



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

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April 13, 2015

VIA ELECTRONIC AND FIRST CLASS MAIL

Mr. Samuel Cole, Board Chair
Success Academy Charter School-Bronx 3
968 Cauldwell Avenue
Bronx, NY 10456

Re: First Year School Evaluation Visit

Dear Mr. Cole:

This letter outlines the SUNY Charter Schools Institute's ("the Institute's") observations and findings from its June 5, 2014 first year school evaluation visit to the Success Academy Charter School-Bronx 3 ("Success Bronx 3"). The visit team consisted of Institute Senior Analysts Heather Wendling and Aaron Campbell. First, please accept my most sincere apologies for the extended delay in sending this letter to you. I understand that certain details of the school's program have likely changed in the current school year, but I do hope that you find this record of information shared during the visit team's debrief with school leaders helpful. Allow me to place this letter and the conclusions set forth below into context.

As with all SUNY authorized charter schools, on a periodic basis throughout the term of your school's charter the Institute conducts a number of formal site visits. The Institute reports in writing to the school on data gathered during these visits. Cumulatively, the information in letters such as this, as well as reports provided in later years, forms the foundation of qualitative data on the school's educational program. At the conclusion of the school's charter term, the Institute provides the State University of New York's Board of Trustees (the "SUNY Trustees") an analysis of your school's performance. The Institute makes a renewal recommendation for your school based largely on two key components: the school's attainment of its academic Accountability Plan goals and evidence of the quality of the school's educational program collected during school evaluation visits.

At renewal, the Institute evaluates the academic, organizational, legal and fiscal aspects of the school's program using the *State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks* (the "SUNY Renewal Benchmarks"; see attachment). For formal school evaluation visits conducted prior to renewal, the Institute focuses on specific qualitative benchmarks that provide a fixed standard for determining the quality of the academic program as the school progresses toward renewal.

To Learn
To Search
To Serve



For this first year visit, the Institute narrows the expectation for each benchmark in recognition of the school program's limited development. The center of attention is on the quality of instruction and related benchmarks, which heavily affect the progress that a school is able to demonstrate in meeting its Accountability Plan goals during the charter term. The Institute expects a school to have moved from the beginning of implementation and the promise of future growth to full and effective implementation of a quality program by the time the school comes to renewal. Because Success Bronx 3 is a replication of an established high-performing school model and in keeping with its ongoing oversight of replicated programs, the Institute presents an abbreviated first-year evaluation of the school.

Although the information provided in this letter is not prescriptive, the Institute would expect you to review thoroughly the issues highlighted below and, to the extent you find them helpful, use them to assist in guiding the school's leadership team to develop further the school's academic program or other aspects of the school. In this regard, please be aware that although the Institute takes very seriously the conclusions provided, we are cognizant of the fact that a brief site visit may not yield information on all facets of a school's program.

Please find the team's findings from the first year visit below.

Instructional Leadership

Success Bronx 3 had strong instructional leadership in place at the time of the first year visit.

- The Success Bronx 3 principal instilled a culture of learning and scholarship throughout the school. Teachers expressed high expectations that all students will achieve academic success.
- The principal effectively supported the development of the school's teaching staff and leveraged the strengths of established schools by arranging inter-visitations, which allowed developing teachers to observe exemplary instruction at other network schools operated by Success Academy Charter Schools, Inc. (the "Success network"), Success Bronx 3's not-for-profit charter management organization.
- The principal provided sustained and systematic coaching for teachers using a network-wide rubric on teacher performance. The principal maintained a frequent presence in all classrooms, often coaching teachers during lessons and providing immediate, actionable feedback to improve pedagogical practice. The principal also provided lesson planning support during weekly grade team meetings.
- Success Bronx 3 implemented the network's comprehensive professional development program. Professional development activities at both the school and network levels interrelated with classroom practice and prepared teachers to meet the needs of all students. The principal customized school-wide professional development activities to fit

teachers' individual needs.

- Success Bronx 3 held teachers accountable for high performance and student achievement in mid- and end-of-year evaluations with clear criteria that teachers understood.

Use of Assessment Data

Success Bronx 3 gathered a variety of assessment and evaluation data and used it to improve student learning.

- Success Bronx 3 regularly administered standardized tests and network-created interim assessments to monitor student progress across grade levels. With an online student management system, the school made assessment results widely available to school stakeholders. The principal and education coordinator analyzed assessment results at the individual, class, grade and school level; additionally, Success Bronx 3 compared its student achievement results to those of other schools within the network in order to evaluate program effectiveness and thereby improve student learning.
- Based on assessment data, Success Bronx 3's teachers regularly make instructional adjustments such as regrouping students by ability level. Teachers and instructional leaders also use assessment results to identify students for academic intervention services.

Curriculum

Success Bronx 3 had a curriculum that supported teachers in the planning and delivery of instruction.

- Success Bronx 3 used network-created materials to support instruction. The Success network provided the curriculum framework, scope and sequence documents, unit plans, lesson objectives and daily lesson plans for teachers to use in most subject areas. Teachers created their own lesson plans for shared text and read-aloud classroom periods, which the principal reviewed. The school reported that curriculum materials aligned both within and across grades and prepared students to meet state performance standards.
- Using these documents, teachers knew what to teach and when to teach it during the school's first year of operation.
- Teachers used a plethora of curriculum materials, including well-stocked leveled reading libraries that supported them in meeting the educational needs of all students.

Pedagogy

High quality instruction was evident in most Success Bronx 3 classrooms.

- Most teachers delivered purposeful lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school's curriculum. Well-designed lesson activities assisted students in meeting the stated objectives.

- Some teachers regularly used techniques such as cold-calling and soliciting whole class non-verbal signals to check for student understanding. In some classes, however, teachers missed opportunities to gauge student mastery while circulating around classrooms.
- Most teachers included opportunities in their lessons to challenge students with questions and activities that developed depth of understanding and higher-order thinking skills. In a math class, the teacher asked students to compare and contrast several strategies written on the board. Later in the same lesson, the teacher purposely suggested wrong answers to practice problems, requiring students to explain precisely why those answers were incorrect. Across the school, teachers consistently required students to defend their answers, to explain the process used to arrive at their answers and to utilize additional strategies to solve problems in multiple ways.
- Teachers established and maintained classroom environments with a consistent focus on academic achievement. Most teachers utilized common transition routines and timers to maximize learning time. High behavioral expectations were clear across the school.

At-Risk Students

At the time of the first year visit, Success Bronx 3 adequately addressed the needs of at-risk students.

- The school had clearly defined procedures for identifying students struggling academically, students with disabilities and English language learners (“ELLs”). All Success Bronx 3 staff were aware of available interventions.
- Success Bronx 3 provided small group push-in and pull-out special education teacher support services (“SETSS”) to students who were struggling academically as well as to students with Individualized Education Programs (“IEPs”) mandating academic interventions. Most Success Bronx 3 teachers had or were working toward special education certification.
- As is the case in other network schools, Success Bronx 3 served the 11 ELLs enrolled at the time of the first year visit in its core, general education English language arts program, which was print rich, writing focused and emphasized student-to-student interaction.
- The special education team met weekly to discuss the progress of struggling students. During these weekly meetings, instructional staff reviewed student data on interim assessments and discussed teachers’ classroom observations.

Organizational Capacity

The Success Bronx 3 organization effectively delivered the school’s educational program.

- In collaboration with the Success network, Success Bronx 3 put in place an administrative structure with staff, operational systems and procedures to help carry out the academic

program in its first year. Success Bronx 3 separated instructional and operational responsibilities. The principal and an education coordinator managed the academic program while the school's business manager handled the day-to-day school operations. The Success network provided both instructional and operational supports.

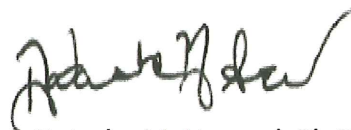
- The school allocated an abundance of resources to support student achievement. Teachers used technology such as SMART boards and iPads in classrooms to facilitate lesson activities, to increase student independence and to reach students with multiple learning styles.
- The Success network worked closely with the Success Bronx 3 leadership on the consistent implementation of systems and protocols to ensure the school is a well-functioning organization.

These conclusions constitute the beginning of your school's record of progress toward meeting the standards detailed in the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks. The Institute conducts formal evaluation visits at various times during each school's initial charter term and generally at least once during subsequent charter terms. The cumulative evidence collected during these school evaluation and renewal visits, as well as the school's record of success at meeting Accountability Plan goals becomes part of the record that informs the Institute's renewal recommendation to the SUNY Trustees.

The number of school evaluation visits the Institute will conduct before renewal depends on a variety of factors. Concerns raised in the conclusions of previous visits, the school's progress toward meeting its Accountability Plan goals and emergent legal and compliance issues may affect the frequency and timing of the visits.

The Institute looks forward to its next visit to Success Bronx 3 and is available at any time to discuss the results of the first year visit, future visits or other concerns you may have as the school moves through its charter term and toward renewal.

Sincerely,



Natasha M. Howard, Ph.D.
Managing Director of Program

Enclosure

c: Colleen Stewart, Principal (*via email*)
Eva Moskowitz, CEO, Success Academy Charter Schools, Inc. (*via email*)