



Harlem Link Charter School

School Evaluation Report 2011-2012

Visit Date: January 17-19, 2012

Report Issued: May 14, 2012

Charter Schools Institute
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INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report includes four components. The first section, titled School Overview, provides descriptive information about the school, including enrollment and demographic data, as well as historical information regarding the life of the school. The second section provides background information on the conduct of the evaluation visit, including the date of the visit and information about the evaluation team and puts the visit in the context of the school's current charter cycle. The third section provides the school's 2010-11 Performance Review and Summaries, which gives an analysis of the attainment of the key academic goals in the school's Accountability Plan. Finally, a fourth section entitled School Evaluation Visit presents overall benchmark conclusions (in italics) based on the Qualitative Educational Benchmarks (a component of the Renewal Benchmarks) and an analysis of evidence collected for each of the respective benchmarks. Following these sections, the report includes an appendix containing the Qualitative Educational Benchmarks used during the visit

The Qualitative Educational Benchmarks address the academic success of the school, focusing on teaching and learning (i.e., curriculum, instruction, and assessment), and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization, including board oversight and organizational capacity. The Institute uses the established criteria on a regular and ongoing basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

The report below provides more detailed conclusions, and evidence to support these conclusions, for some benchmarks in order to highlight areas of concern and provide additional feedback. In contrast to the format of reports issued in previous years and in an effort to issue reports in a timelier manner, the Institute now approaches the presentation as an exception report and deliberately emphasizes areas of concern. As such, limited detail and evidence about positive aspects of the program are not an indication that the Institute does not fully recognize evidence of program effectiveness.

Because of the inherent complexity of a school organization, this School Evaluation Report does not contain a single rating or comprehensive indicator that would specify at a glance the school's prospects for renewal. However, it does summarize the various strengths of the school and note areas in need of improvement based on the Qualitative Educational Benchmarks.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	June 22, 2004
Date Initial Charter Approved by Board of Regents	September 10, 2004
School Opening Date	September 6, 2005

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades	District
2005-06 to 2006-07	134 W 122 nd St., New York, NY	All	NYC Community School District 3
2007-08	134 W 122 nd St., New York, NY 425 W 130 th St., New York, NY	1-3 K	NYC Community School District 3 and 5
2008-09	134 W 122 nd St., New York, NY 425 W 130 th St., New York, NY	2-4 K-1	NYC Community School District 3 and 5
2009-10 to present	20 W 112 th St., New York, NY	All	NYC Community School District 3

Current Mission Statement

Harlem Link Charter School, a K-5 public school, links academics, values and community to graduate articulate scholars who will meet or exceed New York State Performance Standards and active citizens who learn and serve in their communities. Families, staff and community join together to provide a safe, supportive learning environment that empowers students to take an active role in their learning and demonstrate good character.

Current Key Design Elements

• Rigorous expectations and a belief in all students;
• data-driven instruction;
• extended school year and day;
• structured academic programs, including “fieldwork;”
• high levels of professional development;
• co-teaching model;
• strong connections to community-based organizations for the arts;
• a “focus” period, specifically designed for individualized or small-group instruction based on children’s academic needs;
• family and community involvement; and
• a supportive school culture.

School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ¹	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2005-06	108	101	K-1	K-1	196
2006-07	162	162	K-2	K-2	190
2007-08	216	195	K-3	K-3	190
2008-09	270	262	K-4	K-4	189
2009-10	324	310	K-5	K-5	190
2010-11	320	293	K-5	K-5	190
2011-12	320	300	K-5	K-5	190

Student Demographics²

	2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 3 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 3 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 3 Enrollment
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black or African American	80	34	80	34	82	31
Hispanic	20	38	18	38	18	36
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0	6	0	6	0	7
White	0	22	0	22	0	25
Multiracial	0	0	2	0	1	0
Special Populations						
Students with Disabilities	10	N/A	11	N/A	N/A	N/A
Limited English Proficient	1	13	2	10	7	9
Free/Reduced Lunch						
Eligible for Free Lunch	74	48	71	47	71	48
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	6	8	16	8	16	7

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

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

Current Board of Trustees³

Board Member Name	Position/Committees
Jonathan Barrett	Chairman and Acting Treasurer
David W. Brown	Secretary
B. Peter Carry	Trustee
Sean Coar	Trustee
Steven Evangelista	Ex Officio
Rachel Field	Trustee
John Reddick	Trustee
Margaret Ryan	Ex Officio
Kesha Young	Trustee
Julie Crain	Trustee
Michael MacLeod	Trustee

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2005-06 to 2009-10	Steven Evangelista, Co-Director for Operations Margaret Ryan, Co-Director for Instruction
2009-10 to Present	Steven Evangelista, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2005-06	First-Year Visit	Institute	March 15, 2006
2006-07	Second-Year Visit	Institute	March 13, 2007
2007-08	Third-Year Visit	External (RMC Research)	April 16-17, 2008
2008-09	Fourth-Year Visit	Institute	March 24, 2009
2009-10	Initial Renewal Visit	Institute	October 27-29, 2009
2010-11	Subsequent Visit	Institute	March 1-2, 2011
2011-12	Subsequent Visit	Institute	January 17-19, 2012

³ Source: Application for Renewal

CONDUCT OF VISIT

Specifications

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Members	Title
January 10-12, 2012	Ron Miller, Ph.D	Vice President for Accountability
	Danielle Keen	Analyst for School Evaluation
	Jeff Wasbes	Performance and Systems Analyst
	Lori Clement	Senior Analyst
	Jenn David Lang	External Consultant

Context of the Visit

Charter Cycle ⁴	
Charter Period	2 nd Year of 2nd Charter Term
Accountability Period	3 rd Year of 3 Year Accountability Period
Impending Renewal Visit	Fall 2012

⁴ Because the Institute makes a renewal decision in the last year of a Charter Period, the Accountability Period ends in the next to last year of the Charter Period. For initial renewals, the Accountability Period is the first four years of the Charter Period. For subsequent renewals, the Accountability Period includes the last year of the previous Charter Period through the next to last year of the current Charter Period.

School Performance Review

Performance Summary

In 2010-11, the second year of Harlem Link Charter School's three-year Accountability Period, the school is meeting its mathematics goal but not its English Language Arts goal. Other than an increase in the proportion of students meeting the absolute measure, the performance in ELA is the same as that of 2009-10. The results in math are also similar to those from 2009-10: the school again met the same four of five measures with a slight improvement. Harlem Link is meeting its science goal. The school has met its NCLB goal.

English Language Arts

Based on results of the five measures in its Accountability Plan, Harlem Link is not meeting its English Language Arts goal. In this second year of the Accountability Period, the school met its absolute target of 75 percent proficiency, with 78 percent of students scoring proficient compared to 62 percent in the previous year.⁵ The school continued to exceed the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set by the state and to perform better than the community school district (District 5) in which a plurality of the students reside. It performed worse than the district (District 3) in which the school is located. In comparison to demographically similar schools statewide, the school again performed worse than expected, remaining far from the target of a 0.3 Effect Size. In terms of cohort growth, both grade-level cohorts did not meet their growth targets with the 3rd grade cohort showing some progress, the 4th grade cohort declining and the overall year-to year growth basically unchanged.

Mathematics

Based on the results of the five measures in its Accountability Plan, Harlem Link is meeting its mathematics goal. In 2010-11, the second year of the current Accountability Period, the school exceeded the absolute target of 75 percent proficient, with 98 percent of students achieving proficiency,⁶ an increase from the previous year. The school again exceeded the state's AMO and outperformed the local community school district in which a plurality of its students reside, but not the district in which the school is located. In comparison to demographically similar schools statewide, the school met its target, continuing to perform notably better than expected. With respect to year-to- year cohort growth, the school's overall performance increased. These results are similar to the previous year to the extent that one grade cohort again met its individual growth target.

⁵For evaluating the goals' absolute measure, the Institute has again adapted SED's "time-adjusted" ELA cut score for 2010-11 as it had in 2009-10. The other four measures utilize the current, revised ELA cut scores. As such, the cut scores for the Annual Measurable Objective and cohort growth are different from last year when the Institute used the "time-adjusted cut score" instead.

⁶ For evaluating the goals' absolute measure, the Institute has again adapted SED's "time-adjusted" math cut score for 2010-11 as it had in 2009-10. The other four measures utilize the current, revised math cut scores. As such, the cut scores for the Annual Measurable Objective and cohort growth are different from last year when the "institute used the "time-adjusted cut score" instead.

Science

Harlem Link is meeting its science goal. In 2010-11, 100 percent of 4th graders scored proficient on the state science exam, exceeding the absolute target of 75 percent proficiency. District results are not yet available for 2010-11; in 2009-10, 68 percent of district 4th graders scored proficient, indicating that the school is most likely to outperform the district in 2010-11.

NCLB

Harlem Link has met its NCLB goal.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: English Language Arts

Harlem Link Charter School



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

	2008-09 Grades Served: K-4			2009-10 Grades Served: K-5			2010-11 Grades Served: K-5			MET		
	All Students % (N)		2+ Years Students % (N)	All Students % (N)		2+ Years Students % (N)	All Students % (N)		2+ Years Students % (N)			
	Grades			Grades			Grades					
ABSOLUTE MEASURES 1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above a Level 3 on the New York State exam.(§)	3	76.0 (54)	73.7 (38)	3	72.0 (50)	69.8 (43)	3	61.5 (52)	65.9 (41)	YES		
	4	64.0 (50)	73.7 (38)	4	48.0 (50)	52.3 (44)	4	90.6 (53)	93.2 (44)			
	5	(0)	(0)	5	60.0 (40)	63.9 (36)	5	71.1 (38)	73.3 (30)			
	6	(0)	(0)	6	(0)	(0)	6	(0)	(0)			
	7	(0)	(0)	7	(0)	(0)	7	(0)	(0)			
	8	(0)	(0)	8	(0)	(0)	8	(0)	(0)			
	All	70.2 (104)	73.7 (76)	All	60.0 (140)	61.8 (123)	All	74.8 (143)	78.3 (115)	NO		
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.(§)	Grades	PI	AMO	Grades	PI	AMO	Grades	PI	AMO	YES		
	3-4	170	144	3-5	160	155	3-5	127	122			
	Comparison: Manhattan District 5			Comparison: Manhattan District 5			Comparison: Manhattan District 5					
	Grades	School	District	Grades	School	District	Grades	School	District			
	3-4	73.7	54.7	3-5	33.3	29.3	3-5	35.7	32.9			
3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	% FL		Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	% FL		Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES	
	71.1	70.2	66.3	0.27	NO	78.3	32.9	40.5	-0.46	NO		
	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result		
	4	36	66.7	70.8	72.2 *	4	44	75.0	75.1	52.3		
	5	36	66.7	70.9	63.9	5	31	12.9	44.0	19.4		
	6				6							
	7				7							
	8				8							
	All	36	66.7	72.2	All	80	71.3	57.5	All	78	34.6	30.8
4. Each year the school will exceed its predicted percent of students at or above Level 3 on the state exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3) based on its Free Lunch (FL) rate.	% FL		Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	% FL		Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES	
	71.1	70.2	66.3	0.27	NO	78.3	32.9	40.5	-0.46	NO		
	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result		
	4	36	66.7	70.8	72.2 *	4	47	48.9	62.0	38.3		
	5	31	12.9	44.0	19.4	5	31	12.9	44.0	19.4		
	6				6							
	7				7							
	8				8							
	All	36	66.7	72.2	All	78	34.6	30.8				
5. Each grade level cohort will reduce by one half the difference between the previous year's baseline and 75 percent performing at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam. An asterisk indicates cohort met target.(§)	% FL		Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	% FL		Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	NO	
	71.1	70.2	66.3	0.27	NO	78.3	32.9	40.5	-0.46	NO		
	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result		
	4	36	66.7	70.8	72.2 *	4	47	48.9	62.0	38.3		
	5	31	12.9	44.0	19.4	5	31	12.9	44.0	19.4		
	6				6							
	7				7							
	8				8							
	All	36	66.7	72.2	All	78	34.6	30.8				

(§) SED's "time adjusted cut scores" are used in the 2009-10 and 2010-11 results for #1 and in the 2009-10 results for #2 and #5. SED's publicly reported cut scores are used for the other results. Data Sources: New York State data; school-submitted workbooks; and the Institute's student performance database.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: Mathematics

Harlem Link Charter School



	2008-09 Grades Served: K-4			2009-10 Grades Served: K-5			2010-11 Grades Served: K-5			MET
	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	
ABSOLUTE MEASURES										
1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above a Level 3 on the New York State exam.(§)	3	98.2 (55)	100.0 (38)	3	100.0 (50)	100.0 (43)	3	98.1 (52)	100.0 (41)	
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.(§)	4	75.0 (52)	78.9 (38)	4	81.6 (49)	83.7 (43)	4	96.2 (53)	97.7 (44)	
	5	(0)	(0)	5	95.0 (40)	94.4 (36)	5	94.7 (38)	96.7 (30)	
	6	(0)	(0)	6	(0)	(0)	6	(0)	(0)	
	7	(0)	(0)	7	(0)	(0)	7	(0)	(0)	
	8	(0)	(0)	8	(0)	(0)	8	(0)	(0)	
	All	86.9 (107)	89.5 (76)	All	92.1 (139)	92.6 (122)	All	96.5 (143)	98.3 (115)	YES
	Grades	PI	AMO	Grades	PI	AMO	Grades	PI	AMO	
	3-4	186	119	3-5	191	135	3-5	164	137	YES
	Comparison: Manhattan District 5			Comparison: Manhattan District 5			Comparison: Manhattan District 5			
COMPARATIVE MEASURES										
3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	3-4	89.5	75.2	3-5	63.1	38.4	3-5	66.1	40.1	YES
	% FL	Actual	Predicted	% FL	Actual	Predicted	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size
	71.1	86.9	85.8	70.9	61.1	50.6	78.3	65.0	50.1	0.80
	Effect Size	0.23		Effect Size	0.58		Effect Size	0.80		YES
GROWTH MEASURE										
5. Each grade level cohort will reduce by one half the difference between the previous year's baseline and 75 percent performing at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam. An asterisk indicates cohort met target.(§)	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result
	3	3	94.9	95.0	76.9	3	3	74.5	74.7	80.9 *
	4	4	39	94.9	95.0	4	4	31	35.5	55.2
	5	5	36	77.8	77.9	5	5	31	35.5	55.2
	6	6	7	77.8	77.9	6	6	7	7	7
	7	7	7	77.8	77.9	7	7	7	7	7
	8	8	7	77.8	77.9	8	8	7	7	7
	All	All	39	94.9	95.0	All	All	78	59.0	66.7

(§) SED's "time adjusted cut scores" are used in the 2009-10 and 2010-11 results for #1 and in the 2009-10 results for #2 and #5. SED's publicly reported cut scores are used for the other results. Data Sources: New York State data; school-submitted workbooks; and the Institute's student performance database.

SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

Benchmark Conclusions and Evidence

1. B Use of Assessment Data

Harlem Link has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data, although the school only uses the data to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning to a limited extent.

The school regularly administers standardized as well as school-developed unit assessments. The school systematically collects the assessment results of the standardized assessments and makes the data accessible to teachers. Teachers are responsible for scoring their class's unit assessments and uploading the results into a standards tracker. Individual teachers have discretion over how to use the data to inform instructional decisions; the school leadership provides little oversight over the teacher's analysis.

At the beginning of the year and again mid-year, the school administers the NWEA Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) test and the Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA), which both purportedly align to state standards. Teachers use the DRA to assign students to leveled reading groups and to identify students for remedial interventions. In the middle of the school year, the school has not fully trained teachers on using MAP assessment data. Administrators created unit assessments aligned to each curricular unit prior to the beginning of the school year. Teachers administer these unit assessments with the goal of determining student mastery of the skills and knowledge taught in the corresponding curricular units. The school has introduced these assessments as part of a comprehensive revamping of the curriculum and assessment program in response to the Institute's most recent evaluation report and their own recognition of basic limitations of the previous system. School leaders had planned to use assessments to drive the delivery of the curriculum; however, teachers report that the assessments need significant revision at the outset of each unit in order to act as a reliable assessment of student understanding. While teachers report that having the unit assessments to use as frameworks is helpful, the need for individual revision to improve alignment with the curriculum units limits the utility of the initial development.

Teachers score and record results in a "standards tracker" and flag students who do not meet specific performance indicators. Teachers report that leaders mostly review this data in order to track student progress. Classroom teachers rely largely on their own daily informal classroom assessments and observations to determine which students have not mastered skills and how to group them during small group instruction, as well as to identify which students should receive interventions. Given the school's failure to post strong performance on state assessments, these methods have been inadequate for assessing student work products to ensure that the students are making adequate progress toward meeting the demands of the state's academic standards.

In response to the limitations of classroom assessments, the school leadership has begun administering the MAP test, but because of the recent introduction of the MAP, school leaders have not yet used its results to monitor and improve the school's academic program, continuing to rely on information gathered from classroom observation. School leaders report that they intend to use the MAP results to monitor progress toward the school's Accountability Plan goals, although it is

unclear if MAP data is a valid and reliable predictor of state assessment results. There is little evidence that school leaders use data to inform decisions about professional development opportunities.

Scoring of student writing samples and on-demand constructed math responses is not reliable. Teachers report that some rubrics and assessment items are misaligned and that they are unaware of grade-level expectations for quality writing. Both teachers and school leaders report that the school has not normed the scoring of writing samples and has not systematically aligned the writing rubrics across grades.

1. C Curriculum

Harlem Link is in the process of revamping its curriculum in order to align it to the state standards. The school cannot yet determine whether the curriculum is preparing students to meet state standards.

The school is in the process of revamping its curriculum. School leaders decided to undertake a large revision of the curriculum this year in order to align it to New York State and Common Core Standards. While the school has pacing guides and overviews of unit plans, teachers are often still fleshing out unit plan details (e.g., lesson objectives, materials and class assessments) when they have already begun teaching that unit. This poor timing is particularly challenging for new teachers. Based on their development of curriculum overviews at the outset of the school year, the leaders report that the curriculum aligns from grade to grade, but teachers have not met across grades to ensure this vertical integration.

The teachers at each grade level develop the unit details and lesson plans in concert. School leaders expect them to create daily lesson objectives that correspond to the overarching unit plan. The school's principal reports that he checks all lesson objectives for quality and alignment. This requirement is in contrast to the autonomous lesson planning that occurred in previous years. Currently, teachers use a variety of curricular resources, ranging from samples of commercial curricula to materials individual teachers have saved from their graduate programs.

The teachers and leadership team do not regularly review and monitor the curriculum, outside of reviewing lesson plans, but plan to continue to develop the curriculum and go back to revise the first few units introduced at the beginning of the school year in order to align them with the Common Core State Standards. While the unit assessments are a direct outgrowth of the curriculum units and the leaders have intended to use them to drive instruction, they have not used the assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum itself. In light of the school's poor performance on state English language arts assessments over the prior two years, the lack of urgency in ensuring a strong, aligned curriculum raises questions regarding the school's ability to improve performance as it approaches renewal.

1. D Pedagogy

Quality instruction is evident in most classes.

With team teaching in every classroom throughout the school, Harlem Link is following the co-teaching model specified in its charter, though the use of two teachers does not always add value to daily lessons. In one classroom per grade, a special education and general education pair of teachers use the Integrated Co-Teaching model. Classroom teachers conduct whole group and parallel teaching, as well as small group and one-to-one instruction. In some whole-group lessons, two teachers are unnecessary; the second teacher does not take advantage of the opportunity to circulate around the room to provide reinforcement for individual students, check for understanding, etc. However, in small group and parallel lessons, each teacher works with a small group of leveled students and deliberately checks for understanding by questioning each student. Most teachers demonstrate subject matter and grade-level competence, though a limited number of lessons contain factual errors. In addition, despite the school's emphasis on developing measurable learning objectives, most objectives are activity-based, which, given their implicit emphasis on input and participation, blurs the specific expected learning and makes daily informal assessment less meaningful.

In contrast to previous years, the school is focusing on the development of comprehensive daily lesson plans. Using an elaborate, prescribed format, grade level teams meet weekly to generate plans aligned to the current curriculum units and submit them to their assistant principal for review. Through the first part of the year, the assistant principals have provided feedback based on an explicit set of evaluative criteria, focusing in particular on the quality of learning objectives and on eliciting higher order thinking skills. Teachers report that they find the feedback helpful and appreciate its regularity.

Teachers engage students in purposeful learning activities. Transitions are seamless in most classes; in a few classes, teachers provide less structure during transition times, which results in students engaging in non-academic activity. Teachers provide good pacing in small group and parallel teaching.

In English language arts, lesson topics create opportunities for higher order thinking. In mathematics, students are often encouraged to explain their reasoning behind a given answer rather than just providing a short, correct response. On the other hand, some teachers do not use questioning techniques effectively and miss opportunities to maximize higher order thinking.

1. E Instructional Leadership

Harlem Link does not have a cohesive and strategic structure for overseeing and improving classroom instruction.

Harlem Link school leaders have yet to develop a unified process for consistently strong instructional leadership. While the school's assistant principals frequently observe teachers informally and formally (twice a year) and assist teachers in setting individual professional development goals, Harlem Link does not have a clearly articulated and unified approach to improving instruction. Many of the components of the Harlem Link professional development program are strong building blocks; videotape review of instruction, consideration of teacher

created professional development goals during formal and informal observations. The school has not used these blocks to set coherent systems that prepare students to meet all of the goals in the school's accountability plan indicating instructional leadership at the school remains in need of improvement.

Though instructional leaders meet regularly, their respective roles have limited strategic overlap. The school's principal has primary responsibility for the school's curriculum and assessment system, though he spends little time observing instruction. Nevertheless, the two assistant principals, who act as his surrogates, defer to him on many seemingly minor decisions. Despite constant communication, this structure renders school leaders inefficient in identifying individual and collective teacher needs and they are, therefore, less effective in addressing school priorities. The assistant principals meet with teachers once per month to discuss their general progress towards their individual instructional goals, as well as their classroom performance. In addition, teachers report that they receive feedback on the assistant principal's informal observations both orally and by email.

In response to the Institute's previous school evaluation report, the school has introduced a non-supervisory instructional coach to replace a cadre of consultants. Because of immediate needs for assessment and curriculum coordination, she has provided systematic feedback and coaching to only the small number of teachers with improvement plans, as well as one teacher whose co-teacher left earlier in the year.

The school's leadership provides structured opportunities for teachers to plan on the delivery of instruction in grade-level teams. School leaders rely on the grade-level team leaders to report on the grade's instructional activity, especially the implementation of the new curricula and assessments; in addition, they look to the team leaders to keep their peers informed about current school housekeeping issues. The leaders spend limited time supporting the team directly in developing curriculum or analyzing data.

The school holds teachers increasingly accountable for quality instruction, by taking more rigorous and timely action on teachers who the leaders deem to be unable to meet the school's expectations; however, the school has considered student achievement only to a limited extent in evaluating teachers.

1. F At-Risk Students

Harlem Link helps academically struggling students and students with special needs. The school does not monitor the effectiveness of these programs. The school does not have a program for meeting the specific needs of English Language Learners.

In conjunction with its Integrated Co-Teaching model (ICT), Harlem Link utilizes a tiered academic intervention service (AIS) program to support academically struggling students and for those performing below grade level. In addition, the school also provides a Kaplan after-school tutoring program for students who scored marginally below proficiency on last year's state exam.

The school has two defined screening procedures to identify students for appropriate AIS interventions. In the first method, teachers or the assistant principal refer students, based on classroom assessment performance or low performance on school wide assessments, to the Child Study Team (CST), which determines an initial remediation strategy for regular class time. Classroom teachers then track students for a month after which the CST decides whether the student should receive AIS. In the other instance, the school places new students who are below grade level and returning students who previously received academic intervention services directly into the program.

AIS teachers primarily deliver AIS through pull out services for a caseload of 12 to 30 students. In addition, they also push into classrooms to support teachers with direct classroom interventions. AIS teachers meet biweekly with classroom teachers to discuss student progress, curriculum content and in-class strategies. AIS teachers choose their own curriculum and resources with little guidance or oversight from instructional leaders. The school does not have a system to evaluate the effectiveness of the AIS program or its various intervention strategies.

The school utilizes its ICT model to address the needs of special education students, who represent 16 percent of the student body. The school employs one special education teacher per grade, a speech therapist, an occupational therapist and a social worker. The special education teachers have daily common planning periods with their general education co-teachers. More than half of the students with individualized education programs (IEPs) perform below grade level and also receive AIS. ICT teachers meet biweekly with the AIS teachers and monthly with the social worker and speech therapist to discuss student progress. Special education teachers do not meet as a group or with the assistant principal who coordinates special education services, apart from regular CST meetings. The teachers each employ their own methods of tracking student performance and do not provide reports on student progress outside of annual reports and CST meetings for students receiving AIS.

Harlem Link does not have a program to serve its English Language Learners (ELLs) who constitute close to seven percent of the student population. The school follows the required procedures for screening and identification and places the students in regular team teaching classrooms with the expectation that the classroom team will meet the specific needs of these students. Despite this assumption, some classroom teachers are unaware of which students in their class are ELLs, though the school reports notifying them at the beginning of the year. The school does not monitor or track ELL student progress. AIS teachers report that general education teachers frequently request that identified and non-identified ELL students receive push-in services to address their needs.

1. G Student Order and Discipline

Harlem Link has established a safe and orderly environment.

The school has recently put in place measures that render the school safe and orderly with an emphasis on learning that was not present during previous years. It has established a new and effective discipline system that results in a decrease in student misbehavior and an increased emphasis on learning with a calmer school environment. During the summer, the teaching staff received professional development on the new policy as well as additional training on establishing

school-wide routines and on expectations for student behavior. The new discipline policy builds on the school's previously used color card system in which students receive different colored cards based on the degree of their misbehavior. The revised policy delineates more precisely the circumstances under which a color should change.

Teachers apply the discipline policy in a consistent manner. They report that clearer communication of behavioral expectations to students has led to better responsiveness to teacher redirection. With the changes, the halls and lunchroom are quiet and orderly, transitions are efficient and teachers spend minimal time correcting student behavior.

The school also has a new focus on utilizing out-of-school suspensions for infractions ranging from not wearing the school uniform to fighting. This policy has resulted in a decrease in repeat offenders as well as increased parent commitment to the school's value system. In order to continue serving students during out-of-school suspensions, the school provides alternative instruction. The school contracts with an external tutoring organization that picks up instructional materials from the school and meets the child and a guardian on the day of suspension at a local library, or similar location, to provide alternative instruction.

1. H Professional Development

Harlem Link's professional development program continues to be largely dependent on teacher interests rather than meeting student needs.

The professional development program contains a variety of components, but it is not comprehensive or unified. The program includes seminars, content groups, monthly staff meetings, a summer institute, professional growth plans, mentors for new teachers and a full-time instructional coach who replaces a cadre of external consultants. Notwithstanding the large array, the school selects topics and provides support to improve teacher practice based on teacher interest rather than a coordinated focus on areas in which teachers or the school needs improvement, based on the leadership's collective perspective on teacher effectiveness or on a school-side analysis of student assessment data.

In interviews, the leadership team members do not identify as a current priority using professional development to help the school meet its Accountability Plan goals. There is no indication that the leaders systematically evaluate the professional development program or that they hold teachers accountable in their classroom practice for what they have learned during professional development activities.

2. C Organizational Capacity

Harlem Link has reorganized core aspects of its academic program, but the school leadership has not yet developed various systems and procedures to support the delivery of instruction.

Despite recent changes, Harlem Link continues to have a fragmented organizational structure. The school has changed its leadership structure from co-directors with each separately responsible for

academics and operations to a principal responsible for both components who oversees two assistant principals and an acting director of operations and human resources. The operations transition is fully in place; under the direction of the acting operations and human resources director, the school continues to manage its operations well. Staff scheduling is internally consistent and supportive of the school's mission. The school has allocated sufficient resources in support of achieving its goals.

While staff understands the roles and responsibilities of the school's leadership, the urgency to revamp the core components of the program – curriculum and assessment – has led to disjointed organizational arrangements. The leadership has bifurcated curriculum planning, such that different leaders have circumscribed responsibility for overall curriculum development apart from lesson planning. Given the principal's large task of concurrently revamping both curriculum and assessment in order to improve their internal consistency and alignment, teachers do not receive documentary material in a timely manner.

A notable number of teachers opted to leave the school at the end of the last school year, though the school retained some of its strongest teachers. Based on classroom observations, the school has hired promising new members to the teaching staff in response to high teacher turnover in previous years. With a clearer understanding of the respective responsibilities of the two teachers in classrooms and the positive change in school culture, staff morale has improved. The school maintains adequate student enrollment and has effective procedures for recruiting new students to the school.

After limited proactive change to the academic program during the first two years of the current Accountability Period, the school now has a greater sense of urgency. Besides this year's initiative to overhaul the curriculum, the leaders have converted the staffing of the 3rd and 4th grade in order to improve alignment across grades and raise expectations. Notwithstanding these actions, the school has not systematically monitored and evaluated specific aspects of the academic program. Given the current introduction of new assessments, the school leadership is not now able to evaluate the quality of the new curricula or to monitor the effectiveness of the overall school program.

2. D Board Oversight

Harlem Link's board of trustees is heavily engaged in providing oversight and support to the school in order for it to meet its Accountability Plan goals.

The board has adequate skills, structures and procedures with which to govern the school. Under the auspices of an executive committee, the board oversees the school program through finance, education and development committees. Each member serves on two committees and the board meets monthly, ten times per year. Aside from the expertise of members of the education committee, the board is generally aware of the implementation and status of current academic initiatives. Given Harlem Link's struggle to meet its English language arts accountability plan goal during the first two years of its three-year Accountability Period, the board has met with Institute staff to discuss SUNY renewal policies and the school's standing as it approaches the final year of its charter in the 2012-2013 school year. Harlem Link's poor academic performance in English

language arts over the prior two years makes it a potential candidate for non-renewal. The board is fully cognizant of the school's prospects for charter renewal and works diligently with school leadership to oversee activities it hopes will lead to improvement significant enough to earn renewal before the charter term ends in the summer of 2013.

The board receives sufficient information to provide active ongoing oversight. It conducts its own, independent 360° survey to gauge staff attitudes. While the director engaged in the search for a principal last spring, the board remained concerned about the viability of the reporting structure and asked the director to cut back on operational responsibilities when, after failing to find an acceptable candidate, he assumed the role of principal himself. Because the board continued to be concerned that the principal was overextended, it proposed various strategies to mitigate the burden of revamping the curriculum. Despite its apprehensions, the principal has carried most of the load himself this year. Aside from the curriculum initiative, the board has earmarked resources to support an after-school Kaplan test prep program. The board evaluates the school leader and holds him accountable for student achievement insofar as it has partially ties his remuneration to student performance.

During the first year-and-a-half after the SUNY Trustees awarded Harlem Link a short-term three-year charter renewal and prior to the current school year, Harlem Link did not fully address the need for school improvement with a sense of urgency. During this period, the board engaged an outside charter school consulting firm to provide an external, disinterested perspective on the school program. From the firm's recommendations and the board's own hesitancy in initiating meaningful structural changes, the board took insufficient action during this period to boost student achievement.

APPENDIX A: RENEWAL BENCHMARKS USED DURING THE VISIT

An excerpt of the State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks follows.

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

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

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

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

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

<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 1H</p> <p>Professional Development</p>	<p>The school’s professional development program assists teachers in meeting student academic needs and school goals by addressing identified shortcomings in teachers’ pedagogical skills and content knowledge.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school provides sufficient time, personnel, materials and funding to support a comprehensive and sustained professional development program; • the content of the professional development program dovetails with the school’s mission, curriculum, and instructional programs; • annual professional development plans derive from a data-driven needs-assessment and staff interests; • professional development places a high priority on achieving the State University Renewal Benchmarks and the school’s Accountability Plan goals; • teachers are involved in setting short-term and long-term goals for their own professional development activities; • the school provides effective, ongoing support and training tailored to teachers’ varying levels of expertise and instructional responsibilities; • the school provides training to assist all teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities, English language learners and other students at-risk of academic failure; and • the professional development program is systematically evaluated to determine its effectiveness at meeting stated goals.
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<p align="center">Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?</p>	
<p><u>Evidence Category</u></p>	<p><u>State University Renewal Benchmarks</u></p>
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2A</p> <p>Mission & Key Design Elements</p>	<p>The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stakeholders are aware of the mission; • the school has implemented its key design elements in pursuit of its mission; and • the school meets or comes close to meeting any non-academic goals contained in its Accountability Plan.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2B</p> <p>Parents & Students</p>	<p>Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has a process and procedures for evaluation of parent satisfaction with the school; • the great majority of parents with students enrolled at the school have strong positive attitudes about it; • few parents pursue grievances at the school board level or outside the school; • a large number of parents seek entrance to the school;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents with students enrolled keep their children enrolled year-to-year; and • the school maintains a high rate of daily student attendance.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2C</p> <p>Organizational Capacity</p>	<p>The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure with staff, systems, and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school demonstrates effective management of day-to-day operations; • staff scheduling is internally consistent and supportive of the school’s mission; • the school has established clear priorities, objectives and benchmarks for achieving its mission and Accountability Plan goals, and a process for their regular review and revision; • the school has allocated sufficient resources in support of achieving its goals; • the roles and responsibilities of the school’s leadership and staff members are clearly defined; • the school has an organizational structure that provides clear lines for accountability; • the school’s management has successfully recruited, hired and retained key personnel, and made appropriate decisions about removing ineffective staff members when warranted; • the school maintains an adequate student enrollment and has effective procedures for recruiting new students to the school; and • the school’s management and board have demonstrated effective communication practices with the school community including school staff, parents/guardians and students.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2D</p> <p>Board Oversight</p>	<p>The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school’s mission and provide oversight to the total educational program.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school board has adequate skills and expertise, as well as adequate meeting time to provide rigorous oversight of the school; • the school board (or a committee thereof) understands the core business of the school—student achievement—in sufficient depth to permit the board to provide effective oversight; • the school board has set clear long-term and short-term goals and expectations for meeting those goals, and communicates them to the school’s management and leaders; • the school board has received regular written reports from the school leadership on academic performance and progress, financial stability and organizational capacity; • the school board has conducted regular evaluations of the school’s management (including school leaders who report to the board, supervisors from management organization(s), and/or partner organizations that provide services to the school), and has acted on the results where such evaluations demonstrated shortcomings in performance; • where there have been demonstrable deficiencies in the school’s academic,

	<p>organizational or fiscal performance, the school board has taken effective action to correct those deficiencies and put in place benchmarks for determining if the deficiencies are being corrected in a timely fashion;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school board has not made financial or organizational decisions that have materially impeded the school in fulfilling its mission; and • the school board conducts on-going assessment and evaluation of its own effectiveness in providing adequate school oversight, and pursues opportunities for further governance training and development.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2E</p> <p>Governance</p>	<p>The board has implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes, and has abided by them.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school board has established a set of priorities that are in line with the school’s goals and mission and has effectively worked to design and implement a system to achieve those priorities; • the school board has in place a process for recruiting and selecting new members in order to maintain adequate skill sets and expertise for effective governance and structural continuity; • the school board has implemented a comprehensive and strict conflict of interest policy (and/or code of ethics)—consistent with those set forth in the charter—and consistently abided by them through the term of the charter; • the school board has generally avoided creating conflicts of interest where possible; where not possible, the school has managed those conflicts of interest in a clear and transparent manner; • the school board has instituted a process for dealing with complaints (and such policy is consistent with that set forth in the charter), has made that policy clear to all stakeholders, and has followed that policy including acting in a timely fashion on any such complaints; • the school board has abided by its by-laws including, but not limited to, provisions regarding trustee elections, removals and filling of vacancies; • the school board and its committees hold meetings in accordance with the Open Meetings Law, and minutes are recorded for all meetings including executive sessions and, as appropriate, committee meetings; and • the school board has in place a set of board and school policies that are reviewed regularly and updated as needed.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2F</p> <p>Legal Requirements</p>	<p>The school has substantially complied with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • during its charter period, the school has compiled a record of substantial compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations including, but not limited to, submitting items to the Institute in a timely manner, and meeting teacher certification (including NCLB highly qualified status) and background check requirements, FOIL, and Open Meetings Law;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• at the time of renewal, the school is in substantial compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable laws, rules and regulations;• over the charter period, the school has abided by the terms of its monitoring plan;• the school has designed and put in place effective systems and controls to ensure that legal and charter requirements were and are met; and• the school has an active and ongoing relationship with in-house or independent legal counsel that reviews relevant policies, documents, transactions and incidents and makes recommendations and handles other legal matters as needed.
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