



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

South Buffalo Charter School

School Evaluation Report 2006-2007

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
INTRODUCTION.....	2
Background on Charter Schools and the State University	2
The State University Trustees' Oversight Process.....	2
Inspection Visits and Reports	3
The Renewal Cycle and the Timing of School Inspection Visits	5
The Present Report.....	5
Keeping this Report in Context.....	6
SCHOOL DESCRIPTION	8
SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS EVALUATION VISIT	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	2
PREVIOUS YEARS' SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW.....	4
School Performance Summary for English Language Arts	6
School Performance Summary for Mathematics	7
BENCHMARK ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE.....	8
Instructional Leadership.....	8
Use of Assessment Data.....	9
Curriculum	10
Quality of Instruction	11
At-Risk Students	12
Governance	13
CONDUCT OF THE VISIT	16

INTRODUCTION

Background on Charter Schools and the State University

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

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

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

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

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

The State University Trustees’ Oversight Process

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

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

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

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

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

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

Inspection Visits and Reports¹

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

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

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

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

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

This inspection report includes a review of academic attainment and improvement based on the school's performance on state and other assessments. The School Performance Review provides an evaluation of the school's academic achievement in the context of Renewal Benchmark 1A. Because of the timing of the release of state assessment data, the review is based on test results from the school year preceding the date of the school visit upon which the evidence for the Qualitative Education Benchmarks is based..³ The narrative refers to School Performance Summaries which follow the School Performance Review section. These one page summaries present a synopsis of the Accountability Plan outcome measures in ELA and mathematics and the school's performance against these measures over a three year time period:⁴

- Measure 1 (absolute) shows the grade level and aggregate performance on the state test of both all students and students enrolled in at least their second year.
- Measure 2 (absolute) presents the school's Performance Index (PI) measured against the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set by the state's NCLB accountability system. The PI is derived by adding together the percentage of students at Levels 2 and above and the percentage at Levels 3 and above.

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

³ Not all schools will have state test results because the state only administers tests in certain grades: state ELA and math tests are administered to grades 3-8, science tests in grades 4 and 8, and social studies tests in grades 5 and 8.

⁴ In indicating whether a performance measure has been met, the summaries only present a strict, narrow accounting; they do not show whether the school came close to meeting a measure or the relative weight of each measure for gauging student progress.

- Measure 3 (comparative) compares the performance of charter school students enrolled in at least their second year to all students in the same tested grades in the local school district. For instance, a grades 5-8 charter school would compare only its grades 6-8 results to the same tested grades in the district because students in its 5th grade were only in their first year at the charter school.
- Measure 4 (comparative) compares the actual overall performance of the school to the predicted level of performance of similar schools statewide using a regression analysis based on free lunch statistics. The Effect Size is a statistical measure calculated by dividing the difference between the actual and predicted outcomes by the standard deviation difference.
- Measure 5 (value added) shows both the number of grade level cohorts that achieved their target as well as the overall performance of all cohort students combined. If the baseline is above 50 NCE, then the target is an increase of any amount.

The Renewal Cycle and the Timing of School Inspection Visits

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

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

The Present Report

The information contained within this report is the result of evidence obtaining during the Institute's visit to the school conducted in the spring of the school's second year of instruction of its first or second charter term. In addition to this introduction, the report includes a brief description of the school, conclusions and analysis from the present visit, the Renewal Benchmarks, and, finally, data on the visit, including identities of the school inspectors and the date of the visit.

The report reflects the observations and findings from the one-day inspection visit conducted typically by a two- to four-member team comprised of Institute staff, and, in some cases, outside experts. Consistent with the Institute's evaluation process throughout the life of the charter, Institute visitors seek evidence of effectiveness in key areas: the academic success of the school including teaching and learning (curriculum, instruction and assessment) and the effectiveness and viability of the school as an organization, including such items as board operations and student order and discipline. Issues regarding compliance with state and federal laws and regulations may be noted (and subsequently addressed), and where the Institute finds serious deficiencies in particular relating to student health and safety it may take additional and immediate action; however, monitoring

compliance is not the principal purpose of the visit. The same is true with issues pertaining to the fiscal soundness of the school. Evaluation visits typically include an interview with the school board, the school leader, classroom visitations, in addition to the review of other school-based documents.

Keeping this Report in Context

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

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

Readers should also keep in mind the inherent limitations of a one-day visit, which provides only a snap-shot of the school on visit day. While the Institute is confident that the majority of its observations are valid, in that they reflect an underlying reality about the school's academic and organizational structures, they are not perfect or error-free.

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

While there is no one rating that the Institute gives as a result of a single-day visit, it is important to note that where the inspection team identifies area after area with not just room for improvement but significant and severe deficiencies, and few, if any, countervailing strengths, the difficulty that the

school may have in presenting a compelling case for renewal is likely to be substantially increased and this fact may well be noted. Conversely, where the inspection team finds that strengths outnumber weaknesses in both quantity and quality, the school is likely to be better positioned to build a strong case for renewal. So, too, this fact may be noted.

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

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

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

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

South Buffalo Charter School (“South Buffalo”) was approved by the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York in January 2000 and the New York Board of Regents on April 4th of that same year. South Buffalo opened in September 2000 with an enrollment of 220 students in Kindergarten through 4th grades. The school added one grade per year from 2001-02 through 2004-05, and enrolled 641 students in the fall of 2006-07 in Kindergarten through 8th grades.

South Buffalo Charter School was granted a full-term, five-year charter renewal in February 2005 which included approval of the school’s request to add one additional section of grade 6 in 2006-07, grade 7 in 2007-08, and grade 8 in 2008-09, for a maximum enrollment of 657 students at the conclusion of its renewal charter. In February 2006 the school subsequently requested and was granted permission to add one section of grade 4 (25 students) and an additional 23 students overall per year for a maximum enrollment of 705 students by 2008-09. The school is located in a former Buffalo City School District elementary school at 2219 South Park Avenue in Buffalo, New York, which it initially leased and subsequently purchased in June 2002.

The school was chartered with a governance structure that included the school contracting with a management company⁵ to handle day-to-day functions of the school. On January 25, 2005, the South Buffalo Board of Trustees submitted an amendment to its original charter seeking a modification in its management structure. The school modified its charter to move from being managed by a management company to being self-managed and having responsibility for all school operations.

The mission of the South Buffalo Charter School is as follows:

The South Buffalo Charter School seeks to provide equitable opportunities for all students to attain academic achievement that links character education with a rigorous academic program and technology.

Key design elements as outlined in the school’s Application for Charter Renewal included:

- The basic principles of core virtues, a sound fundamental curriculum, enrichment opportunities and Individualized Learning Plans for all students;
- A clearly articulated code of conduct and a dress code;
- The use of the Terra Nova norm-referenced assessment, administered to students in the spring of each year;
- A rigorous academic core curriculum aligned to the new York State Learning Standards;
- A primary focus on English Language Arts, including a balanced literacy approach following the Scott Foresman model;
- Integration of technology into the core curriculum;
- Active parent involvement in their child’s education program; and
- A strong focus on integrating character education into the educational program.

⁵ Initially the school contracted with Beacon Education Management, which changed to Chancellor Beacon Academies and subsequently changed to Imagine Schools.

School Year

South Buffalo Charter School: 195 days

Buffalo City School District: 190 days

School Day

8:15 a.m. to 2:35 p.m. (Kindergarten)

8:15 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. (Grades 2 through 8)

Enrollment

	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment⁶	Original Chartered Grades	Revised Grades Served	Actual Grades Served	Complying
2000-01	234	234	220	K-4	K-4	K-4	YES
2001-02	432	305	304	K-5	K-5	K-5	YES
2002-03	504	383	384	K-6	K-6	K-6	YES
2003-04	576	458	458	K-7	K-7	K-7	YES
2004-05	648	533	531	K-8	K-8	K-8	YES
2005-06	582	582	598	K-8	K-8	K-8	YES
2006-07	643	643	641	K-8	K-8	K-8	YES
2007-08	680			K-8			
2008-09	705			K-8			
2009-10	705			K-8			

⁶ Actual enrollment per the Institute's Official Enrollment Table. Note that the NYSED 2004-05 School Report Card, upon which the Free and Reduced lunch figures are calculated cited the following enrollment totals: 2002-03: 383; 2003-04: 469; 2004-05: 551. The NYSED 2005-06 database cited an enrollment of 585 students.

	2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006	
Race/Ethnicity	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.
American Indian, Alaskan, Asian, or Pacific Islander	11	2.9%	19	4.1%	20	3.6%	19	3.2%
Black (Not Hispanic)	64	16.7%	66	14.1%	76	13.8%	83	14.2%
Hispanic	20	5.2%	25	5.3%	31	5.6%	45	7.7%
White	288	75.2%	359	76.5%	424	77.0%	438	74.9%

Source: NYSED 2004-05 Report Card (2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05), NYSED Database (2005-06)

	2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006	
Free/Reduced Lunch	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.
Eligible for Free Lunch	151	39.4%	205	43.7%	258	46.8%	312	53.3%
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	117	30.6%	131	27.9%	149	27.0%	145	24.8%

Source: NYSED 2004-05 Report Card (2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05), NYSED Database (2005-06)

School Charter History

Charter Year	School Year	Year of Operation	Evaluation Visit	Feedback to School	Other Actions Taken
Original Charter 1 st Year	2000-01	1 st	YES	Prior Action Letter, End-of-Year Evaluation Report	
Original Charter 2 nd Year	2001-02	2 nd	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	School granted permission to decrease enrollment limits
Original Charter 3 rd Year	2002-03	3 rd	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	
Original Charter 4 th Year	2003-04	4 th	NO		
Original Charter 5 th Year	2004-05	5 th	YES	Summary of Findings and Recommendations	Board of Trustees ended management contract. School granted full renewal of 5 years.
Renewed Charter 1 st Year	2005-06	6 th	NO		Request and approval to increase enrollment limits.
Renewed Charter 2 nd Year	2006-07	7 th	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS EVALUATION VISIT

In February of 2005, South Buffalo Charter School (“South Buffalo”) was granted a full-term five year renewal. Prior to making this recommendation to the Trustees, the Charter Schools Institute conducted a renewal visit of the school during the fall of 2004. At that time, school inspectors observed classrooms, met with administrators and board members, and interviewed teachers. Based upon evidence collected at the time of the visit, the Institute issued several conclusions in its report to the State University Trustees, the key points of which are summarized below.

South Buffalo met most of its outcome measures in English Language Arts and mathematics; where it did not, the school had generally made meaningful and consistent progress toward its goals. The report noted that over the term of its charter, the school provided instruction in grades Kindergarten through six that was generally competent, purposeful and explicit. In the lower grades, the school had established an orderly, disciplined environment where children felt safe and which promoted effective instruction.

The report noted that, as classroom instruction in grades seven and eight was at times insufficiently challenging, the school did not provide the academic rigor envisioned in its charter. Moreover, the school had yet to build a culture at its highest grades that consistently valued scholarly excellence. Since 2004-2005 was the first year the school had enrolled eighth graders, no quantitative data on student performance was available at the time of renewal. Drawing on qualitative data, however, the report indicated that “the school’s program at that level is sufficient and maturing into a program likely to be as strong as that in the Kindergarten through fifth grade.”

The report stated that the school had a stable, committed, and capable Board of Trustees that had provided sound governance during the term of the charter. Students and parents appeared satisfied with the school. Students praised its instructional clarity and orderly atmosphere, and parents cited strong communication from the school and individual attention provided to each child as reasons for the school’s success.

The school was in strong financial condition, and over the life of its charter, the Board had provided effective financial oversight.

The school provided a reasonable and appropriate five-year fiscal plan for the term of the future charter. The Board was aware of and was attending to changes in its oversight role as it moved from using a management company to its own internal business administration.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the present visit to the South Buffalo Charter School on March 29, 2007. Inspectors visited classrooms, reviewed documents and interviewed instructional and administrative staff. Each of their conclusions is summarized below. The evidence base and further analysis is contained in the Benchmark Analysis and Evidence section, which follows.

Academic Attainment and Improvement

The school has experienced a small decline in performance from the previous year in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Moreover, students in grades seven and eight are not performing as well as students in lower grades. The school appears to be meeting its goal in science and coming close to its goal in social studies, although comparison data were not available.

Instructional Leadership

The six top administrators at South Buffalo Charter School are all relatively new to the school. The school director reported that one of his main challenges as a leader was to develop the capacity of the leadership team to work together, and for the team to build a rapport with the school's instructional staff. As part of this foundational work, the school has developed a document, "*South Buffalo Charter School Annual Goals*," which outlines five strategic goals and requisite outcomes, resources and timelines. The effective implementation of resources towards achieving these goals, however, is not yet clear.

Use of Assessment Data

The school leadership uses a variety of assessment measures to identify students in need of enhanced academic support, including receiving additional teacher support through Title 1, AIS (Academic Intervention Services), and after school remediation. With the exception of the Reading First Program, however, the school has no systematic way of using formal assessment data beyond grouping students according to ability levels. School leaders have identified this deficiency, but have yet to put into place structures that work towards data-driven instruction.

Curriculum

Since 2004, the school has devoted time and resources to planning and revising its curriculum binders. The school is currently in the process of furthering its development. However, the extent to which these processes are being effectively implemented remains unclear.

High Quality Instruction

Overall, and particularly in the lower grade classrooms, lessons were generally purposeful, learning objectives were clear, and students were responsive to learning. Of particular concern, and consistent with the renewal visit in 2005, school inspectors noted that the 7th and 8th grade instruction generally did not match the quality of academic rigor found in the lower grades.

Supporting Special Students

The school has a robust number of staff to support special education and at-risk students. Although the school benefits from additional staff in classrooms, it was not evident that the school has maximized these resources.

Governance

As has been true throughout the school's first charter, the Board continues to have a strong, diverse membership with a high level of commitment to the school. After being "hands on" for the first charter period, Board members reported that they are now anticipating "stepping back" a bit to allow the leadership of the school to take charge. It is not clear how the Board will evaluate and manage the instructional program in its new role.

PREVIOUS YEARS' SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The following review of academic attainment and improvement (Benchmark 1A) is based on assessment results and other data from the 2005-06 school year, although data is presented from the two previous years as well.

Summary: The school experienced a small decline in performance from 2004-05 to 2005-06. Moreover, students in 7th and 8th grades are not performing as well as students in lower grades. While the school is outperforming its local school district, it is only doing about the same as predicted in comparison to similar schools statewide. Although students are performing at about grade level on the Terra Nova, they did not for the most part make significant gains. The school appears to be making its goal in science and coming close to meeting its goal in social studies, although comparison data were not available.

English Language Arts: In absolute terms, 55 percent of students in 3rd -8th grades and enrolled in their second year scored at the proficient level on the state test in 2005-06 and the school achieved the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set by the state's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system. Students in the 7th and 8th grade performed at lower levels than students in lower grades. Overall the school outperformed the local school district by a large margin; it performed about the same as predicted in comparison to similar schools statewide. On its value added measure, only two out of seven cohorts achieved their targets on the Terra Nova; however, all but one cohort had an average Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) of 50 or above.

Mathematics: On its absolute measure, 62 percent of students in 3rd – 8th grades and enrolled in their second year scored at the proficient level on the state test in 2005-06 and the school achieved the AMO. Students in the 7th and 8th grades performed at lower levels than students in lower grades. Overall the school outperformed the local school district by a large margin; it performed about the same as predicted in comparison to similar schools statewide. On its value added measure, three out of seven cohorts achieved their targets on the Terra Nova; as with English language arts, all but one cohort had an average NCE of 50 or above.

Science: On the absolute measure, 93 percent of 4th grade students enrolled in at least their second year were proficient on the state test; 71 percent of 8th grade students were similarly proficient. Comparative data for the local school district were unavailable.

Social Studies: Of the students enrolled in at least their second year, 88 percent of 5th grade students and 58 percent of 8th grade students were proficient on the state test. Comparative data for the local school district were unavailable.

No Child Left Behind: The school is deemed to be in Good Standing under the state's NCLB Accountability system.

Optional Goals: According to the school's Accountability Plan Progress Report, the school's goal relative to parent satisfaction was met as demonstrated by high marks on the Parent Survey and a

student retention rate of 98 percent. The school also reported meeting its goal for average daily attendance. In addition, the school reports meeting its goals for legal compliance and fiscal soundness.

Note: The following two pages present School Performance Summaries that provide data addressing the required Accountability Plan outcome measures for ELA and mathematics and the school's performance against these measures. Please refer to the "Inspection Visits and Reports" section of the Introduction for full definitions of the measures used and details about the tables themselves.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

English Language Arts
South Buffalo Charter School



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

	2003-04 Grades Served: K-7			MET	2004-05 Grades Served: K-8			MET	2005-06 Grades Served: K-8			MET
ABSOLUTE MEASURES	All Students % (N)				All Students % (N)				All Students % (N)			
	Grades	2+ Years Students % (N)			Grades	2+ Years Students % (N)			Grades	2+ Years Students % (N)		
1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam.	4	68.6 (51)	67.4 (46)	NO	4	59.5 (79)	59.4 (64)	NO	3	57.5 (80)	57.4 (0)	
									4	65.8 (79)	58.3 (0)	
									5	62.5 (80)	62.6 (0)	
									6	62.0 (50)	62.4 (0)	
									7	45.8 (48)	46.7 (0)	
	8	(0)	(0)		8	42.9 (49)	45.2 (42)	NO	8	28.3 (46)	30.7 (0)	
									All	55.9 (383)	54.8 (0)	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.	PI				PI				PI			
	Grades	AMO			Grades	AMO			Grades	AMO		
	4	167	123	YES	4	156	131	YES	3-8	146	122	YES
	8		107		8	143	116	YES				
COMPARATIVE MEASURES	Comparison: (Buffalo City Schools)				Comparison: (Buffalo City Schools)				Comparison: (Buffalo City Schools)			
	Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District	
3. Each year the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State exam will be greater than that of students in the same tested grades in the local district.	4	67.4	34.3	YES	4	59.4	39.2	YES	3-8	54.8	30.1	YES
	8				8	45.2	26.1	YES				
4. Each year the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3).					Effect Size				Effect Size			
	Grades	Actual	Predicted		Grades	Actual	Predicted		N	Actual	Predicted	
	4	59.5	67.8	-0.62	NO	4	59.5	67.8	383	55.9	54.2	0.08
	8	42.9	39.2	0.20	NO	8	42.9	39.2				
VALUE ADDED MEASURE	Assessment: SAT-9				Assessment: SAT-9				Assessment: SAT-9			
	Grades	Cohorts Making Target			Grades	Cohorts Making Target			Grades	Cohorts Making Target		
5. Each grade level cohort will reduce by one half the difference between the previous year's baseline and 50 NCE on a norm referenced test or 75 percent proficient on the state exam.	1-7	3 of 7		NO	1-8	6 of 7		NO	1-8	2 of 7		NO
	N	Base	Target		N	Base	Target		N	Base	Target	
	276	51.8	51.9	50.7	345	51.2	51.3	55.4	376	52.6	52.7	52.3

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Mathematics

South Buffalo Charter School



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

	2003-04 Grades Served: K-7				MET	2004-05 Grades Served: K-8				MET	2005-06 Grades Served: K-8				MET
ABSOLUTE MEASURES	All Students % (N)		2+ Years Students % (N)		YES	All Students % (N)		2+ Years Students % (N)		YES	All Students % (N)		2+ Years Students % (N)		NO
	Grades		Grades			Grades		Grades			Grades		Grades		
1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam.	4	83.7 (49)	81.8 (44)			4	89.8 (78)	90.6 (64)			3	81.3 (80)	80.7 0		
											4	72.5 (80)	71.1 0		
											5	64.6 (82)	68.0 0		
											6	76.5 (51)	77.5 0		
											7	29.2 (48)	29.7 0		
	8	(0)	(0)			8	55.1 (49)	61.9 (26)	NO		8	18.6 (43)	18.4 0		
											All	61.7 (384)	62.1 0	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	YES	Grades	PI	AMO	YES	Grades	PI	AMO	YES			
	4	184	136		4	190	142		3-8	154	86				
	8		81		8	147	93								
COMPARATIVE MEASURES	Comparison: (Buffalo City Schools)					Comparison: (Buffalo City Schools)					Comparison: (Buffalo City Schools)				
3. Each year the percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 on the State exam will be greater than that of students in the same tested grades in the local district.	Grades	School	District	YES	Grades	School	District	YES	Grades	School	District	YES			
	4	81.8	62.5		4	90.6	66.5		3-8	62.1	28.6				
	8				8	61.9	24.3								
4. Each year the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3).						Effect Size					Effect Size				
	Grades Actual Predicted Size				YES	Grades Actual Predicted Size				YES					
	4	89.8	84.3	0.52		4	89.8	84.3	0.52						
	8	55.1	47.0	0.40	YES	8	55.1	47.0	0.40	YES	384	61.7	60.3	0.07	
VALUE ADDED MEASURE	Assessment: SAT-9					Assessment: SAT-9					Assessment: SAT-9				
5. Each grade level cohort will reduce by one half the difference between the previous year's baseline and 50 NCE on a norm referenced test or 75 percent proficient on the state exam.	Grades Cohorts Making Target:				NO	Grades Cohorts Making Target:				NO	Grades Cohorts Making Target:				NO
	1-7	6 of 7				1-8	5 of 7				1-8	3 of 7			
	N	Base	Target	Result		N	Base	Target	Result		N	Base	Target	Result	
	290	47.5	48.8	51.4		350	50.7	50.8	53.6		376	51.6	51.7	51.5	

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE

Instructional Leadership

The six top administrators at South Buffalo Charter School are all relatively new to the school. The school director and social worker both assumed their positions in the 2005-2006 school year, and the two assistant directors, the special services coordinator, and Reading First coordinator joined the school at the beginning of the 2006-07 school year. The school director reported that one of his main challenges as a leader was to develop the capacity of the leadership team to work together, and for the team to build rapport with the school's instructional staff. In particular, the director stated that he and his team are working to "build a foundation" from which to operate. As part of this foundational work, the school has developed a document, "**South Buffalo Charter School Annual Goals**," which outlines five strategic goals and requisite outcomes, resources and timelines. The five goals are for the school to:

- Improve the organizational system (teams, role definitions, leadership structures, and collaborations) to provide for the coordination of curriculum, assessment, and instruction among and between grades and disciplines;
- Develop and implement a systematic process that explicitly links curriculum standards, meaningful assessments, and instruction so that all learners acquire the enduring understandings, knowledge, and skills that they need to succeed;
- Redefine and recreate the learning environment (instructional arrangements, approaches, technologies, and resources) in ways that incorporate our emerging understanding of how students learn and how technology is changing the way they engage with the world;
- Increase parent communication and encourage parents to take a more active role in their child's education; and
- Increase director and board communications and relations.

Limited evidence collected during the one-day visit suggests that implementation structures are in developmental stages. For example, the school's director, assistant director, and special services coordinator said the school's leadership team is developing systematic ways to clinically supervise and support teachers. This would attend to Annual Goal one, "improve the organizational system (teams, role definitions, leadership structures, and collaborations) to provide for the coordination of curriculum, assessment, and instruction among and between grades and disciplines." The director stated that he and the two assistant directors share a divided caseload of teachers to formally evaluate and supervise throughout the year. More formal evaluations are based upon the Charlotte Danielson model of supervision. Both the director and the assistant director said that informal classroom visits are conducted by any of the administrators using a common feedback form. These informal visits do not necessarily follow caseload assignments, although the special services coordinator more closely supervises special education and Title 1 mathematics teachers. Despite this planned feedback structure, in practice, this system is not yet apparent to all teachers. For example, when asked which administrator was "assigned" to her, a teacher replied, "There's an administrator assigned to me? Really?"

Administrative feedback to teachers did not generally seem targeted to identifying and improving specific teaching skills. Feedback on teacher evaluations was extremely general, e.g.: “continue using best practices for student learning throughout all academic subjects,” “display student work throughout classrooms,” “allow students to speak the Spanish language more,” and “continue to plan lessons of this nature.” These comments do not provide teachers with useful and critical feedback or targeted suggestions for improving their practice.

The school also has in place several teacher mentors who assist teachers in Kindergarten through 6th grades plan lessons and locate resources. Lower school teachers reported finding mentors helpful and in “high demand.” One mentor stated that her role was not evaluative, but rather was to provide “positive feedback,” and being present to “listen” to teachers. This suggests that as with administrative feedback, mentor feedback is not critical or targeted towards improving specific teaching skills. Despite lower test scores and generally less rigorous instruction in the upper grades, there was no similar mentor support structure for teachers at the 7th and 8th grade levels.

Use of Assessment Data

The school leadership uses a variety of assessment measures, including TerraNova scores, state test results, and in the lower grades, the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) to identify students in need of enhanced academic support, including receiving additional teacher support through Title 1, AIS (Academic Intervention Services), and after school remediation. Inspection team members observed many lessons and classes during the visit where students were divided into groups focused on specific academic needs of students.

Despite these efforts, the school has no comprehensive assessment system. With the exception of the Reading First Program, however, the school has no systematic way of using formal assessment data beyond grouping students according to ability levels. School leaders have identified this deficiency, but have yet to put into place structures that work towards data-driven instruction.

Interviews with the Reading First Coordinator and coach suggest that teachers are supported in using the Reading First (“RF”) program for Kindergarten through 3rd grades. Students’ progress on the required assessments were visibly posted on color-coded data cards in the Reading First coordinator’s office. This display identified students’ progress and facilitated the identification of students who needed additional instructional intervention. Moreover, the coordinator reported that the assessment monitoring process has created a change in the way teachers view students’ progress. She said that previously teachers continued teaching unit by unit regardless of students’ understanding; now when a student is “not moving,” teachers “panic,” and show determination that they are “going to get them there.” A 3rd grade teacher discussed with one inspector how she used DIBELS, a Reading First assessment tool, to create student groups in her classroom.

At the time of the visit, the school had yet to use student assessment data to its fullest potential. The school’s director remarked that the school does not use assessment data “like we need to,” and that using assessment data “is one of our weak areas.” Evidence suggested that the school was relying on its teachers to develop this area for themselves. When interviewed, however, teachers were generally unaware of state test data such as the test item skill analysis issued by the state to accompany overall test results. Teachers rely on frequent, regular team meetings to informally monitor student progress and to evaluate the pacing of instruction. Teachers also use unit tests and quizzes and observe student activities to evaluate student performance, but this information is not systematically used to determine the effectiveness of the instructional program or to identify students for special interventions during the course of the school year. In one exceptional case, a teacher independently

collected data regarding his students' mastery of content skills. He "used questions from last year's state test" to create a quarterly assessment that he administered to his students in the middle of October to determine their level of mastery of concepts.

Across grade levels, classrooms displayed grade-specific, school developed writing rubrics. The school's assistant director stated that the school is currently developing "child friendly" rubrics. One set of rubrics would address subject-specific content and the other set of rubrics would address writing. Teachers were informed two weeks prior to the visit of this decision. At the time of the visit, it was unclear whether teachers were involved in this decision-making process or whether they understood the rationale or scope of rubric revision.

Curriculum

Since 2004, the school has devoted time and resources to planning and revising its curriculum, and the school is currently in the process of developing internal resources and processes to continue its development. However, it is currently unclear the extent to which these processes will be effectively implemented.

In 2005, South Buffalo Charter School terminated its contract with Imagine Schools (formerly Beacon Management Company), in part because the Beacon Lightpoints Curriculum did not align with the New York State curriculum standards. In the months before and after termination of the contract, the school devoted time and resources to planning and revising its curriculum to align with state standards. According to the school's assistant director, the school hired an external consultant to work with the staff in developing the school curriculum in the summers of 2005 and 2006. Going forward, the school is using internal resources and processes, including a curriculum council and department chair meetings, to "develop and implement a systematic process that explicitly links curriculum standards, meaningful assessments, and instruction so that all learners acquire the enduring understandings, knowledge, and skills that they need to succeed" (SBCS Annual Goals, Goal #2, p. 1).

The school has developed and revised curriculum binders, aligned to state standards, for most grades and core subject areas. However, the school has not yet developed curriculum guidelines that ensure consistency across subject and grade levels and that are useful to teachers in planning units and lessons. During the visit, the school provided curriculum binders for each subject area, divided by grade level. These binders did not use a consistent format, elements, or language to present the information to teachers. In particular, curriculum documents across content areas for Kindergarten through 4th grades tended to use one approach, while curriculum documents for 5th – 8th grades generally used another. This is but one example of the lack of a common understanding of what composes a curriculum.

Curriculum guides did not appear to be sufficient to guide teachers' planning and instruction. Generally speaking, the Kindergarten through 4th grade curriculum documents were void of information that would be useful to teachers and are not presented in teacher-friendly language. For example, they lacked reference to specific sequence or pacing ("Time to teach: October-May"). The documents identified which sub-standards teachers should address, but did not identify specific content or skills students should be learning. There were no specific references to unit assessments, although there was something called "task analysis for teaching unit: check against core performance indicators." In instances where the "task analysis" was more specific than "check against core performance indicators," inspectors noted that the "task analysis" did not always align with the focus of the unit. While some of the 5th through 8th grade curriculum documents adopted a

similar format to the Kindergarten through 4th grade documents, they generally utilized a format that was slightly more teacher-friendly. For example, they identified the focus of the unit, vocabulary, resources, student learning objectives, New York State standards, and content outline.

At the time of the visit, it was unclear to inspection team members the extent to which the school's internal curriculum resources and processes are being effectively implemented. For example, the assistant director stated that the school's Curriculum and Instruction Council—which included representatives from every grade level—meets regularly to examine and discuss curriculum standards and performance indicators for each grade level. However, a review of the Curriculum and Instruction Council binder provided by the school indicates that attendance at meetings is generally limited. Furthermore, meeting agendas and minutes do not appear to reflect that the council is actually a working group focused on “school-wide review and coordination of curriculum and instruction” (the stated purpose of the Council), but instead is a vehicle for members of the school's leadership team to give general updates about happenings around the school. In addition, the assistant director stated that the department chairs, representing the four core academic disciplines, meet regularly to discuss vertical alignment across grades, but it was unclear what products or processes resulted from these meetings.

The school currently uses the Scott Foresman text for mathematics, although the school director indicated that the school plans to adopt Everyday Mathematics for Kindergarten through 6th grades. It is unclear what mathematics approach will be chosen for 7th and 8th grades to create a “seamless math program.” In social studies, the school currently uses MacMillan/ McGraw-Hill in 5th and 6th grades and Prentice Hall in 7th and 8th grades. For 3rd through 6th grade science, the school uses Scott Foresman with kits, and for 7th and 8th grades, it uses McDougal-Littell. The assistant director reported that in the summer a consultant with expertise in education for the primary grade levels is scheduled to provide professional development for teachers in science.

South Buffalo uses the Scott Foresman reading series as the primary vehicle for supporting instruction in the area of English Language Arts, and supplements it with additional series of literature books. The assistant director and several teachers noted that the school is in the process of reviewing and selecting a school-wide writing program. The school presented the inspection team with a binder that contained materials for the possible writing programs that were under consideration, including some downloaded articles about a writing workshop from a website marketing materials on Step Up to Writing and 4-Square writing, and an article on 6 Traits of Writing. Although each resource provides strategies for teaching and assessing writing across disciplines and grades, it is unclear from the materials presented by the school whether any of the options, together or separately, will provide the school with a comprehensive writing program.

Quality of Instruction

Overall, and particularly in the lower grade classrooms, lessons were generally purposeful, learning objectives were clear, and students were responsive to learning. For example, in one classroom, students were participating in a math activity where they were instructed to complete as many math problems as possible in one minute. Problem sets appeared to be differentiated—one student was completing a worksheet involving primarily single-digit subtraction problems, while another was completing a worksheet on multiplication problems. Students were engaged and enthusiastic about the activity. In another classroom, the teacher had clearly posted a student learning objective and an essential question, a priority identified by the school's assistant director. Students listened attentively to the teachers' introduction to the lesson, and then began working in pairs on a reading comprehension activity prepared by the teacher. Another inspector observed a classroom review for a spelling test to be given the next day. When given instructions from the teacher, students quickly

and efficiently created a circle around the room. The teacher read a word, each student gave a letter until the word was finished, then the next student said “end” and the following students said “out.” That final student sat down. All students participated, including struggling students. All students were engaged with the review, and seemed to be spelling silently, because they wanted to know who would be “out.” Moreover, there was no stigma for getting “out” because most of the “outs” were the luck of the draw, not because of mistakes.

When noting less effective lessons, particularly but not exclusively in the upper grades, inspection team members cited a lack of higher order thinking activities and low teacher expectations of students’ participation and engagement in class. For example, in one classroom, students were watching a video, with no expectation that they take notes on what they were watching. Students were instructed to organize their binders while the video was playing. In another classroom, in which several students were giving a presentation, there appeared to be no expectation set by the teacher that the classmates should be serving as audience members for the presenters, or that they might learn something from the presentation. Not only were there no lesson objectives posted on the board, the presenters were not demonstrating any presentation skills – they read directly off the poster, had hands in pockets, were mumbling and talking with their backs to the audience. Moreover, student audience members were not attentive to the presentation and instead engaged in other activities like working on a laptop, doodling, and chatting with neighbors.

At-Risk Students

The school has a robust number of staff to support at-risk students and students with special education needs, including paraprofessionals, special education teachers, and Title 1 teachers. Additional staff in classrooms allows for at-risk students to be included in whole class instruction, and allows students to have access to smaller “flexible student groupings.” This structure has the benefit of keeping Title 1 and students needing special education services or programs in the mainstream and enables special services teachers to reinforce the lessons being taught. During the inspection visit, team members observed multiple classes where whole group instruction was followed by teachers working with smaller groups.

It was not yet evident, however, that the use of support staff had been maximized to support and improve instruction. There did not seem to be a systematic structure in place to define what each person’s role was within the classroom, how these varying roles would be monitored, and what modifications might be made to improve student learning. As a result, often, there was extensive downtime for support staff that did not provide active instruction during whole group lessons.

The school also has a variety of classroom models to support academically challenged students, including multi-age classrooms that pool students in need of services, inclusion classrooms, and classrooms where students are pushed-in/pulled-out. The school’s special services coordinator, who was newly hired this year, said that one of her priorities for next year is to shift instruction to a single inclusion model. Additionally, the school’s director and special services coordinator indicated that the school’s multi-age classrooms lack formal criteria for student placement and the school plans on discontinuing this portion of their model in future years. The school is encouraged to review its charter agreement prior to modifying the structure of the school’s educational program; a request to revise the school’s charter may be necessary. Feel free to consult the Institute for additional clarification on this matter.

Governance

As has been true throughout the school's first charter, the school's board of trustees continues to have a strong, diverse membership and high level of commitment to the school. It has been successful in ensuring financial viability, as evidenced by the fact that the school has obtained and maintained a variety of investments, including the building facility. The board is currently looking for a facility with ample space to create a true middle school (referred to as 6th through 8th grades) and separate elementary school. The board also seems to be well aware of the need for a seamless mathematics program and writing program, and identified those as areas in which they intend on making decisions in the near future.

After being "hands on" for the first charter period, board members reported that they are now anticipating "stepping back" a bit to allow the leadership of the school to take charge. It is not yet clear how the board will evaluate and manage the instructional program in its new role. For example, both the board and school director reported that the school has recently developed assessment protocols to evaluate school administrators; however, it is not clear from the protocols provided by the school what person or persons will be administering and analyzing these assessments. It is also not evident what additional systems or protocols the board will use to assess the quality of the program.

APPENDIX: RENEWAL BENCHMARKS USED DURING THE VISIT

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

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

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the Second-Year Visit to South Buffalo Charter School on Thursday, March 27, 2007. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit:

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

Ron Miller, Ph.D., is the Vice President for Accountability at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Dr. Miller was the Educational Accountability Officer for the New York City Department of Education. After teaching grades three through five in New York City public schools for seven years, he joined the central offices of the New York City schools, where he conducted evaluative research and organizational studies. As Director of the Office of School Planning and Accountability, he worked with school leaders to develop their capacity to use data for school improvement. In this capacity he developed PASS, a school performance review system which was adopted in 600 city schools. Dr. Miller holds an AB degree from the University of California at Berkeley and a Ph.D. in Applied Anthropology from Columbia University.

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

In addition, the Institute was pleased to have the following consultants join the school visit team:

Corinne McKamey, Ed.D (Consulting Writer), is an independent educational consultant and has experiences across many facets of education. For the past 15 years, Dr. McKamey has worked in a variety of roles in urban public schools, including science teacher; curriculum developer; school developer; teacher educator; and school evaluator. As a teacher education clinical faculty member at Trinity and Harvard Universities, she has served as a mentor teacher, university supervisor, and curriculum developer. Corinne has also been a research assistant for several university research projects, including Project ASSERT (Assessing Strengths and Supporting Affective Resistance in Teaching), and Harvard PACE (Projects in Active Cultural Engagement). She was a co-chair of the Harvard Educational Review, and has published several articles and a book entitled, *To be a teacher: Voices from the classroom* (1995). Her dissertation focused on aspects of caring learning communities in a high school serving a diverse immigrant population. Dr. McKamey received a Bachelor of Science degree from Cornell University, and a Doctor of Education degree from Harvard University.

Lisa Simon Cohen is an independent educational consultant and offers more than twenty-five years of commitment to effective, efficient public education. Ms. Simon Cohen has been a classroom teacher, trained, and coached teachers, and has a specialty in Direct Instruction. She holds an undergraduate degree in elementary education from the University of Michigan and a master's degree in special education from the University of Oregon. Over the past ten years, Cohen's experiences in the charter school arena included board relations and internal communications for a national education management organization. Later, she oversaw and conducted field research for a book about the first decade of private management of public schools, "Learning on the Job: When Business Takes on Public Schools," by Steven F. Wilson, Harvard University Press, 2006. Cohen benefits from conducting in-depth observations at more than 35 charter schools nationwide, individual schools and those working with charter management organizations. Ms. Cohen's consulting work focuses on strengthening curricular implementations and improving school climate. Her clients include individual schools, education management organizations, and charter school authorizers.

Hillary Johnson, Ed.D., is an independent educational consultant with 15 years experience as a teacher, staff developer and researcher. Dr. Johnson has conducted over 10 school inspections with the Charter Schools Institute, primarily as a consulting writer. Past projects include providing professional development in reading and writing instruction, analyzing the alignment between standards and curriculum, and designing video-based professional development to support principals in developing instructional monitoring skills. She began her career as a Spanish bilingual teacher and a Reading Recovery teacher in Oakland CA. Subsequently, she served as a Literacy Content Coach and Whole School Change Coach to several Boston Public Schools. Dr. Johnson earned her B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, her M.Ed. from Harvard University and her Doctorate of Education from Harvard University with a concentration through its Urban Superintendents Program.

Scott McCue is the Founding Head of School at Boston Preparatory Charter Public School. Mr. McCue coordinated the work of the school's Founding Group, beginning in 2002. This group won one of five charters awarded to 25 applicant groups in the 2002-2003 Massachusetts charter application cycle. Since the school's opening, Mr. McCue has hired and managed staff, raised over \$750,000 from private sources, and overseen the creation of the school's educational and operational systems. In the school's opening years, BPCPS students have outperformed their peers across the

city and state on standardized tests. Prior to founding BPCPS, Mr. McCue served as the Dean of Students and as History Department Chair at the Academy of the Pacific Rim Charter School. Mr. McCue holds a B.A. in Social Studies from Harvard College and a M.A. in Teaching Social Studies from Columbia Teachers College.