



## **TAPESTRY CHARTER SCHOOL THIRD YEAR INSPECTION REPORT**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The third year inspection is part of a comprehensive accountability system for charter schools authorized by the State University of New York Charter Schools Institute (CSI). The inspection during the school's third year of its charter provides an independent assessment of the school's progress toward its academic and organizational goals.

The third year inspection complements the yearly reviews conducted by CSI staff and corroborates the school's own annual reports of progress toward the targets defined in its accountability plan. The visit provides an independent assessment of the school's progress and provides recommendations for gathering and presenting valid and reliable evidence to the authorizer as the school prepares to apply for charter renewal in its fifth year of operation. The recommendations represent the experienced opinions of the inspection team and are intended to offer the school guidance for enhancing the evidence base for its renewal application.

### **II. CONDUCT OF THE VISIT**

The inspection of Tapestry Charter School was conducted on February 10-11, 2004 by an independent team of experienced educators from SchoolWorks, Beverly, MA.

Aretha Miller, Project Manager, SchoolWorks : Aretha is an eight year veteran special education teacher in the Boston Public Schools and the former curriculum coordinator for an alternative education program that provides services for at-risk and out-of school youth throughout Massachusetts.

William Wibel, Project Manager, SchoolWorks: Bill was a public school administrator for over twenty-five years, has supervised practice teachers and administrators for both Lesley and Harvard Universities, and has authored a number of articles on educational topics.

Emilys Peña, School Quality Review Consultant, SchoolWorks: Emilys worked for Boston Public Schools for 10 years as a bilingual special needs teacher for grades K-6, a literacy specialist at the middle school level, and at the high school level as Assistant Headmaster in charge of Teaching and Learning..

Brent Stephens, School Quality Review Consultant, SchoolWorks: Brent is a former bilingual teacher from Oakland, CA and Boston, MA. He has served as a cabinet-level administrator in the Lowell, MA Public Schools, and is working to complete a doctorate in the Urban Superintendents Program at Harvard University.

The team used the school's accountability plan goals as the guide for their examination along with the set of framework questions included in the inspection protocol to assess the school's academic and organizational effectiveness. Prior to the one and a half day visit, the team reviewed the school's documents including its annual *Accountability Progress Report*, its original charter application, and reports from previous informal site visits by the Charter Schools Institute. At the school, the team interviewed school administrators, Board representatives, staff, parents, and students, and visited classes to understand the efforts the school is making to achieve its academic and organizational goals.

This report is organized into two parts. *Part I: School Progress Report*, offers the team's judgments about the school's effectiveness at meeting the broad goals defined in the charter school law (Education Law §2850(2) (a-f)):

- improving student learning and achievement;
- increasing learning opportunities for all students (particularly students at risk of academic failure);
- encouraging the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- creating new professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators and other school personnel;
- expanding parental choice in public schools; and
- moving from a rule-based to performance-based accountability system by holding schools accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.

The judgments of the team are organized into three categories: academic program, organizational viability, and unique programmatic areas. The framework for the progress report discussion is shown in **Appendix A**.

The second section, *Part II: School Accountability Plan -- Assessment and Recommendations*, reports the team's assessment of the quality of the school's measures of its progress, and offers suggestions for enhancing the evidence base on which renewal decisions will be made at the school's fifth year of operation. A brief rationale for the inspection team's recommendations is presented in narrative form along with a summary table in **Appendix B**.

### III. SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

Tapestry Charter School opened its doors with 104 students in September 2001. During its first year of operation, the school enrolled students in kindergarten through grade four with plans to add grades five and six as specified in its charter. The school currently enrolls 162 students in kindergarten through grade six. Tapestry will become a K-7 program in September 2004 and will eventually become a K-8 in 2005 as a result of approval of its request to amend its charter by the SUNY Board of Trustees in December 2003.

The school is located in a two-story brick building that once housed the administrative offices of Bryant and Stratton College. The school currently leases the space from a private developer but is exploring the possibility of purchasing the building as a way of facilitating its expansion plans. The school presently occupies both the first floor and basement. The administrative offices, school library, and all classrooms (with the exception of grade four) are located on the first floor. The fourth grade classroom and the classrooms for the "Super Subjects" —art, dance, music, and

physical education,—are in the basement along with the dining room. The Spanish teacher currently does not have an assigned classroom but will get one when the school expands in July 2004.

The classrooms at Tapestry Charter School are spacious, brightly lit, and well resourced. The walls are decorated with both commercial and teacher made posters as well as student work. Each classroom has a word wall that reflects the key vocabulary that students are learning in the content areas as well as a leveled library that provides students with a variety of books to choose from. The creation of the word walls and classroom libraries supports the school's efforts to build and strengthen students' literacy development.

Tapestry uses a multi-age approach to provide instruction to students. Consequently, students are enrolled in grades K/1, 2/3, and 5/6. (There are currently two sections of grades K/1, 2/3, and 5/6). Grade four is the only stand alone grade at the school due to the New York State testing that is required in that year. Seventh grade will be a stand alone class during 2004-2005, but will be paired with the eighth grade when the school expands in September 2005. The curriculum for these two grades will be based on the Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound model.

The academic and programmatic design at Tapestry is based on the principles of the Developmental Studies Center (DSC), a nonprofit organization based in Oakland, California. The school's focus on students' literacy development and creating a "caring community of learners" are aligned with the DSC's mission. The school uses the implementation of the Responsive Classroom to make the philosophical views of the Developmental Studies Center a reality throughout the school.

The school employs seven classroom teachers and eight teaching assistants. Each classroom has a full time teacher and either a part time or full time assistant. Of the eight teaching assistants, one works as the part time consultant teacher who provides academic support to students with disabilities and another serves as the art teacher. There are also parent volunteers in some of the classrooms, thereby reducing the student-teacher ratio.

The school has hired a nurse, library media specialist, and the remaining four Super Subject teachers—two of whom it shares with the King Center Charter School. The school contracts with the Buffalo Public Schools for a speech and language pathologist, an occupational therapist, and a hearing impaired consultant to work with students who are in need of these services. Tapestry hired a special education teacher to work with students with IEP who need this service. The administrative team at the school consists of the director, who is the school's instructional leader, associate director, pupil personnel coordinator, administrative assistant, and the arts coordinator, who also serves as the dance instructor. Finally, the school has a seven member Board of Trustees responsible for providing fiscal and policy oversight.

**PART I: SCHOOL PROGRESS REPORT**

**I. ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

**QUESTION 1: To what extent have the students attained expected skills and knowledge?**

- 1. Test results for two consecutive years show that students at Tapestry Charter School are performing above the national norm on the Terra Nova in reading, language, and math. The test scores for second graders who took the test in spring '03—a majority of whom had attended the school for at least two years—exceeded the national norm in reading and language.**

**Table 1: Tapestry Charter School Terra Nova Scores in NCEs for grades 2, 3, & 5**

	2001-2002				2002-2003			
Grade	Number	Reading	Language	Math	Number	Reading	Language	Math
2	19	60.9	51.9	55.6 (N=20)	24	72	74.9	66.7
3 <sup>1</sup>	22	65	61.1	55.5	24	61.8	65	60
5 <sup>2</sup>	NA	NA	NA	NA	11	56	60.2	51.4

<sup>1</sup> The school did not administer the Terra Nova to fourth graders because there was concern that it would have been too time consuming for the students who already had to take the state exams in math, ELA, and science.

<sup>2</sup> The Tapestry School had not yet constituted its fifth grade in the 2001-2002 school year.

The test scores in Table 1 show that the majority students completing their first year at Tapestry already have the skills and knowledge to outrank the national norm group on which the Terra Nova scores are calculated. In the following year, the school succeeded in raising significantly the average score of its students. For both years, Tapestry Charter School achieved or exceeded the measures outlined in the school’s accountability plan for both math and English Language Arts.

- a. Test scores—as represented in tables 2 and 3—for fourth graders on statewide assessments show that Tapestry students, for the most part, are meeting the NY state learning standards in ELA, math, and science.**

In spring 2002, 50 percent of students achieved proficiency in ELA, 53 percent achieved proficiency in math, and 73 percent scored above the state designated level in science. Students who took the statewide exams in spring '03 performed even better on the assessments: 90 percent of fourth graders achieved proficiency in ELA, 94 percent achieved proficiency in math, and 84 percent scored above the state designated level in science.

**Table 2: Tapestry Charter School NY State 4<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA and math test scores, Spring '02 & '03)**

2001-2002				
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<i>ELA (n=16)</i>	25%	25%	25%	25%
<i>Math (n=15)</i>	7%	40%	33%	20%
2002-2003				
<i>ELA (n=20)</i>	0%	10%	50%	40%
<i>Math (n=19)</i>	5%	0%	32%	63%

**Table 3: Tapestry Charter School NY State 4<sup>th</sup> grade Science Results, Spring '02 & '03)**

State Designated Level or "SDL" <sup>3</sup>	2001-2002 N=15	2002-2003 N=19
Above SDL	11= 73%	16=84%
SDL	4=27%	3=16 %

<sup>3</sup> State Designated Level

The average performance of fourth graders on statewide assessments is similar to that of second, third, and fifth graders on the Terra Nova in that they demonstrate the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful on standardized tests and statewide assessments. The school's impact on student achievement is demonstrated by the fact that students who took the Terra Nova and NY state exams in 2003—the majority of whom had attended the school for two years—outperformed students who took the tests in 2002.

## **2. Students at Tapestry significantly outperformed their peers in the Buffalo Public School District.**

Fourth graders at Tapestry outperform their peers in the Buffalo Public School (BPS) district on both the spring '02 and '03 statewide exams. The percent of students at TCS outperforming their counterparts in BPS ranges from 33 percent in science to 55 percent in ELA on the spring 2003 administration of the exams. The differential was less for students who took the tests in 2002.

**Table 4: Comparison of Tapestry & Buffalo Public School scores on statewide assessments**

	2001-2002		2002-2003	
	<u>Tapestry</u> % of students scoring at level 3 or 4	<u>Buffalo</u> % of students scoring at level 3 or 4	<u>Tapestry</u> % of students scoring at level 3 or 4	<u>Buffalo</u> % of students scoring at level 3 or 4
<b>ELA</b>	50%	34%	90%	35%
<b>Math</b>	53%	45%	95%	58%
	<u>Tapestry</u>	<u>Buffalo</u>	<u>Tapestry</u>	<u>Buffalo</u>
	% of students performing above SDL	% of students performing above SDL	% of students performing above SDL	% of students performing above SDL
<b>Science</b>	73%	54%	84%	51%

- 3. The leadership at Tapestry reported that students are meeting the school's measures on internal assessments. The team, however, was not able to verify this claim because members were not familiar with the instrument, the Work Sampling System, was used to assess students' attainment of expected skills and knowledge.**

The Work Sampling System is an ongoing classroom performance assessment system that is used in kindergarten through sixth grade. Its purpose is to document students' skills, knowledge, behavior, and achievements across the content areas. It is administered three times during the school year in order to improve teaching and learning. Teachers are required to complete summary reports that are designed to replace traditional report cards for each student at the end of each administration of Work Sampling System assessment. A review of all summary reports for each student to confirm the school's claim about the achievement of the aggregate student body was beyond the limited scope of the third year visit.

According to the director, the Work Sampling System is not designed to provide the school with aggregate data on student performance over time. Instead, it was developed to give teachers and parents information about the progress of individual students. As a result, claims about student progress over time based on performance on the school's internal measures are limited to analysis of individual student progress. Aggregate progress is more specifically measured by the standardized test results discussed earlier in this report.

**QUESTION 2: What progress have students made over time in attaining expected skills and knowledge?**

- 1. Students who were second graders in 2002 and third graders in 2003 demonstrated significant gains on the spring '02 and '03 administration of the Terra Nova.**

**Table 5: Tapestry Charter School grade 2-3 cohort results on the Terra Nova in NCEs**

N=18*	Grade 2 2001-2002	Grade 3 2002-2003	NCE Gain/Loss
Reading	58.7	66	+7.3
Language	50.6	69.6	+19
Math	57.6	64.6	+7

\*The school reported that there are 19 students in this cohort, but team members could only identify 18 students after careful review of the Terra Nova report provided by the school.

The school administered the Terra Nova to students in grades 2 and 3 in spring 2002 and to students in grades 2, 3, and 5 in spring 2003. As mentioned earlier in this report, the school did not administer the test to its fourth graders because there were some concerns that it would have been too much testing for the students who already had to take the state exams in math, ELA, and science. Consequently, the school has data for only one cohort of students, i.e., the class of 2008. As Table 5 shows, students in that cohort demonstrated significant gains in attainment between their second and third grade years at Tapestry.

### **QUESTION 3: Does the school's instructional program meet the needs of diverse students?**

- 1. Teachers at Tapestry use a basic curriculum guideline that is mapped to the broad topics of the NY state learning standards to deliver instruction. Each teacher has the freedom to adapt the curriculum guideline to address the needs and interest of students.**

In keeping with teachers' freedom to adapt the school's curriculum guideline, the visiting team found a broad range of curriculum materials, instructional strategies, and supplemental materials in Tapestry classrooms. The team found it difficult to form a single judgment about the school's curriculum, and felt that the *enacted* curriculum – the particular and largely autonomous choices made by each teacher about what to teach – may benefit from more systematic planning and supervision. According to interviews with teachers at the Tapestry, these choices about curricula and ongoing assessments played a key role in helping students access and master the skills and knowledge valued by the school. By the same token, teachers also expressed that their individual choices about teaching materials made it easier for them to address more effectively the needs of diverse students in the school.

In mathematics, Tapestry teachers hew more closely to a single textbook. In kindergarten through grade five, teachers almost exclusively use the Scotts-Foresman math series; in the sixth grade, teachers make use of the Holt Reinhardt textbook. The sixth grade teacher suggested that large numbers of Tapestry students were struggling with the sixth grade math text (Holt *Middle School Pre-Algebra Course 1*), and that the teacher was considering adopting a new text for the class. The teacher's assertion about students' difficulty with the math series seemed to stand in contrast to the data on the Work Sampling System that showed high level of math proficiency among the sixth graders when they were in the fifth grade. This seemingly contradictory data suggests that the assessment criteria of the Work Sampling System may not be aligned to the

expectations of the sixth grade math program. This inquiry may represent a worthwhile endeavor for the school's instructional leaders and enable teachers to better predict instructional areas that may need additional support for sixth graders.

Since there is a strong emphasis on students' literacy development, Tapestry teachers are encouraged to attend conferences for early literacy strategies. For example, many teachers have attended conferences on Guided Reading and Writing and on the Lucy Caulkins methodology of teaching literacy. Teachers have reported that they are implementing elements of these literacy strategies in their classes with students.

**2. Tapestry uses a variety of instructional strategies to provide support to students. However, the quality of the implementation of these strategies varies among classrooms.**

Tapestry's small class size - with at most twenty-four students in a class - makes it possible for the school to individualize instruction for both high achieving and struggling learners. The presence of the teaching assistant and the occasional parent volunteer in the classroom serves to further reduce the student teacher ratio, thus creating more opportunities for students to access the instructional support they need. Team members, however, observed during classroom visits that many teachers at Tapestry still have yet to figure out how best to utilize the services of the assistant in their classrooms. Some teachers were observed actively engaging their assistants in the teaching and learning taking place while others did not use them as instructional resources even though it was evident that there were students in the classroom who could have benefited from their help. For example, in some classrooms the assistants and parent volunteers provided instructional assistance to either individual or small groups of students while in other classrooms assistants were observed either sitting in the back of the classroom not participating in the lesson or preparing snacks for students.

Teachers reported and were observed using a variety of instructional strategies. Inspectors noted examples of teacher directed instruction, classroom centers, flexible grouping in math and ELA, and one on one instruction as alternative practices in use to deliver instruction. Teachers reported that they use information from ongoing assessments—running records, student performance on quizzes and classroom assignments — to adjust their instruction to address the needs of their students.

The school uses a “push in” model for delivering instruction to its thirteen disabled students who have an Individualized Education Plan. The school has hired a consultant teacher who is responsible for working with the students who are learning disabled. (The school was able to negotiate an agreement that allows the Buffalo Public School district to pay the consultant teacher's salary). The school has also contracted with Buffalo Public Schools for a speech and language pathologist, an occupational therapist, and a hearing impaired specialist to provide services to the students with IEPs.

Teachers at Tapestry also use students' test results on the Terra Nova to identify students who might be in need of additional academic support. The school develops an Academic Intervention Plan (AIP) for students who are performing significantly below the norm on the Terra Nova so

that they can receive extra academic support, usually in the areas of math and English language arts. Students who have AIPs and continue to struggle to achieve academic success are referred to the Child Study Team to determine whether they should be evaluated for special education services by district personnel.

Although the teachers at Tapestry are working diligently to individualize instruction for students, classroom observations revealed few instances where instruction was adjusted to accommodate more than a modest range of variation. In addition, a review of fifty-one student work samples offered no examples of variations in work product expectations within a task or assignment. The school declares in its mission that it will provide an academic program in which “progressive interdisciplinary teaching techniques are utilized along with the best resources available to fit the individual learning styles of each student.” Neither the products of student effort nor the classes visited during the inspection reflected abundant attention to student individual learning styles.

During classroom visits, team members observed teachers holding different expectations for some students without apparent rationale. In a writing class, the teacher gave her approval of one student’s first draft when the student affirmed that it was his “best work,” but provided extensive correction and remediation for another student nearby. Both first draft samples appeared to the observer to have similar deficiencies, but only one student was expected to complete additional drafts before the work was submitted. In addition, it was troubling to the team that several members of the Tapestry staff and administration expressed their belief that not all students are capable of achieving at high levels. One administrator declared, “Some kids can only perform at level 2. It is unfair to ask more of them.” As clarification, the school leader indicated that the reference is to standardized tests, but the expression of the anticipated limitation in this instance as well as by other speakers did not ease concerns that some students are held to lower expectations than others. When asked to explain how their program serves students of all abilities, Tapestry teachers and administrators explained that, for some students, success in the school’s art program was a suitable substitute for those who will not achieve success in the academic program. The inspectors encouraged the leadership at Tapestry Charter to model for staff a persistent belief in all students, and to take the steps necessary to ensure that achievement in the school’s enrichment programs is accompanied by comparable academic achievement.

The inspectors encountered confusion with the way in which flexible grouping is being implemented throughout the school. Even after conversations with teachers, team members could not clearly ascertain how often students are assessed to determine if they should be assigned to different groups that best met their instructional readiness. This issue was apparent when team members learned that two fourth graders are assigned to the third grade math class. Neither the fourth grade nor third grade teacher could clearly articulate to team members the process for reintegrating these two students, who have been assigned to the third grade math class since September 2003, into the fourth grade math class. It was later learned that these students are assigned to the alternate placement as part of an Individual Education Plan. While an appropriate strategy to address student needs, the lack of familiarity with the plan to bring these youngsters to proficiency in time for state assessments is a concern. According to administrators, the consulting teacher oversees the instructional plans for all special needs students, assuring that student plans are properly addressed.

**QUESTION 4: Do the school's standards reflect the implementation of high academic expectations?**

- 1. The written curriculum being used by teachers is appropriate for students; however, the curriculum as implemented does not consistently reflect high academic expectations across the school.**

Teachers use a basic curriculum guideline that is topically aligned to the NY State Learning Standards to plan instruction. According to teachers, they adapt the curriculum guideline to use a thematic approach that helps students attain expected skills and knowledge. They stated that their adaptation of the curriculum guideline is aligned to the state learning standards, but a review of student work samples showed that while there continued to be a *topical* alignment, most teachers did not address the depth of skills and knowledge that are intended by the standards. For example, one teacher noted on the coversheet attached to a work sample in ELA that the assignment was aligned to NY Standard ELA 2 that requires students to “analyze content by making comparisons.” The class assignment, however, asked the student to recall facts from the story and the rubric that was used to score the student’s writing addressed writing mechanics, grammar and spelling, but did not measure student’s analytical ability, one of the fundamental expectations of the NY State ELA Standards.

Some teachers did create opportunities for students to engage in higher order thinking. On one science assignment, the teacher asked students to make an inference about the variation within a species on the basis of their observation of a class experiment. A few others gave students assignments that allowed them to explain their mathematical thinking for solving a problem. These work specimens were more reflective of the higher order thinking intended by the standards defined by the state.

Many of the work samples reviewed by team members were worksheets that students had completed most of which were not graded. As a result, it was not clear to team members the process teachers use to provide students with feedback about their work. Whenever there was any feedback on students’ writing assignment it usually dealt with grammar and mechanics and not on critical thinking skills such as developing their ideas more thoroughly in their writing.

This inconsistency in expectations of students was also observed during classroom visits. In some classes the teachers asked probing questions of students, encouraged them to use resources that are available to help them with their assignments before asking the teacher for help, and created opportunities for students to take ownership of their own learning. Other teachers simply asked students to engage in rote memorization of facts, answered students’ questions without requiring them to apply what they have learned.

The overall conclusion from the classroom visits and review of student work samples is that there is not a uniform high standard for students across the school. While some teachers can serve as exemplars of high academic expectations, at the present time there is a broad range of challenge students will encounter depending on their class assignment. Since the school enrolls

a high achieving population as demonstrated by results on the Terra Nova scores, a high level of challenge and rigor in the academic program is a key advantage the school can offer its students.

## II. ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY

### QUESTION 1: Are students and parents satisfied with the work of the school?

**1. In general, students are very satisfied with their experiences at Tapestry Charter School. They feel safe and cared for by the adults who work with them everyday.**

In the focus group with team members, students clearly stated they enjoy being at Tapestry Charter School. They believe that teachers “make learning fun” by encouraging them to work at their own pace. They feel that the adults in the school respect them for who they are as individuals. For students, this respect is evident in the fact that teachers answer their questions, offer to help them whenever they are having difficulty with an assignment, and in general, celebrate their successes.

Students also reported feeling safe in the school. They attributed this feeling of safety to the fact that the school provides a lot of adult supervision. According to students, two adults always escort them. They also stated that there are very few fights in the school and that there is an opportunity for students to engage in some kind of mediation during lunch time to resolve any conflict they might have with a peer. One student commented, “There is a lot of kindness here.” This reflects the school’s commitment to create a caring learning community for students.

**2. Tapestry’s small class size and focus on the integration of the arts into the general curriculum has made it an attractive educational alternative for many parents in Buffalo. Results from the Parent Survey administered at the end of the 2002-2003 school year clearly showed that the school has met parents’ expectations.**

The school distributed 132 surveys and 103 were summarized, a 78 percent return rate. Ninety eight percent of the parents who responded to the survey expressed overall satisfaction with Tapestry Charter as a school. Parents who participated in the focus group echoed this exact sentiment. Parents stated that the school’s small class size has made it possible for teachers to individualize instruction, thus, addressing the learning needs of each student. They believe that the school’s high academic standards are preparing their children to meet the New York learning standards as evidenced by the large number of fourth graders who have passed the state exams in English Language Arts and math.

Parents are excited about the school’s emphasis on the integration of the arts into the general curriculum because they see it as providing students with an alternative way to learn as well as demonstrate their understanding of the concepts and knowledge that are required by the state’s learning standards. Parents believe that by encouraging students to work at their own pace and by infusing the arts into the academic program, teachers have helped to instill the joy of learning in their children.

According to parents, they are quite pleased with the school's open door policy. They stated that the teachers and administrators at Tapestry are responsive to their feedback and comments about the overall operations of the school. They also mentioned they have numerous opportunities to actively participate in the life of the school, including volunteering at the school, attending school wide events, and participating in the Tapestry Charter School Community Association (TCSCA), a parent association created to provide assistance to the school's leadership.

Although parents are very enthusiastic about the school they did acknowledge that there are a few areas in which it could be improved. For example, they believe that the school should provide transportation and more extra curricular activities for students. Despite this, parents who participated in the focus group were unanimous in their views that Tapestry Charter is a viable alternative to the Buffalo Public School system.

**QUESTION 2: Are systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of the academic program and to modify it as needed?**

- 1. Tapestry does have a comprehensive system in place that enables the school to collect and analyze students' demographic and performance data. The associate director does a good job of providing oversight and maintenance of this system.**

The associate director reported that the school collects and analyzes student data on a regular basis as a part of the daily operations of the school. The school collects and analyzes student performance on standardized tests and internal assessments. Teachers have also reported that they collect and use student performance data to make adjustments to their lessons and overall instructional practice. They stated that the Work Sampling System, which they administer three times during the school year, helps them to track students' progress towards reaching developmental milestones "across a wide variety of curriculum areas."

- 2. As the school's instructional leader, the director reviews students' test results on internal and external assessments and conducts formal and informal classroom observations of teachers as ways to monitor the effectiveness of the school's academic program. This has been successful in ensuring that teachers adhere to the mission of the school through their implementation of the academic program.**

Tapestry Charter School teachers receive two formal evaluations each year and numerous informal classroom observations. The director conducts the formal evaluations and shares the responsibility of completing the informal observations with the pupil personnel coordinator. According to the pupil personnel coordinator, she conducts classroom observations primarily to see how teachers are supporting struggling learners and students with IEPs in their classes.

The school has developed an evaluation protocol that is used during formal evaluations. The protocol addresses four key areas: Planning, Facilitator of Learning, Assessment, and Environment. A brief review of a few completed teacher evaluations by team members showed that the director's comments consisted primarily of "Satisfied" and "Very satisfied." There was no specific feedback as to how teachers could improve their practice. Teachers, however, have

stated that they find the feedback they receive from the director to be useful and that it helps them get better at their craft.

**3. Tapestry's Board of Trustees is a policy board with fiduciary responsibilities that does not have systematic process in place to evaluate the impact of individual curricula on student learning.**

The Board uses its evaluation of the director to assess the efficacy of the school's instructional program. According to members, they have developed an evaluation protocol that assesses the director in three key areas: student test scores, parent and teacher satisfaction, and fiscal responsibility. They acknowledged that they do not have the capacity to do a more formal assessment of the academic program and so are dependent on the director to inform them about the teaching and learning that is taking place at the school.

When asked to reflect on the issue of diversity, members acknowledged that the current student population does not reflect the level of diversity that they anticipated when designing the charter application. (Although the school did not explicitly mention diversity in its mission, it is articulated in many of its written documents that TCS will provide a "rigorous education to students in a diverse setting.") The Board hopes that the addition of the seventh and eighth grades will enable them to attract a more diverse pool of students. Since the number of siblings with preference for admissions is large, there are few open seats remaining for lottery entrants. For the school to maintain its focus on "diversity" it might consider enhancing its recruitment among diverse populations in the community.

**4. Teachers collect and use student performance data to adjust their instructional practices. There is very little evidence, however, that the school uses data to make decisions about the overall academic program.**

The school seems to have done a good job of using data to make decisions at the individual classroom level. For example, teachers use student performance to determine groupings for math, ELA, and science instruction in the 5/6-grade cluster.

Although TCS has used data to make some programmatic decisions as evidenced by its development of the academic intervention plan, the leadership has yet to conduct a thorough analysis of the school's instructional program. The team has determined that such an analysis is needed after teachers reported that they are overwhelmed with the amount of information they received from the many conferences they have attended. In other words, they are unsure as to which instructional strategies they should implement to address the needs of their students more effectively. A comprehensive review of the school's academic program will help school leaders to clearly identify the issues that are impacting teaching and learning so that they can take a more targeted approach to professional development. An in-depth analysis across the school would be likely to bring more consistency to the instruction and the curricula that are being implemented throughout the school.

### III. UNIQUE PROGRAMMATIC AREAS

#### QUESTION 1: Are the school's mission and vision clear to all stakeholders?

- 1. TSC's mission is very clear to the majority of stakeholders who are able to articulate its key components.**

In conversations with team members, parents, students, teachers, Board members, and administrators talk enthusiastically about the school's mission to create a small learning community that infuses the arts to help students achieve academic success. They all describe the supportive environment that the school provides for students, families, and staff. According to them, TCS's mission is what makes it special and a feasible alternative to Buffalo Public School system. Parents asserted that TSC has been successful in helping their children love school and that it is preparing them "for life."

#### QUESTION 2: Are the school's special programs meeting expected targets?

- 1. Tapestry has achieved its goal "to provide an interdisciplinary academic program that incorporates the arts and social responsibility into the students' daily academic life" by integrating the Super Subjects into students' daily schedules and implementing the Responsive Classroom throughout the school.**

Students at Tapestry are exposed to the arts on a daily basis not only through their participation in the Super Subjects—art, music, dance, physical education, and Spanish—but in their content area classes as well. Classroom teachers make the effort to integrate, whenever possible, the arts into their curriculum. The school's commitment to the arts is evident in hallways and classrooms throughout the school.

According to clarifications from the school leader, the school has engaged in a number of projects to further support the integration of the arts into students' lives. Tapestry has developed a partnership with the Albright-Knox Art Gallery through the School In A Museum program to develop students' English Language Arts skills by creating opportunities for them to respond to a variety of art works in the museum's collection. This year third graders at Tapestry participated in the program and completed assignments based on this year's theme "Conversations."

Students in grades 5/6 participated in dance history unit that infused the social studies and arts/dance curricula. Students learned about the *Amistad* and visited the ship when it was on view in Buffalo, and learned about a dance composition entitled "Rainbow Round My Shoulder" and attended a dance performance by students from the Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts.

The Responsive Classroom is implemented throughout the building and there is evidence of it everywhere. Students are polite and respectful to each other, to staff, and to visitors to the school. Each classroom has a "greeter" who introduces him/herself to visitors and in turn introduces the visitors to the entire class. Students seem to take this responsibility seriously and execute their task of welcoming visitors to their school and classroom with much grace.

## PART II: SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN: ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### I. ACADEMIC PROGRAM GOALS

**Goal 1: All Tapestry Charter School students will demonstrate proficiency in reading and writing of the English Language.**

**Measure 1:** Using the Terra Nova and Fourth Grade New York State English Arts Assessment, cohorts of Tapestry Charter School students in grade 2 through 6 will show an average gain of at least 14 scaled score points over their previous year's scores.

**Measure 2:** Using the New York ELA Grade 4 Test, 75% of Tapestry Charter School students who have attended Tapestry Charter School for at least two years (tested within their second year) will score a three and above.

**Measure 3:** Using the New York ELA Grade 4 Test, 75% of Tapestry Charter School students will outperform students from schools within the Buffalo Public School District over the life of the charter.

**Measure 4:** Using the Work Sampling Checklist, 80% of Tapestry Charter School students will meet yearly grade level expectations for the speaking, writing an spelling components of the Language and Literacy Domain.

**Measure 5:** Using the Brigance Early Screening Inventory, 90% of Tapestry Charter School students achieving below cutoff score of 80 prior to kindergarten entry will score within the ready-for-literacy range (90-100) upon retest within the first month of grade one.

**Measure 6:** On a writing sample administered each spring, 75% of Tapestry Charter School students will score within the proficient range using a rubric that is rated by the classroom teacher and one other teacher.

**Goal 2: All Tapestry Charter School students will demonstrate mastery of mathematical concepts.**

**Measure 1:** Using the Terra Nova and Grade 4 New York State Math Assessment, cohorts of Tapestry Charter School students in grades 2 through 6, will show an average gain of at least fourteen scale score points over their previous year's score.

**Measure 2:** Using the New York grade 4 Math Exam, 75% of Tapestry Charter School students who have attended Tapestry Charter School for at least two years (tested within their second year), will score a three or above.

**Measure 3:** Using the New York grade 4 Math Exam, 75% of Tapestry Charter School students will outperform students from schools within the Buffalo School District over the life of the charter.

**Measure 4:** Using the Work Sampling Checklist, 80% of Tapestry Charter School students will demonstrate one full year of growth as measured by the *mathematical processes, numbers and operations, patterns, relationships and functions, geometry and spatial relations, measurement, and data collection and probability* components of the Mathematical Thinking Domain.

**Goal 3: All Tapestry Charter School students will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of scientific reasoning.**

**Measure 1:** Using the New York Grade 4 Science Exam, 75% of Tapestry Charter School students who have attended Tapestry Charter for at least two years (tested within the second year), will score a three or above.

**Measure 2:** Using the Work Sampling Checklist, 80% of Tapestry Charter School students will meet yearly grade level expectations for the Scientific Thinking Domain.

**Goal 4: All Tapestry Charter School students will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of Social Studies.**

**Measure 1:** Using the New York State Grade 5 Social Studies Exam, 75% of Tapestry Charter School students who have attended Tapestry Charter for at least two years (tested within the second year), will score a three or above.

**Measure 2:** Using the Work Sampling Checklist, 80% of Tapestry Charter School students will meet yearly grade level expectations for the people, past and present, human interdependence, citizenship, and government, and people and where they live components of the Social Studies Domain.

**ACADEMIC PROGRAM GOALS—RECOMMENDATIONS**

The school might consider the following recommendations to enhance the quality of evidence to be used to assess progress toward its goals.

1. Do not compare Terra Nova scores to NY state test results to show progress over time. The tests are not aligned to each other and so any conclusion that is drawn about student progress based on the results from these two tests will not be valid. Since the school is concerned with the amount of testing fourth graders are engaged in during the spring, it might want to consider a fall to fall administration of the Terra Nova.
2. Disaggregate test scores by subgroups, classrooms, and other local criteria to develop a more complete picture of students' overall performance on internal assessments and standardized tests. By disaggregating the data, the school will be able to adjust its academic program and instructional practice to better address the needs of high achieving and struggling students.
3. Include a narrative that explains the purpose of the Work Sampling System; that is, it is a tool used to “document children's skills, knowledge, behavior, and accomplishments across a wide variety of curriculum areas on multiple occasions in order to enhance teaching and learning.” Also, include information on how the school uses and administers it as an internal assessment to track student progress in the core content areas.
4. Create a chart that identifies the skills and knowledge that kindergarten students are assessed on by the Brigance Early Screening Inventory as well as the scores they received for each category. This will support the school's claim that all of its Kindergarteners have the necessary skills and knowledge to be successful in the first grade.

5. Revise the measure for student performance in science to reflect the changes in how the New York state science exam is being scored and reported. If this is not possible, include a narrative that explains the changes in the reporting of the state science exam.
6. Since there is a discrepancy between student performance on the Work Sampling System for science and their performance on the NY state science exam, the school should include a narrative that explains this difference. If this disparity continues, the school should consider monitoring the administration and scoring of the Work Sampling System to ensure the reliability and validity of student results.
7. Break out student performance data by grade levels and categories on the scoring rubric to create a more detailed picture of student performance on the spring writing assessment. Also, include a brief description of how the school ensures the reliability and validity of the scores obtained on the rubric used for scoring the writing samples.
8. The school should consider administering a pre and post assessment to clearly show student progress in writing.
9. Since the majority of Tapestry Charter students are attaining and exceeding the measures for ELA and math outlined in the school's accountability plan, school leaders might want to consider setting a higher benchmark for students to achieve.

## **II. ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY GOALS**

### **Goal 1: Tapestry Charter School will maintain strong parent support through volunteerism and commitment to the school.**

**Measure 1:** 75% of Tapestry Charter School parents who respond to the parent survey will be satisfied with the Tapestry Charter School's academic program and their child's academic growth.

**Measure 2:** 75% of Tapestry Charter School parents who respond to the parent survey will be satisfied with communication between home and school.

**Measure 3:** 75% of Tapestry Charter School parents who respond to the parent survey will be satisfied with their child's social growth.

**Measure 4:** 35% of our families volunteer on an annual basis.

**Measure 5:** The average daily attendance rate at the Tapestry Charter School will exceed the Buffalo Public School's average daily attendance rate by 2%, or at least 94% attendance.

**Measure 6:** Tapestry Charter School will maintain 95% enrollment with a waitlist equal to or greater than 25% of enrollment.

**Measure 7:** 40% of Tapestry Charter School families will participate in Tapestry Charter School Community Association meetings and events.

### **Goal 2: Tapestry Charter School will maintain strong financial practices and responsible decision-making.**

**Measure 1:** Tapestry Charter School’s actual and proposed budgets will demonstrate sound financial practices.

**Measure 2:** Yearly submission of audited financial statements will demonstrate sound financial practices.

**ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY GOALS—RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Create a chart that shows the percentage of parents who are satisfied with the school for each academic year to demonstrate trends over time.
2. The school should clearly identify how many surveys were handed out to parents and how many received to support its claim about the rate of return.
3. Include a list of the volunteer activities that parents have participated in to show more clearly the ways in which they support the operation of the school.
4. Clearly identify the attendance rate for the Buffalo Public School district to show the school’s attainment of its target, that is, to exceed the attendance rate of the district by 2%.
5. Develop a table, such as the one below, to show trends and patterns in enrollment and the number of students waiting to be admitted to the school for each grade level. This will help the school to illustrate its viability as an organization.

*EXAMPLE*

	2001-2002		2002-2003		2003-2004	
	Enrollment	Waitlist	Enrollment	Waitlist	Enrollment	Waitlist
K						
Gr. 1						
Gr. 2						

6. Include the number of parents who have participated in the Tapestry Charter School Association for each academic year.
7. Identify the types of events that the school sponsors and the number of parents who have attended these events. Also, include a description of the strategies that the school uses to inform parents of these school-wide events.

**III. UNIQUE PROGRAMMATIC AREA GOALS**

**Goal 1:** Tapestry Charter School will provide an interdisciplinary academic program that incorporates the arts and social responsibility into the student’s daily academic life.

**Measure 1:** A majority of Tapestry Charter School students will be able to connect social and cultural awareness to academic learning as determined through teacher documentation.

**Measure 2:** When observed by independent individuals and experts who visit the school throughout the year, 75% will say that students are “often” or “always” engaged in learning and are respectful of each other and their school environment as determined by a checklist.

### **UNIQUE PROGRAMMATIC AREA GOALS—RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Tapestry should try to quantify the first measure of its Unique Program Areas goal. Instead of stating that “a majority of students will be able to connect social and cultural awareness...” the school should identify a specific percent of its student body that should meet this target.
2. Create a table/chart that lists the cultural events and the level of student participation to complement the narrative that the school uses to explain attainment of its aim to “connect social and cultural awareness to academic learning.”
3. Tapestry should consider quantifying the data collected by the checklist that is used by visitors to show that they observed students engaged in learning. If this is not possible, the school should think about developing an exit interview protocol or survey to be used with visitors to the school as a way of collecting and quantifying the data that the school will use to determine if it has achieved its measure to have “75% of visitors say that students are “often” or “always” engaged in learning.” Also, create a chart/table to accompany the narrative that is used to explain the school’s progress towards this target.

**APPENDIX A: FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL PROGRESS**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Evidence Sources</b>
<b>Academic Program</b>	To what extent have students attained expected skills and knowledge?	School's Accountability Plan and Progress Report(s)
	What progress have students made over time in attaining expected skills and knowledge?	School's Accountability Plan and Progress Report(s)
	Does the school's instructional program meet the needs of diverse students?	Class visits, interviews, data review, Accountability Plan Progress Report
	Do the school's standards reflect the implementation of high academic expectations?	Review of curriculum documents, student work samples; confirmation of implementation by class visits
<b>Organizational Viability</b>	Are students and parents satisfied with the work of the school?	Interviews, survey review
	Are systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of the academic program and to modify it as needed?	Personnel evaluation policies, minutes and agendas of board, staff meetings
<b>Unique Aspects</b>	Are the school's mission and vision clear to all stakeholders?	Interviews, document reviews
	Are the school's special programs meeting expected targets?	Accountability Plan, Progress Reports, other docs unique to each school

## APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TAPESTRY CHARTER SCHOOL

### I. Academic Program Goals

<p><b>Goals 1&amp;2:</b> All Tapestry Charter School students will demonstrate proficiency in reading and writing of the English Language &amp; mathematical concepts</p>	
<p><b>Proposed Measures</b></p> <p>M1: Using the Terra Nova &amp; Fourth Grade NY State ELA Assessments cohorts...will show an average gain of at 14 scaled score points</p> <p>M2: Using the NY ELA Grade 4, 75% of TCS students...score a three and above</p> <p>M3: Using the NY ELA Grade 4 Test, 75% of TCS students will outperform students from schools with Buffalo Public School.</p> <p>M4: Using the Work Sampling Checklist, 80% of TCS students will meet yearly grade level expectations...</p> <p>M5: Using the Brigance Early Screening Inventory, 90%of TCS students achieving below cutoff score of 80 prior to kindergarten...</p> <p>M6: On a writing sample administered each spring, 75% of students will score within the proficient range...</p>	<p><b>Recommendations for the school to consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Do not compare Terra Nova to NY state test</li> <li>❖ Disaggregate numbers by subgroups, by classroom, and other local norms identify students who might need academic support.</li> <li>❖ Disaggregate data by subgroups</li> <li>❖ Use either percentiles or quartiles to show range of scores.</li> <li>❖ Include a narrative to explain the Work Sampling system.</li> <li>❖ Assemble the data from Work Sampling to demonstrate trends over time within a particular cohort</li> <li>❖ Create a chart that shows some of the skills/knowledge that the Brigance assesses.</li> <li>❖ Break out student performance data by grade levels and by categories on the rubric used to assess writing sample.</li> <li>❖ Include pre and post data to show progress/growth in student performance</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goals 3&amp; 4:</b> All Tapestry Charter School students will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of scientific reasoning. &amp; in the understanding and application of social studies.</p>	
<p><b>Proposed Measures</b></p> <p>M1: Using the NY state Grade 4 science exam, 75% of TCS students...score a three and above</p> <p>M2: Using the Work Sampling Checklist, 80% of TCS students will meet yearly grade level expectation for the Scientific Thinking Domain.</p>	<p><b>Recommendations for the school to consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Change measure to reflect the changes in how the NY science tests are scored and reported.</li> <li>❖ If you cannot change the measure, include a narrative explaining the changes to the reporting of state science exam.</li> <li>❖ See recommendation for measure 4 for goal 1</li> <li>❖ Include a narrative explaining why results on internal assessments for student performance in science are different from results on state assessments.</li> </ul>

## II. Organizational Viability Goals

<b>Goal 1: Tapestry Charter School will maintain strong parent support through volunteerism and commitment to the school.</b>	
<b><i>Proposed Measures</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></b>
M1: 75% of TCS parents...will be satisfied with the school’s academic program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Show results for each year to show trends over time</li> <li>❖ Clearly identify how many surveys were handed out to parents and how many received to support school’s claim of 78% return rate.</li> <li>❖ List the volunteer activities that parents have participated in.</li> <li>❖ Track parent volunteers</li> <li>❖ Clearly identified the attendance rate for Buffalo Public School district to show school’s attainment of this measure.</li> <li>❖ Show a table with enrollment and waitlist for each grade level and year.</li> <li>❖ Include the number of parents who participate in the Tapestry Charter School Association.</li> <li>❖ Identify the types of events that parents participate in and the number of parents who have participated.</li> </ul>
M2: 75% of TCS parents ...will be satisfied with communication between home and school.	
M3: 75% of TCS parents... will be satisfied with their child’s social growth.	
M4: 35% of families volunteer on an annual basis	
M5: The average daily attendance...will exceed Buffalo Public Schools attendance rate by 2%	
M6: TCS will maintain 95% enrollment with waitlist equal or greater than 25% enrollment.	
M7: 40% of TCS families will participate in TCS Communication Association...	
<b>Goal 2: Tapestry Charter School will maintain strong financial practices and responsible decision-making.</b>	
<b><i>Proposed Measures</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></b>
M1: TCS’s actual and proposed budgets will demonstrate sound financial practices.	The Charter Schools Institute will review the school’s financial status.
M2: Yearly submission of audited financial statements will demonstrate sound financial practices.	

## III. Unique Programmatic Area Goals

<b>Goal 1: Tapestry Charter School will provide an interdisciplinary academic program that incorporates the arts and social responsibility into the student’s daily academic life.</b>	
<b><i>Proposed Measures</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations for the school to consider:</i></b>
M 1: a majority of students will be able to connect social and cultural awareness...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Quantify the measure</li> <li>❖ Identify the cultural events and levels of participation</li> <li>❖ Provide a visual and a narrative to</li> <li>❖ Develop exit interviews or surveys for visitors to the school to demonstrate attainment of measure.</li> <li>❖ Create a chart/table to supplement the narrative.</li> <li>❖ Quantify the ‘checklist’ of student performance that is being used by visitors to show that students are engaged in learning.</li> </ul>
M2. When observed by independent individuals and experts who visit the school...75% will say that students are “often” or “always” engaged in learning...	



# Charter Schools Institute

---

## State University of New York

### TAPESTRY CHARTER SCHOOL THIRD YEAR REPORT FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

#### Scope and Methodology

CSI staff performed a desk review of the school's quarterly financial reports, budgets, annual financial statement audit reports, and other correspondence. The review covered documents received during the period from the date the school was chartered, April 24, 2001, through December 31, 2003. The results of this analysis are provided below.

#### Financial Reporting

The school has complied with its financial reporting requirements. The annual budgets, audit reports and quarterly financial reports were filed on time or within one week of the applicable due date. The audit report opinions for the years ended June 30, 2002 and 2003 were unqualified, indicating the financial statements were fairly presented, in all material respects, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. Audits were conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and *Government Auditing Standards* as required. The auditor's reports on compliance and on internal control over financial reporting disclosed no findings. A management letter was not issued in either year.

#### Financial Condition as of June 30, 2003

The school's financial condition was generally stable and had improved over the prior year. Unrestricted net assets totaled \$276,306 (\$2,093 per approved number of enrolled students) and the school's operating activities provided positive cash flow of \$112,342. Total net assets increased from the prior year by \$84,768.

The school has fixed assets (net of accumulated depreciation and amortization) totaling \$432,826 that consist of leasehold improvements, furniture and equipment. Long-term debt totaled just \$5,709, but the school has commitments under a noncancelable operating lease to make payments totaling \$429,000 through fiscal year 2006.

The school received moderate amounts of private grants and contributions to support its program. Private grants and contributions totaled \$99,673, or 8 percent of total expenses (compared to \$189,963 or 15 percent in the prior year).