



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

University Preparatory Charter School for Young Men

School Evaluation Report 2010-11

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INTRODUCTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (“SUNY Trustees”), jointly with the New York State Board of Regents, are required by law to provide oversight sufficient to ensure that each charter school that the SUNY Trustees have authorized is in compliance with applicable law and the terms of its charter. The SUNY Trustees, however, consistent with the goals of the Charter Schools Act of 1998, view their oversight responsibility more broadly and positively than purely monitoring compliance. Accordingly, they have adopted policies that require the Charter Schools Institute (“the Institute”) to provide ongoing evaluation of SUNY authorized charter schools. By providing this oversight, the SUNY Trustees and the Institute seek to accomplish three goals:

- **Document Performance.** The Institute collects information to build a database of a school’s performance over time. By evaluating the school periodically, the Institute can more clearly ascertain trends, determine areas of strength and weakness, and assess the school’s likelihood for continued success or failure. Having information based on past patterns, the Institute is in a better position to make recommendations regarding the renewal of each school’s charter, and the State University Trustees are better informed in making a decision on whether a school’s charter should be renewed. In addition, a school will have a far better sense of where they stand in the eyes of its authorizer.
- **Facilitate Improvement.** By providing substantive information about the school’s academic, fiscal and organizational 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 identify areas for improvement.
- **Disseminate Information.** The Institute disseminates information about the school’s performance not only to its board of trustees, administration and faculty, but to all stakeholders, including parents and the larger community in which the school is located.

This annual School Evaluation Report includes three primary components. The Executive Summary of School Evaluation Visit provides an overview of the primary conclusions of the evaluation team regarding the current visit to the school, summarizing areas of strength and areas for growth. A summary of conclusions from previous school evaluations is also provided, if applicable, as background and context for the current evaluation. The second section, titled School Overview, provides descriptive information about the school, including enrollment and demographic data, as well as summary historical information regarding the life of the school. Finally, in a third section entitled School Evaluation Visit, this report presents the analysis of evidence collected during an evaluation visit conducted in the current school year, with an italicized paragraph that introduces each specific benchmark and provides a summarizing conclusion.

Because of the inherent complexity of an organization such as a school, this Evaluation Report does not contain a single rating or 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 notes areas in need of improvement as compared to the State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks. To the extent appropriate and useful, we encourage school boards to use this evaluation report in ongoing planning and school improvement efforts.

Background

Institute evaluations of SUNY authorized charter schools are organized by a set of benchmarks that address the academic success of the school, including teaching and learning (e.g., curriculum, instruction, and assessment), and the effectiveness and viability of the school as an organization, including such items as governance and management. Entitled the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks, these established criteria are used on a regular and ongoing basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

While the primary focus of the visit is an evaluation of the school's academic program and organizational capacity, issues regarding compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations may be noted (and subsequently addressed); where the Institute finds serious deficiencies in particular relating to student health and safety, it may take additional and immediate action. However, monitoring for compliance is not the principal purpose of the visit.

This is an analysis of the observations and conclusions from this year's evaluation, along with supporting evidence. Some benchmarks are covered in greater detail than others in an effort to highlight areas of concern at the school and provide additional feedback in these areas. Finally, information regarding the conduct of the evaluation, including the date of the visit and information about the evaluation team, is provided.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

The Charter Schools Institute conducted a school evaluation visit to the University Preparatory Charter School for Young Men (“University Prep”) on February 3, 2011. While University Prep is in its first year of operation, the Institute holds all schools accountable to the Renewal Benchmarks with consideration given to its point in the charter period. A school in its first year is expected to have begun to build systems and procedures that would provide a platform for delivering effective instruction to improve student learning and achievement. Based on an analysis of evidence from the evaluation visit, University Prep has not established the systems and procedures that would put it on a trajectory towards meeting the Renewal Benchmarks by the time of renewal. This conclusion is drawn from a variety of indicators which are discussed more fully later in the report. Some of the more salient indicators include the following.

Academic Success

Areas of Strength

- School-developed resources show a focus on inquiry based learning and the incorporation of higher order thinking skills into lessons.
- School leaders instill high expectations for the implementation of the school’s inquiry based instructional program, demonstrating a commitment to the development of higher order thinking skills in students.
- The school’s professional development on lesson plan format has been effective.

Areas for Growth

- Teachers have access to a variety of instructional materials, but these materials are not sufficient to meet the needs of all students.
- In many classes, instruction lacks scaffolding and thorough exploration of topics which results in a lack of student engagement. Students demonstrate difficulty in fully comprehending instructional material.
- Many classrooms have multiple teachers, however teachers are often unclear about their role and do not use their time effectively.
- In the six months since opening, the school has not yet evaluated teachers on their performance.
- While the school devotes adequate resources to serving at-risk students, it lacks a systematic approach to identifying and serving these students.
- Most observed teachers lack effective classroom management techniques, which interferes with student learning.
- Teachers regularly gather assessment and evaluation data but do not utilize a schoolwide assessment system to analyze data for improving instructional effectiveness and student learning.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	June 16, 2009
Date Initial Charter Approved by Operation of Law	February 14, 2010
School Opening Date	September, 2010

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades	District
2010-11 through present	180 Raines Park Rochester, NY	All	Rochester City School District

Current Mission Statement

The mission of University Preparatory Charter School for Young Men is to establish a single-sex education option in the City of Rochester with an engaging learning environment and informed practices that are effective for young men. The school will be available to all city residents who choose to have their children educated in a single-sex education environment, regardless of their ability to meet high tuition costs.

Current Key Design Elements

• Single-sex education;
• Individualized learning;
• Substantive content;
• Daily advisory; and
• Continuous relationship building.

School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment¹	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2010-11	150	160	7-8	7-8	181

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.)

Current Board of Trustees²

Board Member Name	Position/Committees
Joseph Munno	Principal/Executive Committee
Melissa Piccarreto	Trustee
Dr. Michael Robinson	Board President/Executive Committee
Maria Scalise	Secretary/Executive Committee
Sam Valleriani	Trustee
Jose M. Vazquez Jr.	Vice President of Policy and Bylaws/Executive Committee

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2010-11 to Present	Joseph Munno, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2010-11	First-Year	Institute	February 3, 2011

² Source: Institute board information.

SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

Benchmark Conclusions and Evidence

Use of Assessment Data (Benchmark 1.B)

Teachers gather assessment and evaluation data but do not have a schoolwide assessment system for improving instructional effectiveness and student learning. Some teachers use assessment data to adjust whole class instruction but clear procedures and expectations for the use of assessment data to meet individual student needs are not evident.

Teachers at University Prep regularly gather assessment and evaluation data and administer a wide variety of assessments. Teachers primarily use state practice exams and their own teacher-created exams. The school does not utilize a schoolwide assessment system for improving instructional effectiveness and student learning. The teachers are expected to analyze assessment data using their own analytic tools rather than a common template. Based on a visit team review, the teachers' analyses of achievement data do not allow for comparison across teachers or show trends from one exam to another.

The teachers generally create exams based on the objectives they teach during a given time period. School leaders provide little oversight to ensure the alignment of these exams to state standards. Additionally, teachers do not coordinate with other teachers on exam development. The director of instruction indicated that some teachers provide him with copies of the exams prior to administration, but others do not.

Teachers report not having clear procedures for using assessment data for adjusting whole-class instruction or for meeting individual student needs. Teachers indicate that if an assessment shows that students lack mastery of a particular skill, they integrate the skill into future lessons. However, the teachers also report not receiving training on how to use data to adjust their instruction. The director of instruction indicates that teachers have the flexibility to adjust instruction based on assessment data but that there is no formal process for them to document the changes. He also indicates that teachers are expected to use formative assessments to ensure that students will have mastered material prior to taking end-of-unit assessments.

Curriculum (Benchmark 1.C)

University Prep provides teachers with multiple curriculum resources that purport to be aligned to state standards. Teachers are given wide discretion over the implementation of the curriculum with limited evidence of oversight. Teachers have access to a wide variety of instructional materials but these materials are not sufficient to meet the needs of all students.

Teachers have access to school-created, Expeditionary Learning, and commercial curriculum resources. Some of these resources are standards based, while others focus more broadly on big ideas, which do not show an obvious connection to state standards. Some teachers report that they have the discretion to determine if the commercial programs are aligned to standards. The director of instruction reports that teachers can deviate from the curriculum pacing if they address the big ideas derived from the state standards. He attempts to check in on teachers' pacing, but not all

teachers submit lesson plans for his review, and given the time constraints, he only reviews some of those he has received.

Teachers have latitude for the implementation of the curriculum with limited evidence of oversight. They have access to a variety of instructional materials but these materials are limited and not sufficient to meet the needs of all students.

School-developed resources show a focus on inquiry based learning and the incorporation of higher order thinking skills into lessons. Interviewed teachers indicate that this approach is infused into the curriculum. For example, using an inquiry-based-learning approach, students explore the causes of poverty, and how constitutional rights are applied to the classroom setting.

Pedagogy (Benchmark 1.D)

Effective instruction is not evident in most of the observed classrooms. While teachers are implementing the school's lesson plan format (the school's "instructional format"), most lessons do not attain their stated objectives. In some classes student-to-student academic interaction and higher order thinking take place. In other classes, instruction lacks scaffolding and further exploration of the topics resulting in a lack of student engagement and difficulty in their fully comprehending instructional materials.

The teachers are well versed in the lesson plan format that the school leadership has designated for all lessons. While teachers' lesson plans follow a variety of approaches, they all include the major components of the prescribed format. Nevertheless, the visiting evaluators observed that lesson plan implementation is not always sufficient to meet the plans' stated objectives. Many objectives are activity-based rather than reflective of skill mastery. As a result, teachers are not able to fully evaluate what skills students have mastered during a day's lesson. Sample objectives include: "I can take research notes using a note taking process." and "Students will begin writing their own body paragraphs."

Some teachers are able to engage students in collaborative learning and other activities. Students interact with each other academically in some classes and higher order thinking skills are evident. For example, in a science classroom students apply their knowledge through a student debate and respond to each other's comments critically evaluating evidence.

In other classes, instruction lacks scaffolding and deeper exploration of the topics. In one class, the teacher explains the task and then tells students to complete the assignment without any guided practice or checks for understanding. Most students do not participate in the activity. When an observer asked some students why they are not attempting to do the work, two answer, "I don't get it". Another teacher, unsuccessfully, pleads with students for their attention, saying, "Nothing is being done to you, so why are you giving me grief?"

Many classrooms have multiple teachers, however they are often unclear about their roles and do not use their time effectively. One section in each grade has two teachers to serve students with Individualized Education Programs. Additionally, teachers push into other classes when their schedule allows with the intended purpose of providing both support to struggling students and to the lead teachers. However, in observed classes most push-in teachers are not active participants in the lessons and do not improve the lead teacher's effectiveness. The director of instruction indicates that

one of his current priorities is working with the push-in teachers on their management skills so that they can help to maintain orderly classrooms, thus enabling the lead teacher to focus on instruction.

Instructional Leadership (Benchmark 1.E)

Resources devoted to instructional leadership are not sufficient to support the instructional program. Instructional leaders accurately identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses; however, they do not have the time or resources to consistently address teacher needs. In the six months since opening, the school has not yet systematically evaluated teachers on their performance.

The school's leadership, consisting of the principal and director of instruction, spend much of their time focused on non-instructional issues. They are aware that this structure is insufficient to guide the school's instructional program and are beginning to take steps to alleviate some of the workload through a more efficient deployment of staff. They are also planning to hire additional staff for the coming school year. Nevertheless, their support to teachers is currently insufficient.

School leaders instill high expectations for the implementation of the school's inquiry-based instructional program, demonstrating a commitment to the development of higher order thinking skills in students. Leaders and teachers repeatedly discuss the importance of inquiry-based learning and its integration into every lesson; the school's lesson plan format also encouraged this approach. The director of instruction reports that "We are focused on quality instruction and student-centered learning. We intend to develop weekly professional learning communities to instill a solid understanding of inquiry-based learning as it relates to the state standards using the instructional frame." Teachers echo this sentiment with one teacher stating: "I live for a student-driven, discovery-driven approach and the director of instruction strongly encourages it."

Instructional leaders accurately identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses. The school's leadership conducts focused walks as well as informal observations of teachers. Their comments, both written and in discussions with evaluation team members, largely mirror the team's observation of the teaching staff's strengths and weaknesses. However, because of a lack of available resources, the director of instruction acknowledges that he does not work with teachers as much as he has hoped. One teacher reports that "There have not been structured follow-ups in offering support; the director of instruction has been in and out of my room without giving me systematic evaluations, just quick notes in passing."

In the six months since opening, the school has not yet systematically evaluated teachers on their performance. The principal has developed a draft rubric he plans to use to evaluate teachers. The evaluation is to be based on a cumulative evaluation of a teacher's performance over the course of the year, rather than a single evaluation. At the time of the visit, the rubric has not yet been shared with teachers, and teachers are unaware of the evaluation criteria. However, teachers are cognizant of the standard for determining end-of-year bonuses based upon student achievement.

At-Risk Students (Benchmark 1.F)

University prep devotes adequate resources for serving at-risk students, but has not developed an effective system for meeting their needs. The school does not have clear criteria for assigning students to specific academic intervention services and for the content of instruction in these remediation classes. The school has not provided training for general education and special education teachers on how to serve special education, ELL, and academically struggling students.

While the school devotes adequate resources to its significant at-risk population, it lacks a systematic approach for identifying and serving the needs of these students. There are no clear criteria, procedures or guidelines for how students are assigned to specific Academic Intervention Services (AIS) or the content of its remediation classes. One teacher reports that there is no specific program or expectations for the AIS program.

The local district provides resource room and supplementary services to the school, while school staff provides special education services in Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) classrooms. CTT teachers report making a variety of instructional modifications as specified in student IEPs, including modifying objectives and asking more concrete questions. However, the teachers are both new to the profession, and in observed lessons did not demonstrate a full grasp of their job responsibilities and how to best meet the needs of students. The resource room teacher reports that she concentrates on enabling students to reach their Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals. She indicates that she is not a school employee, works part-time and does not coordinate with classroom teachers or participate in any schoolwide professional development.

Shortly before the evaluation visit, the school made changes to the services for academically struggling students in response to student population needs and observed weaknesses in the program. However, despite these reported changes, the school has neither a written procedure for academic intervention nor an established practice among teachers for coordinating academic intervention strategies. While the program revision has led to additional remedial and academic support services for students, much of it is simply structured homework assistance. The school has solicited student tutoring support from an external service provider, but there is little coordination between the school and the provider to ensure effective delivery of services.

The school leadership acknowledges that the school does not have sufficient curriculum materials to serve at-risk students. The school does not have a reading specialist on staff or a remedial reading program. The director of instruction indicates that one reason the school has not yet purchased a remedial program is that the leadership has wanted first to gain a better understanding of students' reading levels to make sure that the selected program meets student needs.

The school's ELL students receive tutoring through AIS. The director of instruction has monitored them closely to ensure their social integration into the school. Notwithstanding these efforts, the school has no ELL specific resources available to teachers to meet the needs of these students.

Student Order and Discipline (Benchmark 1.G)

University Prep is generally safe, but transitions are not orderly. Students are periodically unsupervised in common areas of the school. Most observed teachers lack effective classroom management techniques which detract from student learning. The school has recently begun to develop a discipline system but it is not clearly defined or consistently applied.

Student order and discipline is a critical area for growth among University Prep staff as they struggle to establish and maintain an orderly learning environment. Students run and yell in the hallways during transitions and students appear in common areas such as the gym at times when they should be in class.

Most observed teachers lack effective classroom management techniques, permitting misbehavior to interfere with student learning. Teachers do not generally have a consistent set of procedures to manage student behavior; they give repeated warnings to students without follow-through or consequence. When teachers use a classroom management procedure such as checking off students who are misbehaving, they lack the skill to use the admonishments effectively. Additionally, while most observed classes have multiple adults in the classroom, the additional staff does not provide significant management support to the lead teacher. The director of instruction reports that he is working with these push-in teachers on their management skills in hopes of limiting the number of large infractions so that he can spend less time on discipline issues. The school has not offered professional development on classroom management to enable teachers to develop their own classroom management routines and skills. Teachers report a desire for such training.

While the school has a parent and student handbook, the school's suspension policy lacks clear criteria. The school has a detention system which is supposed to be enforced after three infractions, but it is not implemented in observed classes. It also has a Student Support Center for students who are removed from class for any reason. While significant resources are devoted to staffing the Student Support Center, its effectiveness is limited by the lack of behavior remediation strategies. Students are generally sent there until they calm down but staff does not work with the students to prevent repetition of the infractions or to help them gain insight into the cause of the misbehavior.

Professional Development (Benchmark 1.H)

While University Prep has adopted a lesson planning format it does not provide sufficient professional development to meet teachers' other instructional needs or develop their classroom management skills. The lack of professional development also limits teachers' ability to implement inquiry-based learning as envisioned by school leadership.

Expeditionary Learning (EL) staff provides several workshops with well-developed agendas. School leaders spend significant time training teachers to use the school's desired planning format. Teachers express knowledge of the format and follow it consistently in their classes. While the EL staff presents interesting topics and the planning format is useful, they represent a limited professional development agenda.

Daily staff meetings are intended to serve as a time for professional development; however, they usually focus on administrative issues, behavior follow-up and other daily concerns. The school has plans to utilize video and other tools to ensure that professional development affects teacher practice; however, leaders have not yet used them because of time and resource constraints. Video has only been used once as a PD tool. It is mostly used for observation rather than as a coaching tool.

Organizational Capacity (Benchmark 2.C)

University Prep has an established organizational structure and staff procedures that allow it to carry out its academic program. The organizational structure supports distinct lines of accountability although the roles and responsibilities of school leaders have changed over time. The school is competently managed.

Increased operational responsibilities have occupied most of the principal's time. Therefore, the director of instruction has spent more time than intended on discipline, limiting his effectiveness as

an instructional leader. The school is competently managed; teachers report having sufficient resources and not having to worry about operational issues.

Many teachers have significant teaching experience in other schools. The principal reports that the school has a rigorous recruitment process which includes the submission of a sample lesson to ensure that applicants' teaching philosophy matches the school's mission. The school has sufficient enrollment with a wait list and uses a variety of recruitment efforts to ensure a diverse student population. Because the school's facility is only adequate for this year and 2011-12, the school leader and board are exploring a variety of options, including expanding the current facility or acquiring another one.

Governance (Benchmark 2.D-E)

The school board works effectively to initiate the school program and provide oversight to the total educational program. The board has adequate structures and procedures with which to govern the school and recognizes its responsibility as the charter holder. The members have a clear sense of current priorities given the school's developmental stage. The board has systems to hold school leaders accountable for student achievement, although an evaluation procedure has not yet been fully implemented.

The board has adequate structures and procedures with which to govern the school, including finance, academics and accountability committees. The members understand both their roles as holders of the school charter. They are also fully aware of the school's accountability plan goals. They have provided training for school staff on the accountability plan, indicating an understanding of its importance. They regularly receive a large amount of data from the school leader, including student achievement, discipline, and enrollment data.

The board's current priorities are monitoring student performance and preparing for expansion in coming years. The academic and accountability committees have developed criteria and a process for evaluating the school leader and are in the beginning stages of implementing it. The principal's contract includes a variety of goals to hold him accountable, including student achievement goals which are tied to his bonus.

Conduct of the Visit

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the school evaluation visit at University Preparatory Charter School for Young Men on February 3, 2011. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit:

Maya Lagana (Team leader) is an Accountability Analyst for the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. She is responsible for providing technical support related to school accountability plans and the reporting and analysis of individual school performance. Ms. Lagana joined the Institute as an Analyst for School Evaluation. In this position she scheduled ongoing school evaluation visits, communicated with school team members and administrative staff regarding site visit logistics and requirements, developed and disseminated RFP documents, and coordinated the recruitment and work of consultants. Prior to joining the Institute, Ms. Lagana served as a research intern at New Visions for Public Schools in New York City, where she performed data analysis on school performance and conducted research on a variety of educational issues. In 2008, Ms. Lagana was a Project Manager at Boston Collegiate Charter School in Boston, Massachusetts,

where she was responsible for creating and implementing a data organization system as well as analyzing data. During that same year, Ms. Lagana also helped to craft grant proposals and formulate a strategic fundraising plan for Achievement First in Brooklyn, New York. Previously, Ms. Lagana was an Assessment Specialist at the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence in Washington D.C., where she helped to develop teacher certification exams and analyzed item level statistics and demographics information. In addition to her extensive background as an analyst, Ms. Lagana also has experience as a third grade classroom teacher in New York City. Ms. Lagana received her Master of Public Administration degree in Policy Analysis from New York University's Wagner School for Public Service, her Masters of Education degree from Mercy College and her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Carleton College.

Sean Fitzsimons is a Program Analyst for the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. He supports SUNY's new charter school application process by addressing questions from applicants, reviewing and analyzing new applications, coordinating the review of applications to establish new charter schools by Institute staff and external educational experts, and drafting application summaries and other related documents. Mr. Fitzsimons most recently served as Chair of the Social Studies Department at Manassas Park Middle School in Manassas Park, Virginia where he guided curriculum sequencing and pacing to align the school's courses with state standards, trained and mentored faculty, and designed and implemented courses in Civics and Economics, American Studies, American History, and World Geography. He also taught remedial reading curriculum to special education students and English language learners. Prior to his service at Manassas Park Middle School, Mr. Fitzsimons was an Administrative and Research Assistant at the Embassy of Japan in Washington, D.C. In addition, Mr. Fitzsimons was a visiting instructor at Shanghai Teachers University in Shanghai, China, where he designed and taught curriculum for English language learners. Mr. Fitzsimons received his Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction and Secondary Education Social Studies from George Mason University and his Bachelor of Arts degrees in International Relations and Political Science from the State University of New York, College at Geneseo.

Ron Miller, Ph. D. is Vice President for Accountability at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. He has worked for the Institute since September 2002. Dr. Miller began his career teaching for seven years in New York City public schools and then joined the central offices of the New York City Department of Education, where he conducted evaluative research and organizational studies. As Director of the Office of School Planning and Accountability, he served as the educational accountability officer for the Department. In that capacity, he developed school accountability reports for all city schools and coordinated staff development on the use of the reports for district administrators in the high school and community school districts. In addition, he worked with school leaders to develop their capacity to use data for school improvement. In this role he developed PASS, a school performance review system which was adopted in 600 city schools. Dr. Miller has regularly presented papers at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association and has served as Adjunct Assistant Professor at Teachers College Columbia University and Pace University. He holds an A.B. degree from the University of California at Berkeley and a Ph.D. in Applied Anthropology from Columbia University.

Paul Wright, Ed.D. was recently appointed Director of School Evaluation at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Dr. Wright will be responsible for the Institute's extensive school evaluation program, overseeing and in many cases leading school evaluation visits by Institute staff as well as coordinating the independent evaluations done on the Institute's behalf.

Dr. Wright will lead ongoing efforts to refine the Institute's nationally regarded evaluation protocols and reporting tools; including oversight of the production of the Institute's school evaluation reports which provide valuable information to schools and the public about school progress. He will also coordinate internal staff training on school evaluation. Prior to joining the Institute, Dr. Wright directed Quality Education Partnership, Inc., a national consulting network that conducted evaluations of traditional and charter schools and created strategic management plans for school improvement. The former Development Director for School Design and Strategic Planning of Mesa Public Schools in Arizona, Dr. Wright developed unique schools of choice serving a wide spectrum of learners in coordination with Mesa Public Schools. Dr. Wright also served as Vice President for Student Services at the Leona Group, an Educational Management Organization providing educational services to students throughout Arizona. Dr. Wright received his Ed.D. and his M. Ed. from Arizona State University and his B.A. in Psychology from the State University of New York at Albany.

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>
State University Renewal Benchmark 1B Use of Assessment Data	<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.
State University Renewal Benchmark 1C Curriculum	<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 expected to achieve as specified by New York State standards and performance indicators; the school has carefully analyzed all curriculum resources (including commercial

	<p>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;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 modeling, to teachers in their classrooms; 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

	<p>teachers;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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

	<p>mission, curriculum, and instructional programs;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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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	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>State University Renewal Benchmarks</u>
State University Renewal Benchmark 2A Mission & Key Design Elements	<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.
State University Renewal Benchmark 2B Parents & Students	<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; • parents with students enrolled keep their children enrolled year-to-year; and • the school maintains a high rate of daily student attendance.
State University Renewal Benchmark 2C Organizational Capacity	<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

	<p>its mission and Accountability Plan goals, and a process for their regular review and revision;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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, 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; 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;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
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