



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

2013-14 School Evaluation Report

New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities

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INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit on May 1, 2014. While the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) near the end of a charter term, most mid-cycle school evaluation visits focus on a subset of these benchmarks. This subset, the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, addresses the academic success of the school and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization. They provide a framework for examining the quality of the educational program, focusing on teaching and learning (i.e., curriculum, instruction, and assessment), as well as leadership, organizational capacity and board oversight. The Institute uses the established criteria on a regular basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

The appendix to the report contains a School Overview with descriptive information about the school, including enrollment and demographic data, as well as historical information regarding the life of the school. It also provides background information on the conduct of the visit, including information about the evaluation team and puts the visit in the context of the school’s current charter cycle. Finally, the appendix displays the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks.

The report below provides benchmark evidence to support these conclusions in order to highlight areas of concern. The Institute intends this selection of information to be an exception report. As such, limited detail and evidence about positive elements of the educational program are not an indication that the Institute does not fully recognize evidence of program effectiveness. This report does not contain an overall 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 notes areas in need of improvement based on the Qualitative Education Benchmarks.

SCHOOL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	December 14, 2010
School Opening	September 2011

Location and 2013-14 Enrollment

Address	District	Facility	Enrollment	Grades
99 Terrace View Avenue, Bronx, NY 10463	NYC CSD 10	Co-Location	330	9-11

Partner Organization

Partner Name	Partner Type	Dates of Service
New Visions for Public Schools	Not-for-Profit Organization	2011-12 to Present

Benchmark Conclusions and Evidence

Instructional Leadership. At the time of the New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities (“Humanities”) evaluation visit, the school was implementing professional development supports to assist teachers in delivering strong instruction.

- Humanities’ instructional leadership team consisted of the principal and three assistant principals. In addition to multiple administrative and operational responsibilities, the continual need for staff to respond to student misbehavior and crises interfered with leaders’ attention to supporting the development of the largely inexperienced and struggling teaching staff.
- The school’s instructional leadership team established an environment of high expectations that was evident at the time of the school visit. Leaders set teacher performance goals at the individual, grade and content area levels. Based on classroom observations scheduled biweekly and feedback meetings, leaders tracked teachers’ progress towards meeting these goals each trimester.
- Instructional leaders provided sustained and systematic coaching that improved teachers’ instructional effectiveness to a limited degree. At the time, coaching was limited and it was not clear if it was sufficient to effectively and consistently support teachers in fully meeting student needs.
- The Humanities schedule provided daily opportunities for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction within and across grade levels during teachers’ two free periods. Content-area lead teachers in science and math provided support and guidance for lesson planning and delivery during weekly meetings and classroom observations.
- Instructional leaders implemented several professional development tracks, differentiated by experience level that addressed the needs of teachers through a series of workshops and courses throughout the school year. Professional development activities were interrelated with classroom practice; leaders identified professional development topics based on classroom observations and assessment data. Instructional leaders followed up on some professional development topics by examining their implementation in the classroom.
- Humanities’ leaders regularly conducted teacher evaluations with clear and comprehensive criteria. Teachers were familiar with the evaluation tool and reported it is fair and accurate.
- Instructional leaders held teachers accountable for high quality instruction and student achievement by putting teachers on professional improvement plans and declining to renew contracts when teachers did not meet expectations.

Curriculum & Assessment. At the time of the school visit, Humanities’ curriculum supported teachers in their instructional planning and its assessment system improved instructional effectiveness and student learning.

- Humanities had a curriculum framework with student performance expectations that provided a fixed, underlying structure, aligned to state standards and across grades. In addition to the framework, the school had supporting tools (i.e. learning plans) that provided a bridge between the curriculum framework and lesson plans. Teachers knew what to teach and when to teach it based on these documents.

- Humanities administered a variety of assessments aligned to its curriculum. Humanities' not-for-profit partner, New Visions for Public Schools ("New Visions" or the "network"), issued end of trimester assessments that included Regents and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers ("PARCC") assessment questions across all six New Visions high schools.
- At the time of the school visit, Humanities used clear processes for scoring and analyzing assessment results. After training to norm scoring with a common rubric, teachers from across New Visions schools scored network-developed exams in mixed-school groupings.
- Teachers regularly used assessment results to meet students' needs by adjusting classroom instruction and grouping students. Teachers examined exit slip data to inform the subsequent day's instructional focus. After holding a retreat and examining Regents results, Humanities created additional classes to prepare select students for additional support for the following Regents: Living Environment, Global, Algebra Prep and English Language Arts.
- The school regularly communicated to parents/guardians about their students' progress using a web-based grade book.

Pedagogy. Elements of strong instruction were evident across the school at the time of the school visit, but behavioral issues decreased lesson effectiveness. As shown in the chart below, during the evaluation visit, Institute team members conducted 13 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all school evaluation visits.

Classroom Observation Methodology: Number of Observations

	Grade			
	9	10	11	Total
ELA	3	1	1	4
Math		1	1	2
Science	1	1	1	4
Soc Stu	1		1	2
Writing				
Specials		1		1
Total	5	4	4	13

- Most teachers delivered purposeful lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school's curriculum (11 of 13 classrooms observed). Some teachers did not effectively communicate learning objectives to students or require specific outcomes. Teachers generally linked lessons to previously taught skills and knowledge and presented material in age-appropriate terms. At times, observed lessons lacked the level of rigor necessary to propel students to high levels of achievement.
- Most teachers regularly and effectively used a variety of techniques to check for student understanding during instruction (8 of 13 classrooms observed). Some teachers circulated to monitor students' written work and provided individualized feedback, as well as to

diffuse student chatter and interpersonal conflicts. In other classes, checks for understanding were cursory and used to maintain engagement or participation and curtail misbehavior, not inform or adjust instruction. At times, student participation was minimal; students rarely volunteered to answer or ask questions about class material and opted out of instruction.

- Not all teachers included opportunities in their lessons to challenge students with questions and activities that developed depth of understanding and higher-order thinking and problem solving skills (4 out of 13 classrooms observed). In one notable example, teachers facilitated interactive group presentations on genocides throughout history. Students skillfully questioned presenters to gather information on the various victims and perpetrators to prepare for an upcoming exam. However, in most classrooms, teachers limited the effectiveness of their own instruction by not requiring students to explain or defend their answers and opinions.
- The majority of Humanities classrooms maintained consistent focus on academic achievement (10 out of 13 classrooms observed) though some lacked a sense of urgency for learning. Some teachers communicated behavioral expectations; however, these expectations were inconsistent across classrooms. Student misbehavior interfered with effective delivery of planned lessons in some classrooms throughout the school. Some teachers did not proactively prevent misbehavior and did not redirect students successfully. In several observed classrooms, a few dominant student personalities established an environment that undermined academic achievement. Teachers often tolerated low-level misbehavior by permitting students to socialize during class.

At-Risk Students. With an intervention model based on students' strengths as well as skill deficits, Humanities met the educational needs of at-risk students at the time of the school visit. The school's special education services were particularly robust.

- Humanities used a variety of tools to identify at-risk students. New registrants completed the Home Language Identification Survey, and the school administered the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners ("NYSITELL") to determine the need for English language supports. Baseline assessments administered during Humanities' summer bridge program and teachers' classroom observations inform intervention services for students at-risk of academic failure. The school also uses Regents data to target interventions.
- The school provided at-risk students with a variety of supports in multiple settings. Two ELL specialists provided pull-out supports and a Regents prep course to the 43 ELLs enrolled at the time of the visit. Humanities served most of the 83 students with disabilities requiring academic services enrolled at the time of the visit with integrated co-teaching ELA, math and science classrooms. Students whose needs could not be met with supports in general education classrooms received services in a self-contained classroom.
- The school provided sufficient training for general education teachers and specialists to meet the full range of students' educational needs. Teachers' schedules afforded opportunities for classroom teachers to coordinate with at-risk program staff.

APPENDIX

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Mission Statement

New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities is dedicated to ensuring that all New York City public school students, regardless of race or economic class, have access to a high-quality education that prepares them for the rigors of college and the workforce. Further, we are committed to sharing innovative tools, strategies and lessons learned in New Visions schools with others in New York and throughout the country to prove that meaningful change is achievable at scale and success is possible for every child. New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities is part of the New Visions for Public Schools network.

Student Demographics¹

	2011-12		2012-13		2013-14
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 10 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 10 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0	1	0	1
Black or African American	31	19	36	18	40
Hispanic	62	67	58	68	57
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	1	8	1	8	1
White	2	6	1	6	1
Multiracial	3	0	3	0	1
Students with Disabilities	-- ²	17	22	17	26
English Language Learners	17	22	14	22	13
Eligible for Free Lunch	70	76	71	71	69
Eligible for Reduced – Price Lunch	4	5	4	5	3
Economically Disadvantaged	--	87	80	89	76

¹ Source: 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 New York State Education Department School Report Cards.

² 2011-12 students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged data for the school were not available.

School Characteristics

School Year	Proposed Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades
2011-12	125	122	9	9
2012-13	249	236	9-10	9-10
2013-14	397	330	9-11	9-11

School Leader(s)

School Year(s)	School Leader Name(s) and Title(s)
2011-12 to 2013-14	Seth Lewis Levin, Principal

Board of Trustees³

Name	Position
John Sanchez	Chair
Ronald Chaluian	Secretary
Gary Ginsburg	Trustee
BJ Casey	Trustee
Ariel Zurofsky	Trustee

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2011-12	First Year Visit	Institute	April 19, 2012
2013-14	Evaluation Visit	Institute	May 1, 2014

³ Source: Institute board records.

CONDUCT OF THE SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

School Visit Team

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Members	Titles
May 1, 2014	Natasha Howard, PhD	Director of School Evaluation
	Heather Wendling	Senior Analyst
	Adam Aberman	Consultant

Context of the Visit

Charter Cycle	
Charter Term	3 rd Year of 1 st Charter Term
Accountability Period ⁴	3 rd Year of 4 Year Accountability Period
Anticipated Renewal Visit	Fall 2015

⁴ Because the SUNY Trustees make a renewal decision in the last year of a charter term, the Accountability Period ends in the next to last year of that charter term. For schools in initial charter terms, the Accountability Period is the first four years of the charter term. For schools in subsequent charter terms, the Accountability Period includes the last year of the previous charter term through the next to last year of the current charter term.