teaching staff was highly competent and highly qualified at providing instruction for their grade level and subject areas. Professional development promotes and supports strong instructional practices and professional growth for teachers.
- The ACTION principles are actively used to promote learning and strong school culture at HSA 3. Students and teachers were able to describe the principles, which are included within the current key design elements included in the school description section of the report.

The school has no identified non-academic goals in its Accountability Plan for 2008-2014.

Benchmark 2B: Parents and Students

Parents and students were found by the team to be very satisfied with HSA 3. A formal evaluation of parent satisfaction is conducted through the NYCDOE School Survey, to which 80 percent of parents responded. One hundred percent of respondents in 2008-09 were satisfied or very satisfied with the education their child had received at the school. Ninety-nine percent of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the school maintained high expectations for their child. Similarly, ninety-nine percent of respondents felt that the school provided them with information about the educational goals for their child and offered appropriate feedback on student learning outcomes.

Interviews with parents/guardians and students validated these survey results. The parents voiced strong satisfaction with the many ways in which teachers communicated about student progress. One parent cited a quick response to a special education need that had gone unmet in a previous school. Parents stated that the school's program was challenging "without being overbearing." Students also voiced satisfaction with their teachers and the academic program.

Parents reported that they felt that school leaders had established good communication with them and that there was a process for following up on complaints. There was a parent who sat on the board as well as a parent council established to represent parents. One parent stated that there had recently been a special meeting for all parents so that the board members and others could inform them about school expansion plans. When asked if there were areas for improvement, they mentioned more diversity among staff, more computers for the children, and more space for non-academic activities.

A large number of parents and guardians sought entrance to the HSA schools for their children. According to school documents, approximately 3,600 applications for the 2009-10 school year were received for 475 seats in all of the HSA schools. Parents said that they were committed to keeping their child in the school and were hoping that younger siblings would also be admitted. Most parents reported enrolling their children after family members had reported positive experiences at other HSA schools.

Benchmark 2C: Organizational Capacity

HSA 3 is located in Community School District 4 on the third floor of a building that also houses the Mosaic Preparatory Academy, a pre-kindergarten through grade 5 public school with an enrollment of 275 students and PS 101, a New York City Public School. HSA 3 opened in August 2008 and serves 249 students in kindergarten through grade 2, according to the principal. As of March 15, 2010, the school served 75 kindergarten students, 102 students in grade 1, and 70 students in grade 2. Twenty-three students, or 12 percent, left the school after or during 2008-2009 school year, most due to parental choice such as transfer to a closer school or to be closer to their home, according to school enrollment, application, and attrition data provided to the team. Grade 3 will be added next year and the enrollment will increase to approximately 468 students, according to interviewees. The principal indicated that next year the school would have five kindergarten classes, five grade 1 classes, five grade 2 classes, and three grade 3 classes.

The Network has implemented a management structure that is similar for all of its schools that has clear lines of authority and responsibility. This structure, and the duties and obligations associated with the structure, are described in the Academic and Business Services Agreement By and Between The Success Charter Network, Inc. and the Harlem Success Academy Charter School 3. The Network has similar service agreements with all of the schools it manages. Interviewees described, and a review of the service agreement confirmed, an effective organizational structure that separates school business operations from academics. School business operations are centralized at the Network, including functions such as managing payroll, designing student recruitment and enrollment procedures, managing purchasing, developing a budget, and managing human resource functions.

A review of the school's academic organizational structure showed that the school currently has three classes for kindergarten, four grade 1 classes, three grade 2 classes, 15 teachers, and an athletic coach. The staff also includes associate teachers who, in some cases, will become lead teachers as grades are added to the schools. Having the position of associate teachers increases organizational capacity and

allows the school to increase enrollment and replace teachers who leave with minimal disruption. In addition to the school's principal, HSA3 has had a leadership resident. The leadership resident has accepted a position as the founding principal of Bronx Success Academy 2. According to information provided to the team by the school, all teachers were certified and all had Highly Qualified status.

The Network has implemented at HSA 3 a back office structure that includes a school operations manager, a school affairs coordinator, a student achievement coordinator, and various school support staff. The Network also employs data, literacy, mathematics, and professional development personnel to support academics at the schools. The primary purpose of this structure is to release academic personnel, particularly the principal, from day-to-day administrative routines so they can focus on teaching, learning, and improving student achievement. The principal indicated that because the school is adding a grade next year, the Network has hired a business manager to support increased organizational capacity. To improve the effectiveness of this management model and improve collaboration between teachers and back office personnel, the principal has started a book club. Teachers and back office personnel self-selected books related to education issues and met regularly to discuss them.

The Network and the school share human resource responsibilities. The Network manages the recruiting, selection, and hiring and firing process for support and academic personnel, and the principal manages and evaluates academic personnel at the school. The principal of HSA 3 indicated that she participated in telephone interviews with teacher candidates held by the Network and all school principals attend demonstration lessons held by the Network for prospective new teachers. The Network and the principal collaborate to evaluate back office personnel. A review of the Academic and Business Services Agreement showed that the board and the principal collaborate with the Network to review and approve hiring and firing decisions. The principal stated that the school had a good teacher retention rate and was able to staff the addition of a new grade this year.

The Network manages the lottery for all HSA schools, which is the principle method for recruiting students and is held each April. The school was chartered for 245 students and served approximately 249 students at the time of the evaluation. The Harlem Success Academy Charter Schools received approximately 3,600 applications for enrollment in the 2009-2010 for approximately 475 seats, according to information provided to the team. The lottery was held at a local Armory last year due to the extent of interest by applicants. The principal confirmed that the Network organizes the student recruitment campaign, and that staff goes door to door in neighborhoods distributing information. In addition, information about the school is provided to local daycare centers. She further stated that current parents are very active in spreading the word about the school. A Network interviewee stated that families are encouraged to apply to all HSA schools and applicants who are not selected through the lottery are put on the waitlists of the schools where they submit applications.

The school's management and board effectively communicate with all stakeholders. The school provides a weekly action flyer to parents and the school provides teachers with cellular telephones and business cards. In addition, based on a suggestion from a teacher, the school holds regular community meetings, which have been very successful and well received. The principal instituted a system of providing weekly announcements to teachers about upcoming school issues. She also attends board meetings, and provides the board with and explains student achievement data. The Network operations manager facilitates compliance issues with the board. Members of the parent focus group stated the school and the board communicated well with them. The board holds six public board meetings, which

follow the New York State public meeting laws; three of the meetings are joint meetings with all HSA school boards followed by breakout individual board meetings, and three are held at the school.

All interviewees could describe the mission of the school, and the principal has set expectations and standards with teachers to accomplish the mission and meet academic goals. For example, the principal has set long- and short-term goals with teachers that are rigorous and are aligned with school academic and cultural goals. She also works with parents and students to set goals; for example she has provided students with bookmarks that display the student's current reading level as well as the reading level goal for the student. The school's Accountability Plan has five academic goals relating to ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies, and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). According to a Network interviewee, Accountability Plan goals are essentially the same for all HSA schools, and data is collected centrally for all schools. A review of board of trustee minutes showed that academic data and goals are discussed at board meetings.

Benchmark 2D: Board Oversight

Each Network school has a board of trustees. In addition, there is a Network board of trustees. The only member of the ten member HSA 3 board available to be interviewed was the chair. According to the bylaws provided to the team, the number of trustees shall be not less than five or more than 11. The powers of the board are described in the bylaws and are similar among all schools. Examples of specific powers include electing and removing trustees; acquiring real or personal property; carrying out the business of the charter school; and managing and controlling the affairs and activities of the school.

Board membership included a parent representative and the board member interviewed described the backgrounds of board members and explained the importance of having board members with expertise that added value to the school; for example, expertise in finance, politics, and education. When queried to explain the role of and need for individual school boards considering the Network management model, he explained that each school had different neighborhoods, different principals, and different building and financial issues that need to be addressed. He indicated that board members understood the mission of the school and the interviewed board member exhibited knowledge of specific programs used at the school, particularly mentioning SFA and literacy programs. The team determined that overall the board had the skills needed to provide appropriate academic and financial oversight of the school.

The board member interviewed stated that the long term goal of Network schools was to be the top schools in the State and develop a model that can be replicated. According to this board member, the board uses achievement data to set priorities and spends most of its time reviewing achievement data and asking questions of the principal. He mentioned that he thought the principal was adept at using student achievement data to find and attack problems.

The interviewed board members said that the board was "swamped" with detailed information regarding student achievement. He indicated achievement data results are presented to the board comparing all HSA schools against specific assessment benchmarks. A review of board minutes indicated that achievement data is discussed at board meetings, and the team was provided data comparisons of various assessment results for all four schools.

The board has not made any financial or organizational decisions that have impeded the school in meeting its mission. The board member interviewed indicated that the board approves the school budget

and monitors spending closely. He indicated that Network subsidizes the school and the goal of all HSA schools is to be self-sufficient by the third year of operation. The board does have an executive committee and a finance committee chaired by the treasurer. He also spoke of the importance of retaining teachers and since teachers had a substantial workload, he was continuously looking at ways to encourage teachers. The importance of teacher retention was a sentiment also documented in board minutes.

At the time of the visit, the board had not evaluated the principal. The principal indicated she had not received a written evaluation from the board. The board had not conducted a self-evaluation and did not have a plan to measure board effectiveness. In addition, the board had not evaluated the performance of the Network.

Benchmark 2E: Governance

The board has developed and approved a mission and the five academic goals included in the school's Accountability Plan. The board member interviewed understood and articulated the mission related to all children meeting or exceeding State standards and giving them the resources to lead and succeed in school, college, and life.


HSA 3 is one of four schools managed by the Network and three more are planned for next year. Each school has a board of trustees and bylaws. The bylaws for HSA 3 were voted on and approved and officers were elected on May 7, 2008. The bylaws include articles, which describe a recruitment and selection process for new members, including a process for election, eligibility, term of office, removal, resignation, vacancies, and compensation. The board member interviewed, who also sits on the Network board, indicated that the board of HSA 3 works closely with the Network and the principal. He indicated that the Network was committed to improving student achievement and the Network model put the principal in a position to be free to provide instructional leadership. He indicated that each HSA school has goals and priorities; however, most, such as Accountability Plan goals, are the same for all Network schools.

The board uses the 2009-10 Network Financial Policies and Procedures Manual to monitor and control school finances. The manual describes a system of establishing proper accounting controls and outlines the responsibilities of the school and the Network with respect to certain financial transactions.

A review of the bylaws showed that board meetings can be held at the corporation's principal office or at any other place designated by the board. The board adheres to the New York State public meeting law and posts a notice of the meeting at the school and in the New York Times.

Board members can hold dual membership on Network and school boards. The chair of HSA 3 indicated dual members recuse themselves when voting on conflicting matters, particularly financial matters that affect the school where they are a board member. A conflict of interest policy was included in the bylaws, which require that any board member or officer who has a personal interest in any contract or transaction discussed by the board make a prompt disclosure of his or her interest.

Parent focus group members indicated that a process was in place at the school that allowed parents to register complaints, and a complaint policy is included in the school's charter, according to information



provided by the Network. Parents indicated they had access to the principal and the board, if necessary. The general Network, school, and board policies are reflected in the staff handbooks or board bylaws.

METHODOLOGY

The two-day renewal inspection site visit was conducted at HSA 3 during the period from April 8 to 9, 2010. The renewal inspection team (“the team”) conducted interviews with the principal, the student achievement coordinator, and the leadership resident. The team used a portion of the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks to guide the evaluation process.

In addition, the team conducted the following focus groups of school community representatives:

- a board of trustees’ interview consisting of one current member-the chair;
- a teacher focus group consisting of five teachers: one art teacher, and four first grade teachers;
- a student focus group consisting of six students representing grades kindergarten through grade 2; and
- a parent focus group consisting of four parents.

The team conducted 16 classroom observations in grades K–2. The observations ranged in length from 20 to 30 minutes. The team observed four ELA lessons; one morning meeting, six mathematics lessons, one dance lesson, two science lessons, one art lesson, and one chess lesson. The team also observed a common planning time meeting of eight teachers facilitated by the principal. Team members kept running records of their observations using a classroom observation evidence worksheet.

The documents and data reviewed by the team before, during, and after the site visit included the following:

- organization chart;
- School Improvement or Strategic Plan;
- list and calendar of formative and summative assessments;
- copies of data analyses and summaries;
- description of student support programs;
- student and family handbooks;
- faculty and staff handbooks;
- professional development program documents, schedules, and course lists;
- board minutes and bylaws;

- teacher planning time and meeting schedules;
- teacher evaluation tools;
- classroom observation tools;
- job descriptions of school leaders and instructional staff;
- school classroom schedules and map;
- teacher roster and certification, including highly qualified status;
- parent surveys and newsletters;
- school data to include waiting list, enrollment, student teacher and attrition data;
- sample lesson plans;
- sample student work;
- sample evaluations of teachers, school leaders, and management organizations; and
- curriculum documents.

The external school evaluation was conducted by an experienced team of educators from Class Measures. Their biographies follow:

Christine Brandt has served as a classroom teacher, special educator, administrator, and principal. She began her career as a Middle School teacher of English, French, Moderate Special Needs, and Reading. She moved into the administrator ranks as a Special Education Director at the Middle School level. For 18 years she served as principal in Wellesley and Dover, Massachusetts. In addition, she worked with the Somerville Charter School as their Lower School Coordinator. Currently, she mentors and supervises aspiring school administrators in both regular and special education. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association and is their Federal Liaison and Legislative Chair. She earned her undergraduate degree from Regis College, and her graduate degrees from the University of Massachusetts at Lowell in Reading and Learning Disabilities and from Northeastern University in Education Administration.

Jeanne Simons, Director of Educational Development. She worked previously as a high school mathematics teacher and in mathematics reform in urban school districts as a Targeted Mathematics Specialist with the Massachusetts Department of Education. She is a content and pedagogical expert in mathematics. She has experience in the development of coaching programs, effective differentiation, assessment and the formative usage of data, and in developing and providing professional development for teachers and leaders across a variety of reform topics. In addition, she has been involved in the development of a variety of technology-based educational initiatives, most recently providing educational support in the development of one of the first online teacher licensure programs in the Middle East. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from the California Institute of Technology and a Masters of Education in Mind, Brain and Education from Harvard.

James Hearn, Vice President of Professional Services. Jim is the Vice President of Professional Services for Class Measures. In that capacity, he manages the Class Measures school evaluation process and all contracts, participates as a team member on site visits, and edits and writes evaluation reports. Jim has over twenty-five years of experience in state government policy and budget analysis, performance auditing, program evaluation, and University teaching. Jim served as a School District Examiner and Field Coordinator for the Massachusetts Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, completing over forty school and district reviews in Massachusetts. For almost a decade, Jim held the position of Senior Policy Analyst for the Senate Post Audit and Oversight Committee of the Massachusetts State Senate. In that capacity, he completed a number of performance audits and policy reviews, including a comprehensive review of the Massachusetts adult correctional education programs. Jim is a former member of the Executive Committee of the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society. From 1982 to 1996, he served as an Adjunct Lecturer in Health Management at University College at Northeastern University. Jim earned his Bachelors Degree in Business from Boston College and holds a Master's Degree in Business from Suffolk University.

Melanie Gallo has been an educator for 35 years. A member of the National School Reform faculty, she has been a teacher and a school director. She has been a founder of two schools: a school in New Hampshire and a charter school in Massachusetts. She has been recognized by the College Board for excellence in teaching AP English and is the author of Senior Project in Creating the Good High School by Mackin/Silva. She is a trained Critical Friends coach and has served on the Board of the Massachusetts Drama Guild. She is currently on the graduate school adjunct faculty at Fitchburg State College. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and a Master's degree in Education from Fitchburg State College. She is at present a Leadership Consultant for Class Measures.