

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 benchmarks¹:

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

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.

Other evaluation reports for this or other schools can be found on the Institute's website at 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 or 212-221-6332.

¹ 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>

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

ICAHN CHARTER SCHOOL 3

Visit Date

March 24-25, 2010



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

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EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

ICAHN CHARTER SCHOOL 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Icahn Charter School 3 (ICS 3) was visited by an external school inspection team from Class Measures on behalf of the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (CSI) on March 24 and 25, 2010. The school opened in 2008 and at the time of the visit served 147 students in grades kindergarten through 3.

The team found an assessment program that is aligned to the curriculum and state standards. The school has created assessment categories that parallel the Regents Exam reporting categories. Teachers receive data binders and professional development in using data. The data informs student placement and movement in and out of the targeted assistance program. Data is not used to adjust or modify the curriculum to address identified student needs since the curriculum is not developed at the school; however, teachers use data to modify instruction.

The team observed an established, rigorous, and well documented curriculum aligned to the State standards for all subject areas. The curricular materials are vertically aligned within each content area. The curriculum is defined by the Icahn Schools' central office and does not undergo a review and revision process at the school level that includes teacher input. Teachers had access to necessary curricular materials. A syllabus was provided to parents for each course identifying the topics covered for each month. The curriculum is rigorous and supports the school's mission.

During classroom observations, most teachers demonstrated subject-matter competence. Teachers provided students with instructional expectations through explanation and by posting the expectation on the board. Lessons were aligned vertically and horizontally and were aligned to the State standards.

Although the principal stated that the team would see differentiated instruction, the team did not observe extensive differentiation and noted that instruction was sometimes largely teacher directed and somewhat inappropriate for the age of the students in the classroom. Lessons included high expectations for student performance, and engagement was generally good with the exception of some teachers who were less skilled in pacing and providing age-appropriate instruction.

The team observed that instructional leadership is provided primarily by the principal and is still developing. There is no well-established meeting structure in place; instead most meetings occur in small teacher groups at grade level common planning meetings sometimes facilitated by the principal. Teachers review student data during some of these meetings. Vertical grade level meetings to discuss the alignment of instruction do not occur. Teachers do meet, however, in professional development sessions, to learn more about instructional techniques. The instructional leadership model is similar to a coaching program, rather than a whole school collaborative model. There is no documented procedure in use for the formal evaluation of teachers, and the observation reports reviewed by the team were inconsistent in format. Teachers reported that most of them had been evaluated.

The school has a program in place to identify and meet the needs of at-risk students. Students flow in and out of the targeted assistance program according to assessment results, and staff was qualified to meet the instructional needs of students. Differentiation within the regular classroom, however, was limited, with instruction in some classes requiring students to listen for long periods of time without engaging in a learning activity.

The school is a safe school with students who, for the most part, are well behaved and engaged in the lessons. The school does not have a school-wide behavior program in place. Instead, teachers create their own methods for monitoring and controlling student behavior.

The school has provided professional development to support teachers in providing quality instruction to students. In addition to regular monthly professional development sessions, the school provides access to curriculum consultants in mathematics and technology. Topics for professional development programs are not determined through needs assessment and teachers do not set professional goals to guide their professional development choices.

The school is faithful to its mission and the academic program is rigorous and designed to support students in developing solid academic skills. Parents and students in interviews and in survey results reviewed by the team were satisfied with the school. Attendance rates met the Accountability Plan goals.

The school has a clear management structure and has been successful and thoughtful in hiring and retaining staff. The school is adequately enrolled; it also has clear procedures in place for recruiting and enrolling new students and maintains an active waiting list.

The school currently has sufficient organizational capacity to manage the school efficiently, however the school will be moving two times within the next year to two new sites. This may provide a challenge to leaders in maintaining school culture and student performance.

The team interviewed three board members and reviewed a number of board documents, including board meeting minutes and bylaws. The board has not evaluated the principal and the principal reported that she had not been formally evaluated. The board has also not conducted a self evaluation. The board is informed about student academic progress as well as Accountability Plan goals.

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION¹

School Name

	Name	Date
Chartered Name	Carl C. Icahn Charter School of Far Rockaway	October 26, 2007
Revised Name	Carl C. Icahn Charter School of the South Bronx	June 9, 2008
Revised Name	Icahn Charter School 3	January 16, 2009

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	October 27, 2007
Date Initial Charter Approved by Operation of Law	February 8, 2008
School Opening Date	September, 2008

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades at Location	District
2008-09 through present	968 Caldwell Avenue Bronx, NY	All	New York City CSD 8

Partner Organizations

	Partner Name	Partner Type	Dates of Service
Current Partner	Foundation for a Greater Opportunity	Non-profit	2007 - present

Current Mission Statement

Icahn Charter School 3, using the Core Knowledge curriculum developed by E.D. Hirsch, will provide students with a rigorous academic program offered in an extended day/year setting. Students will graduate armed with the skills and knowledge to participate successfully in the most rigorous academic environments, and will have a sense of personal and community responsibility.

Current Key Design Elements

• Core Knowledge curriculum;
• Small class size (18 students per class);
• Extended school day and year to have more time for instruction and reduce the loss of mastery over school vacations;
• Employment of real life applications and hands-on learning opportunities to make curriculum “immediate” for students;
• High standards for instruction through ongoing professional development;
• Encouraging strong parental involvement; and
• Offering numerous after school academic, recreational and sports programs as well a Saturday Academy classes in English language arts and mathematics.

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

School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Charter Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ²	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2008-09	108		102	K-2	K-2	
2009-10	144		147	K-3	K-3	

Student Demographics

	2008-09		2009-10	
	Percent of School Enrollment ³	Percent of NYC CSD 8 Enrollment ⁴	Percent of School Enrollment ⁵	Percent of NYC CSD 8 Enrollment
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	0%	NA	NA
Black or African American	65%	27%	NA	NA
Hispanic	31%	62%	NA	NA
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	3%	4%	NA	
White	0%	6%	NA	NA
Multiracial	1%	0%	NA	NA
Special Populations				
Students with Disabilities ⁶	4%	18.4%	NA	NA
Limited English Proficient	28%	12%	NA	NA
Free/Reduced Lunch				
Eligible for Free Lunch	35%	76%	NA	NA
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	9%	9%	NA	NA

Current Board of Trustees⁷

Board Member Name	Term	Position/Committees
Carl C. Icahn	Elected each year	Chair
Gail Icahn	Elected each year	Vice-Chair
Julie Goodyear	Elected each year	Secretary
Tine March	Elected each year	Treasurer
Keith Cozza	Elected each year	Assistant Treasurer
Robert Sancho	Elected each year	Trustee

² Source: SUNY Charter School Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

³ Source: School was unable to provide and this information is not yet publicly available.

⁴ Aggregated District data not yet available for 2008-09 or 2009-10 school year.

⁵ Source: School was unable to provide and this information is not yet publicly available.

⁶ New York State Education Department does not report special education data

⁷ Source: Institute Board Records.

Board Member Name	Term	Position/Committees
Seymour Fliegel	Elected each year	Trustee
Edward Shanahan	Elected each year	Trustee
Karen Mandelbaum	Elected each year	Trustee
Parent/Guardian officer	Elected each year	Trustee

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2008-09	Migda Agosto, Principal
2009-10	Migda Agosto, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2008-09	First Year Visit	Institute	March 5, 2009

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?

Benchmark 1B: Use of Assessment Data

ICS 3 uses assessments that are aligned to the State standards. The assessment coordinator reported that the school uses the assessments associated with the Treasures literacy curriculum and mathematics curriculum. These assessments are aligned to the curriculum as well as the state standards. In addition, students are assessed using the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and grade 3 students are also assessed using practice state English Language Arts (ELA) exams.

Data is analyzed and presented to leaders and teachers using spreadsheets created by the central office. The data is reported in levels from one to four which are designed to be parallel to the reporting categories for the New York State Exam. Students are expected to perform at or above level three. Using the reporting categories of 1 through 4, as well as the state practice assessments, is intended to provide insight into how students will perform on the upcoming state assessments, and also how the school will perform on the school's Accountability Plan goals.

The principal reported that the school uses the ITBS to assess students for placement into the targeted assistance program. Students new to the school are assessed at the beginning of the new school year. All students are assessed at the end of the year using the ITBS, which provides information on the progress each student has made during the year. All students scoring at or below the 40th percentile on the ITBS receive intervention services.

Data is provided to teachers in a binder with breakdowns of the overall school and grade level data as well as the teacher's individual student data. Data is discussed with teaching staff in professional development sessions typically three to four times a year. In addition, the principal reported that she meets with teachers in grade level groups and individually to analyze and use data to target instruction to address student knowledge gaps. These meetings frequently occur during common planning times.

Communication of student assessment data is shared with parents through teacher conferences six times per year and also through report cards, which reflect student assessment data for the Treasures and mathematics program which are incorporated into student grades. In addition, ITBS data is provided to parents following receipt and review of the data by the school.

Benchmark 1C: Curriculum

The school had a comprehensive curriculum aligned with state standards based on the Core Knowledge program developed by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. Teachers follow a documented and detailed scope and sequence that adheres closely to the Core Knowledge topics. A monthly syllabus, also provided to parents, covers all curricular areas. The school uses McGraw-Hill textbooks in mathematics and English, which were selected because they were well matched to the Core Knowledge program. The core curriculum was supported through a daily mathematics and ELA targeted assistance program for students deemed "at risk." The materials and protocol for these programs were directly linked to the curriculum and aligned with state standards and had been reviewed by the principal. The curriculum provided additional daily support to students in grades K through 2 through supplemental "core enrichment" in literacy and

writing provided by a core enrichment teacher. According to teachers, this enrichment was not provided to grade 3 students but was being considered for the next school year.

The curriculum as implemented was organized, cohesive, and aligned from grade to grade, although instructional methodologies used by teachers varied. Teachers reported meeting by grade level to discuss curricular and student issues. Teachers stated that they did not meet by subject area to discuss vertical alignment. The Core Knowledge program is vertically aligned, however, and is strictly adhered to and monitored in all of the grades. The curriculum also presented students with depth of content; for example, in one classroom students were exposed to a book about the seasonal activity of animals that connected with science themes covered earlier in the year.

Teachers were fully aware of the curriculum they were responsible to teach and had access to the required curricular materials; however, they were allowed flexibility in the use of instructional strategies. An example of varied teaching strategies observed by the team occurred in two kindergarten classes. Both teachers were teaching the same mathematics lesson. While one teacher used a lecture type presentation with students sitting and listening to her, the other teacher interspersed her lesson with activities such as songs, movement, and manipulatives, which promoted student focus on the lesson. Student behavior was observed to be better in the second class. All observed teachers exhibited good content knowledge and familiarity with the Core Knowledge approach.

The music curriculum was provided through the Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP) program, a non-profit provider of visual arts and music, which is aligned to the state standards. Physical education was provided to students bi-weekly. One extracurricular activity, the Japanese Club, was offered after school. Another after-school program, which provided a combination of enrichment and academic support, was also available and valued by parents interviewed in focus groups. A Saturday program was in the planning stages.

The teachers do not have the ability to alter or provide input into the school's curriculum which is fixed and does not undergo an annual revision process at the school. The principal reported that instead, teachers must "find a way" to address the needs of struggling students not addressed through the targeted assistance program within the constraints of the existing curriculum and time allotment for heterogeneously grouped, regular classroom instruction. The principal stated that it is expected that teachers will have different plans or strategies to address the needs of students.

Stakeholders reported that all curricular decisions and selections were made at the flagship Icahn School's central office, although the selection of stories in the McGraw-Hill textbooks at ICS 3 was sometimes shifted sequentially to correlate with themes in the Core Knowledge program. The principal reported that teachers could provide suggestions for curricular improvement, although they did not have a role in formal curriculum review.

The curriculum supports the school's mission as stated by the principal: "[We] use Core Knowledge to enhance academics, develop good citizens, and provide a solid education to get them into a good high school."

Benchmark 1D: Pedagogy

Most teachers observed demonstrated subject-matter and grade-level competency in the subjects and grades they teach. For example: the topic of magnetism in a kindergarten class was clearly and simply explained, with the teacher using correct terminology ("attraction"); in an ELA kindergarten class, the teacher correctly explained seasonal hibernation in terms appropriate for 5-6 year olds; and a grade 3 teacher checked for understanding through a student demonstration of force when a student pulled and pushed his desk chair.

Instructional expectations were clearly identified in most classes, with learning objectives posted on the board. In a grade 2 targeted assistance class, the ELA lesson was based on state ELA test prep materials appropriate for grade 2. The team also found that instruction held high expectations for students and students used high-level vocabulary that they understood and were able to use in classroom discussions.

Lesson plans and instruction were aligned to the school's curriculum framework and the State standards and performance indicators. During the review of scope and sequence documents provided by the school, the lessons were directly aligned to state standards. When observing different classes within a single grade level, the lesson content was the same in both classes indicating grade level alignment of instruction. In the targeted assistance class, the skills taught were also based on the state skills test requirements.

Instruction was not differentiated to meet the range of learning needs in most lessons observed, although in the observed targeted assistance lesson, the teacher provided differentiated instruction to a group of six students. In one class, the students sat for more than 20 minutes listening to the teacher. Student attention in this classroom was uneven and the teacher struggled with behavior management. In another class, the teacher directed the students to stand and stretch after 5-7 minutes, after which attention and focus on the lesson were significantly improved. While students sat in groups in many classrooms, they were infrequently observed to be working in small groups. Materials used in the targeted assistance class were different from the regular classroom materials. No formal assessments were conducted during team observations, though teachers assessed students informally throughout the lesson.

Almost all students were cognitively engaged in focused, purposeful learning activities during instructional time. Teachers had high expectations for student attention, but were not equally skillful in working with age-appropriate behaviors. The content of lessons was high quality, but some classroom pacing was not appropriate. In several classes, there was too long a period of introduction before students could carry out their activity and the lesson did not permit sufficient movement for the age level.

Learning time was maximized, transitions were generally efficient, and there was day-to-day instructional continuity. Teachers alluded to content learned earlier and made connections to concepts taught previously. Students were on task, except in a few instances noted above. Children seemed very interested in the content being presented in most lessons, with good questions being asked by the students. The targeted assistance class was efficiently taught, with frequent checking for understanding. Chart paper with information from previous lessons was displayed widely within classrooms and provides continuity of instruction; teachers reported that they were required to keep these charts visible since content "spiraled" and was referred to by teachers during observed lessons. Some of the chart papers throughout the classrooms contained evidence of higher-order thinking: similarities and differences, graphical representation of mathematics problems with analysis.

In some classrooms, students were provided with examples of models of work they were expected to perform. For example, in one classroom the teacher scaffolded student expectations when she worked with the entire class of students to complete questions for Charlotte's Web, which she had been reading in the classroom to the students. Following this activity, students were expected to complete the same questions for a book they had read individually.

In addition, teachers challenged students with thought-provoking questions, asking such questions as, "Could someone explain why her answer is incorrect?" or asking students to make predictions about what would happen next in a story. Teacher questions probed beyond seeking superficial information. A lesson on magnetism was a good example of this where he teacher asked students to explain various features of magnetism in their own words, and they were able to do so.

Benchmark 1E: Instructional Leadership

The team found that the school leadership has established high expectations for all students through a rich and rigorous curriculum, which is driven by a mission that acknowledges that all children can learn. The instructional model is replicated on the educational program developed and in use at the Icahn Charter School 1.

The principal stated that she establishes high expectations for her teaching staff through shared expectations communicated to teachers at small group meetings and by using the Accountability Plan goals as a lens for asking what can be done to meet the needs of the child. The team found that teachers do not plan instructional delivery/program collaboratively across grade levels and that teachers only meet in small, grade level meetings during common planning time. Sometimes these grade level meetings are attended by the principal. Teachers review data during common planning time to determine areas of the instructional program where students need reinforcement. These meetings are sometimes facilitated by the principal. According to the principal, teachers also meet monthly during professional development sessions across grade levels, as well as during “lunch and learns,” to discuss common goals.

The principal hired a staff developer this year who models lessons, coaches and shadows teaches, and coordinates assessments. She also maintains binders of student data aligned with State reporting methods and students are expected to receive scores of 3 or higher. Because the school is a replication model, student assessment results do not lead to modifications to the existing curriculum, but rather teachers are expected to find ways to provide extra instruction to individual students or groups of students needing additional in class support.

There is no formal documented process in use for evaluating teachers. The principal stated that this is a small school and that she is in classrooms every day and that she conducts informal walkthroughs. Teachers interviewed indicated that all but two of them had been formally evaluated this school year. The team reviewed four written teacher observations completed by the principal. Three of the observations reviewed shared a similar narrative format, while the fourth was a checklist of instructional practices. The feedback provided to teachers was found by the team to be targeted and focused on instruction. The principal also stated that, during a lesson observation, she might ask for the permission of a teacher to model a strategy that would enhance the learning experience. Teachers said that they found this practice very helpful and that the principal has a rich knowledge base and a valuable resource.

Benchmark 1F: At-Risk Students

The school effectively identified and helped students who were struggling academically and deployed sufficient resources to provide supports for students. According to the principal, special educator, and guidance counselor, all students were assessed to determine their readiness for the school’s academic program. Students who scored below grade level on a number of measures participated in an ELA and/or mathematics targeted assistance program. The targeted assistance program was also available during the school year for students who were identified by teachers as needing specific skill support for a short period of time. Students could also receive academic support through the after-school tutoring program. A full-time guidance counselor was hired in January. Her services included behavioral management support, serving as a liaison between home and school, and monitoring the progress of students. Teachers stated that this position was added at their request.

The two targeted assistance teachers were certified to deliver special education services and provide these services in targeted assistance or general education classes, or through individualized direct support. Nine students had been identified as needing special education services: two whose needs

were provided within the targeted assistance program, and seven others who received support services in academics, speech, occupational therapy, or behavioral management. Some of these services were provided at the end of the school day. Fifteen students were identified as English language learners and received support through the targeted assistance program and/or after-school tutoring programs. Some students also were assigned adult mentors who monitored their progress and provided one-to-one encouragement and support.

Regular education teachers received training in differentiation to utilize effective strategies, but classroom observations showed a range of teacher skills in meeting the needs of all students. In a class with young students where instruction was primarily teacher directed, for example, some boys with a high need for activity struggled to listen attentively for periods of time longer than five minutes. Collaboration between general and special education teachers occurred during grade level common planning time, which occurs at least weekly, and informally as needed.

The school had clearly defined screening procedures, which were well understood and utilized by the teachers to identify students' needs for intervention services. The targeted assistance teachers worked closely with classroom teachers to insure a smooth transition and alignment between both programs. During the student focus group, one third grade student proudly stated that he had just moved from the targeted assistance program to the regular classroom and was progressing well, which was confirmed by the principal. Referral procedures were informal, although a committee of teachers, the guidance counselor, and principal met and discussed individual student issues as needed. The progress of students in the targeted assistance program was closely monitored by the guidance counselor.

Benchmark 1G: Student Order and Discipline

ICS 3 is a safe school according to all stakeholders interviewed. The school has a student handbook that was reviewed by the team and was written in student friendly language. The handbook lists student responsibilities based on a code of conduct that is grounded in respect for fellow students, respect for adults, and respect for the school. According to the staff developer, who also serves as dean, there is no school wide disciplinary approach. According to the principal, in an effort to have a school-wide approach to discipline, the school has contracted to bring in the Responsive Classroom system for next year. In addition, the guidance counselor supports the teachers in behavioral issues.

Currently, each teacher develops their own methods of managing discipline. Teachers interviewed said that use different methods and charts in their classrooms to help students monitor their own behavior. They also stated that they work collaboratively to understand how to help their students develop coping skills. According to the staff developer/dean, school leadership expects classroom teachers to try at least three different approaches to handling discipline before sending the child to the office. Each teacher has a notebook for anecdotal disciplinary notes and must fill out an incident report before sending a child to the office.

The dean responds to behavioral issues on an individual basis, maintaining a focus on keeping the child in school and learning. Consequences for smaller infractions include taking away part of recess or part of gym. Since there are two classrooms at every level, in-house suspension removes a student from their regular classroom to the other classroom at that grade level so that instruction continues. There have been approximately eight students who have received in school suspensions this year. If a student is given an out of school suspension, they come to school for ELA and mathematics and are then sent home with their work for the remainder of the day.

Although the team observed some teachers struggling with low-level behavior issues, there was no serious disruption to learning and the team concluded that a safe learning environment has been established and that the school promotes a culture of learning.

Benchmark 1H: Professional Development

The school has professional development in place that is designed to support teachers in meeting the academic needs of their students and has also committed resources to developing and staffing this program. The staff developer/dean designs much of the professional development. There are also two curriculum consultants available for the staff; one in mathematics and the other for technology. There were four professional development days allocated before school began in September. Two of these days were for all of all Icahn schools and the agendas were developed by the Icahn central office. Teachers received professional development during this time on the school reading and mathematics programs as well as in the use of technology to enhance learning. The team found that professional development topics were well aligned with the school's instructional program.

The school provides professional development on the first Friday of every month from four to six in the afternoon. Topics listed in the professional development binder that have been delivered to staff since October include: using data to drive instruction, mathematics Investigations, a mathematics workshop on data, discussion of the Accountability Plan, and building successful student teacher relationships. Additionally, there have been informal sessions held, which are called "lunch and learn," when the principal provides lunch while the teachers attend short professional development sessions. Topics for these events have included both technology and mathematics. Teachers stated that they have received training in meeting the needs of all learners and cited as examples training in developing mathematics centers and in writing instruction.

Teachers stated that they are not involved in setting short-term and long-term goals for their own professional development activities. The principal stated that there is no formal needs assessment done when determining topics for professional development, but that areas of interest are derived from conversations with the teachers. There is no formal evaluation process of professional development programs.

Renewal Question 2

Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?

Benchmark 2A: Mission and Key Design Elements

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

The mission was clear to all stakeholders interviewed, and was driven by a vision that graduates would attend college and return to revitalize their communities. All students, parents, teachers, leaders, and board members interviewed were able to describe the basic tenets of the mission. Parents were particularly enthusiastic about the mission and the school. The curriculum was found to be rigorous, mission driven, and the school supported the academic growth of all students with programs in place to assist struggling students in mastering the instructional program

The school was found to have implemented all of its key design elements designed to support the mission, which are detailed in the preceding sections of this report. This included the implementation of the Core Knowledge Curriculum; small class sizes, with 18 or less students in attendance in lessons observed by the team; and an extended school day and year. In addition, the team observed that students engaged in activities with real life application with some lessons engaging students in hands on activities. The school provided high quality professional development

for teachers on a regular basis and encouraged parental involvement in school activities. The school offers afterschool programs for both enrichment and academic support.

The school has one non-academic goal related to parent satisfaction, which the school has met. There are two absolute measures related to this goal. The first goal requires that at least two-thirds of all parents will respond positively to each of the survey items (satisfactory, good, or excellent ratings). Review of the survey data provided by the school revealed that the school met this measure on all 15 of the items assessed.

Benchmark 2B: Parents and Students

Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school. The school administered a parent survey, in Spanish and in English, in June 2009. According to the school's Accountability Plan Progress Report, 96 percent of the families reported high satisfaction in key categories. Notably, 95 percent believed that their children were receiving a quality education, and 99 percent would recommend the school to other parents. Participants in a parent focus group unanimously voiced strong positive attitudes about the school, particularly in the way that it challenged their children and maintained high standards for learning. All said that they felt they had access to teachers and the principal to air concerns, and that they received good information about their children's behavior and academic progress. The principal stated that there was substantial interest in the school and that there was a waiting list. Parents conveyed strong satisfaction with the school and planned to keep their children enrolled even though they knew that the school's location would be changing in the next and following years. Daily attendance at the schools met the Accountability Plan goals of at least 90 percent in 2008-2009, except in kindergarten where it was 88.8 percent.

Benchmark 2C: Organizational Capacity

Located in the Bronx on the third floor of P.S. 146, an existing New York City prekindergarten through grade 5 public school, ICS 3 is a replication school modeled after ICS 1, also located in the Bronx. The school opened in 2008 with grades K-2. The school added grade 3 this year, and plans to add a grade each year until the school populates grades K-8, according to interviewees.

The principal has implemented a management structure that has clear lines of authority and responsibility. A review of the school's organizational chart and academic structure showed that the school has two classes for each grade K-3, 11 teachers, including two targeted assistance teachers and a core enrichment teacher, a kindergarten teacher assistant, a grade 2 teacher assistant, and a 1:1 paraprofessional. The per-pupil student teacher ratio was 18:1. In addition, the school has a principal, a business manager, a guidance counselor, a staff developer/dean, and an administrative assistant. All teachers were certified and had Highly Qualified status.

The school has successfully recruited, hired, and retained personnel and made decisions about removing ineffective personnel. The staff handbook states that the teachers are "at will" employees and the board has the authority to terminate a teacher with or without cause unless the termination violates law. The principal has implemented a hiring process which includes outreach to Manhattanville College and principals at Icahn schools 1 and 2. The principal stated she did her own hiring, but did consult with the superintendent when a teacher or other staff person needed to be terminated. Over the last two years, one teacher left voluntarily and another was dismissed. A staff developer/dean and guidance counselor were hired this year as well as a new business manager. According to the principal, three teachers have already been hired for next year in anticipation of the addition of a 4th grade. The principal has not fully implemented an evaluation process for all staff that is aligned with the evaluation criteria described in the staff handbook.

The school has adequate enrollment and procedures for recruiting new students. According to the principal and a review of the description of the ICS 3, at the time of the school evaluation visit 146 students representing 124 families, were enrolled in kindergarten through grade 3 with a waiting list of approximately 100 students. The school's charter allows for an enrollment of 144 students. In addition, the school will be moving to a new site next year and is surveying parents to determine how many students will be enrolling in the school at the new site, which is in a different New York City school district in the Bronx. At the time of the visit, 61 families indicated they would move to the new site. The principal indicated she was not concerned with filling the incoming kindergarten class at the new site because she has approximately 175 applications for kindergarten. The school holds an admission lottery each April. Initial student recruitment efforts included "blitzing" the neighborhoods with information and providing day care centers with information about the school. Because the school is moving to the West Bronx, recruitment efforts are now concentrated in that location. Siblings of current students receive admission preference and students are admitted in all grades as late as January of each year.

The principal indicated that she has a positive relationship with the principal of the school in which ICS 3 is located and meets with the principal and her team monthly to coordinate student activities, including the use of the auditorium and gymnasium. The two schools also share a safety plan and the team reviewed a collaborative fire drill plan that was excerpted from the joint school safety plan. Students from the two schools do not have any concomitant academic programming and have separate breakfast and lunch times in the cafeteria. The principal stated she had a positive relationship with staff, parents, teachers, students, the superintendent and his staff, and the board of trustees, and has received support from the superintendent's office as the school has grown. She indicated she was an active participant in the budget process and, although the school is a replication school, it is allocated additional resources for extra academic programs such as after school tutoring. A review of the 2009-10 budget showed that sufficient resources are allocated to achieve Accountability Plan goals. For example, faculty and specialist salaries, contracted special education services, instructional supplies, and staff development costs accounted for approximately 58 percent of the budget.

The school's Accountability Plan has five academic goals relating to ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies, and two non-academic goals relating to parent and student satisfaction. The principal stated she monitored the Accountability Plan goals by correlating NCE cohort results with the 1-4 Core Knowledge scale rubric; however, because the school is only in its second year, most tested grade data related to the goals will not be available until 2010, 2011, or 2012.

The principal and the board have established communication practices for stakeholders. The school is in the process of developing a newsletter to communicate with stakeholders, and email is the primary method of communication with teachers. A website is under development for all Icahn schools. Parents receive six student progress reports each school year, which include both a course grade and a narrative about student progress. The board holds approximately nine public board meetings, which follow the New York State public meeting laws; however, to this point, board meetings have not been held at the school or in the local community.

At this time the school has sufficient organizational capacity to manage the school efficiently; however, as noted previously, the principal and interviewed board members indicated the school will be moving two times in the next two years. Next year the school will move to a new temporary site for one year before moving into a permanent building in the 2011-12 school year. This transition period will challenge all stakeholders: the principal, the teachers, board members, the superintendent, and lastly, but most importantly, students and parents. The culture of the school may also be affected during these transition years, student cohorts will likely change during the transition making it more difficult to

measure progress toward Accountability Plan goals; additionally, it is likely there may be staff turnover, and the continuous transitioning of students could affect the ability of the school to improve student achievement and reinforce classroom management procedures. The principal and the board recognize this challenge and have begun the process of planning a smooth transition process.

Benchmark 2D: Board Oversight

The Icahn schools have a singular board of trustees for all schools. Board members interviewed stated that the board meets and discusses one school and then adjourns and discusses the next school. The team interviewed three of the eight members of the ICS 3 board of trustees - two in person at the school and one via conference call. According to the by-laws provided to the team the number of trustees shall be not less than five or more than 25. The board includes a parent representative and board members interviewed articulated the backgrounds of some individual board members, and were confident they had the skills and background to effectively oversee the school.

The board has not made any financial or organizational decisions that have impeded the school in meetings its mission. In fact, at the September 22, 2009 board meeting, the board authorized the finance committee to meet as a subcommittee and negotiate with the Foundation for Greater Opportunity to discuss and negotiate a lease for a new building. At a subsequent meeting, the board was informed the Foundation did not acquire the building and would not be in a position to lease a building to the school. At the November 30, 2009 board meeting, the board instructed the superintendent to continue to research possible locations for the schools and report back to the board. Interviewed members stated that a site has been found and the school will move into that site in the 2011-12 school year.

The board has an executive committee and interviewed board members stated the board also has active grievance and finance committees. The board was active in the fall of 2009 in terms of solidifying the capacity of the school to enroll students in K-8, the long term goal of the school. The principal provides an executive summary of school activity at each board meeting, including information on student achievement, testing scores, interim assessment results, professional development, attendance, practice State tests, and results of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). A review of board minutes showed the board also received reports from the superintendent and other members of the superintendent's office. For example, at one meeting a representative from the superintendent's office presented a report on the school's health plan. At another meeting the superintendent presented information on the status of the ETalk web hosting program. The interviewed board members were clear that they expected the principal to carry out school policies as described in the student and staff handbooks. The board has not evaluated the principal and has not developed a principal evaluation rubric. The principal indicated she has not received a written evaluation by either the superintendent or the board. The board has not conducted a self-evaluation and does not have an ongoing assessment rubric to measure board effectiveness.

The board was aware of the school's Accountability Plan and the plan goals, and relies on the superintendent and the principal to provide information to the board on progress toward goals. Interviewed members reiterated that they receive reports from the principal on student achievement at each board meeting. One board member stated "we get more information than we need."

Benchmark 2E: Governance

The board has developed a mission and academic and non-academic goals that are reflected in the school's Accountability Plan. The board members interviewed articulated the major components of the mission related to rigor and personal and community involvement, and were familiar with the Core

Knowledge curriculum. ICS 3 is a replication school and the board indicated systems to achieve priorities, such as using the Core Knowledge curriculum, are similar across all Icahn schools.

The team was provided and reviewed bylaws for the Carl C. Icahn Charter School Far Rockaway. Far Rockaway was intended to be the original location of the school, according to board members interviewed. The bylaws for ICS 3 were voted on and approved and officers elected on April 3, 2008. The bylaws include articles, which describe a recruitment and selection process for new members, including a process for election, eligibility, term of office, removal, resignation, vacancies, and compensation.

The board holds approximately nine meetings per year at 767 Fifth Avenue, NY, NY. The by-laws allow the meetings to be held at the corporation's principal office or at any other place designated by the board. Board members interviewed were unaware of any board meeting being held at the school or in the community or whether any members of the public attended board meetings. The board adheres to the New York State public meeting law and posts a notice of the meeting at the planning board of each school district, in the New York Post, and at the schools, according to board members interviewed.

The team reviewed a conflict of interest policy included in the bylaws, which requires that any board member or officer who has a personal interest in any contract or transaction discussed by the board make a prompt disclosure of his or her interest. A review of September 22, 2009 board minutes showed that the board had to act on this policy with regard to two board members having a conflict in negotiating a lease for the new school site with the Foundation for a Greater Opportunity. The board found no conflicts existed for these two board members that would prevent them from negotiating a lease. In addition, according to the by-laws, not more than 50 percent of board members can be an owner of more than 5 percent of a business that, in the past 12 months, received compensation from Carl C. Icahn or any other entity over which Mr. Icahn has substantial control.

An interviewee indicated that a complaint process was in place at the school. If a parent had a complaint, they would contact the teacher, then the principal. If they continued to be dissatisfied they had access to the Icahn schools' superintendent and the board of trustees. Both the school and the board have policies in place. School policies are reflected in the staff and student handbooks, which were updated for school year 2009-10. Board policies are reflected in the bylaws, according to interviewed board members.

METHODOLOGY

The two-day renewal inspection site visit was conducted at ICS 3 during the period from March 24 to 25, 2010. The renewal inspection team (“the team”) conducted interviews with the principal, the curriculum enrichment teacher, the staff developer/dean, and the special education teacher. The team used a portion of the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks to guide the evaluation process.

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

- a board of trustees’ interview consisting of three current members;
- a teacher focus group consisting of six teachers, representing kindergarten through grade 3;
- a student focus group consisting of six students representing grades kindergarten through grade 3; and
- a parent focus group consisting of four parents.

The team conducted 14 classroom observations in grades kindergarten through grade 3. The observations ranged in length from 20 to 40 minutes. Six ELA lessons were observed; six mathematics lessons; and two science lessons. Team members kept running records of their observations using a classroom observation evidence worksheet.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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