



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School

Evaluation Report 2006-2007

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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 English language arts 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.
- 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.

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 English language arts and mathematics 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.

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 obtained 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

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approved the charter application for the Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School (Roosevelt Children's Academy) on January 25, 2000, and it became effective by operation of law on May 25, 2000. The school opened in September of 2000 with an enrollment of 143 students in Kindergarten through second grade. The school added one grade per year through the 2003-04 school year at which time it served 300 students in Kindergarten through fifth grade. Due to facility constraints, the school added grade six while eliminating kindergarten in the last year of its original charter term (2004-05).

Roosevelt Children's Academy submitted an Application for Charter Renewal in the fall of 2004 and was granted a full-term, five-year charter renewal by the State University Trustees on March 1, 2005, which became effective by operation of law on June 21, 2005. As stated in the school's Renewal Charter, the State University Trustees authorized Roosevelt Children's Academy to add grades seven and eight in 2005-06 and 2006-07 respectively, while reintroducing the Kindergarten program in 2005-06. The school reported an enrollment of 502 students in Kindergarten through eighth grade in 2006-07.

Facility constraints have plagued Roosevelt Children's Academy since its inception forcing reductions in enrollment and/or changes in grade levels offered. The school is currently housed in three separate locations: Kindergarten and first grades are in leased space at the Good Shepard Church at 230 Brookside Avenue, Roosevelt, New York; grades two through five are in a modular facility located at 105 Pleasant Avenue also in Roosevelt; and grades six through eight are in the lower level of a public library facility at 55 Mansfield Avenue in Roosevelt. The school was found in violation of its Renewal Charter by occupying the 55 Mansfield Avenue location without a Certificate of Occupancy, Certificate of Completion, or appropriate Fire Marshall approval and was therefore placed on probation by the State University Trustees on September 26, 2006. If the school follows the terms of a Remedial Action Plan, the probationary status is scheduled to expire on October 1, 2008.

The Roosevelt Children's Academy Board of Trustees requested a change in program on March 29, 2007 for the 2007-08 school year to again temporarily terminate the Kindergarten program in order to create space for the addition of grade nine and subsequent high school grades. The school's request was denied by the Charter Schools Institute because of its current probationary status, the late timing of the request, and the lack of a comprehensive plan for high school educational programming, staffing, and financial management.

The mission of Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School as stated in the school's renewal charter is as follows:

The mission of the Roosevelt Children's Academy is to become one of the finest public schools in America. The Academy will be built on the philosophy that all children can learn and the Academy will ensure that students meet or exceed New York State performance standards.

Over the course of the school's existence, the Roosevelt Children's Academy board of trustees has partnered with Victory Schools, Inc. ("Victory Schools"), a for-profit educational service provider, to design and implement the educational program and provide an array of business and human

resources services for an annual fee. On August 23, 2005 the school's Board of Trustees approved a reduction in the scope of the services provided to the school through its contractual relationship with Victory Schools, along with a reduced fee (a limited services model). Specifically, the updated management agreement indicates that Victory Schools will continue to provide the school with the following services: curriculum services; business and operations services; human resources and employment related services; operations policies, memoranda and reporting services; financial and other reporting services; and insurance services. The school's board of trustees has assumed responsibility for instructional support services, legal and real estate services.

Key design elements for Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School, as stated in the school's Application for Charter Renewal, include:

- devoting resources to initiatives targeted toward at-risk children to ensure all students meet the rigorous standards of New York State (an extended school day along with efforts to provide an additional after-school program and a Saturday academy, as the budget permits);
- ongoing assessment of students as part of the academic intervention program;
- a belief in the arts and infusion of the arts throughout the curriculum as part of components like Core Knowledge and with interdisciplinary programs at the middle school level;
- use of Core Knowledge as the middle school social studies program, supported by authentic literature presenting multiple perspectives using various genres;
- a balanced literacy approach to English language Arts that includes both trade books and other support materials to enhance student reading, writing, and listening skills, including programs such as Scott Foresman, Junior Great Books, Write Source, and Six Traits of Writing;
- a comprehensive mathematics approach using research-based mathematics programs such as Everyday Math, Impact Math and Scott Foresman/Addison-Wesley;
- strong culture and respect for learning and for others, including the use of elements such as Core Virtues for elementary students and an Advisory Council for middle school students;
- commitment to prepare students to succeed in a college preparatory high school program;
- strong career awareness program at the middle school level; and
- strong parental involvement, including a school/parent contract, active Parent Teacher Organization, parent workshops, Parent Task Force, and through a parent representative on the school's Board of Trustees.

School Year (2006-07)

181 days

School Day (2006-07)

8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (grades Kindergarten through five)

8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (grades six through eight)

Enrollment

	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ⁵	Original Chartered Grades	Revised Grades Served	Actual Grades Served	Complying
2000-01	247	150	143	K-2	K-2	K-2	YES
2001-02	322-347	200	191	K-3	K-3	K-3	YES
2002-03	397-447	250	245	K-4	K-4	K-4	YES
2003-04	472-547	300	300	K-5	K-5	K-5	YES
2004-05	547-647	300	299	1-6	1-6	1-6	YES
2005-06	459	459	450	K-7	K-7	K-7	YES
2006-07	540	540	502	K-8	K-8	K-8	YES
2007-08	594	594		K-8			
2008-09	621	621		K-8			
2009-10	621	621		K-8			

Race/Ethnicity	2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006	
	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	0	0.0%	1	0.3%	1	0.3%	1	0.2%
Black (Not Hispanic)	206	93.2%	269	90.3%	287	92.0%	416	94.3%
Hispanic	13	5.9%	25	8.4%	21	6.7%	23	5.2%
White	2	0.9%	3	1.0%	3	1.0%	1	0.2%

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

Free/Reduced Lunch	2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006	
	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.	No. of Students	% of Enroll.
Eligible for Free Lunch	94	42.5%	134	45.0%	114	36.5%	215	48.8%
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	26	11.8%	58	19.5%	40	14.4%	57	12.9%

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

⁵ 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 and student demographic figures are calculated, cited the following enrollment totals: 2002-03: 221; 2003-04: 298; 2004-05: 312. The NYSED 2005-06 database cited an enrollment of 441 students.

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	
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	Initial Renewal Report	Granted full-term, five- year renewal with conditions
Renewal Charter 1 st Year	2005-06	6 th	NO		
Renewal Charter 2 nd Year	2006-07	7 th	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	Placed on probation by State University Trustees on 9/26/06

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS EVALUATION VISIT

On March 1, 2005, the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York granted Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School a full-term, five-year charter renewal. Prior to making this recommendation to the Trustees, the Charter Schools Institute conducted a renewal visit at the school during the fall of 2004. School inspectors observed classrooms, met with administrators and board members, and interviewed teachers. Based upon the totality of the school's record during its charter term, including 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.

During the initial renewal period, Roosevelt Children's Academy met most but not all of the measures of student academic performance in its Accountability Plan. The school performed particularly well on state examinations during this period, exceeding the State Education Commissioner's standard on all of the fourth-grade tests. However, Roosevelt Children's Academy had yet to develop and implement a coherent internal assessment system and it was unclear to renewal visitors whether collected assessment information was readily translated into improved classroom instruction in a systematic way.

By the end of the first charter term, other indicators demonstrated that Roosevelt Children's Academy was largely an academic success. The curriculum in place at the time of renewal was aligned with state standards, and evidence of its implementation was strong. In the last two years of the first charter term, the school benefited from the knowledge and skills of a new principal who demonstrated not only administrative competence but sustained a focus on instruction and academic achievement. Teachers generally reported the professional development opportunities at the school as one of its strengths and complimented the principal for the consistent support she provided in the classrooms. The school's teachers worked diligently to plan instruction linked to state standards and to provide lessons that allowed students to meet those standards. At the time of the renewal visit, though one third of staff members had less than three years of teaching experience and had little experience in teaching at their assigned grade level, the quality and level of classroom instruction was sufficient to enable most students to meet state standards. Roosevelt Children's Academy created a school culture where students displayed behavior that promoted an academically focused environment. While facility limitations resulted in primary classes being conducted in an open environment prone to higher than expected levels of noise, teachers and students worked well together to remain focused on the learning tasks at hand.

By the end of the first charter term, Roosevelt Children's Academy was a viable and effective organization. The school's board of trustees remained faithful to the mission of the school and served students well with a focus on increasing academic achievement. After three different principals in its first three years, in the fourth and fifth years of the charter, through the leadership of the board and the school's principal, Roosevelt Children's Academy successfully worked with their educational management company, Victory Schools, Inc., to build its instructional program and provide parents with a welcome choice in public education. Parents and students reported large measures of satisfaction with the school while also expressing a strong desire for a school facility that would situate the school in one location that included a gym, science lab, and increased access to educational technology.

By the last year of the first charter period, Roosevelt Children’s Academy enjoyed overall financial health and the Board and Victory Schools generally had in place appropriate financial controls and sound financial practices. The school operated pursuant to a long-range fiscal plan and produced realistic budgets over the term of the charter. The school never experienced an operating cash shortfall due to an agreement with Victory Schools whereby a portion of the management and central service fees were deferred.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the present visit to the Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School on May 23, 2007. Inspectors visited classrooms, reviewed documents and interviewed instructional and administrative staff. Their conclusions are summarized below. The evidence base and further analysis are contained in the Benchmark Analysis and Evidence section of this report which follows.

Based on the data available through the 2005-06 school year, Roosevelt Children's Academy was meeting its Accountability Plan goals for English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. Specifically, for the three years up to and including 2005-06, more than 80 percent of students had scored at the proficient level on the state English language arts exam. In mathematics, the school had met its absolute measure for the previous three years and notably at least 80 percent were proficient on the grade three and four tests. One hundred percent of grade four students passed the state science exam in 2005-06, while 95 percent of grade five students passed the state social studies exam that year. In addition, Roosevelt Children's Academy was deemed in "good standing" under the state's NCLB accountability system.

At the time of the inspection visit, the school was systematizing the use of data to inform instruction through its internal assessment "data team" structure, though it was too early to determine the effectiveness of the work of the data teams. Specifically, grade-level data team members met with members of the school's leadership team to analyze internal and external assessment data. These data teams were in place the previous academic year but were, at least, structurally more effective in the 2006-07 academic year. However, based on classroom observations focused on pedagogy, it remained unclear as to whether instructional strategies articulated at data team meetings were actually implemented into classroom practices.

The school leadership team regularly conducted formal and informal teacher observations but did not deliver significant in-classroom pedagogical support to teachers. Roosevelt Children's Academy's leadership team, rather than their management company (as part of a planned transition away from the services provided by Victory Schools), focused on professional development and identified and supported opportunities for teachers. Despite these efforts, teachers at Roosevelt Children's Academy, especially those in the middle school, reported that they did not receive regular and consistent feedback on how to deliver lessons with clear expectations for what students must know and be able to do. Nor was there a systematized clinical supervision model for informal teacher observations and feedback thereof.

At the time of the visit, well-established classroom routines and tightly structured activities were prevalent and students were generally well behaved and appropriately participative. While students were on task, high quality teaching and learning was not consistently evident, and in the higher grades observed lessons did not promote higher order thinking skills. Some classroom activities focused on review of previously learned material resulting in mechanical and unchallenging work. In addition, much of the school's curricula were in flux or multifaceted, evidenced in part by some instructional leaders' unfamiliarity with aspects of the school's curricular programs.

Roosevelt Children's Academy benefits from a strong school board that is passionate in helping the school meet its needs. Through academic and especially financial and operational stewardship the board has taken substantial steps to make Roosevelt Children's Academy in their words, "one of the best schools in New York State."

PREVIOUS YEARS'S 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: Based on the data available, the school was meeting its Accountability Plan goals for English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. In addition, it was deemed in "good standing" under the state's NCLB accountability system.

English Language Arts: From 2003-04 through 2005-06, more than 80% of students scored at the proficient level on the state English language arts exam. In 2005-06, 84 percent of students in grades three through seven were proficient. In each of the three years the school both achieved the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) established by the state's No Child Left Behind ("NCLB") accountability system and outperformed the local school district. In comparison to similar schools statewide, the school performed far better than predicted in 2004-05 and 2005-06. On its value added measure, the school has not met its Iowa Test of Basic Skills ("ITBS") targets and, despite having an average Normal Curve Equivalent ("NCE") above grade level, declined each year.

Mathematics: The school has met its absolute measure in each year from 2003-04 through 2005-06 and notably at least 80 percent of students were proficient on the grade three and four tests; in 2005-06, 75 percent of all students in grades three through seven were proficient. In each of the three years the school both achieved the AMO and outperformed the local school district. In comparison to similar schools statewide, the school performed better than predicted in 2004-05 and 2005-06. On its value added measure, the school did not meet its 2005-06 ITBS targets and declined to just at grade level (50 NCE). Performance on the ITBS was inconsistent over the last four years.

Science: 100 percent of grade four students passed the state science exam in 2005-06; comparison data for the local district were not available.

Social Studies: 95 percent of grade five students passed the state social studies exam in 2005-06; comparison data for the local district were not available.

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

Optional Goals: According to the school's 2005-06 Annual Progress Report, more than two-thirds of respondents to a parent survey gave a positive response to each item; however, without knowing the response rate it was impossible to determine whether this goal was met. The school reported meeting its student satisfaction goal.

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

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

English Language Arts Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

	2003-04		2004-05		2005-06	
	Grades Served: K-5		Grades Served: K-6		Grades Served: K-7	
ABSOLUTE MEASURES	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	All Students % (N)	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 87.2 (47)	85.0 (40)	4 87.3 (71)	84.5 (58)	3 80.9 (68)
	8 (0)	(0)	8 (0)	(0)	4 88.0 (50)	90.7 (43)
					5 89.4 (66)	90.0 (60)
					6 75.5 (49)	78.6 (42)
					7 70.8 (24)	69.6 (23)
					8 (0)	(0)
					All 82.5 (257)	83.6 (220)
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 4	PI 187	Grades 4	PI 186	Grades 3-7	PI 182
	8	107	8	116		122
		AMO 123		AMO 131		AMO 122
		YES		YES		YES
COMPARATIVE MEASURES	Comparison: (Roosevelt Union Free School)		Comparison: (Roosevelt Union Free School)		Comparison: (Roosevelt Union Free School)	
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 4	School 85.0	Grades 4	School 84.5	Grades 3-7	School 83.6
	8	68.5	8	83.9		74.1
		YES		YES		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).			Grades 4	Actual 87.3	Predicted 67.8	Effect Size 1.45
			8			YES
					257	82.5
					58.8	1.31
					YES	YES
VALUE ADDED MEASURE	Assessment: ITBS		Assessment: ITBS		Assessment: ITBS	
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 1-5	Cohorts Making Target 2 of 5	Grades 1-6	Cohorts Making Target 2 of 6	Grades 1-7	Cohorts Making Target of
	N 165	Base 53.0	N 251	Base 61.9	N 253	Base 56.8
	Target 53.1	Result 52.4	Target 62.0	Result 56.8	Target 56.9	Result 54.1
		NO		NO		NO

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Mathematics

Roosevelt Children's Academy



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

	2003-04			MET	2004-05			MET	2005-06			MET
	Grades Served: K-5	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades Served: K-6	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades Served: K-7	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	
ABSOLUTE MEASURES 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	82.0 (50)	80.0 (40)	YES	4	91.8 (73)	92.0 ()	YES	3	91.4 (70)	89.6 (48)	YES
	8	(0)	(0)		8	(0)	(0)		4	94.1 (51)	95.2 (42)	
									5	71.0 (69)	72.9 (59)	
									6	54.9 (51)	58.0 (43)	
COMPARATIVE MEASURES 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.	8	(0)	(0)		8	(0)	(0)		7	41.7 (24)	43.5 (23)	
									8	(0)	(0)	
									All	75.1 (265)	74.9 (215)	
	Grades	PI	AMO	YES	Grades	PI	AMO	YES	Grades	PI	AMO	YES
COMPARATIVE MEASURES 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	182	136	YES	4	192	142	YES	3-7	171	86	YES
	8	80.0	79.8	YES	8	92.0	82.6	YES	3-7	74.9	57.6	YES
	Comparison: (Roosevelt Union Free School)	School	District		Comparison: (Roosevelt Union Free School)	School	District		Comparison: (Roosevelt Union Free School)	School	District	
COMPARATIVE MEASURES 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).	4	91.8	84.3	YES	4	91.8	84.3	YES	N	Actual Predicted	Effect Size	YES
	8		0.71		8		0.71		265	75.1	64.9	0.59
	Grades	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	Grades	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	Grades	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size
VALUE ADDED MEASURE 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
	1-5	4 of 5			1-6	2 of 6			1-7	of		
	N	Base Target Result			N	Base Target Result			N	Base Target Result		
	203	49.6	49.8	58.2	251	59.3	59.4	56.1	254	56.1	56.2	50.1

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE

Assessment and Use of Assessment Data

At the time of the visit, the school was systematizing the use of data to inform instruction through its internal assessment “data team” structure. Specifically, grade-level data team members meet with members of the school’s leadership team to analyze internal and external assessment data, based on a model introduced to the school’s leadership team at an out-of-state conference. As reported by teachers, some grade-level team meetings included identified instructional strategies intended to move all students to grade-level proficiency. Over the course of several weeks, teachers were supposed to collect and bring assessment information to the next grade-level data team meeting to determine how many additional students had achieved grade-level proficiency. Notably, school leaders reported that this internal assessment system is in part a response to the identified need articulated in the Institute’s 2005 Renewal Report.⁶

The data teams were in place during the 2005-06 school year but appeared to be more effective during the 2006-07 school year. Data teams held regularly attended meetings in 2006-07, the frequency of which was consistent at each grade level with some teams meeting several times per month and others once every four or six weeks. Also in 2006-07, Title I teachers were involved within data teams, or at least available to discuss individual students’ needs. Also, similar communiqués were made with the director of student support services. Additionally, in contrast to the previous year when teachers were unclear about what was expected of them, in the 2006-2007 academic year teachers were generally prepared with updated student data for data team meetings.

Teachers demonstrated some signs that they are beginning to use data to drive instruction. For example, although the topics in pacing guides were organized by month and rather broad in scope, some teachers’ subsequent lesson plans included modifications based upon the meetings of the data team. However, it remained unclear whether instructional strategies articulated at data team meetings were actually implemented within classroom practices.

Curriculum

At the time of the school inspection, much of Roosevelt Children’s Academy’s curricula were in flux or unaligned from grade to grade. The Scott Foresman series was the primary English language arts program, though the school recently added a phonics supplement and weekly “Creative [writing] Fridays.” During the visit, the school had in place the Everyday Math program for Kindergarten through fifth grades and Prentice Hall Math (an extension of Scott Foresman Math for middle and high school grades) for sixth through eighth grades. Due to the school’s assessment that the Scott Foresman mathematics program is more aligned to the New York State standards and other factors, the school decided to adopt it in Kindergarten through fifth grades beginning with the 2007-08 academic year, a decision that teachers reported participating in and being knowledgeable of. Kindergarten through fifth grade implemented the McGraw Hill science program while sixth through eighth grades used Glencoe, with support from an outside consultant. Social studies was perhaps the program in greatest flux, as the school used three different social studies curricula: A combination of Core Knowledge, McGraw Hill, and teacher supplements in Kindergarten through sixth grades, and the McGraw Hill middle school edition in seventh and eighth grades. Due to the school’s assessment

⁶ “While ample evidence exists that the school examines student work products, student performance on unit tests, individual reading records, and standardized test results, the examination of this data has yet to combine into a detailed system of internal assessment.” Renewal Report, page 23.

that the Core Knowledge curriculum is not appropriately aligned to the New York standards, beginning with the 2007-08 academic year, the school will implement the Scott Foresman social studies program for Kindergarten through sixth grades and continue its use of McGraw Hill in seventh and eighth grades, a decision that school leaders reported will be accompanied by intensive staff development and support during and after the implementation period. Although the school has carefully analyzed the resources that have been in place and has made many decisions to adopt new programs, the fragmented and evolving nature of the school's documented curriculum appears to have created an academic program that is not seamless from grade to grade, suggesting that the skills and knowledge that each student is expected to attain within each grade level and subject area has not been formally delineated and communicated to teachers.

The fluctuating and multifaceted curricula correlated with some instructional leaders' and teachers' lack of fluency with the curricula. This was especially apparent among some members of the school leadership team. For example, rather than being able to quickly answer the straightforward question of what curriculum was used at which grade level for which subject, some members of the school staff had to consult various binders. The staff members' lack of familiarity with the curriculum could be the result of the focus on test preparation rather than curriculum implementation. This unfamiliarity of some staff, including members of the leadership team, with the formal programs in place at the school suggests that ongoing monitoring of the implementation and use of such programs in classroom practices may be in need of attention. Teachers used off-the-shelf curricula, generally not deviating from their textbooks' scope and sequence while delivering instruction. Incipient efforts to develop curriculum maps and pacing guides reflected teachers' evolving familiarity with curriculum development, and what appeared as their low comfort levels in engaging in such work.

Instructional Leadership and Professional Development

At the time of the inspection visit, the school leadership team was in place and was regularly conducting formal and informal teacher observations. Several members of the leadership team assumed their new posts in the middle of the 2006-07 school year. At the time of the visit, the school leadership team consisted of the principal, assistant instructional principal, interim assistant middle school principal, dean/data coordinator, and Title I reading and mathematics teachers, who also served as the lead teacher for their respective content areas. The principal conducted all formal teacher evaluations while the assistant principals assisted with informal teacher observations and feedback and advise the principal during some formal evaluations.

Roosevelt Children's Academy's leadership team, rather than the school's educational service provider — whose academic support had been reduced by the school to an exceedingly minor role over the previous two years — managed the professional development program to support teachers. There were individualized teacher professional development plans that included areas teachers identified as being targets for professional growth. In interviews at the time of the visit, teachers expressed gratitude to the school leadership team for the many professional development opportunities during the summer and school year.

Despite the focus on professional development, Roosevelt Children's Academy's teachers did not receive regular and consistent feedback on how to deliver lessons with clear expectations for what students must know and be able to do. Though in some data team meetings members of the school leadership team provided guidance on instructional strategies, in-classroom informal feedback to teachers focused on classroom environment and student behavior, as reported by teachers. As one teacher stated: "none of the administrators stay in the room to monitor the actual delivery of a lesson." Another teacher noted that an assistant principal is in the classroom "constantly ... asking

‘what do you need?’ such as copies, bulletin board materials, etc.” rather than providing clinical instructional coaching. Accordingly, the content of the 2006-07 monthly staff development workshops centered on data team activities and classroom management rather than lessons’ content and quality. This lack of pedagogical feedback corresponded to several examples of low-level instructional delivery that did not allow for substantial opportunities for students to engage in higher order thinking exercises.

Feedback to teachers on informal observations was not well documented resulting in no thorough record or reference upon which teachers could reflect to improve instruction over the course of the school year. This was especially true at the middle school where all of the classroom teachers were in their first or second year of teaching. Members of the leadership team focused on the middle school were either not regularly present at the middle school campus or mostly focused on issues of test preparation and discipline. Further, members of the school leadership team responsible for providing informal observations throughout the year were unable to articulate a system of providing feedback to teachers, suggesting that the school is in need of a well-defined system of clinical supervision that provides continuity between documented informal and formal teacher evaluation visits focused on improving specific pedagogical skills in need of improvement. Taken together, this evidence suggests that the individual instructional needs of all teachers are currently not being met.

Instruction

At the time of the inspection visit, well-established classroom routines and tightly structured activities were evident. Instruction was consistent within grade-levels and there was strong evidence that teachers were planning and pacing together. The prevalence of teachers implementing whole group activities with significant individual student work at the white board indicated substantial co-planning.

Reflective of the school’s emphasis on student behavior Roosevelt Children’s Academy’s students were well-behaved and on-task. Students knew classroom routines and procedures. Students were attentive, mutually supportive, cordial, and actively and appropriately participative. Staff members quickly addressed the few observed incidents of minor inappropriate behaviors.

However, correlating with insufficient levels of in-classroom pedagogical coaching and support, lessons observed by inspectors in the upper grades did not promote higher order thinking skills. On the day of the inspection, many classroom activities focused on the review of previously learned material resulting in mechanical and unchallenging work. School leaders attributed this tendency, in part, to the school being in the process of preparing 8th grade students for the upcoming social studies portion of the New York State Testing Program. Teachers devoted large amounts of class time to copying into notebooks and reading aloud, to an extent that was inappropriate for fourth and fifth grades, and especially inappropriate for seventh and eighth grades. Additionally, there were few observed opportunities for students to engage with each other around classroom material. The dearth of lessons geared at higher order thinking skills in the upper grades was of particular concern to the visit inspectors.

Specifically, an example of an English language arts lesson illustrates the lack of higher order thinking exercises observed by inspectors. First, students copied definitions of vocabulary words out of a textbook into their notebooks. Students then read aloud the words and definitions. The teacher then posted literary terms and definitions that the students also copied into notebooks. Lastly, students read a story aloud, frequently interrupted by the teacher with questions about basic

information. Over the course of the lesson, students had no interaction with each other and were not asked challenging or thought provoking questions.

Governance

Roosevelt Children’s Academy benefits from a strong board of trustees that is passionate in helping the school meet its needs. In concert with the desires of staff and parents, the board continued its difficult search to find a suitable facility that would allow the school to expand to an envisioned Kindergarten through twelfth grade program. Further, to help the school achieve long-term financial stability, the board has decided to fully sever its limited services agreement with Victory Schools, Inc., the school’s management company, to take effect on June 30, 2007. In fact, at the time of the visit the board had ensured that Roosevelt Children’s Academy had assumed all payroll, human resources, information technology and insurance responsibilities. Moreover, the board was well versed in the school’s academic needs, particularly in the area of mathematics, and was taking steps to make Roosevelt Children’s Academy not just superior to local schools but, in their words, “one of the best schools in New York State.”

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.
Benchmark 1E Student Order & Discipline	1E	The school's culture allows and promotes a culture of learning.
Benchmark 1F Professional Development	1F	The school's professional development program assists teachers in meeting student academic needs and school goals, by addressing identified shortcomings in student learning and teacher pedagogical skill and content knowledge.

Evidence Category	Benchmarks	
	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?	
Benchmark 2C Governance	2C.1	The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school's mission and specific goals.

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the Second-Year Visit at Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School on May 23, 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 at 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/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.

Susan Seymour is a Senior Analyst at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. In the past Mrs. Seymour taught pre-kindergarten through 10th grade. From 1996 to 1999 she worked in the Governor's Office of Regulatory Reform as an analyst. There she assisted various state agencies, among others the banking department and the Office of Children and Family Services, in cutting "red tape" from their New York State regulations. Interested in education reform, she joined the Charter Schools Institute in 1999. She received her B.S. from The University of Rochester and her M.A. from Manhattanville College concentrating in Special Education and Reading.

Simeon Stolzberg is a Senior Analyst at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Part of the Institute's oversight and evaluation team, Mr. Stolzberg participates in informal, annual and renewal school visits. Mr. Stolzberg also assists in the development and execution of the Institute's research agenda, performing statistical analyses of student academic data, and providing technical guidance to schools as needed. Prior to joining the Institute, Mr. Stolzberg managed his own consulting practice, advising charter schools across the country in their application and planning phases. He also served as Middle School Director for the Beginning with Children Charter School in Brooklyn, New York. In 2002, as a Building Excellent Schools Fellow, Mr. Stolzberg wrote the

prospectus and application for the Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter School (BArT) in Massachusetts; the school was one of only five schools approved by the state that year. Mr. Stolzberg served as the school's founding principal. Mr. Stolzberg received his Master's Degree in Public Policy from Georgetown University and his Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy, with independent studies in education and political economy, from Williams College.

In addition, the Institute was pleased to have the following consultant(s) join the school visit team:

Adam Aberman (Consulting Writer) is Youth Venture's Director of Global Online Strategy. Mr. Aberman was the Executive Director and Founder (and currently Board Member) of icouldbe.org, the non-profit internet-based career mentoring program that has served over 5,000 teens nationwide and in Tanzania. Mr. Aberman is also the Principal and Founder of The Learning Collective, a consulting organization that strengthens practices of youth-serving organizations. Prior to establishing icouldbe.org, he was a Regional Coordinator for the New York City Department of Education. Mr. Aberman began his career in education as a Spanish bilingual public school teacher in Los Angeles. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Vassar College and a Master of Science degree in Public Policy, with an emphasis on Education, from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

William Haft is an independent consultant who specializes in school development and accountability. He works regularly with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) where his recent responsibilities have included leading contract development for post-Katrina charter schools in New Orleans; in-depth training of California Department of Education staff; and charter school oversight and evaluation guidance for the Los Angeles Unified School District. Other clients for whom he does school accountability work include Cambridge Education (in conducting Quality Reviews for the New York City Department of Education), Raza Development Fund (charter school facilities loan underwriting), and the Colorado Department of Education (charter school application evaluation). Mr. Haft previously served three year stints as NACSA's Associate Director and as an attorney in the litigation and education practice groups at Hogan & Hartson, LLP in Washington, D.C. Before joining the legal ranks, he was a school teacher, administrator and soccer coach at an independent K-12 school in Colorado. He graduated from Carleton College, holds a J.D. from Harvard Law School, and recently earned an M.Ed. (Administration) from Arizona State University. William serves on the Board of Directors of Democracy Prep Charter School in New York City.

Joe Nicolella has more than thirty years in the field of education. At the time of his retirement, Mr. Nicolella was the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources of the Shenendehowa Central School District, and as such his responsibilities included developing and maintaining all staff rosters and procedures for a district of over 1,700 employees; providing leadership and supervision for the district's professional development program; recruiting, selecting and hiring staff; coordinating the development of the district's teacher assessment and evaluation approach; and conducting disciplinary and other hearings, as well as contract negotiations. Prior to becoming Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Nicolella served as a principal at the junior high and middle school level for six years, as director of student services for three years, as an assistant principal for ten years, and as a science teacher at the middle and high school levels for over ten years. Since retirement from public education, Mr. Nicolella has served in the capacity of a supervisor of administrative interns and

student teachers at the College of St. Rose, as an interim coordinator of special education, and as acting lead principal for three middle schools. For nearly three years, he also has been a consultant for the Charter Schools Institute, with a primary responsibility to review and critique curriculum documents submitted to the Institute as a part of the initial charter school application process, charter renewal, or change in program. Mr. Nicolella has earned both a Bachelor and Master of Science degree in Education. He also holds a Master of Science in Advanced Classroom Teaching and a Specialist in Curriculum and Instruction. Mr. Nicolella has also completed all coursework for a doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction. All of his professional training was completed at the University at Albany.