



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

UFT Charter School

School Evaluation Report 2006-2007

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INTRODUCTION

Background on Charter Schools and the State University

The New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (“the Act”) called for the creation of tuition-free public schools that would operate independently and autonomously of local school districts; schools by design committed to improving student achievement for all students, particularly those at-risk of academic failure.

The Act specifies that civic leaders, community groups, educators and/or parents interested in bringing public school choice to their communities may apply to one of three chartering entities in the state to open a new charter school: the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the State University Trustees), the New York State Board of Regents (the Regents), or local boards of education (in New York City, authorizing power is vested in the Chancellor). Additionally, existing traditional district-operated schools can seek to convert to charter status through their governing boards of education.

The Charter Schools Institute (the Institute) was established by the State University Trustees to assist them in their responsibilities under the Act, including reviewing applications to establish charter schools as well as the review of renewal applications for those schools (as detailed more fully below, an initial charter is granted for a period of five years only). In each case the Institute makes recommendations to the State University Trustees. In addition the Institute is charged with providing ongoing oversight of SUNY authorized charter schools.

Charter schools are public schools in every respect. They are open to all children, non-sectarian in their programs and funded with public tax dollars. Unlike district operated schools, which are run by a board of education, each public charter school is governed by an independent board of trustees which is directly responsible for school performance. That board, while independent, is subject to public oversight. Just as traditional school boards, charter school boards of trustees must adhere to New York State’s Freedom of Information and Open Meetings laws. Public charter schools and their boards are also subject to oversight and monitoring. In the case of SUNY authorized schools, that monitoring is conducted by the Institute. Additionally, all public charter schools in New York State are jointly subject to inspection and oversight by the State Education Department (SED) on behalf of the Board of Regents. As such, charter schools, though free from many mandates, are more accountable to the public than district-run schools.

Charter schools are also accountable for performance. In exchange for the freedom from many state rules and regulations that the Act provides, a public charter school receives a charter, or contract, of up to five years and must meet stated student performance goals that are set forth in its Accountability Plan, as well as standards regarding its fiscal, legal and organizational effectiveness within the charter period, or risk losing its charter or not having its charter renewed. This tradeoff—freedom from rules and regulations in exchange for unprecedented accountability for student performance, and real consequences for failure—is one of the most significant differences between public charter schools and other public schools administered by traditional school districts.

The State University Trustees’ Oversight Process

The State University Trustees, jointly with the Board of Regents, are required to provide oversight sufficient to ensure that each charter school that the Trustees have authorized is in compliance with applicable law and the terms of its charter. The Institute, together with the State Education

Department, monitors compliance through a monitoring plan (which is contained in the schools' charter itself) and other methods.

In addition to monitoring a school's compliance with the law, the State University Trustees view their oversight responsibility more broadly and positively. Accordingly, they have adopted policies that require the Institute to provide ongoing evaluation of charter schools authorized by them. By providing this oversight and feedback, the State University Trustees and the Institute seek to accomplish three goals.

The first goal is to facilitate improvement. By providing substantive information about the school's strengths and weaknesses to the school's board of trustees, administration, faculty and other staff, the Institute can play a role in helping the school to recognize those strengths and weaknesses. Of course, whether the school actually takes corrective actions, and more importantly, effective corrective action, remains the school's responsibility given that it is an independent and autonomous school.

The second goal is to disseminate information about the school's performance beyond the school's professional staff and governing board to all stakeholders, including parents and the larger community in which the school is located. Ideally this information, including the present report, should help parents make choices about whether a school is serving their children well and/or is likely to continue to do so in the future. For this reason, this report (and others like it) is posted on the Institute's website and the school is asked to inform parents of its posting. By providing parents with more information, the State University hopes to enhance the market accountability to which charters are subject: if they do not attract and retain sufficient numbers of students who want the product they are providing, they cannot survive.

The third goal is to allow the Institute to build a database of the school's progress over time. By evaluating the school periodically, the Institute is better able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a school—and the likelihood for continued success or failure. Having information based on past patterns, the Institute and the State University Trustees are better positioned to make recommendations and a decision on whether a school's charter should be renewed. In turn, a school will also have a far better sense of where they stand in the eyes of its authorizer.

Inspection Visits and Reports¹

A central component of the Institute's evaluative oversight system is a schedule of periodic visits to and inspections of charter schools, resulting in letters and reports to the school's board of trustees. This inspection report is a product of one of those visits.

In evaluating schools at renewal and on a regular and ongoing basis, the Institute uses a series of benchmarks that cover not only the strength of the academic program but the strength and effectiveness of the organizational and fiscal policies, structures and procedures that the school has instituted at the time of the visit ("the Renewal Benchmarks"). How these benchmarks are used (and which are used) varies, depending on the specific year of the visit as well as whether the school is in its initial renewal cycle (the first five years) or, having been renewed one or more times, in subsequent renewal cycles.

¹ More information on the Institute's school oversight and evaluation system may be found online at <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsPubsReports.htm>.

In particular, the Institute uses a subset of the Renewal Benchmarks to review the effectiveness of a charter school's academic programs, e.g., the strength of a school's internal assessment system, the rigor of its pedagogical approach, and the breadth and focus of the school's curriculum. This subset, Renewal Benchmarks 1.B-1.F, is often referred to as the "Qualitative Education Benchmarks," or "QEBs." In the formative years of a school (generally the first three years of operation), the QEBs are important precisely because the quantitative indicators of academic achievement, i.e., students' performance on standardized tests (especially the state's 3rd - 8th grade testing program and Regents assessments), are generally few in number and difficult to interpret. The qualitative indicators serve as proxy indicators, therefore, for student assessment data sets that are necessarily incomplete and incipient. Moreover, only by using these qualitative indicators can the Institute provide feedback not only on *how* the school is doing but also *why* it is succeeding or failing.²

Over time, and particularly at the school's initial renewal (and subsequent renewals thereafter), the quantitative indicators (as defined by Renewal Benchmark 1.A, the school's progress in meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals) take on paramount importance and the qualitative indicators concordantly diminish in importance. This is consonant with the fact that charter schools must demonstrate results or face non-renewal. However, while subsequent renewal decisions are based almost solely by the school's progress toward meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals during the charter period, the Institute continues to use the Qualitative Education Benchmarks in its evaluation of charter schools. The reason for this is that it can give the school, parents, and other stakeholders information not only on how the school is doing but perhaps the reasons for its lack of performance (if such is the case).

The Renewal Cycle and the Timing of School Inspection Visits

Because some schools take planning years before opening (during which time their five-year charter continues to run as if they had opened) and/or receive renewal charter terms of less than five years, the number of years that a school has been in operation is not always co-terminus with the number of years that a school has provided instruction. Thus for example, a school that is in its seventh year of operation may be facing initial renewal, having previously received a short-term planning year renewal for a period of time equivalent to the number of planning years the school took. It will therefore receive a renewal visit, whereas another school that did not take any planning years and was renewed for five years would be in the second year of its second five-year charter. This school would therefore not receive a renewal visit but rather an evaluation visit and inspection report, which all schools in that position receive.

As such, each of the Institute's inspection reports contains a chart indicating the years the school has been in operation, the year of its present charter period, when it has been renewed and for how long, and the feedback that has been previously issued to the school. This chart is set forth in the following section.

The Present Report

The information contained within this report is the result of evidence obtaining during the Institute's visit to the school conducted in the spring of the school's second year of instruction of its first or second charter term. In addition to this introduction, the report includes a brief description of the

² More often, of course, schools do not succeed or fail so much as parts of the highly complex organization are working well and parts are not.

school, conclusions and analysis from the present visit, the Renewal Benchmarks, and, finally, data on the visit, including identities of the school inspectors and the date of the visit.

The report reflects the observations and findings from the one-day inspection visit conducted typically by a two- to four-member team comprised of Institute staff, and, in some cases, outside experts. Consistent with the Institute's evaluation process throughout the life of the charter, Institute visitors seek evidence of effectiveness in key areas: the academic success of the school including teaching and learning (curriculum, instruction and assessment) and the effectiveness and viability of the school as an organization, including such items as board operations and student order and discipline. Issues regarding compliance with state and federal laws and regulations may be noted (and subsequently addressed), and where the Institute finds serious deficiencies in particular relating to student health and safety it may take additional and immediate action; however, monitoring compliance is not the principal purpose of the visit. The same is true with issues pertaining to the fiscal soundness of the school. Evaluation visits typically include an interview with the school board, the school leader, classroom visitations, in addition to the review of other school-based documents.

Keeping This Report in Context

In reviewing this report, readers should keep in mind that charter schools face a variety of challenges as they mature, and not all charter schools address each challenge at the same pace. The State University and the Institute recognize the difference between the challenges of starting-up a school and those involved in sustaining its viability and effectiveness over the long-term, as well as the differences in the richness of student assessment data available for a school which has recently opened compared to a school which has been in operation for an extended time. In reviewing this report, readers should keep in mind that charter schools face major challenges in the first few years of their charter. These challenges include:

- establishing a positive, academically focused school culture that provides high expectations, support and encouragement for students and teaching staff, and any necessary remediation for students;
- establishing operational and communication patterns with the governing school board of trustees, as well as communication patterns with staff, parents and the community;
- setting up sound fiscal processes and procedures;
- establishing the school in often less-than-ideal facilities, without ready access to facilities funding mechanisms available to district administered public schools;
- creating an environment with strong instructional leadership where teachers receive timely professional development to address changing student needs;
- ensuring that all staff are familiar with and consistently use an effective system for behavior management; and
- retaining qualified staff and minimizing the frequency and rate of any staff turnover by understanding the reason for it, and providing replacement staff with an orientation to the school and its program, as well as the necessary professional development.

Readers should also keep in mind the inherent limitations of a one-day visit, which provides only a snap-shot of the school on visit day. While the Institute is confident that the majority of its

observations are valid, in that they reflect an underlying reality about the school's academic and organizational structures, they are not perfect or error-free.

For the reasons above, and because of the inherent complexity of an organization such as a school, this report does not contain a rating or a single comprehensive indicator that would indicate at a glance the school's prospects for renewal. It does, however, summarize the various strengths of the school and the areas that the inspection team found in need of improvement. To the extent appropriate and useful, we encourage school boards to use the inspection team's conclusions in planning school improvement efforts.

While there is no one rating that the Institute gives as a result of a single-day visit, it is important to note that where the inspection team identifies area after area with not just room for improvement but significant and severe deficiencies, and few, if any, countervailing strengths, the difficulty that the school may have in presenting a compelling case for renewal is likely to be substantially increased and this fact may well be noted. Conversely, where the inspection team finds that strengths outnumber weaknesses in both quantity and quality, the school is likely to be better positioned to build a strong case for renewal. So, too, this fact may be noted.

In sum, then, we urge all readers to review the entire report and not to take a particular comment in the report about the school out of context.

Finally, we note that this report cannot serve its three functions (providing data to the school to use for its potential improvement; disseminating information to stakeholders; and gathering data so that the Institute may come to renewal with a richer set of evidence) unless the report is not only unsparingly candid regarding the observations that the Institute has made, but also focused on those areas that are potentially in need of improvement rather than those accomplishments that the school has accumulated to date.

While this level of what can reasonably be termed *brutal honesty* is necessary, as is the focus on areas for improvement, readers should remember that almost no other entity in education is held to such a high standard of review. This is especially true of public schools that traditional districts and Boards of Education oversee. In so saying, the Institute does not ask the reader to make excuses for schools that are not succeeding—and the Institute's accountability system does not and will not—but we do note that providing this level of accountability, which almost every charter school welcomes and even advocates for, represents in and of itself a revolution in how public education is governed.

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approved the charter of UFT Elementary Charter School on July 15, 2005, and it was subsequently approved by the Board of Regents on July 21, 2005. The school opened in August of 2005 at 300 Wyona Street in Brooklyn, New York, with an initial enrollment of 138 students in the Kindergarten and first grades.

In an approved revision to its charter in March of 2006, the school changed its name to UFT Charter School and received approval to ultimately add grades six through nine. Under the terms of the revision, in September 2006 UFT Charter School opened a second facility, located at 800 Van Siclen Avenue in Brooklyn, to serve its sixth through ninth grade students. The school plans to add one additional upper level grade, and one elementary grade, each year. UFT Charter School enrolled 355 students in the fall of 2006 in grades Kindergarten through two, and grade six. In the 2007-08 school year, UFT will offer grades Kindergarten through three, and grades six and seven. The UFT Charter School is structured as an Elementary Academy, including Kindergarten through fifth grades, and a Secondary Academy, including sixth through ninth grades.

The mission statement for UFT Elementary was as follows:

The UFT Elementary Charter School will prepare all students to achieve academic and personal excellence. The UFT Elementary Charter School will graduate students fully prepared for a demanding secondary education and help prepare students for meaningful lives as full democratic citizens in a free society.

However, with the name change and expanded grades of the school, the UFT Charter School revised its mission to the following:

The UFT Charter School will prepare all students to achieve academic and personal excellence. The Elementary Academy of the UFT Charter School will graduate students fully prepared for a demanding secondary education. The Secondary Academy of the UFT Charter School will graduate students fully prepared for a demanding college education. Both academies will help to prepare students for meaningful lives as full democratic citizens in a free society.

The school partners with the United Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization. The United Federation of Teachers directly supports the school, as well as provides support through the Educational Foundation. The partner organization serves the school as a consultant, service provider, and financial supporter. On-going support services are provided on an in-kind basis and include:

- financial planning and management;
- procurement;
- human resources;
- grants administration;
- service bureau (through UFT Welfare Fund);
- website and email technology;
- fund and relationship development;
- meeting space; and
- financial support.

The founders of the UFT Charter School are committed to closing the achievement gap and creating a school “built on democratic principles of respect, tolerance, and liberty so that students will also become practitioners of democracy and civic responsibility.” They also see the school as exemplifying the original vision of a charter school model as conceived by Albert Shanker, former United Federation of Teachers and American Federation of Teachers President. This model includes a collaborative labor-management relationship that respects teachers’ voices. The Executive Summary of the initial charter application for the UFT Charter School states that the school will achieve its mission through the following central elements of the school:

1. balancing human resources with curriculum and school culture;
2. high-quality teachers (gained by economic and material incentives);
3. democratic governance;
4. professional development;
5. National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification;
6. three parent seats on school board of trustees;
7. family-school partnership;
8. CREST core values (community, respect, excellence, scholarship, trustworthiness);
9. a dress code;
10. high academic expectations;
11. academic-based after school program (run by a community based organization);
12. two teachers per classroom in Kindergarten through third grades;
13. intensive focus on literacy, numeracy, and early intervention; and
14. “Habits for Thought” (Analysis, Breadth of perspective, Connection, Discourse, and Evidence).

The school is also committed to encouraging parental involvement, including classroom volunteers and board representation. Further, all teachers will attain New York State certification.

The academic program of the Elementary Academy reflects a focus on basic literacy and numeracy skills in Kindergarten through second grades, and includes a daily three hour block dedicated to English language arts and mathematics. The Elementary Academy implements its curriculum through the use of the Harcourt Trophies Program for reading and writing, Everyday Math, Harcourt Science, and Harcourt Horizon Social Studies. The Elementary Academy academic program also includes arts, family and consumer sciences, physical education, career development and technology. The school administers the Terra Nova, the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), the state assessments, and Everyday Math assessments together with internal assessments and portfolios to keep track of student progress.

The Secondary Academy will organize its student body in three groups: a Lower School (grades 6 - 8), an Upper School (grades 9 and 10), and a Senior Institute (grades 11 and 12). The groupings acknowledge the increased sophistication of the students’ academic work over time and their growing maturity and associated responsibilities. In terms of the Secondary Academy’s academic program, in grades six through eight there will be a strong focus on foundational literacy and numeracy. In sixth grade students will receive three hour-long English language arts classes: reading strategies and techniques, literature and writing. In seventh grade, students will also have an

additional hour of instruction in mathematics. By eighth grade, the academic program expands to include subjects such as Spanish, dance, art, music and media literacy. By eleventh and twelfth grades, students will be required to take and pass at least two college level (Advanced Placement or their equivalent) classes in English language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and Spanish.

School Year

180 instructional days

School Day

7:30 a.m. (breakfast); instruction from 8:00 a.m. to 2:40 p.m.

Enrollment

	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment³	Original Chartered Grades	Revised Grades Served	Actual Grades Served	Complying
2005-06	150	150	138	K-1	K-1	K-1	YES
2006-07	225	350	355	K-2	K-2, 6	K-2, 6	YES
2007-08	300	525		K-3	K-3, 6-7		
2008-09	375	735		K-4	K-4, 6-8		
2009-10	450	860		K-5	K-9		

Race/Ethnicity	2005-2006	
	No. of Students	% of Enroll.
American Indian, Alaskan, Asian, or Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Black (Not Hispanic)	128	85.9%
Hispanic	19	12.8%
White	2	1.3%

Source: NYSED 2005-06 Database

³ Actual enrollment per the Institute’s Official Enrollment Table. Note that the NYSED 2005-06 database, upon which the Free and Reduced lunch figures are calculated, cited an enrollment of 149 for 2005-06.

	2005-2006	
Free/Reduced Lunch	No. of Students	% of Enroll.
Eligible for Free Lunch	93	62.4%
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	25	16.8%

Source: NYSED 2005-2006 Database

School Charter History

Charter Year	School Year	Year of Operation	Evaluation Visit	Feedback to School	Other Actions Taken
Original Charter – 1st Year	2005-06	1 st	YES	Prior Action Letter, End-of-Year Evaluation Letter	Granted request to change school name and add grade 6 for 2006-07
Original Charter – 2 nd Year	2006-07	2 nd	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS EVALUATION VISIT

The Charter Schools Institute conducted a visit of the UFT Charter School on March 23, 2006. Institute staff observed classrooms, met with administrators and interviewed teachers. In a letter to the school's board of trustees, the Institute reported the results of the school site visit which are briefly summarized below.

At the time of the visit, the UFT Charter School enrolled 138 students in Kindergarten through first grade. In its first year of instruction, the Elementary Academy had a clear focus on teaching and learning. Teachers felt supported in their work, and the school's schedule provided weekly time for grade level teachers to plan together. The school had implemented the curriculum described in its application (Harcourt Brace Trophies for reading, and Everyday Math, along with Harcourt Brace texts for social studies and science). Student writing appeared rigorous and a number of the social studies and science activities were creative. In addition, teachers were provided with the professional development to support implementation of the curriculum through the Teacher Center located on the same floor as the school.

In March 2006, it was evident that the Teacher Center played a critical role in supporting instruction through the number of references teachers made about the variety and types of assistance given, including: analysis and communication of assessment data; use of student performance data in guiding instruction; modeling instructional strategies in the classroom; coaching in the classroom; guided reading lesson development; assistance in organizing classroom libraries; and selecting appropriate books and materials. Further, the school leader and the staff developer from the Teacher Center worked collaboratively and effectively in the ongoing professional development of the school's teachers.

The UFT Charter School had also instituted the instructional model included in the school's charter; two teachers in each classroom (Kindergarten and first grades). The school was aware of the challenges of establishing and sustaining a "co-teaching" model that provides opportunities for both teachers to equally share in the instructional, as well as more administrative, duties of being a teacher.

In addition, the school had put in place an assessment system that was comprehensive, including the administration, analysis, communication, and use of student performance data in driving instruction and learning. The assessment results were used to identify students in need of academic intervention services provided at that time by the school's special education coordinator and the school counselor two to three times per week in the afternoons.

At the time of the end-of-year visit, students demonstrated a clear understanding of behavioral expectations and exhibited a developing sense of awareness of the meaning of the school's CREST values (community, respect, excellence, scholarship and trustworthiness). Students clearly were familiar with routines related to being part of a community as exhibited by their participation in the school's morning "Community Gatherings."

In its first year of instruction, UFT Charter School had attracted a mix of instructional staff. Some appeared more comfortable with the traditional forms of school structure and operation, and others sought more progressive instructional environments. As a result, the school developed a responsive

process for teachers and administrators to deal with issues, a process through which both groups have the opportunity to contribute to developing resolutions.

At the time of the first end-of-year visit, the UFT Charter School's board of trustees was in the process of revising its organizational structure to address the governance needs of two instructional levels: elementary and middle school. The trustees represented that they were well aware of the new structure and were able to clearly articulate the design and the challenges inherent in operating a school in two locations.

As in all first year schools, the UFT Charter School dealt with the fundamental challenges of establishing a school infrastructure, including the establishment of sound operational and organizational practices, policies, and procedures. Inspectors noted the importance of the board establishing more formal reporting practices, policies and procedures, especially in dealing with issues such as the school's promotional policy and evaluations of teachers and the school leader.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Academic Attainment and Improvement

UFT Charter School only enrolled students in Kindergarten and first grades in 2005-06 and thus had not yet administered any of the New York State Testing Program exams. Nevertheless, the school did report results for other external assessments which serve as baseline measurements of student performance. On these assessments students appear to have made progress towards the school's goals in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Based on teachers' grades of student work, the school reported being on track to meet its science and social studies goals as well.

Governance

The board of trustees of the UFT Charter School holds a single charter authorized by the State University Trustees, and that one charter allows it to govern and provide oversight to one school. While the Charter Schools Act does not preclude a charter school from being structured in any number of ways, including housing different grades at separate locations (as long as the structure aligns with the terms of the school's charter), information collected on the day of the second end-of-year visit suggests that the UFT Charter School currently functions as two separate schools—the Elementary Academy and the Secondary Academy. The split between the two academies was evident across the school administration and the academic program, as discussed throughout this report. As a result, the UFT Charter School faces its greatest organizational challenge to date—establishing synergies between and simultaneously growing both its Elementary and Secondary Academies under the umbrella of one school.

At the time of the school's evaluation visit, while the Elementary Academy had established systems and structures that will likely contribute to the implementation of the school's academic program, organizational viability, and fiscal soundness, these systems and structures were still absent at the Secondary Academy. Generally speaking, the UFT Charter School has come face-to-face with challenges inherent in operating two instructional programs in two locations, in addition to establishing a school infrastructure and sound operational and organizational practices, policies, and procedures.

Use of Assessment Data

At the time of its second end-of-year visit, the UFT Charter School had a well-designed assessment program. The school administers a combination of standardized, diagnostic, and interim assessments, as well as unit tests. In addition, student writing is evaluated using a writing rubric. However, inspectors noted that the use of assessment data in informing the academic program had been more fully implemented in the Elementary Academy than the Secondary Academy.

Curriculum

The school relies upon the UFT Teacher Center to provide guiding curricular documents and leadership in the realm of curriculum development and implementation. Teachers are clearly committed to teaching lessons which were developed within their grade levels and this has created a firm sense of consistency within grades. In fact, teachers demonstrated a fidelity to the clear curricular choices of the school. However, while there is consistency within grades, the curriculum

is still a work in progress at both sites. It is not clear how curriculum planning from grade-to-grade will occur at the school, and to the extent appropriate, between the two buildings.

Instructional Leadership

Teachers at the UFT Charter School feel supported by academy leaders and staff developers. The school has established a culture of collaboration and shared decision-making among teachers and academy leaders. Academy leaders suggest that this approach affords them a larger degree of teacher ownership in organizational decisions, including those having to do with the academic program. However, inspectors noted that the culture of shared decision-making may prevent academy leaders from effectively holding teachers accountable for improving teaching and learning at the UFT Charter School.

Instruction

Inspection team members noted that the quality of instruction was limited across both the Elementary and Secondary Academies. The limited quality of instruction is likely to have significant impact on student learning over time. Leaders at both sites stated that it has been more difficult than anticipated to recruit and hire excellent teachers to the UFT Charter School. This is of particular concern as the school's board of trustees is seemingly unaware of the difficulties that academy leaders face in attracting and hiring talented teachers.

At-Risk Students

Teachers in both the Elementary and Secondary Academies indicated that additional assistance is available after-school, but could not identify a systematic way to identify or monitor progress of students at-risk for academic failure. In short, neither site has modified its practices based on large groups of students who are clearly behind grade level (e.g., radically changing the schedule, providing differentiated instruction and materials, providing more time on task, creating more skill-based groups, etc.). The result may be that some students who are below grade level may find adequate supports at the school and others may not, depending on the individual student's teachers.

Professional Development

The school has made professional development for its teachers a priority, and has access to a valuable professional development resource through its relationship with the UFT Teacher Center. One school board member stated, "Professional development is an outgrowth of student achievement. It's the work of the school." Clearly, the school has invested a significant amount of resources in professional development, evidencing their true commitment to teacher growth. Teachers feel supported, and are able to identify areas in need of professional development and request support through the UFT Teacher Center. However, the effectiveness of this resource has not yet been maximized, particularly at the Secondary Academy. Clearly, at both campuses the Teacher Center is a resource that teachers can avail themselves of, but not one that has been fully leveraged at this time.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE

Academic Attainment and Improvement

The UFT Charter School only enrolled students in Kindergarten and first grades in 2005-06 and thus had not yet administered any of the New York State Testing Program exams. Nevertheless, the school did report results for other external assessments which serve as baseline measurements of student performance. On these assessments students appear to have made progress towards the school's goals in English language arts and mathematics. Based on teachers' grades of student work, the school reported being on track to meet its science and social studies goals as well.

English Language Arts: Based on Terra Nova results for first grade students, 67 percent scored at Levels 3 and 4 which the school reported are aligned with performance levels on the state tests. On the DIBELS test, 41 percent of Kindergarten students achieved benchmark level in the fall, rising to 59 percent in the spring. However, the percent of first grade students at benchmark (55 percent) remained about the same from fall to spring. No comparative or value added data were available for 2005-06.

Mathematics: On the Terra Nova 59 percent of first grade students scored at Levels 3 and 4. Performance was generally consistent across the subset of skill areas.

Science: Using teachers' grades of student science performance based on teacher observation, project based assessments and end-of-unit tests, 80 percent of Kindergarten students and 72 percent of first grade students were performing at what teachers consider to be Levels 3 and 4.

Social Studies: Using teachers' grades of student social studies performance based on teacher observation, project based assessments and writing samples, 76 percent of Kindergarten students and 91 percent of first grade students were performing at what teachers consider to be Levels 3 and 4.

Governance

The board of trustees of the UFT Charter School holds a single charter authorized by the State University Trustees, and that one charter allows it to govern and provide oversight to one school. While the Charter Schools Act does not preclude a charter school from being structured in any number of ways, including housing different grades at separate locations (as long as the structure aligns with the terms of the school's charter), information collected on the day of the second end-of-year visit suggests that the UFT Charter School currently functions as two separate schools—the Elementary Academy and the Secondary Academy. The split between the two academies was evident across the school administration and the academic program, as discussed throughout this report. The UFT Charter School faces its greatest organizational challenge to date—establishing synergies between and simultaneously growing both its Elementary and Secondary Academies under the umbrella of one school.

Members of the board of trustees stated that “where there are parallel people [at each of the sites], there is constant communication” between those individuals. However, evidence of this practice does not bear out in the day-to-day practice in each building. Despite each site having staff from the Teacher Center based within the building, the academies do not offer teachers shared opportunities for professional development. Members of the board of trustees also stated that the directors of

operations from both of the academies work together, as do the special education coordinators and teachers. However, no specific evidence of this collaboration was shared with visitors on the day of the visit. One board member stated, “We recognize we need to work on that [collaboration between the two sites, leadership and staff]; we need to figure out how to institutionalize that so that it becomes part of the daily life of the schools.”

At the time of the school’s visit, while the Elementary Academy had established systems and structures that will likely contribute to the implementation of the school’s academic program, organizational viability, and fiscal soundness, these systems and structures were still absent at the Secondary Academy. Generally speaking, the UFT Charter School has come face-to-face with challenges inherent in operating two instructional programs in two locations, in addition to establishing a school infrastructure and sound operational and organizational practices, policies, and procedures.

Use of Assessment Data

At the time of its second end-of-year visit, the UFT Charter School had a well-designed assessment program. The school administers a combination of standardized, diagnostic, and interim assessments, as well as unit tests. In addition, student writing is evaluated using a writing rubric. However, inspectors noted that the program had been more fully implemented in the Elementary Academy than the Secondary Academy.

In the Elementary Academy, a combination of assessments is administered and used to inform various aspects of the Elementary Academy’s educational program. For example, the results of the Terra Nova, administered twice a year for first and second graders, were used to determine class groupings. In addition, the DIBELS assessment is taken four times a year. This data has been used to identify students who need intensive support in the form of small group work during literacy block. Teachers also use unit assessments from curriculum programs, and collect additional student achievement data through running records, student writing, and other work products. In addition, the Elementary Academy’s leader receives and reviews student progress data every two months. She then meets with the classroom teachers informally about this data. The academy leader expects teachers to re-teach (in “centers”) based on student performance results. Furthermore, information gathered through the school’s mathematics assessments prompted the academy leader to take a set of specific actions to address mathematics instruction, including contracting with a staff developer focused solely on mathematics. The staff developer also helps teachers to form plans to support individual children’s needs. Student achievement data plays a critical role in making adjustments to curriculum and instruction at the Elementary Academy.

The Secondary Academy lags behind the Elementary Academy in the full utilization of assessments. In fact, this site is in the beginning stages of collecting assessment data and there is little evidence to suggest that the data they have collected has been used to inform improvements to curriculum and instruction. The Secondary Academy has not yet begun to develop or implement an interim assessment program. Further, they administered the Terra Nova later than typical practice (in November) and received results in the second week of April, too late in the school year to be useful to the instructional staff. And despite having access to students’ scores on state exams from the 2005-06 school year, the Secondary Academy neglected to use this information as baseline data on its students. As a result, the Secondary Academy has yet to use assessment data to make improvements to curriculum and instruction.

To their credit, the board of trustees was keenly aware of levels of student performance on various assessments administered by the school. For example, members knew that students struggle with their mastery of mathematics skills. Further, the board suggested that Secondary Academy students would likely need an extended day and that there were about 25-30 low performers in the Secondary Academy. Board members present on the day of the visit were also aware that Secondary Academy students needed additional reading strategies, basic mathematics skills, and writing support. Given the board of trustees' attention to levels of student performance at both campuses, it is likely that the Secondary Academy's use of assessment data in informing programmatic improvements will improve as the program continues to develop over time.

The board of trustees of the UFT Charter School noted that a promotion policy does exist for the Elementary Academy, but the Secondary Academy Leader clarified that the Secondary Academy promotion policy is still being created. The necessity of a promotion policy for the school at all grade levels was noted in the first-year letter from the Charter Schools Institute.

Curriculum

The school relies upon the UFT Teacher Center to provide guiding curricular documents and leadership in the realm of curriculum development and implementation. Teachers are clearly committed to teaching lessons which were developed within their grade levels and this has created a firm sense of consistency within grades. In fact, teachers demonstrated a fidelity to the clear curricular choices of the school. However, while there is consistency within grades, the curriculum is still a work in progress at both sites. It is not clear how curriculum planning from grade-to-grade will occur at the school, and to the extent appropriate, between the two buildings.

Instructional leaders at the Elementary Academy appear to have established a clear process for further development and refinement to the curriculum in all core content areas, including reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. The staff developer at the Elementary Academy described a "backmapping" process that includes using crosswalks to state standards, curriculum mapping for the year, and the development of teaching points (or objectives). In the case of English language arts and mathematics, where teachers rely on the Harcourt Trophies and Everyday Math programs, respectively, the school supplements the programs with additional materials. Teachers write unit and lesson plans in grade level meetings and with their co-teachers once a week, and then submit those individual plans to the academy leader for review and archiving.

At the Secondary Academy, teachers use the compiled curriculum of the Teacher Center to guide and inform lesson development. The staff developer at the Secondary Academy stated, "We have a curriculum [in English language arts] developed by my colleagues at the Teacher Center, although the teachers have a lot of leeway. I work to develop units with them." Notably absent, however, was a clearly articulated plan or system for monitoring, tracking, or documenting adjustments to the curriculum. In fact, the staff developer alluded that her curriculum work was isolated to the English language arts teachers who have been more receptive to her coaching and guidance. Therefore, the curriculum at the Secondary Academy may depend on teacher interest to receive such guidance and support. Because the Secondary Academy has not yet put in place a comprehensive process of curriculum development and monitoring, it is unclear if, or how, the Secondary Academy's curriculum will align with the Elementary Academy's curriculum.

In addition, across both campuses teachers noted that the school's writing curriculum, in approach and practice, is still very much a work-in-progress. Some Elementary Academy teachers were

concerned that the Harcourt program is not aligned to the local writing curriculum that is being developed. According to teachers, the Harcourt writing program has not been as comprehensive as desired and this is why the curriculum is being enhanced by the teachers this year. One teacher at the Elementary Academy noted that they do not utilize the Harcourt writing program at all and that she utilizes a writing workshop model.

Instructional Leadership

Teachers at the UFT Charter School feel supported by academy leaders and staff developers. The school has established a culture of collaboration and shared decision-making among teachers and academy leaders. Academy leaders suggest that this approach affords them a larger degree of teacher ownership in organizational decisions, including those having to do with the academic program. However, inspectors noted that the culture of shared decision-making may prevent academy leaders from effectively holding teachers accountable for improving teaching and learning at the UFT Charter School.

The approach to leadership and shared decision-making has had some success to date at the Elementary Academy, as the leader of that site has managed to recruit staff members who are aligned with the school's mission and her vision of the Elementary Academy. At the Elementary Academy, while there is a sense that accountability for the academic program is shared, the academy leader has created a role for herself in overseeing the implementation of the academic program. In addition to reviewing lesson plans on a weekly basis, the academy leader frequents classrooms and provides both informal and formal feedback to her teachers. She stated, "To me it's important to get to the teacher. It makes teachers nervous when I go in, but I am there as an instructional leader and not to tell them all the things that they are doing incorrectly... I am looking for ways in which the instruction is happening. I tell them, 'I am here to support you, here to help.'" Teachers believed these informal drop-in visits with occasional feedback were very helpful. Although teachers at the Elementary Academy had difficulty identifying building-wide priorities and initiatives for improving teaching and learning, the leader at the Elementary Academy, in concert with the staff developer, appears to have been successful in leading the work of the Elementary Academy staff. In these ways, instructional leadership was observed at the Elementary Academy.

In contrast, during its first year of instruction, a sense of accountability for the instructional program does not yet appear to have been cultivated within the Secondary Academy at any level. In fact, inspectors noted what appeared to be a void of instructional leadership from within the Secondary Academy. This was echoed by the leader at the Secondary Academy, who noted regrettably on the day of the visit that he has not yet been able to focus on instructional leadership among his other responsibilities. Unlike at the Elementary Academy, the leader of the Secondary Academy has not yet carved out a role for himself in providing structure and support to the instructional program. Teachers were hard-pressed to determine who the instructional leader of the Secondary Academy actually was. One Secondary Academy staff member noted that the instructional leader of the school is "all of us." However, this sense of shared accountability for the instructional program does not appear to be functioning in a practical sense. For example, staff members at the Secondary Academy noted that teachers have the choice to opt out of various opportunities for professional development and growth. The model of shared accountability for the academic program, in place at the Elementary Academy, is not present at the Secondary Academy. This appears to have resulted in a lack of building-wide priorities and initiatives for improving teaching and learning at the Secondary Academy.

Instruction

Inspection team members noted that the quality of instruction was limited across both the Elementary and Secondary Academies. Specifically, on the day of the visit and despite evidence that lesson plans are aligned to state standards, there was little to no evidence that lessons were explicitly focused on student learning objectives aligned to state performance standards. For example, in two Secondary Academy mathematics courses, there were no objectives posted within the classroom; the same was true in at least six classrooms in the Elementary Academy. Instructional time was not maximized, particularly in the Elementary Academy where there was a significant investment of time in transitions and students were observed for long periods of time (in excess of an hour, in at least one case) sitting on the rug and listening to a teacher without opportunity to engage in learning through other modalities. There was evidence of a lack of student engagement throughout most classrooms, substantiated by student misbehavior throughout classrooms within both schools. Teachers did not capitalize on “teaching moments,” or opportunities to promote higher-order thinking skills in their students. In particular, teachers were observed sticking to the script of the lesson no matter what responses or questions came from the students. Teachers at the Secondary Academy also demonstrated weakness in content knowledge, referring to a “sinew,” or tendon, as a “string” throughout one sixth grade science lesson, and informing students in one social studies class that “you could fit three or four Americas into China.” If not addressed, the limited quality of instruction is likely to have significant impact on student learning over time.

Leaders at both campuses described that it has been more difficult than anticipated to recruit and hire excellent teachers to the UFT Charter School. They cited reasons such as: tenure and security available through the New York City Department of Education and the dangerous neighborhood in which the school is located. One of the academy leaders also stated that they face the same competition for teaching talent as everyone else, and that the school’s requirement that they only hire certified teachers limits the number of teaching candidates who are both interested and possess minimal qualifications for the job. As a result of these factors, the school has been unable to choose its teachers from the widest possible pool of teaching talent.

This is of particular concern, as the school’s board of trustees is seemingly unaware of the difficulties that academy leaders face in attracting and hiring talented teachers. One board member stated, “We are able to recruit skilled and accomplished teachers, which allows us to implement curriculum that requires a level of skill and knowledge that a novice teacher would not be able to do.” In reality, many teachers at the Elementary Academy informed inspectors that they had never previously taught the grade levels they were currently teaching.

At-Risk Students

Students at the Elementary Academy have opportunities to receive remedial instruction mainly within the regular school day. The Elementary Academy leader stated, “The design of our classroom model is a great way to address student needs.” Staff at the site stated that they rely on grouping, centers, and workshops in order to re-teach, and that some students receive pull-out assistance from the school’s academic intervention services coordinator or paraprofessionals for a maximum of 45 minutes a week. The leader expressed an interest in the Elementary Academy providing its own after-school or Saturday tutoring for its students. Currently, Groundwork, Inc. (a local non-profit community organization) offers after-school programming for the students. This program consists largely of homework help and some arts-based offerings, although it is not necessarily tied to re-teaching or remediation needs of students.

Students at the Secondary Academy have academic time built into the school day for remediation, but it was unclear to inspectors on the day of the visit how the program differs from normal day-to-day instruction. At the Secondary Academy, 25 struggling students receive an extended day program for mathematics. The Secondary Academy may enroll these students in summer school, though the academy leader noted that the board of trustees had not quite made the decision whether to have their own summer school or to utilize the Department of Education’s program. The Secondary Academy has also attempted to offer additional time for literacy, homework help, and one science lab a week—but it appears that this is simply an adjustment to the basic school schedule, rather than additional remediation time for students.

Teachers at both sites indicated that additional assistance is available after-school, but could not identify a systematic way to identify or monitor progress of students at-risk for academic failure. In short, neither campus has modified its practices based on large groups of students who are clearly behind grade level (e.g., radically changing the schedule, providing differentiated instruction and materials, providing more time on task, creating more skill-based groups, etc.). The result may be that some students who are below grade level may find adequate supports at their individual academy and others may not, depending on the individual student’s teachers.

Professional Development

The school has made professional development for its teachers a priority, and has access to a valuable professional development resource through its relationship with the UFT Teacher Center.

One school board member stated, “Professional development is an outgrowth of student achievement. It’s the work of the school.” Clearly, the school has invested a significant amount of resources in professional development, evidencing their true commitment to teacher growth. For example, each of the sites has access to a full-time staff developer from the UFT Teacher Center. Both buildings have devoted significant time (approximately two and a half hours a week) in their weekly schedules to building-wide professional development meetings, full-day monthly sessions, as well as a Summer Institute.

These site-based meetings are facilitated by the staff developers from the Teacher Center, and cover such topics as looking at student work and individualizing instruction for students who are struggling or excelling. In addition, the staff developers provide other supports to teachers, such as assistance with unit and lesson planning, mentoring for novice teachers, coaching for teachers pursuing National Board Certification, as well as modeling lessons and providing feedback based on lesson observations. Furthermore, each academy has organized a professional development committee that consists of teachers from that building as well as the staff developer from the Teacher Center. Some teachers at the Elementary Academy even have their own Individual Professional Development plans.

Teachers feel supported and are able to identify areas in need of professional development and request support through the UFT Teacher Center. As an example, one teaching team working on the development of the school’s writing program noted: “We requested her [the staff developer’s] assistance. She would watch us teach and give feedback. She [also] modeled, watched us and coached us through it [how to teach a lesson in writing]. That’s what she is here for.”

However, the effectiveness of this resource has not yet been maximized, particularly at the Secondary Academy. Although these resources are in place at both sites, the professional development program at the Secondary Academy does not yet appear to have become part of the fabric of the building culture. This may be due, in part, to the backgrounds and experiences of each of the academy leaders. For example, the Elementary Academy Leader, a long-time staff developer for the UFT Teacher Center herself, shares a common approach with the staff developer assigned to her school, including a common set of expectations regarding the professional development program and a common language in talking about it. On the other hand, the leader at the Secondary Academy was a former assistant principal with limited responsibilities for teaching and learning. As a result, he has focused his attention primarily on operations as opposed to academics (in a ratio of 70/30, by his account). Evidence collected during interviews on the day of the visit suggested that the leader at the Secondary Academy has not been an active collaborator or contributor to the school's professional development agenda. As a result, the staff developer at the Secondary Academy is alone in identifying topics for staff development and implementing all initiatives. Clearly, at both campuses the Teacher Center is a resource that teachers can avail themselves of, but not one that has been fully leveraged at this time.

APPENDIX: RENEWAL BENCHMARKS USED DURING THE VISIT

Evidence Category	Benchmarks	
	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?	
Benchmark 1A Academic Attainment & Improvement	1A.1	English Language Arts: The school meets or has come close to meeting the English Language Arts goal in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.
	1A.2	Mathematics: The school meets or has come close to meeting the mathematics goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.
	1A.3	Science: The school meets or has come close to meeting the science goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.
	1A.4	Social Studies: The school meets or has come close to meeting the social studies goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.
	1A.5	NCLB: The school has made adequate yearly progress as required by NCLB.
Benchmark 1B Use of Assessment Data	1B	The school has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and to use it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.
Benchmark 1C Curriculum	1C	The school has a clearly defined and aligned curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards.
Benchmark 1D Pedagogy	1D.1	The school has strong instructional leadership.
	1D.2	High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	<p>1D.3 The school has programs that are demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically to meet the school's academic Accountability Plan goals, including programs for students who require additional academic supports, programs for English Language Learners and programs for students eligible to receive special education.</p>
<p>Benchmark 1E Student Order & Discipline</p>	<p>1E The school's culture allows and promotes a culture of learning.</p>
<p>Benchmark 1F Professional Development</p>	<p>1F The school's professional development program assists teachers in meeting student academic needs and school goals, by addressing identified shortcomings in student learning and teacher pedagogical skill and content knowledge.</p>

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	<p style="text-align: center;">Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?</p>
<p>Benchmark 2C Governance</p>	<p>2C.1 The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school's mission and specific goals.</p>

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the second end-of-year visit to UFT Charter School on April 12, 2007. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit:

Ms. Kim Wechtenhiser* is Associate Vice President at the Charter Schools Institute and maintains primary responsibility for the Institute's charter renewal process, overseeing a comprehensive evaluation of each SUNY authorized charter school as it comes up for renewal. Ms. Wechtenhiser joined the Institute in September 2005 as a Senior Analyst. Prior to her work with the Institute, Ms. Wechtenhiser served as the Coordinator of New Schools Development in the Charter School Office at the Massachusetts Department of Education, where she led the review of new charter school applications, provided technical assistance to newly chartered schools, participated in the ongoing review of their academic and organizational performance, and oversaw the charter amendment process. Ms. Wechtenhiser is the former Lead Teacher of Spanish at City on a Hill Charter Public School in Boston, where she also served as faculty representative to the school's Board of Trustees. She taught Spanish at Westfield Public High School and English at the Universidad de Córdoba in Spain. Ms. Wechtenhiser holds a B.A. in Spanish and Secondary Education and a M.A. in Spanish Language and Literature, both from Simmons College. She earned an Ed.M. in School Leadership from Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

Dr. Joanne Falinski is the Vice President for Charter School Evaluation at the Charter Schools Institute. She most recently served as an Assistant Professor in the School of Education at Pace University, Pleasantville, NY. Her responsibilities included teaching both undergraduate and graduate education courses, supervising literacy practicum students in the field and conducting relevant research. She also presented at numerous regional and national conferences on topics of literacy, professional development and collaboration between special education and regular education. Dr. Falinski was actively involved in the University community, serving as a member of the Institutional Review Board and Writing Center Advisory Board. Prior to joining Pace, Dr. Falinski served as an Assistant Professor in the School of Education for Manhattanville College and Director of a NYS site of the National Writing Project. Dr. Falinski's vast experience in the K-12 community includes serving as an Elementary Classroom Teacher and Elementary Principal.

Mr. Simeon Stolzberg is a Senior Analyst at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Part of the Institute's oversight and evaluation team, Mr. Stolzberg participates in informal, annual and renewal school visits. Mr. Stolzberg also assists in the development and execution of the Institute's research agenda, performing statistical analyses of student academic data, and providing technical guidance to schools as needed. Prior to joining the Institute, Mr. Stolzberg managed his own consulting practice, advising charter schools across the country in their application and planning phases. He also served as Middle School Director for the Beginning with Children Charter School in Brooklyn, New York. In 2002, as a Building Excellent Schools Fellow, Mr. Stolzberg wrote the prospectus and application for the Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter School (BArT) in Massachusetts; the school was one of only five schools approved by the state that year. Mr. Stolzberg served as the school's founding principal. Mr. Stolzberg received his Master's Degree in Public Policy from Georgetown University and his Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy, with independent studies in education and political economy, from Williams College.

Mr. Jason L. Sarsfield is a Senior Analyst at the Charter Schools Institute at the State University of New York. Mr. Sarsfield fulfills a leadership role in informal and annual visits to SUNY authorized

charter schools as well as participates in the charter renewal review process, provides technical assistance to schools as needed, and contributes to the Institute's research agenda. Prior to joining the Institute in January, 2007 Mr. Sarsfield was a Contract Analyst at The Center for Charter Schools at Central Michigan University – Office of Academic Accountability where he was responsible for evaluating the academic performance of authorized schools, reviewing school curricula and educational program, and measuring progress toward educational goals. While at Central Michigan University, Mr. Sarsfield worked closely with the Michigan Department of Education on annual legislative reports, grant reviews, and policy recommendations. Previously, Mr. Sarsfield taught social studies in grades 7-12 in Michigan and Alaska while also completing curriculum development responsibilities and serving as an Advanced Placement Exam Reader for The College Board. Mr. Sarsfield holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Secondary Education from Northern Michigan University and is completing the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in Educational Leadership from Central Michigan University.

In addition, the Institute was pleased to have the following external team members:

Ms. Joey Gustafson is the founder and CEO of JM Consulting Inc., which focuses on the K-12 market, specializing in assessing the needs of educational organizations, finding solutions, and assisting in their implementation. Ms. Gustafson's previous experiences include senior management at ChildrenFirst, Inc., a national corporate child care company, being the Assistant Head of School at a charter school in Massachusetts, Community Day Charter School, and doing education reform research at the Hudson Institute. Ms. Gustafson was also the education policy advisor to former New York City Mayor Giuliani. Ms. Gustafson holds an MBA from Boston University and a B.A. from Georgetown University.

Dr. Antonia Rudenstine has been the principal of Rudenstine & Associates since 1997. In this capacity, she has been involved in a number of projects including coaching school directors on a range of instructional issues; training school founders to design mission-driven schools; supporting educational leaders in the creation of improvement and accountability plans; and designing professional development programs for organizational leaders and their staffs. Dr. Rudenstine began her career as a high school teacher of social studies in Quincy, Massachusetts—a small, urban district where she worked primarily with special education students and English language learners. In the mid-1990's, she moved to New York City to become one of the founding teachers and administrators of a small, alternative, public high school. More recently, she designed and directed the Building Excellent Schools Fellowship program (the flagship program at the national non-profit, Building Excellent Schools). Dr. Rudenstine holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Oberlin College, and a master's (in Teaching and Curriculum) and doctorate (in Educational Administration) from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Her doctoral dissertation, entitled *Building without Blueprints: Administrators' Efforts to Learn about Teaching and Learning*, explored the challenges administrators face when attempting to improve instruction within schools and across districts.

Ms. Liz Wynne, director of Twin Cities Academy and Twin Cities Academy High School (opened fall 2006), inner city charter schools, is a veteran educator. She has worked in the educational field for eighteen years in various capacities as classroom teacher, gifted and talented coordinator, consultant, and district and charter school principals. Twin Cities Academy was recognized by the Minnesota Commissioner of Education as one of the top twenty schools in the state for both reading and mathematics academic achievement. TCA repeatedly outperforms the State, Minneapolis Public

School District and St. Paul Public Schools on state assessments. Currently, she serves on the Minnesota Charter School Advisory to the Commissioner of Education and is a board member on the Park Nicollet Medical Foundation. She has Co-Directed the Charter School Resource Center at the University of Minnesota and is a past board member of the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools. She worked in corporate America for seven years, but returned to the field of education in order to pursue her passion for teaching and working with students. Ms. Wynne was a member of the state's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Task Force and the governor's Education Funding Reform Task Force. Recently, she was extended an invitation to participate in Oxford University's Charter School Round Table.

*Serving as Inspection Team Leader for this visit.