

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

HARLEM SUCCESS ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL 4

Visit Date
April 12-13, 2010



CONDUCTED BY CLASS MEASURES
ON BEHALF OF THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE



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EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Harlem Success Academy Charter School 4 (HSA 4) was visited by an external school inspection team from Class Measures on behalf of the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the Institute) on April 12 and 13, 2010. The school opened in 2008 and at the time of the visit served 245 students in grades kindergarten through 2.

The school administers formative and summative assessments in all core academic areas that are aligned to the school's defined curriculum and the state standards. All but minor in-class quizzes are uniform for all schools in the Success Charter Network (the Network). The assessment process, including the development of assessments such as benchmark assessments, scoring and analysis of data, distribution of data to stakeholders, and storage of data is managed by the Network for all HSA schools. Rubrics are available to ensure inter-rater reliability when evaluating and grading writing assessments and teachers sometimes meet collaboratively to score writing assessments together for consistency. The school monitors student data to evaluate progress towards school goals. Data is also used to identify students for placement in the Response to Intervention (RTI) program and to monitor their progress in that program.

HSA 4 has a well documented curriculum in place that is aligned to state standards for all subject areas with the exception of art, which is being developed. The curriculum was found by the inspection team to be both vertically and horizontally aligned. The curriculum documents are readily available on the Network shared server and teachers use the curriculum to design lessons, which are reviewed by the principal. Curricular programs in place are research-based and the curriculum is developed and periodically reviewed at the Network level through collaboration between the Network staff and HSA school principals.

The team found high quality instruction in place in classes throughout the school. Teachers demonstrated solid content knowledge and grade level competency in all classes observed. Lesson plans were aligned to the curriculum and state frameworks. Differentiated instruction was observed in classrooms through the Success for All (SFA) reading and RTI programs. Students were actively engaged and participated in lesson activities. Teachers used instructional strategies to activate student learning and were effective in incorporating technology into their lesson design.

Instructional leadership at HSA 4 was strong and leaders held high expectations for teachers and students. Teachers received abundant professional development, including a three to four week summer orientation. Professional development was targeted on improving instructional practices and behavioral management. Teachers were observed and evaluated regularly and received high quality formative feedback. Teachers developed goals for their professional growth at the beginning of the year in collaboration with the principal. Teachers had online access to other teachers' lesson plans and videotaped lessons delivered by other teachers in the Network.

Services for at-risk students were provided primarily through the RTI program and the special education department. HSA 4 effectively used the school's assessments to identify and monitor students in the RTI program. The special education staff collaborated with classroom teachers on interventions and

differentiated instruction for students in the classroom and teams of teachers regularly evaluated the interventions at place within the school.

HSA 4 has created a well documented discipline program that is implemented consistently school wide. All members of the school community are well informed about the program. Numerous habits and rituals were observed during classroom observations by the team that prepare students to learn, help them move efficiently through transitions, and help to bring behavior back under control in a positive manner. All stakeholders reported that the school was safe.

Professional development provided to teaching staff is focused on improving instruction within the school and developing a strong culture of continuous improvement. Teachers receive three to four weeks of professional development during an orientation session prior to the beginning of school. In addition, teachers receive six to eight full days as well as two hours each Wednesday of additional professional development. Selection of topics for the sessions is informed by school goals, student performance data, and teacher requests.

The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter. Stakeholders were familiar with the mission. The school has not identified any non-academic goals for 2008-2014.

According to information from the parent focus group and survey data reviewed by the team, parents and students were determined to be satisfied with the education their child was receiving at HSA 4. They also expressed satisfaction with the communication process, including staff responsiveness to parent questions and concerns, and the academic program. The school is fully enrolled and receives far more applications for enrollment than it has open spaces for new students each year.

The school has sufficient organizational capacity to manage the school efficiently. The Network provides substantial support to the school in non-instructional areas and in management. Areas of support include student and teacher recruitment, assessment and data support, financial management, and other areas. This support is designed to allow the principal to focus primarily on instructional leadership. An additional grade and additional students will be added next year and the Network has plans to increase support to the school through, for example, the addition of a business manager to address additional needs resulting from these changes.

The team reviewed a variety of documents, including board meeting minutes and bylaws. An interview was also conducted with one of the ten board members. The board was found to be in compliance with New York State public meeting laws. The principal has not been evaluated formally by the board nor has a formal process for the principal evaluation process been developed. The board has not conducted a self-evaluation. Board members receive copious data on student data and progress towards school goals.

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION¹

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	October 26, 2007
Date Initial Charter Approved by: Operation of Law	February 8, 2008
School Opening Date	August, 2008

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades At Location	District
2008-2009	160 East 120 th St. New York, NY	All	New York City CSD 4
2009-Present	240 West 113 th St. New York, NY	All	New York City CSD 3

Partner Organizations

	Partner Name	Partner Type	Dates of Service
Current Partner	Success Charter Network	Charter Management Organization	2007 - present

Current Mission Statement

The mission of Harlem Success Academy Charter School 4 is to provide New York City elementary students, particularly those from economically-disadvantaged neighborhoods, with the knowledge, skills, character, and disposition to meet and exceed New York State standards and give them the resources to lead and succeed in school, college, and life.

Current Key Design Elements

• A focus on student achievement;
• Research-based, results-driven curriculum;
• Monthly assessments in all core subjects;
• Extended school day and year;
• School leaders with the power to lead;
• Highly-qualified, highly-trained staff; and
• Strong school culture, including reinforcement of ACTION principles (Agency, Curiosity, Try and Try, Integrity, Others, and No Shortcuts).

¹ The information in this section was provided by the SUNY Charters Schools Institute.

School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Charter Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ²	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2008-09	155		177	K-1	K-1	188
2009-10	245		245	K-2	K-2	185

Student Demographics

	2008-09		2009-10	
	Percent of School Enrollment ³	Percent of NYC CSD 3 Enrollment ⁴	Percent of School Enrollment ⁵	Percent of NYC CSD 3 Enrollment ⁶
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	0%	0%	
Black or African American	80%	32%	78%	
Hispanic	18%	37%	19%	
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	2%	7%	0%	
White	0%	23%	0%	
Multiracial	0%	0%	2%	
Special Populations				
Students with Disabilities ⁷	11%		12%	
Limited English Proficient	1%	10%	3%	
Free/Reduced Lunch				
Eligible for Free Lunch	64%	47%	58%	
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	14%	8%	16%	

² 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.)

³ Source: These statistics were provided by the school.

⁴ Source: 2008-09 New York State Report Cards.

⁵ Source: These statistics were provided by the school as it is not yet available publicly.

⁶ Aggregated District data not yet available for 2009-10 school year.

⁷ New York State Education Department does not report special education data. Statistics given were provided by the school.

Current Board of Trustees⁸

Board Member Name	Term	Position/Committees
Svetlana Artamonova	2009-2012	Trustee
Trena Drayton	2008-2011	Trustee
Kian Ghazi	2008-2011	Treasurer
Mark Goldey	2009-2012	Secretary
Stirling Levy	2008-2011	Trustee
John Petry	2008-2010	Trustee
Lance Rosen	2008-2010	Chair
John Sabat	2008-2011	Vice Chair
Udai Krishan Tambar	2008-2010	Trustee
Katrina Young	2009-2010	Parent Representative

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2008-09 to present (2009-10)	Mitch Center, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2008-09	First Year Visit	Institute	April 28, 2009

Information current as of 5/18/2010

⁸ Source: Institute Board Records.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?

Benchmark 1B: Use of Assessment Data

Assessments at HSA 4 were found to be purposely aligned to the school's curriculum framework and learning standards as well as the state performance standards. HSA 4 administered formative and summative assessments designed to evaluate and monitor student academic progress. Literacy assessments included the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment, administered five times a year to all students at the school. The Roots assessment was administered to students in grades 1 and 2 and grade 1 students were administered the Steppingstones assessment for reading. For mathematics, students were administered the assessments contained within the Investigations in Mathematics curriculum as well as mathematics benchmark assessments developed by the Network. In science, the school administered Network developed benchmark assessments. HSA 4 also administered assessments intended to measure how well students were expected to perform on upcoming state assessments, and grade 2 students are assessed three times using assessments aligned to state tests in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The Terra Nova assessment was given to all students twice annually as a summative assessment of student progress in ELA and mathematics.

The Network managed the assessment development, data analysis, and data distribution processes. Assessments were developed at the Network level with input from the school principals and the administration of assessments within the Network was identical for all schools. Data was provided to teachers on the shared network drive and in spreadsheet format. The student achievement coordinator and school leaders provided training to teachers in groups and individually on data access, analysis, and use on a formal and informal basis. The student achievement coordinator manages all information related to student assessment and special education services, oversees faculty summer training and professional development, manages and synthesizes data from all data meetings and assessments, and distributes, collects, and insures assessment materials have been completed correctly.

The Network and school provided supports to ensure consistent assessment practices. Network rubrics and forums for collaborative scoring were provided for some open response writing assessments. Teachers met following the receipt of benchmark and other assessment data approximately every eight weeks to identify students for inclusion in the RTI program and to assess student progress towards their individual learning goals developed through that program. Students may stay on their current RTI plan following this assessment review, have their individual goals modified, place out of the program, or be evaluated for more intensive services.

The Network developed and monitored school goals, which are based on its Accountability Plan goals. The board received data on individual, class level and whole school academic progress and monitored progress towards school goals. Parents are informed of student progress through report cards that are issued five times per year. Parents do not receive data on school progress related to the academic goals.

Benchmark 1C: Curriculum

HSA 4 replicated the curriculum framework for each grade and core academic subject found in all Network schools. As a result, it was aligned to state standards and performance indicators. The Network provided written curriculum documentation for all curricular areas except art, which is under development. Teachers have access to curricular documentation through the Network server. When asked how the school curriculum differed from other Network schools, the principal reported that it differed only in teacher style and delivery. Through classroom observations the team confirmed that the curriculum in place at HSA 4 adhered to the Network curriculum.

SFA formed the foundation of the HSA literacy and ELA curriculum. SFA was complemented by the addition of a balanced literacy and guided reading program. The leadership resident reported that the school had made a targeted effort to bolster the writing program in grade 1. She noted that the team would observe a substantial number of writing projects during classroom visits, which was confirmed through observations. The school used the Investigations in Mathematics program in all grades. The social studies and science programs were developed by the Network, organized around the state frameworks' key ideas, and included performance indicators, themes, and student learning objectives. Science was taught five days per week, art twice a week, dance twice a week, and chess once each week.

Teachers reported that they carefully analyzed curriculum resources during grade level meetings. They also reported that the Network's literacy coach requested teacher input and feedback on the implementation of the reading program. In addition, teachers stated that they were asked to provide specific feedback to the Network's "head of data" following unit assessments.

The curriculum was organized, cohesive, and aligned from grade to grade. Visits to two first grade classrooms revealed teachers were at the same point in the curriculum. Both teachers were reviewing material that would be on an upcoming test. Although one teacher used a Smartboard and Senteo student response tools while the second teacher used a paper practice test, the content of the lessons were aligned to one another. Teachers reported that they worked closely as a team at each grade level and maintained common pacing charts. Teachers stated this helped to keep the curriculum cohesive, organized, and aligned. The Network also provided to the team with assessment calendars for core curricular areas for all Network schools. Teachers stated that having access to these calendars helped to keep the curriculum cohesive, organized, and aligned. Teachers said they had access to all curriculum documents through the Network server and were fully aware of the curricula they were responsible to teach.

Teachers stated that they developed common lesson plans during common grade level planning time. They reported that these lesson plans were based on the required curriculum, and that they were submitted to the principal for review. The team reviewed examples of detailed feedback teachers received regarding lesson plans. Teachers valued the availability of lesson plans created by other teachers at Network schools on the Network server and stated that their availability provided a constant source of ideas and best practices.

The teachers reported that they were involved in the on-going review and revision of the curriculum through feedback provided to the school student achievement coordinator and to the coaches at the Network level. However, major curricular decisions and curriculum mapping occurred collaboratively by school leaders.

The curriculum was found by the team to support the school mission in preparing students to lead and succeed in school, college, and life. The focus on writing in first grade, the use of balanced literacy and

guided reading approach in combination with the SFA, and the use of the Investigations in Mathematics program provided a rigorous academic program. Coupled with an effective RTI support system, the curriculum is accessible to all students.

Benchmark 1D: Pedagogy

The team found that high quality instruction was evident in classes throughout the school. Teachers demonstrated solid subject matter knowledge and grade level competency in all classes. In particular, teachers were observed to be using Smartboards skillfully and were adept at integrating technology into lessons. This occurred in both core academic classes as well as in enrichment classes. In art, for example, the teacher had created a video showing her own print-making in order to model steps for a grade 1 project.

Instruction was found through observations to be rigorous and focused on learning objectives. Lessons were well-planned and pacing was generally effective. In two of twelve classes observed, teachers less skilled in classroom management struggled to keep children focused on the lesson. In the remaining ten classrooms, teachers were skillful in using a variety of instructional and behavior management techniques and the team observed children were challenged and on task. Learning time was maximized and teachers and students generally made smooth transitions using music, chants, and pre-alerts. Teachers not only kept students on pace, but checked with them to see if they needed more time.

Lesson plans and instruction were closely aligned to the school's curriculum framework and the state standards and performance indicators. Teachers shared lesson plans across grade levels and supported each other in developing creative and differentiated lesson plans. All teachers are provided with laptops and had access to lesson plans developed by other teachers across the Network through the use of the shared Network drive. Teachers told the team that they found this to be a valuable resource.

Instruction was differentiated not only through the SFA reading and RTI programs, but also through targeted grouping for skill building, which was provided to some students as a pull-out intervention during social studies. Some students also had individual behavioral plans. All classes had substantial libraries of leveled reading books. Teachers used strategies such as paired learning, partner discussions, and buddy helpers. Students also stated that they could ask a friend for help during class.

The students were actively engaged. They responded enthusiastically and respectfully to teacher questioning. They actively moved about the room, choosing appropriate materials and working well with partners. One class of first grade students used Senteo student response remotes for interactive learning when the teacher used a Smartboard. Hallways and classrooms were observed to have a rich variety of projects on display based on real life experiences.

The team observed teachers using instructional strategies such as asking challenging questions, checking for understanding, and asking students to "get into thinking position." Teachers provided models for students to develop their own strategies to solve problems. For example, in a non-fiction writing class in grade 1, the teacher used her own writing sample to model how her students could focus writing strategies. In a mathematics class, the teacher challenged students to more quickly solve a three number addition problem. Students were then asked to explain why they made their pair choices. Teachers were observed continually checking for understanding by asking students to explain their thinking, show thumbs-up or thumbs-down as a check for understanding, or share their answers with a partner. Students said "they got smarter by listening to their teachers" and that they would recommend that friends come to this school to "get smarter." Parents all agreed that their children were challenged.

Benchmark 1E: Instructional Leadership

There was strong instructional leadership in place at HSA 4 and leaders had set high expectations for both staff and students. There also was an environment of reflective practice that focused all staff on continuously improving instruction.

The principal stated that he established high expectations for student achievement by starting with the adults in the school community. For example, during the orientation weeks before school opens, the staff developed an understanding of the behavioral and academic standards and then set achievement goals. After these standards and goals were developed they were shared with parents and students. The principal used the example of sharing a leveled reader that was entry level for most students and then showing parents a leveled reader that demonstrated the growth level expectations for a student.

The principal said that setting standards for teachers begins with a rigorous application process for new teacher candidates. Finding teachers who are committed to improvement was a key focus of the process. Candidates were questioned on how they learn from feedback, and were asked questions designed to probe an applicant's willingness to be reflective and become part of a continuously improving school environment. The three to four weeks of orientation also focused on the mission and the school cultural practices expected of teachers. Teachers interviewed by the team said that the orientation also applied the ACTION (Agency, Curiosity, Try and Try, Integrity, Others, and No Shortcuts) values to adult behavior in order to model these values for students. Teachers told the team that expectations for them are high and that high expectations for teachers was in the best interest of the children.

There was a comprehensive teacher evaluation system in place based on the rubric developed by Kim Marshall. School leadership had established a culture of reflective practice at the school that provided input into the evaluation process. Teachers told the team that they are observed by the principal, the leadership resident, and the Network's literacy coach and that the feedback they received was clear and immediate. The formal evaluation process began when teachers set goals with the principal at the beginning of the school year. These included instructional, school culture, and student achievement goals. The principal observed teachers and gives feedback throughout the year. In January, there is a mid-year meeting to review goals followed by a summative evaluation at the end of the year. The team reviewed examples of goal setting and feedback materials. Feedback was thoughtful, detailed and connected to teacher goals.

Teachers stated that feedback was linked to their individual goals as well as their classroom practice, and helped them improve instruction. Teachers were encouraged to observe other teacher's lessons and to videotape their own lessons to post on EduTube. EduTube is a web-based program in use throughout the Network where teachers could post and view model lessons. Teachers also had allocated professional development time where they were able to observe instruction in other Network schools. The principal modeled and co-taught lessons to help teachers with their practice.

The principal told the team that HSA 4 was working to meet the needs of students through ongoing monitoring of the achievement data from the internal assessments. They reviewed this data at the grade level, the leader level and at the network level to monitor the quality of the academic program as it applied to student achievement, making changes as necessary.

The principal stated that everyone in the school was aware of the school goals and that staff worked together as a team to achieve goals and celebrate successes. These school developed goals were described as having expectations that exceed those identified in the Accountability Plan, and were characterized by a Network interviewee as exceeding the expectations of the Accountability Plan goals.

As an example, a goal at the kindergarten level was that 100 percent of scholars grow one grade level or more in reading, writing, and arithmetic. School goals were developed for all Network schools through a collaborative effort between Network personnel and school principals. The teachers said that the principal had built an atmosphere of trust and flexibility and that everyone worked hard in the best interest of students.

Benchmark 1F: At-Risk Students

HSA 4 used the RTI model to support at-risk students, as did all of the schools in the Network. Teachers described, and documentation provided by the school supported, a clearly defined screening procedure for identifying at-risk students. At the time of the visit, 12 percent of the school, or 29 students, received special education services and 3 percent, or 7 students, had been identified as limited English proficient and received services.

Similar to other schools in the network, approximately every eight weeks all HSA 4 teachers met to review student performance data and to assign at-risk students to RTI tiers; interventions were also evaluated to judge their effectiveness. Teachers and the student achievement coordinator also stated that if students appeared to be having difficulty at any time during the eight week period, they could be included in the RTI program. At the RTI assessment meetings, differentiation plans were developed. They were provided to parents during conferences and parents were required to sign them.

Classroom teachers delivered Tier 1 interventions, and a full time tutor was available to provide Tier 2 services to first graders. Associate teachers provided Tier 2 services to kindergarteners and second graders. English Language Learners (ELL) were identified through a home language assessment survey, and also received assistance through the RTI program. Special education services were provided by a part-time special educator who was going to be placed in a full-time position at the end of April. Related services such as counseling, speech, and occupational therapy were provided by either part-time staff or staff shared among the Network schools. Teachers reported receiving students' Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and reviewing these with the special educator. The special educator also met regularly with classroom teachers at grade level meetings. Sufficient time for collaboration was provided for special educators and classroom teachers; this usually occurred during weekly grade level meetings and the bi-monthly RTI meetings.

Teachers reported that they had developed strategies for supporting students at grade level meetings, through consultation with the special educator, and with the assistance of the student achievement coordinator and Network coaches. The team observed a variety of classroom based strategies, including selective grouping, partnered learning, buddy helpers (one youngster needed to "take five" to calm down and he was invited to select a friend to do this with), re-directing, selective pre-alerts, and individual behavioral enforcement charts.

Teachers reported they received sufficient training and support to provide effective services to at-risk learners. They particularly cited the value of access to the Network shared drive as a resource for ideas and modeling of effective practices.

Benchmark 1G: Student Order and Discipline

HSA 4 has established a culture of learning and scholarship. The school had a documented discipline policy in place that provided clear expectations for behavior and identified the consequences for infractions to the policy. Parents signed a contract with the school upon enrollment of their child that indicated their responsibility in meeting school expectations.

Teachers used many behavioral techniques in the classroom such as red, yellow, and green color charts that helped students monitor their own behavior by moving a clothes pin with their name to the color representative of their behavior. Chants and rhymes to redirect students were also in use. The team observed that staff members moved to eye level with children to discuss behavior or a problem the child was having in class. In classrooms observed by the team, some teachers were more skilled in the use of behavioral management techniques than others. For example, some teachers followed through with consequences for inappropriate behavior rather than just warning students and not following through,

All stakeholders interviewed by the team believed that HSA 4 was a safe school. Students interviewed by the team stated that the “rules” kept them safe. Teachers said that students understand the culture of respect at the school and listen and respond because expectations are clear.

Benchmark 1H: Professional Development

HSA 4 allocated time and resources to provide sufficient professional development for its staff. According to the principal and teachers interviewed by the team, there are three to four weeks of professional development provided to the teaching staff before school begins for the year. Part of the orientation professional development is provided to all Network schools. The remainder is delivered at the individual schools. Students are dismissed early on Wednesday afternoons so teachers can engage in three hours of professional development. There was an additional six to eight full days of professional development provided during the school year. Teachers interviewed said they could request to go to a conference and that school and Network leadership were supportive to teachers seeking to attend outside conferences. For example, the HSA 4 the student achievement coordinator was being sent to a conference in Nashville for additional training in RTI. The principal received professional development through the Network and cited recent workshops he had attended led by Jon Saphier and Uncommon Schools.

Each teacher sets professional goals in collaboration with the principal at the beginning of the year. According to teachers interviewed, professional development support was available to help them attain their goals. Teachers also told the team that professional development was differentiated to meet individual teacher needs. They said they had a choice in which professional development programs they attended. Teachers told the team that the topics were responsive to their needs and provided the following example. Teachers had requested instruction in different ways of creating strategy groups within their classrooms. The literacy coach came in the next Wednesday to offer help on this topic at the afternoon professional development session.

According to documents reviewed by the team, professional development was aligned with the school’s academic and cultural goals. There have been professional development sessions on such topics as behavioral management, school action values, lesson planning and delivery, writing, and looking at student work. Needs for professional development were identified through analysis of school and teacher goals, classroom observations and teacher requests. Teachers evaluated each session and provided feedback.

Renewal Question 2

Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?

Benchmark 2A: Mission and Key Design Elements

The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in the school description section of this report. All stakeholders interviewed were able to relate the major points of the mission. The school promotes academic success through a program that is aligned with the state academic standards. Students are taught behavioral and interpersonal skills that will allow them to be successful in life.

The school was found to have implemented all of its key design elements designed to support the mission. This included:

- Data is used extensively to monitor and support student progress. The main student intervention, RTI, used data to place and monitor students in the program through the use of periodic benchmark and other assessments.
- Two of the primary curricular programs were strongly research based. SFA and Investigations in Mathematics are research based and others also have foundation in research.
- The school had developed a package that included both formative and summative assessments designed to monitor student progress. Assessments in place at the school included the Terra Nova, and assessments designed by the Network and administered to all schools in the Network, which included subject area assessments. All assessments and data, with the exception of minor quizzes, are managed by the Network. The frequency of assessments in each core area meets the once monthly measure defined by the design elements.
- Students at HSA 4 were found to have a longer school day and attended school for more days than students in the non-charter NYC public schools.
- The Network supported the principal by taking over many of his managerial and academic responsibilities not related to instructional leadership. This allowed the principal to be a focused instructional leader who could spend more time on developing a strong instructional program and assist teachers in their growth through frequent observations and feedback.
- HSA 4 teachers were competent and highly qualified in their grade level and subject areas. Significant amount of professional development were provided to staff on a regular basis. The content of these sessions was focused on instructional practices and the development of a strong culture within the school.
- The ACTION principles listed in the school description of the report were in use within the school with all stakeholders found to be aware of them. These principles were used to unify the community and promote learning and culture within the school at HSA 4.

The school has no identified non-academic goals in its Accountability Plan for 2008-2014.

Benchmark 2B: Parents and Students

Evaluation of parent satisfaction at HSA 4 occurred formally through the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) School Survey; 50 percent of parents responded. Ninety-nine percent of respondents in 2008-2009 were satisfied or very satisfied with the education their child had received and agreed or strongly agreed that the school had high expectations for their child. Ninety-eight percent of responding parents felt that the school communicated well with them.

Team interviews with parents, guardians, and students validated these survey results. The parents also stated that they were very satisfied with the variety of ways teachers communicated with them about student progress. They said the teacher and other member of the school community contact them via email, text messages, phone, and weekly newsletters. They stated that they also had the opportunity to talk with teachers each day at student pick-up time. They mentioned that what set this school apart from other public schools was the professionalism of all of the staff, and their willingness “to go above and beyond.”

Students voiced satisfaction with their teachers and with their academic program. They said that while they worked hard, “they were getting smarter.” They wanted friends to come to their school so that they could get smarter too. Students could explain the ACTION values listed in the school description section of the report, and stated that the rules of the school made them feel safe. All students knew that the mission of the school included preparation and success for college, and they articulated specific colleges they were interested in attending.

Parents listed a number of ways in which the school was attentive to their concerns and ways in which complaints were addressed. They cited teacher and administrator accessibility by phone as important. They felt welcomed in the school community. They stated that the school even provided a computer for parent use in the office so that they could access the internet or complete parent association business. One parent mentioned that members of the school administration and staff “work with you as a family” and cited a recent occasion where special accommodations were made for her children during a family illness. When parents asked if there were areas for improvement, they mentioned they would like the addition of a world language, and they wished to have a building dedicated to their school alone, although they understood the prohibitive costs associated with that.

A large number of parents sought entrance to the HSA schools. According to school documents, approximately 3,600 applications were received for the 475 seats available in the 2009-2010 school year in all of the HSA schools. Parents said that they were committed to keeping their children in the school and were hoping that younger siblings would also be admitted. Parents interviewed stated they enrolled their children after family members had reported positive experiences at other HSA schools.

Benchmark 2C: Organizational Capacity

HSA 4 is located in New York City school district 3 on floors 1-3 of a building that houses two other public schools. One school is P.S. 241, a K-8 school with an enrollment of 235 students. The second school is the Opportunity Charter School (OCS), a grade 6-12 school with an enrollment of approximately 400 students. Over 50 percent of the students at OCS receive special education services. HSA 4 opened in August 2008 serving 177 students in kindergarten through grade 1. The school added grade 2 last year and now serves 245 students. According to the principal of HSA 4, the ages of the students who attend the three schools sharing the building range in age from 4 to 19. The principal

indicated he had a good relationship with the other schools and school leaders meet at the beginning of the year to develop operational parameters and schedules.

Grade 3 will be added to HSA 4 next year and student enrollment and staff will increase, according to the principal. As a result of this increase in enrollment, the school will hire approximately 5-10 additional staff. To deal with the anticipated increased workload, the principal is considering implementing a distributed leadership model, which may include assigning teacher leaders for each grade. The principal stated the school hires a business manager as additional support for the next school year, and the Network assists in the hiring process.

According to documentation provided to the team, the school's academic personnel included three kindergarten teachers (one also teaches dance), four first grade teachers, three second grade teachers, two science teachers, a special education teacher, an art teacher, a temporary dance teacher (associate teacher), and an athletics coach. In addition, the school has a principal and a leadership resident. Leadership residents act as quasi assistant principals and essentially are principals in training for new Network schools. Like other Network schools, HSA 4 teaching staff includes associate teachers. Associate teachers, typically 2-3 for each grade level according to an interviewee, are sometimes hired as grade level teachers the following school year when the school adds a grade. Having associate teachers at the school permits the school to replace teachers with experienced teachers who are familiar with school and Network practices. According to information provided to the team, all but one teacher at HSA 4 was certified and had attained Highly Qualified status.

The current partner of HSA 4 is the Success Charter Network (the Network), a charter management organization that now manages four schools in Harlem and will be opening three more schools in the 2010-2011 school year, according to Network interviewees. The Network has implemented in all of its schools a consistent academic program and management structure that has clear lines of authority and responsibility. Each school has a student achievement coordinator, a school affairs coordinator, and a school operations manager. The team was provided with and reviewed Network teacher, associate teacher, specialty teacher, principal, leadership resident, school operations manager, school affairs coordinator, and student achievement coordinator job descriptions.

The duties and responsibilities associated with the HSA model are described in job descriptions and in the Academic and Business Services Agreement By and Between The Success Charter Network, Inc. and the Harlem Success Academy Charter School 4. The Network has similar service agreements with all of the schools it manages. Interviewees described, and a review of the service agreement confirmed, an organizational structure that separates school business operations from academics in a collaborative environment. Functions such as managing payroll, designing student recruitment and enrollment procedures, managing purchasing, developing a budget, and managing human resource functions are centralized at the Network. The Network also employs data and accountability, literacy, mathematics, and professional development personnel to support academics at the schools. The primary purpose of this bifurcated structure is to allow academic personnel, particularly the principal, to focus on teaching, learning, and improving student achievement rather than day to day school management issues, according to both school and Network interviewees.

The Network and the school collaborate on human resource issues, including the hiring process. The Network manages the recruiting, selection, and hiring and firing process of support and academic personnel in collaboration with school principals. The school principal hires and evaluates all academic staff. The principal of HSA 4 indicated that he participated in telephone interviews with teachers and observed model lessons of prospective candidates. The principal emphasized that during the interview

process a focus is put on the importance of improvement and candidates are asked about how they have themselves improved and changed.

According to the principal, he evaluates the teachers, although this year the leadership resident did assist with some grade 1 evaluations. He indicated he uses many dipsticks during the evaluation process, including evaluating how the teacher plans lessons and questions students. He uses a modified version of the Kim Marshall evaluation tool and requires the teacher to develop three instructional goals. He also aligns the evaluation to the school's academic goals. He meets with teachers during the year and goals can be modified. According to the principal, as a result of the evaluation process, one teacher and the principal developed an improvement plan and one teacher was let go.

All students are admitted through a lottery, which the Network holds each April, and the Network received 7,000 applications for admission to all Harlem Success schools for next year. The Network organizes the lottery and the student recruitment campaign. The principal stated that some of the methods used to recruit students included posting information flyers in multiple languages, and advertisements in the New York Times and the New York Daily News. A Network interviewee stated that families were encouraged to apply to all Harlem Success schools and applicants are put on the waitlists of the schools where they submit applications.

The school's management and board communicate with parents, school staff, and students. The school provides a weekly action flyer to parents, and the principal indicated a process is in place to deal with the concerns of parents. He indicated that some parents bring all of their concerns to him, but many communicate with the school affairs coordinator. He also attends board meetings, explains student achievement data, and answers questions from board members. Members of the parent focus group stated they receive regular telephone calls, emails, flyers, and a weekly newsletter. The board communicates primarily through board meetings. The board holds six public board meetings, which follow the New York State public meeting laws; three of the meetings are joint meetings with all HSA board followed individual board meetings and three are held at the school. There is a parent representative on the board and the school has an active parent council.

The principal had set expectations and standards with student, parents, and teachers to accomplish the mission and meet academic goals. For example, the principal had set long and short-term goals with teachers that are aligned with school academic and cultural goals. In addition, the school holds a three to four week orientation session for new staff prior to the school year. At the beginning of the school year he discusses with parents what he expects from their children in terms of academics and behavior, including the requirement of the students to be on time and wearing the uniform. The principal also stated he communicates with the students the first few days of school about the importance of appropriate behavior. According to a Network interviewee, Accountability Plan goals are the same for all HSA schools, and data is collected centrally for all schools.

Benchmark 2D: Board Oversight

The school and the Network each have a board of trustees, albeit they are separate and have distinct roles and responsibilities. According to the school's by-laws provided to the team, the number of trustees shall be not less than five or more than 11. The powers of the board are described in the by-laws and are similar among all Network schools. Examples of specific powers include electing and removing trustees; acquiring real or personal property; carrying out the business of the charter school; and managing and controlling the affairs and activities of the school.

Only one member of the board was available for the interview by the team. Board membership included a parent representative and the board member interviewed described the backgrounds and expertise of board members and articulated the importance of having board members with experience in fundraising, politics, finance, and business. He was an attorney with a background in government/education. He stated that he felt that all board members had a foundational commitment to education and that their backgrounds provided added value to the school. He gave an example of the expertise many of the members had in reviewing detailed financial spreadsheets and that this ability to review detailed financial data was an asset when reviewing student achievement data. The team determined that the board members had the appropriate expertise to provide rigorous oversight of the school.

When queried to explain the role of and need for individual school boards given the Network management model, he explained that the local school board was responsible for the students in the building, as well as for assuring the school had the necessary finances, staff, and resources to run the school. He noted that in the Network model, the school outsourced non-pedagogical services to the Network so it could focus on academic services. He indicated the Network, while providing certain specific support to schools, was involved more at the big picture level, such as allocating resources to individual schools or deciding whether to open additional schools.

He indicated that board members understood the mission of the school and received packets of student achievement data prior to each board meeting. The principal makes a presentation on the data and the information is discussed by the board. He stated these packets were sometimes 20 pages in length and included achievement data, financial data, and school culture data. The data that is presented includes comparisons among the HSA schools. For example, at the November 19, 2008 board meeting, the principal elaborated on the performance of HSA 4 students and indicated the results were similar to HSA 1 students during the first year. He indicated the grade 1 students were currently working on decoding and phonics, and the second half of the year would work on comprehension. One board member queried the principal on time allocations in the reading curriculum, and the principal indicated school leadership is revising the hours of the reading block and exploring different schedules. A review of other board minutes by the team showed fairly detailed discussion about student achievement and curriculum issues by board members.

The board member interviewed stated that the school takes action when data indicates a problem might exist. In one instance, data indicated one classroom was doing better in reading than another. Further investigation showed one classroom had a large number of boys who could not read. As a result, a teacher was added to the classroom.

The board has not made any financial or organizational decisions that have impeded the school in meeting its mission. In fact, the board member interviewed described many of the difficult financial decisions made by the board, including a decision to spend in excess of \$100,000 when “building out” the school, including new bathrooms and an upgraded electrical system.

The board member interviewed indicated the board has not evaluated the principal in writing. He indicated the board has not conduct a self-evaluation. He felt, however, there was high attendance at board meetings and this was an indication of a strong commitment to the school and in some respects a form of self-evaluation. In addition, the board indicated that its evaluation of the Network was an “ad hoc” process.

Benchmark 2E: Governance

The board has developed and approved a mission and the five academic goals included in the school's Accountability Plan. The board member interviewed understood and articulated the mission of the school and indicated the school had goals to provide the children in Harlem the education they should have had all along and have stability of location as well as financial stability.

Each HSA school is governed by a board of directors and has approved bylaws. The bylaws for HSA 4 were voted on and approved and officers elected on May 7, 2008. The bylaws include articles, which describe a recruitment and selection process for new members, including a process for election, eligibility, term of office, removal, resignation, vacancies, and compensation. The board member interviewed indicated the board of HSA 4 works closely with all key players at the Network and the school to meet school goals.

Network, school, and board policies are in place. Network and school policies are reflected in the staff handbooks and board policies are reflected in the bylaws. The board also uses the 2009-2010 Success Charter Network Financial Policies and Procedures Manual monitor and control school finances. The manual describes a system of establishing proper accounting controls and outlines the responsibilities of the school and SCN with respect to certain financial transactions.

According to the board member interviewed, the board holds six meetings per year: three meetings are held at the school, and three are held at the office of a Board member. The by-laws allow the meetings to be held at the corporation's principal office or at any other place designated by the board. The board adheres to the New York State public meeting law, but the member interviewed did not know where the notice of the meeting was posted. He did note that members had to be visually present and participating via telephone was not acceptable. He noted that usually parents or the public did not attend board meetings.

A concern to the inspection team is that board members can hold dual membership on Network and school boards, possibly creating a conflict of interest, particularly in financial matters. The board member indicated the bylaws include a conflict of interest article and board members have left one board to join another. He indicated board members would resign or recuse themselves to avoid conflicts of interest. For instance, one member of HSA 4 left to serve solely on the Network board. The conflict of interest policy included in the bylaws requires that any board member or officer who has a personal interest in any contract or transaction discussed by the board make a prompt disclosure of his or her interest.

Parent focus group members indicated that a complaint process was in place at the school, and, if needed, they had access to the principal and the board.

METHODOLOGY

The two-day renewal inspection site visit was conducted at HSA 4 during the period from April 12 to 13, 2010. The renewal inspection team (the team) conducted interviews with the principal; the leadership resident, the student achievement coordinator, and the special educator. The team used a portion of the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks to guide the evaluation process.

In addition, the team conducted the following focus groups of school community representatives:

- A board of trustees' interview consisting of one current member.
- A teacher focus group consisting of three teachers.
- A student focus group consisting of six students representing kindergarten through grade 2.
- A parent focus group consisting of three parents.

The team conducted 12 classroom observations in grades K–2. The observations ranged in length from 20 to 28 minutes. Five ELA lessons were observed; one art lesson, three mathematics lessons, one morning meeting, one science lessons, and one special education lesson were observed. Team members kept running records of their observations using a classroom observation evidence worksheet.

The documents and data reviewed by the team before, during, and after the site visit included the following:

- Organization Chart
- School Improvement or Strategic Plan
- List and calendar of formative and summative assessments
- Copies of data analyses and summaries
- Description of student support programs
- Student and Family handbooks
- Faculty and Staff handbooks
- Professional development program documents, schedules, and course lists
- Board minutes and By-Laws
- Teacher Planning time and meeting schedules
- Teacher evaluation tools
- Classroom observation tools
- Job descriptions of school leaders and instructional staff
- School classroom schedules and map
- Teacher roster and certification, including highly qualified status
- Parent surveys and newsletters
- School data to include waiting list, enrollment, student teacher and attrition data
- Sample lesson plans
- Sample student work
- Sample evaluations of teachers, school leaders, and management organizations
- Curriculum documents

The external school evaluation was conducted by an experienced team of educators from Class Measures. Their biographies follow:

Christine Brandt has been an educator for several years, serving as a classroom teacher, special educator, administrator, and principal. She began her career as a Middle School teacher of English, French, Moderate Special Needs, and Reading. She moved into the administrator ranks as a Special Education Director at the Middle School level. For 18 years she served as principal, first in Wellesley, then in Dover, Massachusetts. In addition, she worked with the Somerville Charter School as their Lower School Coordinator. Currently, she mentors and supervises aspiring school administrators in both regular and special education. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association and is their Federal Liaison and Legislative Chair. She earned her undergraduate degree from Regis College, and her graduate degrees from the University of Massachusetts at Lowell in Reading and Learning Disabilities and from Northeastern University in Education Administration.

Jeanne Simons, Director of Educational Development. She worked previously as a high school mathematics teacher and in mathematics reform in urban school districts as a Targeted Mathematics Specialist with the Massachusetts Department of Education. She is a content and pedagogical expert in mathematics. She has experience in the development of coaching programs, effective differentiation, assessment and the formative usage of data, and in developing and providing professional development for teachers and leaders across a variety of reform topics. In addition, she has been involved in the development of a variety of technology-based educational initiatives, most recently providing educational support in the development of one of the first online teacher licensure programs in the Middle East. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from the California Institute of Technology and a Masters of Education in Mind, Brain and Education from Harvard.

James Hearn, Vice President of Professional Services Jim is the Vice President of Professional Services for Class Measures. In that capacity, he manages the Class Measures school evaluation process and all contracts, participates as a team member on site visits, and edits and writes evaluation reports. Jim has over twenty-five years of experience in state government policy and budget analysis, performance auditing, program evaluation, and University teaching. Jim served as a School District Examiner and Field Coordinator for the Massachusetts Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, completing over forty school and district reviews in Massachusetts. For almost a decade, Jim held the position of Senior Policy Analyst for the Senate Post Audit and Oversight Committee of the Massachusetts State Senate. In that capacity, he completed a number of performance audits and policy reviews, including a comprehensive review of the Massachusetts adult correctional education programs. Jim is a former member of the Executive Committee of the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society. From 1982 to 1996, he served as an Adjunct Lecturer in Health Management at University College at Northeastern University. Jim earned his Bachelors Degree in Business from Boston College and holds a Master's Degree in Business from Suffolk University.

Melanie Gallo has been an educator for 35 years. A member of the National School Reform faculty, she has been a teacher and a school director. She has been a founder of two schools: a school in New Hampshire and a charter school in Massachusetts. She has been recognized by the College Board for excellence in teaching AP English and is the author of *Senior Project in Creating the Good High School* by Mackin/Silva. She is a trained Critical Friends coach and has served on the Board of the Massachusetts Drama Guild. She is currently on the graduate school adjunct faculty at Fitchburg State College. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and a Master's degree in Education from Fitchburg State College. She is at present a Leadership Consultant for Class Measures.