



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Leadership Village Academy Academy Charter School

School Evaluation Report 2006-2007

September 24, 2007

Charter Schools Institute
State University of New York
41 State Street, Suite 700
Albany, New York 12207
518/433-8277, 518/427-6510, Fax
<http://www.newyorkcharters.org>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
INTRODUCTION.....	2
Background on Charter Schools and the State University	2
The State University Trustees’ Oversight Process.....	2
Inspection Visits and Reports	3
The Renewal Cycle and the Timing of School Inspection Visits	5
The Present Report.....	5
Keeping this Report in Context.....	6
SCHOOL DESCRIPTION.....	8
SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS EVALUATION VISIT	11
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	12
SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW.....	14
School Performance Summary for English Language Arts	15
School Performance Summary for Mathematics	16
BENCHMARK ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE.....	17
Student Order and Discipline.....	17
Use of Assessment Data.....	17
Curriculum	17
Quality of Instruction.....	18
At-Risk Students	18
Instructional Leadership.....	18
Professional Development	19
Governance	19
APPENDIX: RENEWAL BENCHMARKS USED DURING THE VISIT.....	20
CONDUCT OF THE VISIT	22

INTRODUCTION

Background on Charter Schools and the State University

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

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

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

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

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

The State University Trustees’ Oversight Process

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

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

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

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

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

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

Inspection Visits and Reports¹

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Renewal Cycle and the Timing of School Inspection Visits

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

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

The Present Report

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

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

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

Keeping This Report in Context

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approved the application for Leadership Village Academy Charter School (“Leadership Village”) on June 25, 2002 (the school was originally named East New York Village Academy Charter School with the school’s board of trustees adopting the current name in March of 2005), and it was subsequently approved by the Board of Regents on September 13, 2002. The school took three planning years, in large part due to an inability to find an adequate facility in the desired Community School District. The school began instruction in August of 2005 at 315 East 113th Street, New York, New York, serving 59 students in fifth grade, added grade 6 in 2006-07 for an enrollment of 114 students, and plans to grow one grade each year with a projected enrollment of 242 students in fifth through ninth grades by the 2009-10 school year. The State University Trustees granted the school a short-term planning-year renewal on March 20, 2007, for a period of three years, extending its charter to incorporate the initial planning years.

The mission statement for Leadership Village, as stated in the school’s original charter, is as follows:

“... to prepare our students to graduate from college and to contribute meaningfully to their families, communities, and nation.”

According to the Executive Summary of the charter, the founders envision Leadership Village Academy as “a place where students work hard and love it, just as a real athlete is entirely immersed in her game, or a serious musician gets perfectly lost in his music. It is a place where students look forward to the challenge of a harder book or a more difficult equation, pushing their limits each day.” The charter states that Leadership Village Academy will achieve its mission through the following key design elements of the school:

- Teaching students to be “academic athletes” with a passion for learning and the discipline of hard work;
- Extended day and year;
- Liberal arts curriculum shaped by rigorous standards of excellence;
- School uniforms;
- High expectations for conduct and focus on learning;
- Investing in teachers – recruit, develop, support, and reward excellent teachers;
- Creating a school as a “village,” a small and respectful learning community;
- Strong connection and frequent communication with families;
- Village Council weekly gathering of the academy for debate, reflection, and inspiration;
- and
- Investing in teachers by building a results-driven organization where excellent educators thrive.

The school has received planning and development support from the Village Academies Network, Inc., a non-profit education organization that also provides certain services and funding to the school.

The school includes a liberal arts curriculum, developed by Village Academies Network and aligned to New York State performance standards, with a strong focus on reading and math. Technology is integrated throughout the learning experience. In addition, the program includes college counseling beginning in the sixth grade. While planning for the opening, the school’s leadership team determined that working with fifth grade students as they progressed to ninth grade over the life of

the charter would be more appropriate for serving students at-risk of academic failure. Therefore a request to revise the school’s charter to allow the school’s program to begin with a fifth grade rather than sixth grade was made to the University Trustees and granted prior to the school opening.

The school also utilizes grade level and departmental “*kounaikenshuu*,” a Japanese practice of “collaborative instructional strategy, driven by quantitative and qualitative student performance data and serious study of students’ work.” Kounaikenshuu ensures the “coherence of students’ horizontal (within a grade) and vertical (over time) experience.”

School Year

186 instructional days⁵ (divided into 5 diagnostic periods)

School Day

8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Enrollment

	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment⁶	Original Chartered Grades	Revised Grades Served	Actual Grades Served	Complying
2002-03	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year
2003-04	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year
2004-05	Opening Delayed	Opening Delayed	Opening Delayed	Opening Delayed	Opening Delayed	Opening Delayed	Opening Delayed
2005-06	312	56	59	6-8	5	5	YES
2006-07	416	107	114	6-9	5-6	5-6	YES

⁵ 200 instructional days, contained within three trimesters is identified in the school’s original charter; however, the school amended this as stated above in their application for Short Term Planning Year Renewal.

⁶ Actual enrollment per the Institute’s Official Enrollment Table. Note that the NYSED 2005-06 database, upon which the Free and Reduced lunch figures are calculated, cited an enrollment of 55 for 2005-06.

2005-2006		
Race/Ethnicity	No. of Students	% of Enroll.
American Indian, Alaskan, Asian, or Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Black (Not Hispanic)	35	63.6%
Hispanic	20	36.4%
White	0	0.0%

Source: NYSED 2005-06 Database

2005-2006		
Free/Reduced Lunch	No. of Students	% of Enroll.
Eligible for Free Lunch	29	52.7%
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	13	23.6%

Source: NYSED 2005-2006 Database

School Charter History

Charter Year	School Year	Year of Operation	Evaluation Visit	Feedback to School	Other Actions Taken
Original Charter – 1 st Year	2002-03	Planning Year	N/A	N/A	
Original Charter – 2 nd Year	2003-04	Planning Year	N/A	N/A	
Original Charter – 3 rd Year	2004-05	Opening Delayed	N/A	N/A	
Original Charter – 4 th Year	2005-06	1 st	YES	Prior Action Letter, End-of-Year Evaluation Letter	Granted change in program to begin with grade 5
Original Charter – 5 th Year	2006-07	2 nd	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	Short term planning year renewal granted for a period of 3 years

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS EVALUATION VISIT

The Charter Schools Institute conducted a visit of the Leadership Village Academy Charter School on April 4, 2006. Institute staff observed classrooms, met with administrators and interviewed teachers. In a letter to the school's board of trustees, the Institute reported the results of the school site visit which are briefly summarized below.

The First Year Observations and Findings identified many positive aspects of the school's operation and identified a few areas of concern.

Perhaps the most important finding of the visit was that Leadership Village Academy was establishing a strong foundation for future success. Institute staff noted that overall, Leadership Village Academy was benefiting from the experience of its parent organization, Village Academies.

Specifically, the school had been scrupulous in beginning to establish the key design elements stated in its charter, including the establishment of a community of learning with high expectations for student performance and a commitment to recruiting and developing excellent teachers. In particular, the school had established clear expectations for student conduct, teaching and learning were aligned with state standards, and the teachers demonstrated effective classroom management. The school's plan for student assessment showed promise although it did not yet have state test scores from which to evaluate performance.

Institute staff highlighted two areas for ongoing attention, including ensuring that the school provided adequate staffing to implement the school's instructional strategy effectively with respect to special education, and the need for ongoing development of the school's science and social studies curriculum. In addition, Institute staff noted that the board of Leadership Village Academy overlaps with the board of its sister school, Harlem Village Academy, which opened several years earlier. Based on the first year visit, it was apparent that Leadership Village Academy would benefit from the experience of its overlapping board members gained from Harlem Village, especially in relation to making decisions about how to allocate resources, to draw on resources already developed (e.g., the parent/student handbook), and to capitalize on economies of scale by sharing resources.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Leadership Village Academy has a serious commitment to educating students well. The school has identified a target population that would otherwise be unlikely to have good educational options. With the benefit of a parent organization that already operates a similar school and shares lessons and experience effectively, Leadership Village Academy has established a sound educational structure and operation.

As 2005-06 was the school's first year of operation, test results for the 5th grade, the only grade served that year, essentially serve as baseline information for the charter period. Based on the results of measures that were available this year, the school appears to be on track to meeting or coming close to meeting its ELA and math goals. The school did not have science testing grades this year and the social studies measures were not applicable this year. The school was deemed in good standing under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.

Among numerous qualities that contribute to the school's overall strength, the following are particularly significant:

- There is a remarkable consistency in expectations for student conduct from classroom to classroom producing a safe and orderly learning environment.
- The school uses a coherent, rigorous system to gather assessment and evaluation data, including protocols and procedures that promote standardized scoring.
- Reading and mathematics instruction aligns with, and is consistently informed by, state performance standards.
- Leadership Village's leadership is active and engaged throughout the school, establishing a collegial, collaborative educational environment in addition to setting and monitoring educational priorities.
- Instruction consistently reflects clear, focused lesson planning and implementation.
- There are well-structured systems for identifying struggling students, and the school operates programs designed to serve those students.

Inspectors also observed some important practices, where further enhancement or refinement would support the school's ongoing efforts to improve student academic achievement:

- Despite frequent informal feedback to teachers based on classroom visits, there is little sense of a coherent professional development vision or plan.
- There was little evidence of curriculum or structure for the science and social studies programs.
- The continual emphasis on student conduct and basic skills suggests that students may have limited opportunities to develop higher-order skills

- The school had limited opportunities (especially in terms of time and professional development) for instructional staff to focus on how best to meet the needs of special education students.
- It was difficult for the inspectors to determine the parameters within which the Leadership Village Academy board of trustees functioned independent of the leadership of Village Academy.

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, the school's first year of operation.

Summary: As 2005-06 was the school's first year of operation, test results for the 5th grade, the only grade served that year, essentially serve as baseline information for the charter period. Based on the results of measures that were available at that time, the school appears to be on track to meeting or coming close to meeting its English language arts (ELA) and mathematics goals. The school did not have science testing grades this year and the social studies measures were not applicable this year. The school was deemed in good standing under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.

English Language Arts: As the school only had 5th grade this year, its results for students enrolled two or more years are unavailable. However, 66 percent of all students tested scored at the proficient level. The school outperformed its local community school district and met the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) for performance under the state's NCLB accountability system. The school also exceeded its predicted level of performance in comparison to similar public schools statewide. While the school did not yet have spring to spring Stanford 9 results with which to assess its value-added measure, the average NCE for the 5th grade cohort increased from 46 in the fall to 60 in the spring.

Mathematics: In absolute terms, 80 percent of all students in the 5th grade performed at the proficient level. This far exceeded the performance of the local community school district. The school met the AMO for performance under the state's NCLB accountability system and also exceeded its predicted level of performance in comparison to similar public schools statewide. Although spring to spring Stanford 9 results were unavailable for the value-added measure, the average NCE for the 5th grade rose from 41 in the fall to 85 in the spring.

Science: The school did not yet have a testing grade for science.

Social Studies: The school's measures were not applicable this year, and the school did not report 5th grade social studies results.

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

Optional Goals: None.

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

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

English Language Arts

Leadership Village Academy Charter School



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

	2003-04		MET	2004-05		MET	2005-06		MET	
	Grades Served: None	Grades Served: None		Grades Served: None	Grades Served: 5					
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.	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		
	Grades	Grades		Grades	Grades					
	4 (0)	(0)		4 (0)	(0)		3 (0)	(0)		
	4 (0)	(0)		4 (0)	(0)		4 (0)	(0)		
	5 66.1 (59)	(0)		5 66.1 (59)	(0)		5 66.1 (59)	(0)		
	6 (0)	(0)		6 (0)	(0)		6 (0)	(0)		
	7 (0)	(0)		7 (0)	(0)		7 (0)	(0)		
	8 (0)	(0)		8 (0)	(0)		8 (0)	(0)		
	All 66.1 (59)	(0)		All 66.1 (59)	(0)		All 66.1 (59)	(0)		
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	Grades	PI	AMO	Grades	PI	AMO	Grades	PI	AMO	
	4			4			5	163	122	
	8			8					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.	Comparison: (Manhattan District 4)			Comparison: (Manhattan District 4)			Comparison: (Manhattan District 4)			
	Grades	School	District	Grades	School	District	Grades	School	District	
	4			4			5	66.1	50.8	
	8			8					--	
4. Each year the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the State exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3).				Effect Size			Effect Size			
	Assessment: SAT-9			Grades	Actual	Predicted	Size	Assessment: SAT-9		
				4			59	66.1	58.4	0.38
				8						YES
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.	Assessment: SAT-9			Assessment: SAT-9			Assessment: SAT-9			
	Grades	Cohorts Making Target:	Target:	Grades	Cohorts Making Target:	Target:	Grades	Cohorts Making Target:	Target:	
	NA	of		NA	of		5	of	--	
	N	Base	Target	N	Base	Target	N	Base	Target	
			Result			Result			Result	

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Mathematics

Leadership Village Academy Charter School



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

	2003-04		2004-05		2005-06		MET
	Grades Served: None	MET	Grades Served: None	MET	Grades Served: 5	MET	
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	(0)	4	(0)	3	(0)
4		(0)	4	(0)	4	(0)	
5		79.7 (59)	5	(0)	5	(0)	
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)	8	(0)	6	(0)	
	8	(0)	8	(0)	7	(0)	
	8	(0)	8	(0)	8	(0)	
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	PI	Grades	PI	Grades	PI	AMMO
	4		4		5	178	86
	8		8		5	79.7	55.2
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).	Comparison: (Manhattan District 4)		Comparison: (Manhattan District 4)		Comparison: (Manhattan District 4)		
	Grades	School	Grades	School	Grades	School	District
	4		4		5	79.7	55.2
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.	Assessment: SAT-9		Assessment: SAT-9		Assessment: SAT-9		
	Grades	Cohorts Making Target:	Grades	Cohorts Making Target:	Grades	Cohorts Making Target:	
	NA	of	59	79.7	60.3	0.85	YES
N Base Target Result		Effect Size		N Actual Predicted		Effect Size	
N Base Target Result		8		59 79.7 60.3		0.85	YES

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE

Student Order and Discipline

Leadership Village Academy has established an orderly and safe learning environment. There is remarkable consistency in the expectations from classroom to classroom reflecting a coherent system for educating students, staff and families about the school's student behavior standards. Among the consistent, well-structured procedures were students indicating understanding by tapping fingers to their heads; students raising hands and waiting to be called on before responding to a question; teachers waiting for a substantial number of students to be prepared to respond before calling on someone; and orderly transitions between activities and classes. Teachers report that the use of consistent protocols helps them focus on lesson objectives, making the substantial investment of time and effort to behavioral standards and expectations at the beginning of the year worthwhile. On the other hand, in a few classrooms inspectors observed dedication of significant time to student conduct and discipline even at this relatively late stage in the school year, suggesting that a few teachers needed additional support and professional development in this area.

Use of Assessment Data

In mathematics and reading, the school has a coherent, rigorous system to gather assessment and evaluation data, including protocols and procedures that promote standardized scoring. Inspectors saw evidence of this system in the school's first year, and it now appears to be firmly established. The principal described an expectation of short weekly assessments and more comprehensive six-week assessments.

Curriculum

The writing standards and instruction are less developed than the mathematics and reading curriculum and not well coordinated with other aspects of the English language arts program. One classroom displayed a rubric with writing samples evaluated according to a well-structured rubric. However, the writing assignment was from several months earlier and inspectors did not see other evidence to indicate that writing assessment occurs with the same clarity and consistency. One teacher indicated that the lack of common planning or preparation time made it difficult to ensure alignment between writing and reading. The school has correctly identified writing instruction and evaluation as a priority for development.

State performance standards drive the instructional program. In English language arts and mathematics, the school builds learning expectations around the standards. In mathematics, instruction derives directly from the standards, and staff members are attentive to vertical alignment as the school adds additional grades. In English language arts, teachers use leveled reading assessments monthly based on Fountas and Pinell reading level classifications. Teachers cited examples of using weekly assessments and more comprehensive diagnostics to evaluate performance and align instruction whether in readjusting reading groups or re-teaching mathematics in areas for which the class as a whole has performed poorly.

Teachers generally have individual responsibility for curriculum development based on the standards. The visiting team observed class agendas and objectives in a common format. For instance, objectives generally read "SWBAT..." as in "Students Will Be Able To..." In developing lessons and units that are aligned with New York State standards, teachers make effective use of materials that Leadership Village's parent, Village Academies, has already created.

Inspectors expressed concern that the science and social studies curriculum lack curricular goals and assessment. A science binder included broad learning objectives without providing any sense of scope or sequence for specific learning objectives. For social studies, inspectors did not see a curriculum or other indications of course goals, structure and content.

Quality of Instruction

The quality of instruction is variable but generally competent with areas of excellence. The principal expects to see “100% focus on instruction; student participation; and teachers checking for understanding throughout” the class. Classes observed largely met these expectations. Teachers are well prepared regarding the lesson content and had posted clear objectives such as “solve an equation using inverse operations” (Math 5th grade) or “use commas with appositives, introductory words and phrases.” (Writing 5th grade). Teachers frequently assess comprehension, and students are on task. Lessons are characteristically tightly planned, purposeful and aligned with clear objectives. Inspectors also observed mechanical processes and little opportunity for discussion.

On the day of the visit, inspectors noted a continual emphasis on student conduct and basic skills. Teachers were vigilant about student conduct, ensuring that students were engaged. However, the constant focus on conduct and basic skills lead inspectors to question the degree to which students had the opportunity to develop higher-order thinking skills. Lesson objectives did not tend to include either discussion or analysis, and teachers generally did not seize opportunities to engage students on those levels. The student population may have required an initial focus on such foundational aspects of learning. However, it was not clear during the visit that a vision or plan existed to move student learning from basic to higher order thinking skills, as evidenced by inspectors observing in some cases teachers posing discussion-oriented questions but tending to shut off subsequent discussion.

At-Risk Students

Leadership Village Academy has a structured system for identifying struggling students and providing them remediation. The school offers Small Group Instruction (SGI) at the end of the day and Saturday School until 1 p.m. According to the principal, any student with a grade of “C” or lower is required to attend Saturday School. Tutors provide the instruction based on lessons and skills that classroom teachers identify. The school tracks the progress of individual remediation sessions, but had yet to determine the effectiveness of the remediation program in general, e.g., the rate or average time required for students to achieve their remedial goals

The special education coordinator is considered part of the grade level teams, but grade level meetings may not be frequent enough or have time to adequately address special education issues. In addition, the school has not been able to provide as much training and support to the special education coordinator as they would like, however, Leadership Village’s leadership has properly identified strengthening the special education program as a priority for the coming year.

Instructional Leadership

The instructional leaders are active and engaged throughout the school. The Principal and Executive Director both set clear educational priorities and provide frequent informal feedback to teachers based on classroom visits. Their presence is characterized by “a lot of brief check-ins.” Feedback tends to focus on school culture and procedures. Feedback typically addresses the degree to which students exhibit the expected preparation or appeared to be on task.

Professional Development

The school has a professional working environment. There is dedicated physical space for teacher offices and weekly professional development time. The agenda for Friday afternoon professional development meetings relies on substantial input from teachers, and the school expects peer observation to be part of each teacher's professional growth. As a result, teachers have substantial input and report being "truly committed to improvement and collaboration."

Despite the school's strong commitment to professional development, the program lacks a consistent focus. Teachers report that initial orientation is extremely valuable for immersing new teachers in educational standards and expectations for student conduct. However, professional development during the year tends to be topical and ad hoc rather than part of a coherent strategy for development. Teachers have not identified professional development goals, and more experienced teachers often find themselves "the giver and not the receiver" of professional development. Moreover, the school has development priorities such as uniformly rigorous writing instruction and differentiated instruction within the classroom that have not been consistently linked to professional development activities.

Governance

The school's governance structure reflects both the substantial benefits and potential pitfalls of developing under a parent organization. On the one hand, Village Academies offers invaluable support and guidance to Leadership Village, benefiting the school immensely by providing, among other things, well-defined structures, expectations and instructional assessment systems. On the other hand, it was difficult for the inspectors to determine the parameters within which the Leadership Village Academy board of trustees functioned independent of the leadership of Village Academy. In other words, although the Institute recognizes the high level of academic performance of students at Leadership Village Academy and embraces the autonomy granted all charter schools under the Charter Schools Act, as well as understands that a very collaborative relationship exists between the school and Village Academy, it was not evident to inspectors that the school's board of trustees, as holders of the school's charter, played the leadership role in the relationship.

APPENDIX: RENEWAL BENCHMARKS USED DURING THE VISIT

Evidence Category	Benchmarks	
	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?	
Benchmark 1A Academic Attainment & Improvement	1A.1	English Language Arts: The school meets or has come close to meeting the English Language Arts goal in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.
	1A.2	Mathematics: The school meets or has come close to meeting the mathematics goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.
	1A.3	Science: The school meets or has come close to meeting the science goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.
	1A.4	Social Studies: The school meets or has come close to meeting the social studies goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.
	1A.5	NCLB: The school has made adequate yearly progress as required by NCLB.
Benchmark 1B Use of Assessment Data	1B	The school has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and to use it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.
Benchmark 1C Curriculum	1C	The school has a clearly defined and aligned curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards.

Benchmark 1D Pedagogy	1D.1	The school has strong instructional leadership.
	1D.2	High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.
	1D.3	The school has programs that are demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically to meet the school's academic Accountability Plan goals, including programs for students who require additional academic supports, programs for English Language Learners and programs for students eligible to receive special education.
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 Leadership Village Academy on April 13, 2007. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit:

Susan Seymour (Team Leader) 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.

Ronald Miller, Ph.D., is Vice President for Accountability at Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. In the past, 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.

Jason L. Sarsfield is a Senior Analyst at the Charter Schools Institute of the State University of New York. Mr. Sarsfield fulfills a leadership role in informal and annual visits to SUNY authorized charter schools as well as participates in the charter renewal review process, provides technical assistance to schools as needed, and contributes to the Institute's research agenda. Prior to joining the Institute in January, 2007 Mr. Sarsfield was a Contract Analyst at The Center for Charter Schools at Central Michigan University – Office of Academic Accountability where he was responsible for evaluating the academic performance of authorized schools, reviewing school curricula and educational program, 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.

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 join the school visit team:

William Haft (Consulting Writer) 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 (New York City Department of Education Quality Reviews), 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. Mr. Haft also serves on the Board of Directors of Democracy Prep Charter School in New York City