



**Independent School Evaluation Visit Reports**

Attached is a school evaluation report based on a school visit conducted by an external vendor on behalf of the Charter Schools Institute. School evaluation visits are a key component of the Institute’s comprehensive oversight and evaluation system. They provide an assessment of the school’s academic program and, to a more limited degree, its organizational and governance capacity. The objectives of the school evaluation visit are to:

1. Collect and document evidence of the school’s progress toward meeting the academic and organizational standards found in the Institute’s Renewal Benchmarks; and
2. Provide the school with feedback on its current achievement of the Renewal Benchmarks that may be helpful to the school as it determines how best to improve its program in anticipation of renewal.

The Institute engages external vendors to conduct an independent school evaluation visit and write an evaluation report at least once during a school’s first charter term, and occasionally in subsequent charter terms. These evaluations provide the Institute with additional information about a school’s program from an objective external perspective and serve to inform, corroborate or challenge conclusions drawn from the Institute’s ongoing evaluation and oversight.

The vendors are selected through a competitive bidding process, and must demonstrate the capacity to conduct rigorous and reliable qualitative evaluation of a school’s academic program and organizational capacity. The vendors are contracted to specifically collect and analyze evidence pertaining to the following SUNY renewal benchmarks<sup>1</sup>:

<b>Academic Success</b>	<b>Organizational Effectiveness and Viability</b>
1B. Use of Assessment Data	2A. Mission & Key Design Elements
1C. Curriculum	2B. Parents & Students
1D. Pedagogy	2C. Organizational Capacity
1E. Instructional Leadership	2D. Board Oversight
1F. At-Risk Students	2E. Governance
1G. Student Order & Discipline	
1H. Professional Development	

While specific evaluation methodology is left to the discretion of the vendor, the school evaluation visits typically include classroom observation, interviews with teachers, parents, school leaders and board members, and review of relevant documents. The attached report was written by a vendor based on evidence collected during a school evaluation visit, with the school description section provided by the Institute. The school had an opportunity to review a draft of this report and provide factual corrections and comments prior to the finalization of the report.

<sup>1</sup> These reference version 4.0 of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks; the latest version can be found on the Institute’s website at: <http://newyorkcharters.org/documents/renewalBenchmarks.doc>

Other evaluation reports for this or other schools can be found on the Institute's website at [www.newyorkcharter.org](http://www.newyorkcharter.org). For questions or concerns about this report or the Institute's school evaluation procedures, please contact Simeon Stolzberg, Director of School Evaluation, at [simeon.stolzberg@suny.edu](mailto:simeon.stolzberg@suny.edu) or 212-221-6332.

# **External Evaluation Report of Kings Collegiate Charter School**

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**Conducted by RMC Research  
on Behalf of  
the Charter Schools Institute**

**2008 – 2009**

**June, 2009**



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## *1. Executive Summary*

Kings Collegiate Charter School was visited by an external school inspection team from RMC Research on behalf of the Charter Schools Institute on May 6 and 7, 2009. The school was in its second year of operation and served students in fifth and sixth grades. All students participated in the New York State Testing Program (NYSTP) but the results of the assessments had not been returned to the school at the time of the visit. However, the school was optimistic that results would demonstrate improvement from the prior year and would reflect the intense instructional focus of the school. This view was bolstered by the data from a well-defined and continuous assessment system established in the school. Based on the strong academic performance of Williamsburg Collegiate Charter School, the first school opened in the Collegiate network of schools that is affiliated with Uncommon Schools, Inc., interim assessments developed at Williamsburg Collegiate and refined at Kings Collegiate were administered to monitor student progress and to predict success on the state assessments. Data from these assessments combined with data from the Terra Nova and from other locally created assessments were regularly analyzed by the co-director of curriculum and instruction and teachers and were used to drive all decisions about curriculum.

Although a relatively new school, Kings Collegiate had developed a set of standards in all subjects founded on those created at Williamsburg Collegiate. These were based on the New York State standards in each subject area and were organized into a scope and sequence which was comprehensive and uniform for the school. The inspection team concluded that the standards and the related curriculum provided a foundation for a rigorous academic program at Kings Collegiate. Teachers used these standards to create curriculum documents including curriculum alignment templates (CATs); syllabi, which were five day plans; and daily lesson plans. The curriculum was continually modified based on the results of the interim and other assessments by all staff on a regular basis. This served to provide a high degree of consistency and alignment in the development and execution of the curriculum throughout the school.

Students at Kings Collegiate were departmentalized for instruction in reading, writing, mathematics problem solving, math procedures, history and science. All teachers implemented the school's curriculum faithfully and were knowledgeable about their subject area content. Instruction was delivered chiefly in whole class format, with little differentiation of instruction in the classrooms, except for some recent additional grouping for mathematics instruction in one class which was prompted by the results of the interim assessments indicating the need for re-teaching. Most instruction was well-paced and instructional time was maximized. In some classes, however, lessons were teacher dominated and several students in those classes were not engaged. Additionally, novels used to teach reading and history were not always appropriate to the instructional levels of all students. Overall, the inspection team observed that Kings Collegiate had the basis for high quality instruction that could be improved as the school continued to use student assessment data to refine its pedagogical model.

Instructional leadership was very strong at Kings Collegiate. The school was led by two co-directors, one for instruction and one for all other areas. The co-director for instruction was involved in all aspects of curriculum, instruction, assessment and professional development. Further, she had developed systems and procedures for assisting staff to examine their

pedagogical content and practices that were consistently implemented and were directed to the assessed needs of students. She provided a high degree of supervision and support.

The systems for identifying and supporting at-risk students were well developed at Kings Collegiate. Although there were minimal opportunities for the subject area teachers to provide additional individual or small group support to special education and other struggling students in the classrooms during the school day, students received direct instruction through push-in and pull-out services from the special education coordinator/teacher. Students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) and others at-risk also received Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) before school, at lunchtime and during the enrichment period. There was also a functioning student study team (SST) which met to develop individualized student support plans for students referred for at-risk services.

Routines for maintaining a safe and orderly environment were evident. Kings Collegiate developed and consistently used a system for behavior management throughout the school. A dean of students supported teachers and students to implement the system and to maintain a culture for learning.

The professional development program at Kings Collegiate was largely data driven and focused on meeting the needs of students and teachers. Inquiry groups met weekly and the co-director for instruction guided teachers in these and in planning meetings to refine curriculum, to modify instruction and to examine classroom and school practices. She also met with individual teachers weekly to discuss observations of their instructional practices, to review specific data and to create plans for individual students. It was also reported that teachers met with teachers of the same subjects and grade levels from Williamsburg Collegiate to develop their subject area competencies.

Parents interviewed expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the discipline system, academic program and the well developed organization at Kings Collegiate. The inspection team also found that the organizational structure of Kings Collegiate, while modeled on the previously developed Williamsburg Collegiate, was efficient and supported the schools instructional programs.

The board of trustees of Kings Collegiate was the same board for all schools in the Collegiate network. They had engaged Uncommon Schools to manage the Collegiate schools and the managing director, who served as superintendent, provided the oversight to the co-directors and, as a member of the board, kept them abreast of the school's development and progress. The board was very experienced and clearly understood its roles and responsibilities for oversight and governance.

## 2. *School Description*<sup>1</sup>

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approved the application to establish Bedford-Stuyvesant Collegiate Charter School on November 9, 2005. Note: The school requested, and the State University Trustees approved, a charter revision to change the school's name to Kings Collegiate Charter School ("Kings Collegiate") on May 31, 2007; this revision was subsequently approved by the Board of Regents on July 25, 2007.

Following one planning year (2006-07), the school opened in the fall of 2007 with an initial enrollment of 81 students in fifth grade. The school added a sixth grade in 2008-09, growing to serve 136 students in grades 5 and 6. The school plans to add one additional grade each year for the next two years, serving students in fifth through eighth grade with an expected enrollment of 277 students in the 2010-2011 school year. Ultimately, the school's board of trustees plans to serve students in grades 5 - 12. The Kings Collegiate Charter School is located at 1084 Lenox Road in Brooklyn, New York, sharing a facility with I.S. 252 and the Middle School of Art and Philosophy.

Kings Collegiate contracts with Uncommon Schools, Inc. ("USI"), a not-for-profit educational management organization, for the development and implementation of the school's educational program. USI provides the school with a broad range of services including: 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; development and implementation of the academic program and assessment protocol; recruitment of staff; professional development; school inspection services; budgets; reporting requirements; coordination of audit services and back office functions; technology coordination; fund development, facility management, and marketing/advocacy.

As of the date of the current school evaluation visit, the school's board of trustees was comprised of the following individuals:

- Ms. Reena Mithal, Chairperson;
- Mr. John Greenstein, Treasurer;
- Ms. Allyson Alimansky;
- Mr. Robert Howitt;
- Ms. Suzanne Karr;
- Mr. John Kim;
- Mr. Brett Peiser;
- Ms. Laura Lee, ex officio; and
- Ms. Lauren Harris, ex officio.

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<sup>1</sup> This section was provided by the Charter Schools Institute for inclusion in this report.

The mission of Kings Collegiate Charter School is to prepare each student for college.

Key design elements include:

- a longer school day and year;
- double periods and English and mathematics daily, as well as an hour each of science and history for all students;
- tutoring and Saturday school;
- emphasis on college, including meetings with a college advisor and frequent college visits;
- calm, composed and disciplined environment, including a strictly enforced dress code, and merit/demerit and rubric systems;
- explicit instruction in literacy skills;
- targeted curriculum focused on basic skills;
- frequent school-wide assessments; and
- substantial family involvement.

**School Year (2008-09)**

193 instructional days

**School Day (2008-09)**

7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

**Enrollment**

<b>School Year</b>	<b>Chartered Enrollment</b>	<b>Actual Enrollment<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Chartered Grades</b>	<b>Complying</b>
2006-07	Planning year	Planning year	Planning year	Planning Year
2007-08	75	81	5	Yes
2008-09	146	136	5-6	Yes
2009-10	213		5-7	
2010-11	277		5-8	

<sup>2</sup> Actual enrollment per the Institute’s Official Enrollment Table. Note that the New York State Education Department School Report Card and Database may represent slightly different enrollment levels depending on the date on which this data was collected.



### Demographic Data<sup>3</sup>

	2007-08	
	Percent of Charter School Enrollment	Percent of CSD 18
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0
Black or African American	99	90
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0	7
Hispanic	0	1
White	0	2
Multiracial <sup>4</sup>	1	0
<b>Special Populations</b>		
Students with Disabilities <sup>5</sup>	15	NA
Limited English Proficient	0	6
<b>Free/Reduced Lunch</b>		
Eligible for Free Lunch	60	63
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	19	9

<sup>3</sup> Source: 2007-08 School Report Cards (New York State Education Department). Note that the State Education Department does not report special education data.

<sup>4</sup> Multiracial enrollment data were not collected statewide in the 2005-06 school year.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Kings Collegiate Accountability Plan Progress Report

### **3. Benchmark Analysis**

#### Use of Assessment Data

Kings Collegiate had a well defined assessment plan. The Terra Nova assessments were administered in the fall and spring in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The co-director for instruction indicated that the data from the Terra Nova examinations were used to compare Kings Collegiate to other schools nationally. The New York State Testing Program (NYSTP) assessment data, along with data from internally designed fifth grade placement tests, were used to determine the placement of students into ability grouped classes based on ELA and mathematics proficiencies and to measure their progress and achievement from year to year. The school administered interim assessments in ELA and mathematics every six to eight weeks. These assessments were created by the “Collegiate” network of three charter schools, of which Kings Collegiate was the second member. It was reported that the construction of the interim assessments was chiefly developed by curriculum experts at Williamsburg Collegiate Charter School and refined by the teachers at Kings Collegiate so that they were the same across the three Collegiate schools. These interim assessments mirrored the New York State assessments and yielded results that were used to chart the progress of individual students throughout the year. Additionally, the teachers administered the Village Academy Assessments, developed at the Harlem Village Academies Charter School in New York City, to measure independent reading levels. A writing test, given in the fall of 2008 to assess fifth grade students, consisted of a writing prompt which was administered in Kings Collegiate and in all Collegiate schools. This examination was corrected and analyzed by Educational Vistas, a consulting company that provides a New York state assessment scoring and reporting service for charter schools. Educational Vistas provided data to demonstrate trends by class and by school. Finally, Kings Collegiate created assessments such as quizzes, performance based assessments for each subject area which were administered throughout the year.

The interim assessments were administered over a two day period, usually Mondays and Tuesdays. On Wednesdays, teachers met together with the co-director for instruction to score the tests and record their results. On the Fridays following the administration of the interim assessments, the staff met to analyze scores by student and by class. Every teacher developed an action plan that identified students needing additional services, such as tutoring, and adjusted the classroom instruction to meet students’ needs based on the new data. The results of the assessments and the actions plans would be posted by the teachers on the shared drive so that the co-director for instruction and other appropriate staff members would have access to the data. The co-director for instruction worked closely with the teachers to support and monitor the analysis of assessment data to ensure that necessary changes were made to the instructional program and that students would receive necessary interventions. Adjustments to the instructional program could include reteaching a concept or skill not mastered as demonstrated by the assessment results. For example, in fifth grade mathematics, data consistently demonstrated that there was a significant group of students who did not understand fractions. As a result, students were regrouped and lessons were revised to reflect the additional review of fractions.

Kings Collegiate had developed rubrics in writing and in history by grade and the co-director for instruction reported that their next step would be to align those rubrics vertically among grades during the summer of 2009. The writing rubrics were developed in conjunction with Williamsburg Collegiate and were based on the 6+1 Trait Writing program. The history rubrics were developed and based on the rubrics used for the New York state eighth grade social studies assessment. Additionally, science rubrics were used for lab reports. The rubrics were observed to be used consistently throughout the school.

Although the co-directors could not state definitively whether the assessments used could predict that all accountability goals were being met, they were confident that they were moving in that direction. The interim assessments were a major source of data for the teachers and were still in the process of being modified to align with the developing school curriculum. The co-director for instruction indicated that, while the interim assessments were “not at the point of being predictive,” they had made significant academic improvement in ELA. The assessment results had just been reported to the school at the time of the visit and both grades five and six made major gains.

Kings Collegiate reported the results of assessments to parents on report cards four times each year which contained scores from the interim assessments as well as a narrative written by teachers to describe each child’s progress during that period. Additionally, progress reports were sent home every three to four weeks to provide parents with information about class assignments and interim assessments.

The team observed that the entire staff of Kings Collegiate, with the support and oversight of the co-director of instruction, was actively involved in all aspects of data gathering and analysis to make informed decisions about instruction for students. There was strong evidence to suggest that student assessment data were understood and used to drive decisions about curriculum and instruction at Kings Collegiate.

### Curriculum

Kings Collegiate had developed, in conjunction with network support from the other Collegiate charter schools, the Kings Collegiate standards (KCS) which were initially developed at Williamsburg Collegiate and were based on the New York State standards in each subject area. The Kings Collegiate curriculum organized the KCS into units with measurable objectives that were sequenced based on the decisions of Kings Collegiate staff and grouped in such a way that made clear which units would be tested on each interim assessment. The curriculum was comprehensive and uniform for the school. Based on the Kings Collegiate core curriculum, teachers developed curriculum alignment templates (CATs) through which they created units, decided on learning activities and how the objectives would be assessed. The CATs were created during the summer prior to the opening of school. Using the CATs as a roadmap, teachers then created five day plans, syllabi, which indicated what they would teach each day, including the major activities, their agenda, and homework they would assign. Based on the syllabi, teachers developed daily lesson plans. Based on data from the interim assessments, teachers reviewed and revised their units and plans during the professional development sessions

that occurred following the administration of the interim assessments. These procedures were observed to be well defined and embedded in the culture of the school.

Team members examined the Kings Collegiate standards and observed that the school had used the New York State performance indicators and made them more specific, but did not include all performance indicators in all subject areas. The managing director of the Collegiate network, who was referred to by the co-directors as a “superintendent,” reported that the Collegiate schools focused on content indicators and not process indicators in all subjects except mathematics. He also indicated that they focused on the performance indicators that were measurable.

Kings Collegiate prided itself on having a curriculum that is not tied to any specific commercial instructional program. The team observed that there were a variety of commercial materials available to teachers for use as resources, including those from Everyday Math, Connected Math, Teacher’s Curriculum Institute history textbooks, Full Option Science System (FOSS) kits, Harcourt science textbooks, and Glencoe Math books. In most cases, teachers were provided with flexibility to use any parts of the commercial programs that were appropriate to support the curriculum.

The ELA curriculum for grades five and six relied on reading prescribed class novels. The novels were reported by the co-director of instruction to have been selected based on the instructional reading levels of the vast number of students in the classes. In addition, the curriculum resources for history included historical novels. In ELA and history, teachers did not have discretion about which novels they had to use, since they had to select from a predetermined list used at other Collegiate charter schools. Teachers reported that, in some cases, these novels in ELA and history were too difficult for some students to read independently and were working with the co-director of instruction to modify the list of novels for next year.

Kings Collegiate has worked to develop a high degree of consistency and alignment in the execution of the curriculum among teachers within each grade and across the grades. Evidence strongly suggested that the teachers were fully included in the refinement of the school’s curriculum and its implementation. The inspection team concluded that the curriculum content, as implemented, was rigorous and supported the school’s mission to prepare students for college.

### Pedagogy

Students at Kings Collegiate were departmentalized for instruction in both the fifth and sixth grades. Each grade was organized into three separate groups, 5A, 5B, 5C and 6A, 6B and 6C. Students in each grade traveled to their reading, writing, mathematics problem solving, math procedures, history and science classes together. Each student was also assigned to an advisory which integrated students from the three groups in each grade level. Two teachers were assigned as advisors for each advisory group.

Team members observed that most teachers demonstrated a high degree of subject area competence. Instruction observed was rigorous and learning objectives were clearly posted and

communicated to students. A high degree of alignment between the school's standards, the objectives, the weekly syllabi and the daily lesson plans was also observed.

It was reported by the co-directors that students were assigned to each of the three classes in each grade in homogeneous groups based on the reading and mathematics assessment results. Students strong in both ELA and mathematics were placed in one class, while another class consisted of students who needed the most intensive instruction in ELA and/or mathematics. The co-directors felt strongly that, since students were in classes with other students at the same instructional level, there did not need to be further differentiation of instruction in regular classrooms. Further, they expressed their views that, through whole class instruction, they could be assured that the "full year's objectives are taught." They indicated that "small group instruction takes a higher level of skill, particularly with management issues" and did not think their teachers would be as successful at this time using grouping as an instructional strategy. As a result, the schoolwide instructional approach was based on whole class instruction. This year, based on results from interim assessments and from teacher input, the school had regrouped the students in 5A by ability into three smaller groups in reading and two groups in mathematics taught by the classroom teacher, the co-director for instruction and the special education teacher. In ELA, the students in 5A were reading a different set of novels from other students in the fifth grade, reported by the teachers to better match their instructional levels. In mathematics, students on the lowest instructional level were being taught by the special education teacher. The lesson planning for all of the 5A groups was done by the classroom teacher for the special education teacher and the co-director for instruction to use. Sixth grade reading and mathematics teachers were anticipating that this grouping pattern would continue into sixth grade next year.

A number of lessons observed were teacher dominated and, in those classes, the team saw students who were not engaged and others who did not understand the concepts being taught. Overall, school inspectors observed that lessons were well paced and tightly planned so that instructional time was maximized. Most teachers were observed to ask thought provoking questions and students were asked to explain their answers. However, some teachers observed asked literal questions that required one word answers and did not provide opportunities for students to speak. The lessons delivered in all classes were organized around worksheets that were either developed by the teachers or taken from commercial programs available to them for instructional support. The co-directors characterized the pedagogical model used throughout the school as "direct instruction" and every class was required to follow the same procedures, including: a do now, which was a written activity planned for the first five to eight minutes of the period; a presentation of the lesson by the teacher; guided practice and independent practice for students; and the completion of an exit ticket, which served as a brief assessment of teaching and learning. This model was consistent in all classes observed.

The team also observed that classes did not have sufficient numbers of fiction and nonfiction books easily accessible to students to support independent reading, nor were there appropriate reference materials accessible in classrooms, such as dictionaries, maps and other authentic sources to support instruction. Observers noted the absence of displays of student work in classrooms. There was a limited amount of student work displayed in the hallways. Most of this consisted of worksheets and some writing samples graded using rubrics. Most classrooms did not reflect the subject area being taught.

School inspectors concluded that Kings Collegiate had established a firm foundation for high quality instruction, which could be improved as the school continued to examine student assessment data in more depth and refined their pedagogical model to meet the needs of all students.

### Instructional Leadership

The inspection team found that the instructional leadership was very strong at Kings Collegiate. There were high academic and behavioral expectations for students. Additionally, teachers were closely supported and monitored to ensure that they performed at the highest levels. The co-director for instruction worked directly with each teacher both in their classrooms and at weekly scheduled individual meetings. She collected and reviewed lesson plans weekly, at minimum, which were posted on a shared drive, and she provided feedback to every teacher. In addition, the co-director for instruction met with teachers by subject and grade as well.

Observation of each teacher was conducted by the co-director for instruction weekly, at minimum. Teachers requiring more intensive supervision and support were often observed more frequently. The co-director for instruction and the teachers all reported that the co-director's observations served as the basis for the individual weekly meetings with each teacher. The co-director of instruction maintained detailed and extensive records of the weekly discussions with each teacher to build upon and for future reference.

The co-director for instruction established a comprehensive plan for professional development that addressed the needs of the school as a whole, the needs of each grade and of each teacher. The team also noted that the co-director for instruction was in classrooms either coaching, modeling or providing direct instruction to students. She had first hand knowledge of any gaps between the school's curriculum and the needs of each class. As noted previously, Kings Collegiate was the second school in the Collegiate network resulting in Kings Collegiate's ability to utilize the standards and objectives developed at Williamsburg Collegiate as a basis for the Kings Collegiate curriculum. The co-director led the teachers to continually examine the curriculum and to modify it, where appropriate, so it would meet the instructional needs of the Kings Collegiate students.

The team concluded that the instructional leadership at Kings Collegiate was a strong positive factor in the school's development. There was a comprehensive system in place for supervision and support that met all expectations.

### At-Risk Students

At the time of the visit, Kings Collegiate had nineteen students with Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs). In the fifth grade, they were clustered mostly in one class. The students in sixth grade were distributed among all the classes. Of the nineteen students, nine were identified to receive the Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) program. Those students and others categorized as at-risk were provided with differentiated small group instruction before school five days a week. The instructional model for these morning sessions was based on the Wilson Reading System intervention program. During the school day, the special education

coordinator/teacher provided direct instruction to all identified students daily using both pull-out and push-in instructional models. In addition, those students were also included in after school tutoring sessions conducted by classroom teachers. The co-directors reported that there were additional SETSS services provided during lunch and during the enrichment period. Additionally, it was reported that the school conducted Saturday sessions targeting students who needed extra assistance in ELA and mathematics prior to taking the state assessments.

Students were referred for at-risk services by the classroom teachers to the student study team (SST), which consisted of the classroom teacher, the special education coordinator/teacher, and the school counselor. Together they used all available information about the students to develop individualized student support plans that were then implemented for approximately thirty school days. After the thirty days, if necessary, modifications were made to the plans and, if warranted, referrals to the student support office for further interventions and possible referral to special education would be made. The student support office consisted of both co-directors, the dean of students, the special education coordinator/teacher and the school counselor. The co-directors reported that they anticipated hiring a full time special education teacher to provide additional services during the 2009-10 school year. The teachers reported that they communicated frequently with the special education coordinator/teacher in order to understand IEP goals and to discuss student progress. These discussions were scheduled on Wednesday afternoons at student study team meetings. During the visit, it was reported that there were no identified English language learners (ELLs).

The inspection team concluded that Kings Collegiate had created and implemented a highly developed system for identifying students at-risk and providing them with appropriate services.

### *Student Order and Discipline*

Kings Collegiate used a merit and demerit system for behavior that was adopted from the system used in other schools in the Collegiate network. Parents reported that the implementation of this system resulted in a zero-tolerance policy, which school personnel characterized as “we sweat the small stuff.” The behavior system was observed to be consistently applied throughout the school. The students began each day with a “clean slate.” If a student received three demerits, they were in detention during the enrichment period. With six demerits, further penalties were applied which could include a phone call home, removal from class or a one-day suspension, as necessary. Kings Collegiate employed a dean of students who worked with students on discipline issues. She also monitored detention, worked with students during breakfast and lunch and supported teachers to maintain a positive culture in their classrooms and throughout the school. The dean of students also initiated and implemented such programs as Kings Pride for positive reinforcement of good behavior. Kings Collegiate also selected a student of the week for recognition to highlight positive behaviors. The inspection team observed a safe and orderly environment throughout the school.

### *Professional Development*

Kings Collegiate had developed a comprehensive professional development plan. It included three weeks of training prior to the opening of school. Areas for training during these three

weeks were determined by the Collegiate network superintendent and were consistent with other network schools. They included the academic program, literacy, the standards, Taxonomy of Effective Teaching Practices training, student discipline, special education, interim assessments, data-driven instruction and family support. Time was also provided for teachers to work on the curriculum alignment templates (CATs).

The instructional schedule provided time for weekly professional development. Each Wednesday, students were dismissed early and teachers met in inquiry groups by topic and at grade level meetings. The co-director for instruction planned the topics for the school year. She reported that topics were determined based on feedback from teachers during their individual weekly meetings, from other suggestions made by staff and from the results of her own observations. The focus areas of inquiry groups included homework, effective questioning, developing a “bag of tricks” for classroom management, teaching with love and logic, and internal assessments.

As noted earlier, every six weeks, following the administration of the interim assessments, teachers used the Wednesday professional development time to score the tests. On Friday of that week, they analyzed the data and developed action plans which were discussed and embellished during the subsequent individual meetings with the co-director of curriculum and instruction.

In addition, teachers were encouraged to meet with colleagues at Williamsburg Collegiate for additional support and training. Teachers were also provided with opportunities to attend appropriate subject area conferences, such as those sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the National Science Teachers Association.

The co-director for instruction also modeled lessons, coached and co-taught as strategies to provide additional professional development for underperforming teachers.

All professional development activities were reported to culminate in a product, such as a plan or report, that could be collected, reviewed and evaluated by the co-director for instruction to gauge the effectiveness of the training. Further, the co-director for instruction reported that the evidence of implementation of practices and procedures developed during the professional development sessions were part of the classroom observation process.

There was strong evidence to suggest that the Kings Collegiate professional development program was effective and aligned to the needs of students and teachers.

### *Mission and Key Design Elements*

Kings Collegiate, which at the time of the visit was in its second year of operation, was the second school in the already established Collegiate network, which includes Williamsburg Collegiate, the first school, Bedford Stuyvesant Collegiate, and the soon to be opened Brownsville Collegiate (plans exist to also open Uncommon Charter High School). These schools were all designed with the same vision and mission: to prepare each student for college. The team observed that this concept had been internalized and understood by teachers, students and parents and was the driving force behind the instructional decisions made at the school.



Design elements, including a focus on literacy and basic skills, assessing student progress and achievement on a continuous basis, increasing instructional time for students, emphasizing college and providing structure and order were clearly evident during the visit. Evidence strongly suggests that all key design elements have been implemented and that the school is well on its way to meeting both academic and non-academic goals.

### Parents and Students

Surveys were administered to parents twice a year in order to determine their satisfaction with all aspects of the school. Midyear, Kings Collegiate administered the parent survey developed and utilized by all of the Collegiate schools. At the end of the year, the New York City Department of Education survey was sent to all parents. Results of these surveys indicated a high degree of parent satisfaction with Kings Collegiate.

Parents interviewed unanimously expressed their positive attitudes toward the Kings Collegiate school and staff. They cited such positive aspects as: the strong discipline, which made them feel that their children were safe; the opportunity the school presented to prepare their children for college; the structured school environment; the close communication between teachers and parents; and the rigorous curriculum. Parents with children who had IEPs reported that their children received appropriate services and were more supported than they had been in other settings. Parents expressed their good fortune at having their children selected for admission while approximately 150 children remained on the waiting list for entrance to the school.

The parent organization at Kings Collegiate was the family involvement committee, which met once each month. Parents indicated that the meetings were focused on instructional issues. Some parents reported that while they met regularly to obtain specific information such as summer program availability and strategies for dealing with preteens, they would “appreciate a parent group to work together to enhance the school.”

The superintendent of the Collegiate network reported that student attrition was exceptionally low, with only two students having left this entire year. He also reported that average daily attendance was 97%.

Students interviewed indicated a positive attitude toward the school and that they understood expectations. One student reported that he liked this school “because the discipline reminds us how to act properly.” Another student reported that “teachers want us to be professional.” Students said that they liked departmentalization. All parents interviewed and additional strong evidence suggested a high degree of satisfactions by parents and students with Kings Collegiate.

### Organizational Capacity

At the time of the visit, Kings Collegiate was in its second year of operation and was comprised of 135 students in fifth and sixth grades. Both Uncommon Schools and Williamsburg Collegiate, the school preceding Kings Collegiate, had developed procedures and protocols that were used across all of the Collegiate schools and as the foundation for Kings Collegiate. Further,

Uncommon Schools assigned a superintendent/ managing director of the Collegiate network. He provided oversight and both instructional and organizational support for the co-directors at Kings Collegiate.

The school was well organized for daily operations. At 7:15 a.m., students arrived for breakfast and for before-school instructional programs. Located on the fourth floor, the school shared common spaces, such as the lunchroom, the auditorium and the gym with two other schools housed in the same building. After breakfast, students were brought upstairs to the fourth floor to begin their academic day at approximately 8:15 a.m. Team members observed that all systems for managing the movement of students and classes, following the school schedule and for ensuring that school functions such as supervising students during lunchtime in the cafeteria were well implemented routines. These procedures were highly developed in order to coordinate with similar schedules of the other two schools. Administrators, teachers and support staff clearly understood their roles and responsibilities within the school structure and the team observed a very well organized effort on the part of all staff to work together to ensure that all systems were implemented effectively.

Both co-directors reported that they shared the “big picture” decision making around hiring, firing and decisions about parents. The co-director for operations handled all non-curricular issues and issues relating to technology, finance, budgeting and food. This organizational structure made it possible for the co-director for instruction to focus exclusively on curriculum, instruction and assessment. Teachers all expressed a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each co-director and were clear about what issues were the responsibility of each one. The school schedule was constructed to support the academic mission of the school and included time for teacher planning, grade level meetings and weekly professional development.

The school reported that their goal was to become self-sustaining utilizing the normal funding streams provided to charter schools. As a result, they did not do any additional fundraising. It was reported by the co-directors that there was a surplus of money for the 2008-09 school year and that decisions would be made around how to invest this money. However, as previously noted, the school had not yet purchased sufficient books and materials to provide a full, rich educational experience for all of the students.

The superintendent of the Collegiate network expressed some concern about the staff recruitment process. Despite advertisements in newspapers, outreach to historically black colleges and participation at job fairs, the school was having difficulty recruiting a diverse, experienced staff. At the time of the visit, the co-directors reported that two teachers had left the school since it opened, including one who moved out of the country and another who left teaching. The co-directors also indicated that, as a result of the teacher evaluation process, one teacher’s contract would not be renewed at the end of this school year.

The inspection team observed that the organizational structure of Kings Collegiate was well organized, efficient and supportive of its academic program. Further, all staff understood and collaborated in the implementation of school systems, procedures and routines.

### Board Oversight

One board of trustees served for all of the schools in the Collegiate schools network. Board members indicated that their oversight was through their contract with Uncommon Schools to start and manage all of the Collegiate schools. The board reported that it had entered into a five year academic and business services agreement with Uncommon Schools and that the board of trustees evaluated the services of Uncommon Schools yearly based on academic oversight, developing/marketing/managing grants, finance, human resources/ legal issues, recruitment, special education support, and technology. The board also indicated that the co-directors would evaluate services and support provided by Uncommon Schools and that Uncommon schools would complete a self evaluation. The Uncommon Schools' managing director of the Collegiate network, as superintendent, evaluated the co-directors based on a "multi-tiered evaluation system based on scores, curriculum development, instructional leadership, use of assessment data, recruitment of staff, developing an orderly school culture, working with families, promoting the school's mission, building a culture of distributed leadership, complying with requirements, conducting school operations and exhibiting professionalism."

The board expressed its role as giving advice, holding the management company accountable for results and providing access to resources unobtainable by the school itself. The board reported that it was "unconflicted and uncomplicated with an unwavering commitment to education." The member of the board leading the finance committee reported that they "keep an eye on the finances." He also indicated that there was "no shortage of funds."

The board of trustees met six times during the year but is planning to move to meet four times each year as a whole. The board will conduct committee meetings during the months that the entire board is not convening. They received reports, presentations and heard issues about all of the Collegiate schools at each meeting. The superintendent/ managing director and the co-directors sent a board package to the members including quantitative data, such as attendance and free lunch statistics and interim assessment scores. Additionally, the school leaders made presentations at the meeting on qualitative issues such as school culture, why students are leaving, enrichment activities and student successes.

The board of trustees expressed that Kings Collegiate's progress in fulfilling the school's mission was "tracking on par with expectations." They felt that their expectations were high and that the success of Williamsburg Collegiate was a "high bar to match against." They reported that "early indications are that ELA results are tracking well as are other metrics, including attendance and financials. Attrition is exceptionally low. Attendance and lateness data is incredibly positive and tardy rates are low." It was also reported that interim assessment data in all but one fifth grade class are meeting expectations.

Board members reported that the greatest challenges were starting new schools. One member indicated that there was a "dynamic tension between rigor and joy." Members said that "the challenge is taking a young staff and creating a new school. Every year, a new grade. It does not get easier." The board also reported that they expected all of the schools across the network to feed into the same planned new high school.

The inspection team observed that board of trustees had an in-depth understanding of all aspects of developing new schools and that they were well informed about the progress of Kings Collegiate.

### Governance

The board of trustees viewed their role as providing oversight to all of the schools and holding Uncommon Schools accountable for achieving the academic and non-academic goals as stated in the charter. The board established financial policies on such areas as salaries, health benefits, and matching contributions for all of the Collegiate schools. The board's policies impacted the numbers of teachers and staff hired at all of the schools. They reported that they ensure that competent teachers are recruited, trained and retained by paying 20% above New York City teacher salaries.

The board also expected that teachers would want to remain in the Collegiate schools as a result of being part of an organization with a clear mission and positive school culture. The board placed a great emphasis on recruitment. They indicated that "one third of Uncommon Schools staff is made up of recruiters," and they still faced staffing challenges.

The managing director/superintendent of the Collegiate schools was an employee of Uncommon Schools. One other board member was also on the board of Uncommon Schools. They indicated that only two members are allowed to be on both boards. It was reported that both Collegiate board members recused themselves whenever there was a conflict regarding Uncommon Schools. When the board of trustees voted on the selection of the co-directors, both members associated with Uncommon Schools did not vote, since Uncommon Schools had recruited the candidates and presented them to the board for approval. The board indicated that it had a formal conflict of interest policy.

Trustees expressed that membership on the board was predicated on not having a motive for financial gain, having no social ties and on wanting to concentrate on educational issues only. One trustee said, "We're uncomplicated. We're only here for education."

Parent complaints were reported to be channeled through the family involvement committee to the school leaders, to the superintendent and then to the board. Parents had the option to attend board meetings, but none had ever done so. The board also received feedback from parents through the mid-year and end-of-year surveys. It was expressed that parent satisfaction was also reflected in the numbers of students who remained from year to year. The board questioned the reason for two students leaving. The board was clear about their view that parents in the Collegiate schools know what the expectations are and, "while parents should be partners, this school is not a co-op."

There is strong evidence to suggest that the board of trustees is knowledgeable, experienced and has developed policies, systems and processes that have been successful in their previously developed schools and that are appropriate in this school. Additionally, their relationship with Uncommon Schools appears to be clear and roles and responsibilities have been carefully crafted and implemented.

#### **4. Methodology**

The inspection of Kings Collegiate Charter School was conducted on May 6 and 7, 2009 by an independent team of experienced educators from RMC Research, New York, New York. The team was comprised of the following individuals:

- **Sandra Kase, Ed.D.** (Team Leader) is an educational consultant currently providing regular services for RMC Research. Dr. Kase began her career in the New York City public schools as a teacher, staff developer and district administrator. She served as principal of the Claremont Community School for 14 years before moving to the New York City Board of Education as an Assistant to the Chancellor for School Improvement and later Supervising Superintendent of the Chancellor's District. During that time, Dr. Kase focused on improving the lowest performing schools in the city and creating high quality new schools designed to provide rigorous educational opportunities for traditionally underperforming students. During 2003, Dr. Kase worked with the incoming Chancellor and his staff to support the transition to the newly created Department of Education. In March 2004, she began to work in Peekskill, New York to support the efforts of the superintendent to raise the academic achievement of the students in that community. Dr. Kase has developed a wide array of programs, including: gifted and talented programs designed to provide opportunities for underserved students; courses at museums such as the American Museum of Natural History; university based programs for K-12 students; and extended day and year programs, which blended cultural experiences with demanding learning standards to raise the academic levels of all participants. Dr. Kase holds a Doctor of Education Degree in Educational Leadership, Administration and Policy from Fordham University.
- **Janice M. Imundi** is a Research Associate for RMC Research. She also serves as a member of the Adolescent Literacy Team for the New York Comprehensive Center (NYCC), a USED contracted project of RMC Research. Currently, she is working with the New York State Education Department to review the English Language Arts Standards. Her career of over 30 years in education was spent working with students in the New York City public schools. Ms. Imundi was a teacher in a junior high school, an assistant principal in both an elementary and middle school, and a principal in a middle school. During her career, Ms. Imundi also served as an Adjunct Professor in the School of Education at Mercy College and at Long Island University. Prior to joining RMC, she worked with aspiring principals and first year principals as a mentor with *New Visions for Public Schools* and the *New York City Leadership Academy*. Ms. Imundi holds a Master's Degree in Secondary Education and a Professional Diploma in Administration and Supervision.
- **Ellen Rosenbaum** is a Research Associate for RMC Research. With over 33 years of experience in the New York City schools, Ms. Rosenbaum has served as an elementary school teacher, teacher trainer and district administrator. As the Director of School Improvement for Community School District 8 in New York City, she worked with school leaders to use data to inform instruction and to develop school reform initiatives.

Ms. Rosenbaum holds a Master's Degree in Education and a Professional Diploma in School District Administration.

- **Andrea Hoffman** is an educational consultant currently providing ongoing services for RMC Research. Ms. Hoffman served as a teacher, staff developer, literacy coach and academic intervention specialist for many years. She has also served as a consultant to provide support to administrators, librarians and teachers to facilitate the alignment of instruction taking place in school libraries with literacy implementation throughout the schools. Additionally, Ms. Hoffman works in the New York City Department of Education's Peer Observation and Evaluation Program for RMC Research to conduct observations of teachers in need of improvement and to create individualized professional development plans. Ms. Hoffman has had specialized training in literacy and holds a Master's Degree in Elementary Education.

The team used the Qualitative Educational Benchmarks (QEB), 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 Benchmark Analysis section of this document. Prior to the two-day visit, the team reviewed the school's documents, including its annual Accountability Plan Progress Report and reports from previous site visits by the Charter Schools Institute or other entities, such as the New York State Education Department.

During the visit, the team used a triangulated approach to collect data, including observing classes, interviewing school administrators, board of trustees members, teachers, staff, parents and students and reviewing student work, curriculum and other school documents, such as board minutes, teacher evaluations, assessment data, school policies and school organization documents in order to understand the efforts the school is making to achieve its academic and organizational goals. Notes were taken by each team member during each of the activities noted above.

In order to analyze the data and generate conclusions, the team reviewed and examined the notes taken by each of the team members during classroom observations, interviews or while reviewing relevant documents for information and for data collection reliability. Team members analyzed data for patterns, correlated evidence gathered with the Renewal Benchmarks and grouped data into relevant categories. All data were verified through multiple sources.