



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

External Evaluation Report of Leadership Preparatory Charter School

2007 – 2008

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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>

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Leadership Preparatory Charter School External Evaluation Report

I. INTRODUCTION

The external inspection is part of a comprehensive oversight and evaluation system for those charter schools authorized by the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (“State University Trustees”). The external inspection during the second or third year of a school’s initial five-year charter cycle and periodically thereafter provides an independent assessment of the school’s progress toward meeting the academic and, on a more limited basis, organizational Qualitative Educational Benchmarks (QEBs), a component of the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks (“State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks”).¹

The external inspection complements the regular reviews conducted by the Charter Schools Institute by incorporating the Institute’s documentation of the school’s previous record of performance. This report provides an analysis of the data reviewed before and during the inspection visit and reflects any trends evident therein. In addition, this assessment provides insights which may contribute to the school’s ongoing improvement efforts and support the school’s case when it applies for initial or subsequent charter renewal. Finally, the Institute uses external inspection reports in discussions with school boards about the quality of their schools’ educational programs and the schools’ prospects for charter renewal.

This report is organized in the following sections:

- I. Introduction**
- II. Conduct of the Visit**
- III. School Description**
- IV. Executive Summary**
- V. School Progress Report**
- VI. Overall Trends Regarding the School**

Section I - the “Introduction” provides an overview of the external inspection process, as well as an overview of the organization of this report. Section II - the “Conduct of the Visit” includes a list of the members of the site visit team and their biographical sketches, along with a synopsis of the documents reviewed in preparation for the visit. Section III - the “School Description,” as the title indicates, briefly describes the charter school in terms of its establishment and history. Section IV - the “Executive Summary” provides a summary of the major conclusions reflected in the report.

Section V, entitled the “School Progress Report,” is divided into two parts: Part I, the “Benchmark Analysis and Evidence of the School’s Academic Success” and Part II, the “Benchmark Analysis and Evidence of the School’s Organizational Viability.” Both parts of the School Progress Report reflect evidence and analysis of the school’s effectiveness in meeting the standards set out in selected QEBs of the State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks.

¹ A full description of the State University Trustees’ Renewal Benchmarks and *Practices, Policies, and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools authorized by the State University Board of Trustees* can be found at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org>.

The “Benchmark Analysis and Evidence of the School’s Academic Success” is further divided into two components: the “School Performance Review,” which provides an analysis of student academic performance for the most recent two or three years as an indication of the school’s academic success (Renewal Benchmark 1A), and the “School Educational Program Review,” which reflects the visit team’s analysis of the qualitative aspects of the school’s educational program based upon the guiding questions provided by the Institute and aligned with Renewal Benchmarks 1B - 1F.

“Benchmark Analysis and Evidence of the School’s Organizational Viability,” focuses on three components: clarity of the school’s mission and vision to its stakeholders; parent and student satisfaction; and the establishment of systems to monitor the effectiveness of the school’s instructional program. Renewal Benchmarks 2B, 2D.1, and 2C.1 provide the underpinnings for this part of the report.

In the final section of the External Visit report, Section VI - “Overall Trends Regarding the School,” the visit team offers its insights about any patterns that have emerged across the full spectrum of the school. Here the team offers its judgments about the school’s effectiveness at meeting the broad goals defined in the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 as amended (Education Law §2850(2) (a-f)):

- improving student learning and achievement;
- increasing learning opportunities for all students (particularly students at risk of academic failure);
- encouraging the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- creating new professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators and other school personnel;
- expanding parental choice in public schools; and
- moving from a rule-based to performance-based accountability system by holding schools accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.

The judgments of the team are organized into two categories: academic program and organizational viability. The framework for the progress report discussion is shown in Appendix A. For your reference, the State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks, in their entirety, may be found on the Institute’s website at <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsRenewOverview.htm>.

II. CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

The inspection of the Leadership Preparatory Charter School was conducted on April 30 and May 1, 2008 by an independent team of experienced educators from SchoolWorks, Beverly, MA. The team included:

- **Spencer Blasdale** is Chief Executive Officer of SchoolWorks. Before joining SchoolWorks, he was Executive Director of the Academy of the Pacific Rim Charter Public School in Boston, Massachusetts. He has spent the past 20 years in the field of education as a teacher, administrator and non-profit director. Spencer holds a BA in history from Princeton University and a M.Ed. from Harvard University.
- **Linda Moriarty**, CAGS, Ed. Linda is a consultant for SchoolWorks. After teaching for 21 years in grades 4-6 in the Boston School Department, she served as a Curriculum Specialist for a K-12 Boston Magnet Zone of 26 schools; two years as an assistant principal in two different K-5 schools in Boston and subsequently as a cabinet member for the superintendent of a K-12 Boston Public School Zone. She retired from a twelve year position as principal of a K-5 school in Marshfield MA.
- **Cecelia D. Brady** currently serves as an Executive Leadership Coach of the DC New Leaders for New Schools program, coaching resident and post-resident principals. She joined NLNS in June, 2004 following a 33 year career as an educator with the District of Columbia Public Schools. Cecelia became a classroom teacher, teaching grades K through 6 and then went on to pursue a Masters degree in Guidance Counseling from Bowie State and an Administrative Certificate from Trinity College. After completing her MED, she became counselor at Stevens Elementary in downtown Washington, DC, and assistant principals and principal at various District of Columbia Public Schools.

As noted above, the team used the QEBs, a subset of the State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks, as the guides for its evaluation. In addition, the team relied on a set of framework questions to structure the "School Progress Report" section of this document. Prior to the two-day visit, the team reviewed the school's documents, including its annual *Accountability Plan Progress Report*, reports from previous site visits by the Institute or other entities, such as the New York State Education Department, and relevant sections of the school's charter agreement. During the visit, the team observed classes, reviewed student work, interviewed school administrators, school board members, staff, parents and students, and reviewed curriculum and other documents to understand the efforts the school is making to achieve its academic and organizational goals.

III. SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approved the application for Leadership Prep Charter School (“Leadership Prep”) on July 15, 2005, which became effective by operation of law on December 11, 2005. After utilizing 2005-06 as a planning year, Leadership Prep opened on September 5, 2006 with an enrollment of 116 students in Kindergarten and first grades. The school added second grade in 2007-08 bringing its total enrollment to 170 students. Leadership Prep plans to continue expanding by one grade in each year of its initial charter, growing to serve a maximum enrollment of 300 students in Kindergarten through fourth grade in 2009-10. The founders of the school envision the eventual addition of a fifth through eighth grade middle school. Leadership Prep Charter School is located on the 3rd floor of 600 Lafayette Avenue in Brooklyn.

As of the date of the current school inspection, the Board of Trustees of Leadership Preparatory Charter School was comprised of the following individuals:

- Ms. Carrie Abrahamson
- Ms. Gail Brousal
- Ms. Caroline Curry
- Mr. Ben Esner
- Mr. John King (Ex Officio)
- Mr. Max Koltuv (Ex Officio)
- Ms. Ruth Meyler
- Ms. Renee Muir
- Mr. Tokumbo Shobowale
- Mr. Dyrnest Sinckler
- Mr. Jeffrey Wetzler

The mission statement for Leadership Prep is as follows:

Leadership Prep Charter School in Bedford-Stuyvesant ensures academic success for children in grades K through 8. By fostering unparalleled academic success in elementary and middle school, we prepare our students to excel in demanding, college-prep high schools. Through educational achievement in high school and college, our students earn opportunities in life for themselves and prepare to contribute as leaders in their communities.

Leadership Prep’s original charter did not include a provision for a partnership with an educational management organization. However, the school’s Board of Trustees requested a modification to the charter which would allow them to contract with Uncommon Schools, Inc. (“USI”), a not-for-profit educational management organization, which was approved by the State University Trustees on September 26, 2006. The specific services that USI provides, as outlined in the Academic and Business Services Agreement between USI and the Leadership Prep Board of Trustees, include the following: a managing director, responsible for supervising and managing the head of school and principal and for managing and implementing the academic and non-academic operations of the school; an intensive leadership program for the head of school and principal, comprehensive annual

evaluations of the head of school and principal, and ongoing coaching and support of the head of school and principal; recruitment of instructional and non-instructional staff; professional development for staff, including necessary support and training for implementing the curriculum and assessment programs; curriculum development and implementation, including scope and sequence, assessment system, daily schedule, and a variety of other curriculum materials and related documents; development and implementation of a comprehensive student assessment program in order to measure each student's progress toward the school's academic accountability plan goals; development of a draft accountability plan; completion of a school inspection not less than every two years; federal and state funding reporting; facility management; fundraising and the development of budgets and financial reporting; school start-up functions, such as facilitating the acquisition of needed materials and information technologies; and facilitating the acquisition of insurance.

Key design elements of Leadership Prep, as outlined in the school's charter include²:

- a master teacher and teaching assistant in grades kindergarten through 2nd grade, with a single master teacher in 3rd grade and beyond, per the school's amended charter (original charter called for two teachers in each classroom in grades kindergarten through three;
- expecting excellence;
- recruiting, developing, and retaining great teachers;
- assessing early and often to inform effective instruction;
- focusing on literacy;
- employing research-proven curricula;
- making more time;
- helping students until they master it;
- providing structure and order;
- keeping it personal;
- developing character;
- involving families; and
- helping students envision a bright future which inspires them to achieve.

As the school expands through the grade range contained in its original charter, the academic program will be structured in two age-based academies: the Foundations Academy (K - 3rd grades) and the Scholars Academy (4th grade, and if the charter is renewed, 5th grade). Although both academies are intended to be closely integrated in the areas of curriculum development, teacher training and culture of achievement, they will each have their own teaching staff and traditions.

² The Charter's Executive Summary indicates the founders of the school developed the key programmatic elements by visiting and studying the following successful schools: Amistad Academy (New Haven, CT), the KIPP schools, North Star Academy (Newark, NJ), Bronx Prep, Roxbury Prep (Boston, MA), South Boston Harbor Academy (Boston, MA), the Academy of the Pacific Rim (Boston, MA), Lawrence Community Day Charter School (Lawrence, MA), The Marva Collins Preparatory Charter School (Milwaukee, WI), Kew-Bennett Elementary (Los Angeles, CA), Earhardt Elementary (Chicago, IL), and PS 141 The Grown School (New York, NY).

School Year (2007-08)

193 Instructional Days

School Day (2007-08)

7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.³

Enrollment

	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment⁴	Original Chartered Grades	Revised Grades Served	Actual Grades Served	Complying
2005-06	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year
2006-07	120	120	116	K-1	K-1	K-1	YES
2007-08	180	180	170	K-2	K-2	K-2	YES
2008-09	240			K-3			
2009-10	300			K-4			

Race/Ethnicity	2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. Leadership Prep	% of Enroll. Community District #13
American Indian or Alaska Native	NA]
Black or African American	NA	NA
Hispanic	NA	NA
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	NA	NA
White	NA	NA

Source: New York State Education Department Database

³ According to the school's charter, 7:30 to 7:50 is used for breakfast, right work, and handing in homework, while 3:45 to 5:00 p.m. is used for a Homework Club.

⁴ Actual enrollment per the Institute's Official Enrollment Table. Note that the NYSED database, upon which the Free and Reduced lunch figures are calculated, may represent slightly different enrollment levels depending on the date in which this data was collected.

Special Populations	2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. Leadership Prep	% of Enroll. Community District #13
Students with Disabilities	5.2 % ⁵	10.6 %
Limited English Proficient	0.0 %	3.8 %

Source: New York State Education Department Database

Free/Reduced Lunch	2006-2007	
	% of Enroll. Leadership Prep	% of Enroll. Community District #13
Eligible for Free Lunch	49.1 %	59.1 %
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	17.2 %	9.5 %

Source: New York State Education Department Database

School Charter History

Charter Year	School Year	Year of Operation	Evaluation Visit	Feedback to School	Other Actions Taken
Original Charter – 1 st Year	2005-06	Planning Year	NO	NONE	NONE
Original Charter – 2 nd Year	2006-07	1 st	YES	Prior Action Letter, End-of-Year Evaluation Letter	Charter revision approved to add management partner and change instructional staffing levels
Original Charter – 3 rd Year	2007-08	2 nd	YES	External School Evaluation Report	NONE

⁵ The table represents data as of the start of the school year as recorded by SED. At the time of the visit, the percent of students with disabilities served by Leadership Prep was 14%; representing admitted students who had not been previously identified as in need of support services.

IV. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The review team concludes that Leadership Prep Charter School (“Leadership Prep”) is high functioning in instructional practice, management and organizational structure. The school has established a strong culture and a strong instructional practice across grade levels that are supported by detailed systems of curriculum, assessment and professional development. School leadership and board governance work effectively at Leadership Prep.

The school has a strong instructional program supported by an unusually detailed and comprehensive set of curriculum guides and research-based professional development. The school has also established a systematic and comprehensive process for compiling and analyzing assessment data, both formative and summative, to use to monitor student progress and to make improvements to school curriculum and instructional practice.

There is a consistency of strong instructional practice throughout the school which has resulted in steady academic growth of students on all levels. Although observers found minimum evidence of critical thinking activities in several classrooms, this issue is being addressed by school leadership and the teaching staff. The school has strong and supportive instructional leadership which is evidenced in all aspects of curriculum and instruction. There is a comprehensive system for supervision and evaluation that ensures this consistently strong instructional practice in all classrooms.

Leadership Prep has a strong culture that promotes learning and high student achievement. Routines, procedures and expectations are internalized by students in all grades. There is a sense of fun and warmth within a culture of discipline and respect. The school also has programs that are demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically to meet the school’s academic Accountability Plan goals. Students receiving intervention are making steady gains.

Stakeholders in the Leadership Prep community are clear on the overall vision and mission of the school. Parent/guardians and students are very satisfied with all aspects of Leadership Preparatory Charter School, and the board of trustees has implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes, and has abided by them to achieve the school’s mission and specific accountability goals. Board members are committed and dedicated to the continued success and growth of the school.

V. SCHOOL PROGRESS REPORT

Part I: Benchmark Analysis and Evidence of the School's Academic Success

A. "School Performance Review"

Performance Summary: Leadership Prep served students in kindergarten and 1st grade in 2006-07, its first year of operation, and thus did not have state testing grades that year. Based on standardized, norm-referenced exam results, the school appears to be on track to achieving the English language arts and mathematics goals in its Accountability Plan. Data is not yet available to evaluate progress towards meeting the school's science and social studies goals. The school is deemed to be in good standing under the state's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.

English Language Arts: Leadership Prep administered the Terra Nova exam to kindergarten students in the winter and spring of the 2006-07 school year, and to 1st grade students in the fall and spring. At the end of the school year the average Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) for kindergarten was 73 for reading and 68 for language. Moreover, 93 percent of kindergarten students scored at or above the national norm (50 NCE) in reading, and 83 percent scored at that level in language. The average NCE for 1st grade in reading was 57, up from 43 in the fall; it was 65 in language, up from 39 in the fall. Leadership Prep also administered the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Skills (DIBELS) assessments to 1st grade students at the beginning and end of the school year. At year's end, the percent that achieved grade level mastery on four literacy domains ranged from 86 to 95 percent, up from less than 50 percent in all four domains in the fall.

Mathematics: On the Terra Nova exam, the average NCE for kindergarten at the end of the school 2006-07 year was 68, well above the national norm. Comparing fall to spring results for 1st grade, performance rose from an average NCE of 31 to 70, and 84 percent of students scored above the national norm.

Science: Not Applicable

Social Studies: Not Applicable

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

B. School Educational Program Review

Benchmark 1B: The school has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and to use it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.

Leadership Prep has established a systematic and comprehensive process for compiling and analyzing assessment data, both formative and summative, to use to monitor student progress and to make improvements and changes to school curriculum and instructional practice.

Leadership Prep has established a consistent system of testing for all grade levels in both English language arts and mathematics. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy (DIBELS), a research-based standardized assessment, is administered to all students in grades K-2 three times a year. DIBELS focuses on four major areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency and comprehension. DIBELS is administered to Kindergarten children in July, when they are registered for an initial screening, and again in November, February and May. Students in grades 1 and 2 are administered DIBELS in October, January and April. The TerraNova, a norm-referenced, standardized achievement test of basic skills is administered to students in grades 1 and 2 in June of each year.

Leadership Prep also measures student interim progress using the DIBELS progress monitoring assessments every six to eight weeks to track student's progress in reading. Using a handheld device, teachers can assess students in minutes to measure the development of pre-reading and early reading skills (it includes a form of running record). These immediate results are used to inform the next six to eight weeks of instruction, to adjust student grouping and to re-teach in areas where students are struggling. DIBELS provides prescriptive interventions which are used for individual students as well as for the class as whole.

In addition to DIBELS progress monitoring, in 2006-2007, teachers administered the Direct Reading Assessment (DRA), an individual assessment which assesses decoding, fluency and comprehension normed to different levels, three times a year for immediate assessment before the end of term in October, February and in late May. This year the DRA has been replaced with TRC (administered using a palm pilot), an assessment which focuses more closely on comprehension skills than the DRA. The school has already seen gains on the interim English language arts assessment results with higher reading comprehension results since the implementation of this broader diagnostic assessment.

To supplement these external assessments, Leadership Prep uses interim assessments (IA) designed to replicate skills assessed by the TerraNova as well as NYS English language arts and mathematics exams. Due to their partnership with Uncommon Schools, Inc. ("USI"), and its sister school in USI, Excellence Academy (Excellence), Leadership Prep has been able to adopt these interim assessments developed by Excellence which are aligned with New York state standards. In addition, classroom teachers regularly assess students using more informal assessments such as end of unit tests, workbook tasks and other informal testing measures to track progress and to inform grouping and instruction.

Leadership Prep uses bi-monthly writing assessments to monitor writing growth and achievement and to promote a consistency of practice in this area. Beginning in September to establish a baseline, students are given bi-monthly a grade level writing prompt for a writing sample. Students follow the

Lucy Calkins writing workshop process – topic development, drafting, revising, editing and sharing. Leadership Prep has developed a rubric for assessing these writing pieces based on four levels of achievement. The writing samples are kept in portfolios to be analyzed during assessment meetings to assess individual student growth in this area as well as to monitor the strengths and weaknesses of the writing program. Portfolio samples are used in calculating report card grades and are shared with parents and students. Other informal assessments for English language arts include project work such as an author study in grades one and two, which classroom teachers grade using a four point rubric. Members of the review team saw samples of units demonstrating high, middle and low performance in this area.

The school uses the Saxon Mathematics program which has assessments after every ten lessons to track student progress and note strengths and weaknesses. Saxon tests results are electronically tabulated so that teachers have immediate data to analyze for planning, grouping and to inform on-going instruction. These assessments are supplemented by additional testing, either teacher designed or from other sources, to assess any other areas that are required by New York State standards. The school is presently piloting Stern Structural Arithmetic, which includes a more multi-modal hands-on instructional approach than Saxon, with some intervention students to see if gaps found in using Saxon math can be addressed. According to teachers, last year's pilot of Stern had already shown the intervention group making greater achievement gains.

Although New York State does not require testing in social studies and science for students in grades K-2, Leadership Prep staff has created formative assessments in both social studies and science based on material from a new Scott Foresman program they are piloting this school year. The staff aligns these assessments and curricula materials with New York State standards in these content areas.

The director of operations (DOO) takes the responsibility for compiling and disaggregating test results so that leadership and teachers have electronic access to all testing results in a very short time after testing occurs. The DOO creates graphs to demonstrate growth and comparisons to previous periods and previous years. These results are tabulated and disaggregated by grade level, by individual grade level teams, and by individual teachers and distributed in a timely manner to all staff. There is extensive professional development training for looking at such data results and consistent time built into the school year for results conferences among staff and with leadership.

As evidenced by professional development agendas and calendars, teachers have had several days of intensive training during the summers regarding assessment data and interpretation of data to inform classroom instructional practice. This focused training continued this fall during professional development days. In addition, time is built into grade level and cross grade meetings weekly to look at data and to use results to plan and improve instructional practice. The review team found much evidence of the school's consistent and intense examination of data to drive and improve instruction and curriculum.

The school uses the Paul Harvey "Results Protocol" to zero in on the data and set immediate action plans. Teachers are given protocols to identify student strengths and weaknesses school-wide in all areas of English language arts and mathematics; to identify grade level strengths and weaknesses; and to identify strengths and weaknesses in specific classrooms. Using a template, teachers develop six to eight week plans to address areas of global weakness for their grade level, for a specific classroom or as a school-wide focus. During this time, the head of school reviews all plans. Teachers

are able to group for instruction based on this data. Groups in both reading and mathematics are ability grouped based on testing results. Teachers reported that there are times that certain students may be moved up or down in a group based on the most recent test data, although the team did not determine the frequency of student movement. There are detailed intervention plans and tutoring developed for individual students within this planning, so that intervention instruction is clearly planned and detailed.

The review team found several examples of changes in instructional practice after data analysis. One is that teachers now screen kindergarten students using DIBELS, which they found to be more detailed and specific than the Harcourt Early Reading Success Indicator (ERSI) used the prior year. They feel better able to provide more specific intervention, and reading results for kindergarten students are higher this year. Another example is that Leadership Prep looked at Saxon mathematics test data over the summer to decide whether the Saxon program had gaps and did not teach a particular skill well according to New York State standards or whether the problem was instruction based. From this examination, it was decided that staff would teach four (instead of the recommended five) Saxon mathematics lessons a week to free Fridays for review, re-teaching and problem solving. Another change based on data results was to pilot Stern Structural Arithmetic with a targeted intervention group. Staff reported that this extended practice resulted in higher mathematic gains with most students moving on to the next level.

Leadership Prep uses data to make instructional and curriculum improvement adjustments in a systematic way with consistent monitoring and accountability.

Benchmark 1C: The school has a clearly defined and aligned curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards.

The school has designed an unusually detailed and comprehensive set of curriculum guides for English language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, art and physical education, which are used to prepare students to meet New York state performance standards. Leadership Prep offered three teachers the opportunity to align existing curriculum materials to New York state standards during the summer of 2007. Using a curriculum alignment template designed by Excellence as a framework, these teachers further developed the curriculum guides for all grades in all content areas up through grade four. As teachers completed drafts, the heads of school of Leadership Prep and Excellence, its sister school, provided oversight of the process.

The teacher writers focused on filling in the gaps in the curriculum teaching materials they are primarily using: Reading Mastery, the core reading program; Waterford Early Reading, a computer-based literacy program with graphics and music to reinforce students' early reading skills; Saxon Math; and Scott Foresman social studies and science materials. By analyzing testing data, staff had identified gaps in these programs and areas of weakness. The curriculums are all electronically available to all teachers, who are required to reference standards in the planning of lessons and units.

Although extensive, the standards and benchmarks expected at each grade level are written out with clarity for teachers both experienced and new. They include the skills and knowledge expected for each standard for each grade level and in each discipline. Reviewers noted that there are extensive support materials to make the curriculum guides truly useful tools for guiding planning and instruction to ensure that students are trained in the learning tasks and expectations set by the state as well as the school. The guides include sample lessons, lesson design templates with samples of

completed models, and instructional planning templates. The school has further extended the power of the curriculum guides by developing an annual scope and sequence for each subject area. The scope and sequences are further broken down into suggested sequence for monthly units and for weekly planning to help teachers organize and think out lesson planning both immediate and long-term.

Teachers use the curriculum guides to prepare weekly lesson plans, which are reviewed and commented upon by the head of school. Leadership Prep curriculum guides and materials are comprehensive in guiding teachers in instructional practice that prepares students for New York state performance expectations.

Benchmark 1D.1: The school has strong instructional leadership.

Through classroom observation, focus group discussions and review of school documents, the review team gathered consistent evidence that the head of school is a strong and supportive instructional leader and that the leadership team is effective. The head of school and leadership team are focused on student achievement and set high expectations for all community members.

In focus group discussions, teachers stated that they see the head of school as a strong instructional leader. Samples of his teacher observations and evaluations demonstrate that he is knowledgeable in research-based instructional and supervision practices. Under his leadership, there is extensive documentation of all aspects of the school operation and instructional practice. His directives to staff through e-mail and meeting agendas are written in direct, motivating and positive terms.

The head of school has extended leadership roles to the teaching staff by creating grade level team chairs (completion of a goal noted in the Institute's first-year letter to the school) who meet weekly with the head of school to create agendas specific to grade level issues and concerns. To address leadership needs regarding professional development, teachers are trained during summer professional development and on retreats to become trainers of their peers. The opportunities for meeting with peers and school leaders and for ample professional development time together have helped to create a strong instructional culture of collegiality and collaboration.

The head of school spends extensive time on teacher evaluation, observation and feedback. At the time of the review, he and the dean of students had completed over 191 observations of teachers. Review team members had access to a spreadsheet showing an average of 13.8 observation visits per teacher with the range going from eight visits to twenty-seven, which supports the individualization of feedback according to teacher need.

These observations are completed and feedback is given to the teacher in a timely manner. The head of school focuses not only on teacher strengths and weaknesses, but includes feedback specific to the school wide instructional goals as well. It was evident in a recent observation sample that feedback gave specific attention to stretching teachers to increase critical thinking levels in the classroom, a need yet existed for a school-wide focus as recognized by both the school and the review team. In an example of positive feedback, the head of school praised the teacher for "creating a culture in which students feel safe grappling with higher level questioning." Positive feedback is followed by questions that teachers are to respond to electronically. Areas of concern or in need of further development are clearly referenced and discussed. For example, it was suggested in one sample by

the head of school that a teacher “make a strong conscious effort to shift balance from easier to much harder questions.” Suggested materials and ideas for improvement were included in the feedback.

Formal evaluations are completed by the head of school once a year from December through March. All evaluations had been completed well before the review visit. The evaluation template is a lengthy document (about twelve pages) addressing specific strengths in all aspects of instructional practice and collegial and collaborative relationships with the rest of staff. The head of school identifies areas needing attention and coaching with questions for teacher reflection. Teachers respond with a self-evaluation and response to his questions. The head of school and the teacher together set goals for growth in instructional practice and professionalism. The formal evaluation is based on the several informal observations and the feedback loop established between the staff member and the head of school. Reviewers examined samples of both formal and informal observations that were detailed and thorough with a tone of supportiveness and respect at all times.

The leadership team is also designed to support instruction. Included on the team are a director of operations, who compiles assessment information (amongst many other responsibilities), as well as a dean of students, who oversees the general counseling and discipline of students and organizes the activities that promote and sustain the culture of academic achievement. The leadership team reviews academic data on a weekly basis and meets with grade level teams for discussion and planning for student academic improvement. The head of school reviews all teacher instructional plans designed as a result of data results.

There are two other positions to specifically support the leadership of the academic program. The learning support specialist provides intervention for students on individual education programs and other students at risk, and supports and mentors teachers working with these students. The reading specialist, a new position created at the initiative of the head of school and approved by the board of trustees, focuses on the needs of the reading/language arts program. She, too, supports students at risk and provides material and resources to classroom teachers. These two leaders serve together on a Student Support Team to provide comprehensive care for students at risk.

The review team found evidence of strong instructional leadership in all the most essential areas necessary for good teaching. The head of school and the leadership team are effective in instructional oversight.

Benchmark 1D.2: High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.

There is a consistency of strong instructional practice throughout the school, which has resulted in a steady academic growth of students on all levels. Within this consistent practice, observers found minimal evidence of higher order questioning and discussion that encouraged higher levels of critical thinking during classroom instruction.

Instructional practice reflected a school-wide consistency of practice in most areas. Observers noted teachers using core program materials in all classrooms visited. For each grade, the reading and language arts time is divided into reading blocks for all grade levels with little difference in schedules except regarding specialists' times. During the 160 minutes allotted for English language arts, about 80 minutes (two blocks) are focused on using the Reading Mastery Program and Read Aloud, the core reading program; another block (about 40 minutes) focuses on the Waterford

Foundations Program; and the last block concentrates on reading comprehension strategies drawn from Concepts of Comprehension.

Teaching routines regarding each reading block were similar and consistent through all observations. All classrooms use Saxon Mathematics as the core program for the daily 80 minutes of mathematics. The mathematics period is broken into two blocks; one for Math Meeting, which focuses on problem solving and review of basic facts and computation; and one for Math which concentrates on the Saxon lessons. The Friday mathematics periods are used for review, re-teaching, problem solving and using material to fill in the gaps of the Saxon mathematic program to better align with New York State standards. Students are ability grouped in all grades for both reading and Saxon mathematics lessons based on interim testing data. These groups are distinct for each subject, depending on the student's skill level, and students may move from one group to another.

There was evidence of high student engagement and attention (above 90%) with implicit high expectations for participation in 18 of 21 lessons observed. Teachers and students used similar language and strategies for transitions and attention such as the acronyms S.T.A.R. (Sit up, Track the speaker with your eyes, Ask and answer questions, and Respect at all times) in all classrooms. These school-wide behavioral expectations are displayed in all classrooms and the corridors throughout the school. There was effective use of instructional time and smooth timely transition times evident during all 21 observations. Although there was little wait time after each teacher question, teachers kept a pace of delivery that implied high expectations for attention and response and seemed appropriate for most students in 20 out of 21 observations. Teachers were quick to have other students support struggling students so that students were not put in positions of discomfort. Both teachers and students seemed to share a strong rapport and sense of fun during learning. Observers saw many examples of chants, movements and routines in all lessons observed.

Although there was consistent practice of questioning observed in all classrooms, in 15 out of 21 observations the majority of the questions were on a literal level with minimum evidence of higher order thinking and questioning among teachers and students. Instruction in almost all classrooms was teacher directed (20 out of 21) with teachers asking questions and students in turn responding directly to the teacher. Students were seen paired or in groups for student to student discussion or problem solving in only four out of 21 observations. Observers recorded higher level questioning at a minimal level (e.g., the teacher usually asking a child why or how you would describe a character) in only 10 out of 21 classes and not evident at all in two classes. There were some instances where teachers did ask students to make predictions before reading. Student responses showing higher order thinking were noted at times in 12 out of 21 lessons and not heard at all in nine of 21 observations. The practice of higher level questioning and response is not evident as consistent practice throughout the school.

The review team saw evidence that the need for higher order thinking in the classrooms is already recognized by the school, and a process is in place for addressing this area. Raising the level of higher order thinking in the classrooms is a strong focus of professional development and for supervisory feedback. Although the issue has risen to a conclusion from the review team's classroom observations, other evidence supports that it will be addressed in a timely manner.

Benchmark 1.D.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.

The school has a strong system for identifying struggling students and for providing effective intervention and support. The school provides support for students in many ways: by a longer school day and school year; by ability grouping for small group instruction during both reading and mathematics; by intervention program support during the core reading program; by providing at least 40 minutes additional intervention support during the school day for students with individual education programs (IEP) (about 14% of students have IEPs recognizing some type of learning disability) or for others who are struggling; by additional tutoring after school; and, for the first time since the school's inception, by providing tutoring during the summer.

Leadership Prep provides a longer school day and a longer school year than the average New York public school. The academic school day runs from 7:55 to 3:52 p.m. and the school year is 193 days providing additional learning time for all students. By regularly compiling and analyzing assessment data, teachers group children into ability levels for instruction. After every six to eight weeks, students' progress is assessed in both reading and mathematics and groupings are adjusted as individual student needs change. Students identified as struggling are provided intervention at different levels according to need. All at-risk students are provided time during the core reading blocks to use the reading program based on Wilson Foundations of Language, which is a multi-modal approach and is used predominantly to reach struggling students. Many of these same students are provided 40 minutes of additional instruction beyond the 160 minutes of core reading from either the reading specialist or learning support specialist. Besides using other aspects of the Foundations of Language program, the specialists use other support materials such as Visualizing and Verbalizing, a program structured to increase comprehension, and Wordly Wise for vocabulary development and fluency practice. From looking at recent testing results, it is apparent that intervention strategies are closing the gap between struggling students and those at proficiency levels.

For more intensive diagnoses of student issues inhibiting benchmark progress, the school has developed a Student Support Team (SST). This team is made up of the reading specialist, the learning support specialist, the dean of students and any two homeroom teachers involved for that week. Every week, the SST reviews two students with homeroom teachers and together they develop an instructional or behavioral intervention plan. The dean of students or a specialist will observe students in class and give teachers feedback and suggestions for reaching the struggling students.

In addition to school day intervention, homeroom teachers provide after-school tutoring twice a week for one hour on Mondays and Wednesday for students identified as needing extra intervention and time on learning. These sessions run for six to eight weeks, and students are either graduated out at the end of the session or are included again for another tutoring session. Through the services of the dean of students the school supplies homework support strategies to parents and make-up work for children who have missed classes due to illness. There is daily after-school homework support for children who do not meet the daily homework requirements. The school is proud of its 95% homework completion rate.

This summer there will be a school tutoring program mandatory for struggling students to mitigate some of the learning loss that happens over the summer break. Both teachers and parents express strong support for this additional attention to students in academic need. Beginning next year, the

school plans to hold Saturday tutoring sessions for third graders who have not met proficiency standards in reading. Leadership Prep has carefully planned intervention (which is adjusted frequently based on data results) and is committed to continuing to support struggling students.

**Benchmark 1E: The school’s culture allows and promotes a culture of learning.
Leadership Preparatory Charter School has a strong culture that truly promotes learning and high student achievement.**

Leadership Prep has created a culture of learning through its rituals and routines; its attention to the expression of joy in learning; and its consistent adherence to rules of behavior and decorum. Reviewers saw repeated examples of these school-wide practices that help to create a safe and purposeful learning environment in Leadership Prep. Behavioral cues such as S.T.A.R. (Sit up, Track the speaker with your eyes, Ask and answer questions, and Respect at all times) are consistent throughout the school so that even the youngest students responded with the same expected behavior when requested. Students are checked for required uniform dress daily as they are greeted with a handshake by a school leader. The school is intentional in expression of joy as well as promoting and maintaining discipline and respect. It has created a “Bible of Joy” electronically available to all teachers from which to draw on activities and ideas to infuse joy and delight into daily learning and procedures. Observers noted the sense of fun as the children transitioned to other activities with tools such as call and response, chants, songs, clapping, hand gestures and movement and the like. These strategies gave children opportunities to kinesthetically move in some way to help maintain focus and energy as well as to react in harmony. The overall effect is a safe and orderly environment for learning.

Leadership Prep holds a Friday Creed Circle every week to focus on the school’s creed values selected to build pride, self-esteem and respect within the school community. There are ten creed values, one highlighted each month by discussion at Creed Circle on Fridays, during classroom instruction, on notices sent home to families, on posters throughout the corridor and on walls in the classrooms. From the creed value of the month, scholars (students) generate other terms to express an example of that creed value. For the creed value of love, students chose the word compassion and in other weeks the words passion and caring. Reviewers heard creed values and terms referred to in several classrooms.

Awards systems are in place to promote positive behavior with a general consistency of practice throughout the school day. For example, all teachers send home a weekly homework log that is to be signed off on each evening by a parent or guardian for both daily assignments and for the 20 minutes a night of reading. These forms include a daily paw print which indicates student positive behavior and participation for that day. The paw print may be crossed out and replaced with either one or two checks depending on the degree of off-task behavior. The teacher will include comments to parents explaining the behavior report. In addition to this, each class has its own additional incentive system to reward positive behavior and accomplishment (such as earn a choice activity built into a time block). Classroom behavior was consistently on task in classrooms and corridors.

The dean of students (DOS) is responsible for supporting the staff in maintaining the culture and for the general discipline of students. She supports students with classroom behavioral issues with a combination of counseling and conversations referring to creed values and respect and by giving students space to “cool down.” The DOS at times gives additional support to teachers by classroom observation and feedback as to how to help a particular child maintain decorum (e.g. the material may be too hard for that child). She involves and supports parents by making calls regarding their

child's behavior during the school year whenever necessary; by giving parents some of the strategies that the school is using to contain some behaviors, by coordinating events such as Family For Achievement, and by doing intake meetings with all kindergarten students in July. At times, the DOS has visited families in their homes during the summer to establish a positive relationship from the start. The culture is further enhanced by Saturday field trips in which several staff members and even board members will join families and students on a city venture.

Benchmark 1F: The school's professional development program assists teachers in meeting student academic needs and school goals, by addressing academic shortcomings in student learning and teacher pedagogical skill and content knowledge.

Leadership Prep has a thoughtful and comprehensive professional development program. The program is continually adjusted and modified based on the school's student achievement data and the particular needs of the teaching staff. At present there is a two year professional development plan from 2007-2009. Professional development is designed in conjunction with Uncommon Schools, Inc., which provides resources and personnel to the school and combines some training and observation opportunities with other schools within its network.

Leadership Prep teachers were trained in and have implemented all new instructional initiatives in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies and science in all classrooms. Reviewers observed that the Reading Mastery, the Saxon mathematics program, the Waterford Foundation for Literacy program, and Scott Foresman science and social studies materials are being used in all classrooms with consistency of approach and practice.

Leadership Prep staff participated in intense three week long (including Saturdays) professional development sessions for the last two summers. In addition to training in core program initiatives, teachers had professional development focused on reading/writing workshop; Critical Friends; inquiry group discussions; responsive classroom techniques, Steven Covey time management strategies and training on analyzing assessment data. New staff receive an additional two days of training in the core subject area programs.

During the school year, nine days are set aside for professional development with well-planned agendas based on both long-term goals (two year planning calendar) as well as additional goals based on the most recent data results. After school closes for the summer, teachers participate in an additional three days of professional development offerings.

There are seven hours each week for planning, grade level meetings and professional development; three of those hours are on Friday afternoons. This year, the school has added inquiry sessions into their professional development time on Fridays. Two teachers a month present an instructional issue they may be struggling with. For example, a teacher may be videotaped teaching a particular lesson where there is a perceived issue. The video is played to the whole staff during the inquiry session. Following a protocol that ensures that feedback is helpful and respectful, teachers give suggestions and ideas to the teacher. During a focus group conducted by the review team, teachers commented that they found this process helpful.

The head of school is chiefly responsible for the planning and follow through of professional development and the implementation of instructional initiatives. Teachers are e-mailed, in advance, about any staff development and faculty meeting agendas. They are notified as to what preparation

or material they may need for these meetings or day-long professional development days. Teachers in focus groups stated that there is a strong, collaborative community regarding all aspects of improving instructional practice. Professional development is comprehensive with a systematic follow-up loop for accountability and improvement.

A more informal support for teacher development is teacher mentoring. There are two teachers for each classroom of up to 30 students in kindergarten through grade two, an identified lead teacher and a more novice teacher. Less experienced teachers are initially assigned higher ability groups to work with while under mentoring from the lead teacher. The lead teacher provides the mentee with feedback and support in addition to that of the head of school. Although they parallel teach rather than co-teach, the paired teachers carefully plan together to create consistent procedures and discipline structures for their classrooms. There is a protocol from the head of school for discussion and planning during their weekly meetings.

In addition to the extensive professional development training during school time, teachers are each allowed to spend up to \$500 a year in pursuing any other professional development, workshops and courses on their own. Teachers are also given class coverage to visit each other's classes for observation. They also have opportunities to visit Excellence Charter School of Bedford-Stuyvesant, the sister school.

The head of school oversees the professional development using ongoing feedback and communication with the staff via e-mail and faculty meetings. In January, the head of school administers a thorough survey to teachers, which rates their satisfaction for all areas of professional development training and initiatives. As a result of this survey, the leadership instructional team established focus areas of particular need for the year such as more attention to reading comprehension and critical thinking (data revealed that students are doing better consistently on multiple choice items but were not making the same strong gains on open-ended questions); improvement of core classes, particularly social studies and science (there was a need to address skills and strategies that a high number of students were struggling with); and the creation of more leadership opportunities for teachers (grade level team leaders were created who are responsible for setting agendas for their particular grade level and leading discussions).

USI also provides extensive training. USI collaborates with the school to provide master teachers with a retreat to train them to become trainers. In the summer of 2006, five teachers were trained in the "Taxonomy of Observable Teaching Strategies," a USI compilation of best teaching practices. In 2007, seven were trained. This summer these teachers will train other teachers with the expectation that these strategies will be in visible practice in classrooms next school year. Retreats are offered during the school year as well; for example, a retreat focusing on literacy was held this past fall and a mathematics retreat will be held in the spring. The special education division of USI provides personnel and materials support for all special education training such as in the Wilson Foundations of Learning Intervention program; Handwriting without Tears training; behavior modification strategies for teachers and counselors.

Professional development at Leadership Prep is well designed and monitored. There is a continual feedback loop of student results, teacher feedback and leadership observation to guide professional development.

Part 2. Benchmark Analysis and Evidence of the School's Organizational Viability

Benchmark 2B: The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.

All stakeholders in the Leadership Prep Charter School community are clear on the overall vision and mission of the school, and the school has implemented the key design elements in its charter.

The mission of Leadership Prep Charter School is:

“Leadership Prep Charter School in Bedford-Stuyvesant ensures academic success for children in grades K through 8. By fostering unparalleled success in elementary and middle school, we prepare our students to excel in demanding, college-prep high schools. Through educational achievement in high and college our students earn opportunities in life for themselves and prepare to contribute as leaders in their communities.”

The review team found that the mission and vision of the leadership Prep Charter School are clear to all stakeholders. The board of trustees discussed the priority of impressing students, even at this young age, with the importance of doing well academically and going to college. Board members felt that it was particularly necessary to engage students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds with such conversations about their future.

During a focus group with five parents, they voiced delight that their young children were talking about going to, for examples, New York University (NYU) or Harvard. These parents have even taken children to see the local colleges. They are extremely pleased with the Leadership Prep high standards for achievement, inspiration and high expectations for disciplined behavior and work habits.

Within Leadership Prep, each classroom is named for a particular college or university (many are where a Leadership Prep teacher has attended) ensuring student familiarity with colleges and universities. Beside each classroom are the graduation dates for that class from elementary school, from high school and from college, so children are constantly reminded of their long-term goals of college education. Teachers address students as “Scholars” and remind them of high expectations. They frequently talk about what a college student would do, and they reward obvious effort and hard work. In all focus groups, reviewers heard stakeholders referring to the school as a college prep school that upholds high expectations to meet the goal of college. There is a developed culture of language and expectations at Leadership Prep designed to impact the beliefs and the aspirations of its young students and their families that college is in their futures.

The school has clearly implemented the key design elements included in its charter, which are evidenced in all aspects of the school's culture and its academic achievement. The review team found strong evidence that:

- All classes held high expectations for academic participation and behavior.
- Teachers were well-prepared and created a sense of urgency regarding learning by moving instruction on in an efficient and well-paced manner.

- There was strong focus on elements of literacy in all classes observed and the use of research-based curricula and instructional practices.
- Students are assessed with high frequency and data is analyzed and results drive instructional and curricula improvement.
- There was a consistent, highly visible structure of routines and behaviors in all classrooms. Children’s behaviors and transitions demonstrated that even kindergarten students had begun to internalize the procedures and expectations of the school.
- There is a continual improvement of elements in the attention and refining of professional development, in expanding teacher leadership roles, in improving reading intervention approaches, and, most importantly, in continually improving student performance.

The head of school remarked that the essence of Leadership Prep is to “create a data-driven, rigorous, warm culture that motivates young children to set their goals for college.” At the time of the visit, the school lived up to its charter’s goals.

Benchmark 2C.1: The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school’s mission and specific goals.

The board of trustees for Leadership Prep Charter School consists of a broad range of committed, experienced professionals with expertise and experience in many professional sectors. There are representatives of professional fields such as education, the legal community, the financial community, and the social services community. Several board members have roots, both personal and professional, in the Bedford-Stuyvesant community. The managing director represents Uncommon Schools, Inc. on the board. Although there is not a parent position on the board, the board holds open meetings and several board members attend special school and family events. The board conducts an annual parent survey for feedback to them and to school leadership. New board members are recruited through a long and thoughtful process which includes personal recommendations, intensive interviewing by the board, attendance at a board meeting and a demonstrated deep commitment and willingness to help in raising funds for the school.

The review team met with ten out of fifteen members of the board of trustees (the board), who attended the focus meeting. It was clear from specific remarks and quotes heard from different members that there was a deep and lasting commitment to the school from the board members. Most of the members were there from the start and planned to continue working for the school. They are committed to fund-raising opportunities and to reaching out to contacts and interested parties for grants and funding to support the school. The board, which meets once a month, has an updated list of agenda items prepared at the school level that remain on the forefront until resolved. The head of school attends every board meeting, and he presents a “dashboard” of data to update members on school performance. The board reported that it holds the leadership responsible for academic learning goals and organizational goals by managing a monthly dashboard and by “asking tough questions.” As teachers expressed in a focus group, “the school feels the board’s presence – we wonder what they will ask us.” An example of a board decision based on the reported need by the head of school was to hire a reading specialist to provide more intensive intervention for struggling students and support for the reading program.

Much of the information reported to the board is contained in a document called the Performance Dashboard where updated data is gathered concerning results of testing and interim indicators of assessment; enrollment figures and trends, financial expenditures and needs, survey results and any other data pertinent to school concerns. The board is involved in planning for the future development of the school not only in terms of facility needs, but also supporting school-based initiatives for hiring or student support. The board described a process in which an area of challenge is identified (by the board or school leadership) and solutions are brainstormed and then piloted for analysis. The board is responsible for making detailed projections and pro forma budgets, for financial support beyond the public school contribution and the goal of a break-even budget within the next five years, and for strategic expansion. Decisions are based on the mission of high expectation of both academically and behaviorally and the core values. Agendas for board meetings reflected attention to these issues.

The board reported that it has sub-committees, both on-going and ad hoc, to address specific school issues. One sub-committee is working with the New York City Department of Education (DOE) on finding the appropriate and most advantageous space for relocation of the school to accommodate its future growth. It is presently evaluating a space option presented by the DOE. The board expressed a commitment to spending beyond their per pupil allotment for a space that will meet their needs for growth as well as to preserve the integrity of the school culture and program. In addition, the board is planning to grow more schools to truly continue the mission of the original charter in supporting students toward college education and success. Uncommon Schools is supporting this mission and sees Leadership Prep as one of up to six schools within this superintendency network.

The board has already evaluated the managing director and overall USI support using Leadership Prep leadership and staff feedback. There is a thorough process designed for this evaluation which includes a managing director self-evaluation; a school leadership (head of school and director of operations) assessment; an ad hoc committee of three people from the board that looks at all the information and drafts the evaluation; a board presentation and review; and a final evaluation written in template form with comments sent to USI.

The board is highly committed to keeping the school available to those with little opportunity to know how to get the best for their children. There is a concern that they need to specifically market the school to underserved communities so that the demographics of the school population will not change. This is an initiative that was given to USI and one that USI is completing by spending time on outreach through churches and public housing channels to advertise the school as an option.

The board of trustees has implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes and has abided by them to achieve the school's mission and specific accountability goals. There were clear guidelines both on paper and in practice for the role of the board in governance and the role of the school leaders in the management of the school. Board members see their role as that of asking the critical questions around student achievement, which is described as the heart of the charter for the school.

Benchmark 2D: Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.

Parent/guardians and students are very satisfied with all aspects of Leadership Preparatory Charter School.

The team found strong evidence that parents and their children are highly satisfied with the school. During the parent focus group, each of the five parents expressed unreserved enthusiasm for the school and for the positive learning environment provided for their children. All participants supported one parent's statement that the school has "a positive aura" felt by all and an open door policy where staff is always available to families for support. Parents were attracted to the school because of the promise of a strong school culture that is supported by a consistent discipline policy that includes a level of sternness with flexibility and cohesiveness, collaboration and support. They appreciate the deep commitment of all staff to the safety and high standards of continuous learning and behavior oriented to college goals. Parents lauded the philosophy of the school that the school and teachers "sweat the small stuff" so that big issues do not develop.

Parents had much to say about the ease of communication between the home and the school. Teachers call evenings and even on weekends not just to discuss issues but to speak of the positive progress of children. Parents expressed surprise that they get responses back immediately to their evening calls. In addition to frequent home phone calls, families receive weekly newsletters keeping them abreast of coming events and reminding them of the school's mission. There are daily homework forms sent for sign-off on homework assignments and daily student behavior charts. Report cards are given out quarterly directly to parents during a conference with their children's teachers. Parents feel that they do not have to visit the school frequently, because they are made so aware of all that is happening through a variety of communication channels.

To build community and enthusiasm, Leadership Prep encourages parents to join the staff and students in many evening workshops and presentations and, at times, on Saturday field trips. Some of the more popular events are Family Achievement Nights, where students and staff are acknowledged for achievement and receive awards. There are family workshops with an academic focus such as mathematics night where students join their family members and walk them through learning centers similar to those of their daytime program. Leadership Prep staff of all levels, as well as members of the board of trustees, at times join families on field trips on Saturdays such as to the zoo.

Parents spoke of the quality of academic and behavioral support their children are given. Most outstanding for them was the mandatory after-school tutoring for those students struggling for any reason with the core curricula. For the parents of students heading into third grade, the future summer tutoring session was described as an added bonus and layer of support for them. Parents spoke of receiving suggestions and materials to assist students at home with academic challenges or behavioral issues. Parents are kept abreast of absences, and teachers are generous with sending home make-up work for students absent due to illness. Parents claimed that teachers never give up and are always willing to try to a different approach if the present one is not working. As one parent stated, "they never blame the child - teachers find the way to reach that child." Parent survey results were very positive in most areas and seemed to support the school satisfaction reported by the parents in this focus group.

Parents presented only three challenges they feel are facing Leadership Prep. Foremost for them was the new space and facilities need being considered by the board of trustees to address the growth of the school. They were concerned with the location of this new space, and more importantly, (similar to board concerns) that the new space may inadvertently change the culture of school. They expressed disappointment at the lack of discipline and respect they perceived in some district schools, and thus they felt that co-inhabiting a building with another school may unbalance the strong

respectful culture of the present school. Another concern was the limited amount of extra-curricular activities. They love the new enrichment day, but wish for many more activities such as after-school sports programs and more multi-cultural activities. Their last wish was for a foreign language program to start in the early grades where children are most receptive to learning.

The review team met with a number of students. As young as they are, students easily expressed that they loved their school and teachers. They made statements such as, “Teachers care about you” and “Teachers help them to solve problems.” The review team concluded that parent and student satisfaction with the school was high.

VI. OVERALL TRENDS REGARDING THE SCHOOL

Academic Program

Although this is only the second year that Leadership Prep has been opened to students, the review team can conclude that the school has already developed a strong, consistency of practice in teaching approaches and strategies; in behavioral expectations and routines; and in establishing the goal of academic success for all. The school has fully implemented research-based programs and materials reflecting best education practices in all classrooms. Teachers make effective use of instructional time and transitions times are minimized within a strong culture of respect, positive attitude and a sense of joy. Leadership Prep has established an unusually thorough system of compiling, analyzing and using assessment data to consistently monitor instruction and improve student achievement. There are protocols and procedures for instructional planning with reviews, revisions, and high accountability for continued student academic gains. The school's intervention program has already resulted in reducing the gap between many struggling students and their more proficient peers. There is evidence that the school stakeholders on every level participate in self-reflection and self-improvement with a deep commitment to preparing students for a college future. The instructional leadership has been exceptional in its involvement and input in all aspects of the schools. Although reviewers found evidence of a low level of critical thinking activities, attention to improving this is already a high priority for the school both in terms of professional development and supervision. Assessment results showed continually strong academic gains for all grades after each term. The school is instructionally and academically very high functioning.

Organizational Viability

One of the over-riding strengths of this school is the structure and thorough documentation of role expectations, of school management protocols, of organizational and instructional systems and of any action plans. Observers can see on paper all that the school members do in practice. The leadership team has planned well and has followed through on the school's effective model. Professional development is designed based on identified areas in need of improvement in instructional practice and on the expressed needs and concerns of the teachers themselves. There is strong communication among all stakeholders, who work in collaboration and growing collegiality. Time is provided during the school week, during the school year, and before and after the school year for teachers to discuss, plan and train together. Students have additional tutoring and intervention time at different levels to meet their specific needs. In sum, school-wide systems are in place to ensure academic growth and success.

The board of trustees of Leadership Prep represents a broad range of professionals whose deep commitment is evident by their on-going involvement and actions concerning governance of the school. Agenda items remain on the table until resolved. While working together on short term issues, the board has sub-committees working on long-term issues. The support of Uncommon Schools, Inc. in providing an experienced and knowledgeable managing director and resources, both financial and professional, has had a positive impact on the school in many areas. The board has a process in place to work on addressing the school's most pressing growth challenges—the need for a larger facility and the need to retain and recruit teachers that are a good fit for the school culture and expectations. The review team concludes that there is much evidence that the organizational viability of Leadership Prep is strong.

APPENDIX A:

Framework for Report Discussion

Category	Report Section (Relevant Benchmark(s))	Evidence Sources
Academic Program	School Performance Review (Renewal Benchmark 1.A)	Developed by Institute
	School Educational Program Review (Renewal Benchmarks 1.B – 1.F)	Classroom observations; Interviews; Review of documents and student work
Organizational Viability	School’s Mission and Vision (Renewal Benchmark 2.B)	Review of documents; Interviews; Classroom observations
	Student and Parent Satisfaction (Renewal Benchmark 2.D.1)	Interviews; Review of school documents, including the Accountability Plan Progress Report
	Board of Trustees’ Systems (Renewal Benchmark 2.C.1)	Review of documents; Interviews; Classroom observations