



Charter Schools Institute

The State University of New York

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	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.

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>

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.

External Evaluation Report of Henry Johnson Charter School

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

2008 – 2009

June, 2009



TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
SCHOOL DESCRIPTION	4
BENCHMARK ANALYSIS	6
METHODOLOGY	16

1. Executive Summary

Henry Johnson Charter School was visited by an external school inspection team from RMC Research on behalf of the Charter Schools Institute on May 13 and 14, 2009. Henry Johnson was in its second year of operation and, at the time of the visit, offered kindergarten, first and second grades. An assessment plan, which included formal and informal assessments, had been created. Data from all of these assessments were systematically collected, analyzed as a staff with the support of the principal, and provided to teachers and parents. Teachers also constructed and administered weekly tests in all subject areas, which they used to gauge the progress of their students and as a basis for regrouping and re-teaching, when appropriate. The school was working to systematically collect all of the data, including teacher made tests, to obtain a more complete picture of the performance of each grade, class and child.

The academic curriculum was based on the review and selection of commercial programs in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, social studies and science. The staff selected components of each program to include in the newly created curriculum maps that were being developed online using the Rubicon Atlas program. The ELA and mathematics maps were nearing completion, and the maps for other content areas were in initial stages of development. At the time of the visit, the curriculum maps had been aligned by each grade individually but not from grade to grade. It was reported that vertical alignment would begin in the 2009-10 school year.

Henry Johnson was modeled after Milwaukee College Prep Charter School. Aspects of Milwaukee College Prep's curriculum were replicated by Henry Johnson, such as the Proactivity curriculum, which focuses on hard work, patience and concern for each child, reward for accomplishments and high expectations. These principles were incorporated into all aspects of the academic curriculum.

Instruction throughout the school was delivered in both whole class and small group models. During ELA and mathematics instructional blocks, additional support personnel were in every classroom to reduce the student to adult ratios and to provide more individualized instruction. Evidence suggested that, with further refinement and development, the staffing structure in place had the potential to provide intensive literacy and mathematics instruction to students.

The principal was reported to provide a great deal of support to the staff. She collaborated with staff and believed strongly in their being part of decision making in all areas of school development. The principal expected that teachers would deliver instruction proficiently and that the routines and rituals associated with the discipline policy and the Proactivity program would be consistently implemented. While she did conduct observations, the inspection team did not find evidence that the observations were focused on providing guidance in improving the delivery of instruction in the curriculum areas. The principal also instituted a system of evaluating teachers based on the rubrics from Charlotte Danielson's *Components of Professional Practice*.

Henry Johnson did have a plan for identifying and providing services to at-risk students. At-risk students, including special education students and English language learners (ELLs), were provided with differentiated instruction and tutoring in the classrooms by the teacher and educational assistants as well as additional small group or individualized instruction by the special education teacher. Henry Johnson also had an instructional support team (IST), which

met monthly with teachers to develop plans to meet the needs of the identified students. All evidence suggested that the academic needs of the struggling students were being met.

The inspection team observed that a consistent system of managing discipline, replicated from the system at Milwaukee College Prep, was being implemented by all staff. All staff were in the process of inculcating the norms of this system. The dean of students supported teachers in implementing all aspects of the program and of the discipline system.

There was a plan for professional development which included summer sessions prior to the opening of school, two full professional development days, weekly staff meetings and off-site opportunities for specific training. Areas of focus included developing the school culture, training on Rubicon Atlas curriculum mapping, using the instructional programs and materials, and school routines for classroom management. The inspection team found that the first two years of Henry Johnson's growth had been largely devoted to developing the school culture and initializing the instructional programs. The principal indicated that her next steps would be to link professional development to student development and achievement.

The mission and key design elements of Henry Johnson had been faithfully implemented. At the time of the visit, staff, parents and students could articulate the school's mission and were working as a team to carry it out. The identified elements of the Milwaukee College Prep program had been replicated reliably. Parents interviewed expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the school.

The inspection team found that Henry Johnson was competently organized and staffed to support and implement instructional programs. School routines were evident, and roles and responsibilities of administrators and all personnel were clearly defined. School schedules provided instructional blocks of time and regular opportunities for planning and articulation. Student enrollment was at planned levels.

Although the board of trustees is small, consisting of six members, with one living in New York City and another being a parent representative, trustees interviewed indicated that they understood their role and responsibilities for oversight of Henry Johnson. They expressed that they wanted to provide greater financial and educational oversight. As a result, they indicated their desire to recruit additional members with expertise in education. They also indicated that they planned to hire an outside auditor to develop a system of internal financial controls and an educational consultant to provide the board with needed information. Evidence suggested that the board had implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes consistent with their roles and responsibilities.

2. *School Description*¹

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approved the application to establish the Henry Johnson Charter School (“Henry Johnson”) on May 24, 2005, and the charter became effective by operation of law in October of that same year. The school took two planning years prior to opening, in large measure due to facility delays (2005-06 and 2006-07). The school opened in September of 2007 with an initial enrollment of 116 students in kindergarten and 1st grade, adding one grade in 2008-09 so as to serve 202 students in kindergarten through 2nd grade. The school plans to add an additional grade in 2009-10, ultimately serving 275 students in kindergarten through 3rd grade by the end of its first charter term. Henry Johnson Charter School is located at 30 Watervliet Avenue in Albany, New York.

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

- Ms. Michelle Cleary, Chairperson;
- Ms. Debra Dickerson, Vice-Chairperson;
- Ms. Alea DePauw, Secretary;
- Mr. Peter Murphy, Treasurer;
- Ms. Claire Hazzard; and
- Mr. Brennan Keating.

The mission statement of the Henry Johnson Charter School is as follows:

The mission of the Henry Johnson Charter School is to ensure that all students reach the highest levels of scholastic achievement in an environment that instills character, virtue and “habits of mind” that ensure success both within and outside of the classroom: diligence, courage, respect, self-reliance, duty, and responsibility.

Proudly named for Albany’s World War I hero, the school strives to help students emulate Sergeant Henry Johnson’s strength of character. Henry Johnson is modeled on the Milwaukee College Preparatory School (MCPS) and follows many of the tenets of Marva Collins (e.g., using daily recitals of alphabetic Wall Cards to assure knowledge of letters and sounds, thus promoting a phonics-based approach to reading, and enriching the ELA program with classic literature).

Key design elements include:

- a rigorous academic program;
- a longer school day and school year allowing for three hours of English language arts instruction and one hour of mathematics instruction daily;
- comprehensive assessment, the results of which drive curricular and instructional decision making;
- a school culture based on the values of honor, honesty, diligence, and perseverance;

¹ This section was provided by the Charters Schools Institute for inclusion in this report.

- a focus on learning, with at least two adults providing instruction in each classroom and extensive professional development available to teachers; and
- a program enriched by visual and performing arts and by physical education.

School Year (2008-09)

192 Instructional Days

School Day (2008-09)

7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Enrollment

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ²	Original Chartered Grades	Revised Grades Served	Actual Grades Served	Complying
2005-06	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year
2006-07	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year	Planning Year
2007-08	200	125	116	K-2	K-1	K-1	Yes
2008-09	275	200	202	K-3	K-2	K-2	Yes
2009-10	350	275		K-4	K-3		

Student Demographics³

	2006-07		2007-08	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of Albany CSD Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of Albany CSD Enrollment
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	1.6	0	0
Black or African American	79	62.6	79	63
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0	3.4	0	11
Hispanic	8	10.7	8	4
White	3	20.1	3	20
Multiracial	10	1.7	10	1
Special Populations				
Students with Disabilities	NA	17.9	NA	NA
Limited English Proficient	1	4.5	1	5
Free/Reduced Lunch				
Eligible for Free Lunch	81	55.9	81	48
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	14	10.9	14	9

² Actual enrollment per the Institute's Official Enrollment Table. Note that the New York State Education Department School Report Card and Database, upon which the Free and Reduced lunch figures are calculated, may represent slightly different enrollment levels depending on the date in which this data was collected.

³ Source: 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08 School Report Cards (New York State Education Department). Note the State Education Department does not report special education data.

3. Benchmark Analysis

Use of Assessment Data

Henry Johnson Charter School had developed a comprehensive assessment plan that was aligned to its curriculum framework. Incoming kindergarten students were screened in the areas of language, concepts and motor skills using the Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL) 3 instrument. The Terra Nova assessments in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, social studies and science were administered in the fall and spring. The Measures of Academic Performance (MAP) assessments were administered three times a year, in September, January and May. These provided information about student progress in English language arts and mathematics. The data from the MAP assessments were used to group students for instruction and to adjust the school's curriculum. The STAR Reading assessment published by Renaissance Learning—a computer-adaptive assessment in which the difficulty of items is adjusted automatically to reflect the skill level of students, including those with special needs—was correlated to the Accelerated Reader program in use at the school and was administered three times a year. Henry Johnson had just begun to administer the STAR Mathematics assessment in the 2008-09 school year. At the time of the visit, the mathematics assessment had been conducted one time. The STAR assessments were used to chart student growth using a lexile system, to identify reading levels within the Accelerated Reader program so that students were assigned to the appropriately leveled books and to provide data to inform programmatic decisions for remediation of students.

Henry Johnson also added assessments developed by School Performance New York (SPNY) in second grade for English language arts and mathematics, which were aligned to state standards and were modeled after the New York State testing program (NYSTP) measures. These assessments were developed with the input of teachers who had identified the skills to be tested based on the taught curriculum. All of the data from the SPNY assessments were systematically collected and provided to teachers and parents. In addition to constructing the second grade tests, SPNY also analyzed the Terra Nova data for the school.

In addition to assessments administered schoolwide, teachers administered classroom tests developed both individually and by grade to monitor student progress. These included weekly spelling, fluency and grammar tests; quarterly unit assessments in English language arts, mathematics and social studies; end of module assessments in science; monthly vocabulary tests; Marie Clay observation surveys; running records; poetry recitations; and sight word checklists. The data from the classroom assessments were used to chart the progress and academic growth of students and informed teachers' decisions about regrouping students and re-teaching curriculum content.

The principal met with the teachers weekly at planning and grade meetings to review the data obtained from the schoolwide assessments and their implications for instruction. Teachers reported that the principal worked very closely with them to examine data printouts and item skill analyses to identify students' areas of strength and weakness for grouping and re-teaching. The principal indicated that, at the time of the visit, she did not monitor the classroom based assessments. The school was working toward the systematic collection of all assessment data including teacher administered tests to obtain a more robust assessment of the performance of each grade, class and child. The results of all assessments were regularly communicated to parents and students, as appropriate. The Terra Nova scores were mailed home and explained

during parent-teacher meetings. Other student data were communicated to parents on report cards and progress reports and through homework folders, called Life's Work, which were brought home daily.

Curriculum

Modeled after the Milwaukee College Prep Charter School, which was initially developed based on the work of Marva Collins, Henry Johnson elected to implement those aspects of the Milwaukee College Prep curriculum which emulated the foundational elements of hard work, patience and concern for each child without preconception, reward for accomplishments and the maintenance of a consistent environment of high expectations. These principles were embodied in the Proactivity curriculum, which had been fully adopted at Henry Johnson and integrated into all aspects of the school day and into all academic subjects. Other components of the Marva Collins approach implemented at Henry Johnson included Bright Work, which reviewed the work of the preceding day, and the use of wall cards in the recitation of letters and sounds.

The academic curriculum was selected by the staff of Henry Johnson based on a review of several commercial programs in each curriculum area. The Henry Johnson curriculum was largely based on the programs selected. Initially, the school anticipated using the Open Court Reading program but ultimately adopted the Macmillan/McGraw Hill Treasures program for English language arts. Similarly, although the charter application identified Saxon Math, SRA Real Math was actually used in Henry Johnson's first year of operation. During the current year, Henry Johnson moved from SRA Real Math to the Scott Foresman Math program. Teachers determined that the SRA Math program did not provide adequate attention to "critical areas" and had to be supplemented too much. They reported that the Scott Foresman program was more comprehensive. Additional programs selected were Accelerated Reader and Accelerated Mathematics, SRA tutoring, Full Option Science System (FOSS), Teachers' Curriculum Institute's Social Studies Alive and Handwriting Without Tears.

The scope and sequence of each program was included in newly created curriculum maps. Based on prior reports, Henry Johnson had made significant progress in developing a curriculum with a well-defined scope and sequence at the time of the visit. In the summer of 2008, the school undertook the creation of curriculum maps using the Rubicon Atlas online program. The principal and five teachers attended a three-day workshop on curriculum mapping presented by a noted expert. One of the three days was an opportunity to meet with curriculum mapping vendors. The cadre of staff attending the workshop invited selected vendors to the school for further discussions and investigation and, as a result, the decision was made to engage Rubicon Atlas. A format was created which included essential questions, curriculum content, skills, assessments, Proactivity content, interdisciplinary connections and alignment to state standards. School inspectors observed that the curriculum maps for English language arts and mathematics were nearing completion. Teachers were updating them and adding information to the curriculum maps as decisions about the school curriculum evolved. Curriculum maps for science, social studies and other content areas were in the initial stages of development. It was anticipated that those would be completed during the summer of 2009. The curriculum mapping process involved teachers' examinations of the commercial programs currently in use to make decisions about which components of each program to utilize. While the selected programs were already aligned to New York state standards, each commercial program provided many activities which teachers could select based on the needs of their students. The identified components were then matched to the appropriate New York state performance indicators and included on the

curriculum maps. This process was done on each grade. At the time of the visit, alignment had been initiated within each grade but not across grades. The principal expressed her plan for beginning the work on vertical alignment in the 2009-10 school year.

Pedagogy

School inspectors observed that the teachers were knowledgeable about the academic programs. Instruction throughout the school was delivered in both whole class and small group models. The model of instruction established at Henry Johnson provided a minimum of two teachers in kindergarten and first grade as well as an educational assistant in all classes from kindergarten through second grade during the English language arts and mathematics periods to reduce student to teacher ratios. The homeroom teacher served as the lead teacher for English language arts instruction, while the math and other teachers and the educational assistants served as support personnel. During the whole class English language arts instruction, the other adults supported individual students or assisted with classroom behavior issues. When the students were divided into instructional groups, the math or other teachers instructed one small guided reading group and the educational assistants worked with students on skill practice with another group. This structure was also in place during mathematics instruction when the mathematics teachers became the lead teachers and the homeroom teachers and educational assistants moved to roles of support. This model was observed by the team to differentiate instruction for students, although in some cases the use of the support staff during the whole class portion of the English language arts instruction was not optimized. In second grade, the classroom teacher taught both English language arts and mathematics with the support of an educational assistant.

Team members observed that lessons were focused and had clear learning objectives that were communicated effectively to students. Inspectors observed classes in which lessons were appropriately paced and the instruction was challenging. However, in a few classes, instruction observed was not rigorous. In those classes, questions asked to guide instruction were literal, calling for one word answers, and were not thought provoking. Some lessons observed consisted of a series of activities without any direct instruction. In several lower grade classes, pacing was slow and was negatively affected by frequent interruptions to deal with behavioral and management issues. While the inspection team recognized the school's focus on establishing a positive culture using the Proactivity curriculum and routines embedded in all aspects of instruction during this second year of operation, the team observed that the delivery of instruction and the behavioral expectations for early childhood students were not always developmentally appropriate. In many cases, young children were being asked to sit for long periods without enough opportunities for appropriate movement.

The inspection team concluded that Henry Johnson had developed a structure for the delivery of instruction which hadn't been implemented to its fullest potential at the time of the visit. Evidence suggested that the assignment of support personnel during the English language arts and mathematics periods had the potential to provide students with personalized teaching to build on their strengths in order to remediate their academic deficiencies.

Instructional Leadership

Teachers were unanimous in their descriptions of the support provided to them by the principal. They reported that she was open to suggestions, was always available for assistance and was willing to collaborate with them on all aspects of the school program. The principal had

provided time in the school schedule for planning. She had high expectations for the teachers' consistent implementation of school routines and rituals associated with the discipline policy and the Proactivity programs. Similarly, students were held to high expectations to meet behavioral standards. Students reported that they were aware of school rules and that the rules were necessary to help them make "good choices." Students interviewed also discussed the instruction in their classes. One kindergarten student indicated that she was allowed to make a mistake on her "rough writing draft" but that the "final draft must have your best handwriting and no mistakes."

Structures for supervision and support had been established. Assessment data were available to inform and improve instruction and the principal provided continuous support to teachers to use the results effectively; the development of a strong curriculum and curriculum map were underway; and teachers regularly planned for instruction, although lesson plans were not collected and reviewed for fidelity to the school curriculum or for evidence of data based planning. The principal had also created a professional development plan and reported that she was working to refine that plan to be more data driven and school based.

The principal reported that during the prior school year, she had created and implemented a schedule of regular formal observations to be conducted a minimum of twice a year. She indicated that, because of time constraints, she had changed her supervision protocol to informal unannounced observations during which she recorded what she saw on index cards and then gave them to the teachers to provide written feedback. In addition, she often met with teachers to engage in discussions about issues that arose as a result of her classroom visits. Much of the feedback related to classroom management concerns and teachers' skills in meeting the requirements of the behavior and Proactivity programs and did not address their abilities to teach specific subjects, such as reading and mathematics. Although the principal reported that this new, informal system of observing classes helped her to focus on teachers who needed more monitoring, the team did not find evidence of a comprehensive and consistent system for evaluating instruction of all teachers and providing critical feedback on their delivery of instruction.

The principal did engage with each teacher in individual goal setting at the beginning of the school year. During the course of the year, the principal observed teachers and had ongoing conversations with them about their progress toward meeting their goals. During their final evaluation, an assessment would be made as to their growth in achieving their identified goals. As part of this process, teachers completed a self-assessment. Henry Johnson had adapted the Charlotte Danielson model, Components of Professional Practice, to use as an indication of teachers' professional growth. With the Framework for Teaching, Danielson's rubrics for such domains as planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction and professional responsibilities were used to evaluate teachers' performances. In addition, Henry Johnson customized the rubrics to be specific to the school's priorities by adding other components including the Henry Johnson Charter School culture, co-teaching, student achievement, academic growth and participating in a professional community. Based on these domains and supporting components, teachers were evaluated in the spring of the previous year.

Also, at the end of the prior year, teachers received differentiated salary increments based on performance as measured by the Danielson rubrics. The principal indicated that at the end of the 2008-09 school year, a cost of living increase of 2.5% was anticipated in addition to a merit

increase, which would be awarded to all teachers based on the rubrics jointly assessed by the teachers and the principal and student performance. Teachers in the proficient and distinguished categories would most likely benefit. This bonus would be for returning teachers only. At the time of the visit, the teachers did not know whether there would be a salary bonus or increase. Some hoped that there would be some additional remuneration but did not know the eligibility requirements for such potential monies. The principal told the team that the plan for the cost of living increase and the merit bonus was not fully developed and had not been discussed with teachers at that time.

The inspection team recognized that establishing school routines and rituals took time and observed that, under the leadership of the principal, Henry Johnson had developed many positive features which have the potential to support the growth and development of the Henry Johnson academic program. The principal informed team members that closer supervision of teaching and learning to promote instructional consistency throughout the school would be her next step.

At-Risk Students

Henry Johnson had developed a plan to provide support for at-risk students. In the classrooms, students were grouped by ability in English language arts and mathematics to differentiate instruction. In addition, teachers and educational assistants provided tutoring using the SRA Early Reader program. Accelerated Math was also used for struggling students, who were assigned reinforcement exercises and were then reassessed to determine proficiency. Henry Johnson had eight students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP's). The special education teacher pushed into the classrooms and pulled out students with IEP's, as well as other at-risk students, for direct instruction. Students for whom the service was mandated received counseling and other related services, such as speech instruction. A reading tutor was hired in April, 2009 and had begun to work with identified at-risk students. There were three students identified as English language learners (ELLs) in the school: two in kindergarten and one in first grade. There was no certified English as a second language (ESL) teacher on staff at the time of the visit. The kindergarten students were supported through the routine classroom program. The first grade student received additional instruction in the classroom and also joined a small group of special education and other at-risk students working with the special education teacher.

Students at risk were identified at Henry Johnson through clearly defined procedures. The instructional support team (IST), conducted by the special education teacher and counselor, met monthly. The special education teacher planned an agenda for each meeting based on names submitted to her by classroom teachers. Classroom teachers and the dean of students were invited to the meeting to discuss the needs of each student and developed a plan for behavioral and/or academic improvement. If, in fact, students were not successful as a result of plans developed, they might ultimately be referred for special education services. Additionally, Henry Johnson was moving toward full implementation of the Response to Intervention (RtI) model. Four teachers were undergoing training at the time of the visit. The inspection team concluded that the needs of the at-risk students at Henry Johnson were being met.

Student Order and Discipline

A system for managing discipline had been established and implemented in each classroom throughout the school. This system was modeled after the behavior system at Milwaukee College Prep. Every class on each grade level used a similar color-coded behavior management

system which enabled the students to know when they were not behaving appropriately. A parent reported that “the color system was teaching his child to self correct.” Another parent reported that the staff “paid attention to the small stuff.”

All teachers continued to be involved in the Proactivity program for character education based on the Milwaukee College Prep model. Students were called “scholars.” They continued to identify a virtue each month and recount various slogans and chants, poems and values throughout the school. The students recited a declaration of excellence and Proactivity continued to be celebrated at whole school assemblies.

The dean of students was a very visible presence in the school. He was observed meeting buses in the morning and greeting students upon arrival. He was in and out of classrooms, supporting teachers and working with students. There were clearly defined reward mechanisms and consequences for student behavior. There was strong evidence to suggest that the policies related to discipline and establishing a positive culture at Henry Johnson had been internalized by all staff and students and were consistently applied across the school.

Professional Development

There was a professional development plan at Henry Johnson. Staff reported for one week of training in August and new staff members were provided with an additional week of orientation and professional development. The topics for these sessions included: revisiting the school’s mission and vision; developing the school culture; training on Rubicon Atlas curriculum mapping; effective use of curriculum programs and materials; continuing support for the co-teaching model; a review of school routines, including classroom management and school discipline; and grade-level curriculum meetings. There were two full days devoted to professional development during the school year. During those sessions, the Teaching Taxonomy developed by Uncommon Schools was presented to staff members. Additionally, teachers reviewed and revised the report card template, updated the curriculum maps and organized materials. Time was allotted monthly during staff meetings to continue training on such topics as Teaching Taxonomy techniques. There were off-site opportunities for teachers, including visits to Milwaukee College Prep, to learn more about the programs and strategies being replicated at Henry Johnson, as well as local workshops for RtI training and sessions hosted by Uncommon Schools on the Teaching Taxonomy. Teachers who attended the off-site professional development sessions provided turnkey training to their colleagues. Henry Johnson had also provided differentiated training for specific cohorts of staff. During one of the professional development days, for example, educational assistants received training to implement the SRA Early Reading Tutoring program. The teacher who was identified to become the reading teacher in 2009-10 was being provided with additional training at a local reading and writing institute. New teachers were provided with mentors in addition to the targeted week of training in August. The team noted that the principal was examining strategies to provide professional development to staff based on student achievement data. However, at the time of the visit, there was no evidence that the professional development provided was linked to observations of teachers’ practices or that training in child development principles or early childhood instructional techniques was offered. This was the second year of operation for Henry Johnson and a system to evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development program had not yet been developed.

Mission and Key Design Elements

The mission of Henry Johnson was known and understood by all staff. Teachers, students and parents interviewed were all able to articulate the mission of the school. The key design elements, including English language arts and mathematics instructional blocks, were included in the daily schedules and the focus on building character was implemented primarily through the Proactivity program embedded in the school day as well. Rituals and routines were observed to have been established to teach and reinforce the concepts embodied in the Proactivity program. Although the principal was hired after the charter was written and submitted, she was the chief advocate and was responsible for ensuring that the school's mission and the foundational elements were fully embraced by all school constituents. The principal reported that when she was first hired during the planning year, she visited Milwaukee College Prep three to four times to "soak in the culture" in order to know and understand what she needed to replicate at Henry Johnson. Subsequently, she has returned to Milwaukee and taken staff members with her so that they would have the benefit of seeing the model firsthand. Other staff members, who had not yet had the opportunity to visit the model school, received consistent turnkey training from the principal and from teachers who had visited. This training and the resulting implementation of a consistent system throughout the school yielded a culture of cohesion and common purpose.

Parents and Students

Parents expressed approval of the organization of and the educational program at Henry Johnson. Parents interviewed expressed that the school was meeting their expectations. They indicated that they were impressed with the teachers, who cared about the children and who addressed issues immediately. They cited the Proactivity assemblies and awards as a reason for feeling that their children were safe in the school. They expressed their views that the "learning was advanced for the ages of the kids" and that the structure of the day "did not leave a lot of down time." Parents cited the three hours of English language arts instruction as a strong factor in their satisfaction with the school. They felt that the behavior management system was having a positive impact on their children. The parents were unanimous in articulating that the principal was very caring. Students interviewed clearly understood their grade appropriate academic goals and expressed that they appreciated the discipline management system as well.

Organizational Capacity

The daily operations at Henry Johnson were well organized. The dean of students greeted students every day as they arrived on buses at approximately 7:30 a.m. Students were supervised by staff members as they ate breakfast and at 8:00 a.m. they were brought to their classrooms to begin the day's work. The school building had been renovated for Henry Johnson, and the principal reported that she had had some input into the design and the selection of furniture. School scheduling provided time for block instruction in English language arts and mathematics. Also built into the schedule was time for the full staff to meet on Wednesdays and for grade level groups to plan on Fridays.

As noted previously, the school had created a staffing structure during the English language arts and mathematics blocks which had the potential to provide maximum academic support for students. There was a part-time librarian who worked at the school two days a week to help students check books in and out and to assist them accessing the internet on the computers in the library. At the time of the visit, team members observed that staffing was ample to meet the

needs of the instructional program for students in kindergarten through second grade. The school, as originally planned, was to include an assistant principal in its organizational structure. When the principal was hired, she sought approval from the board of trustees to eliminate that position and to add a dean of discipline. However, it was anticipated by the principal that, as the school increased to fourth grade, additional staff would have to be added such as an assistant principal or director of curriculum. The school was also planning to hire a full-time librarian, an intervention teacher for mathematics and a reading teacher/literacy coach in the 2009-10 school year.

The principal viewed her role as “overseeing” the curriculum, the instruction and all things “related to academics.” She provided teachers with the resources to run programs and involved teachers in most decision making. Material and personnel resources were sufficient for Henry Johnson to achieve its goals. The dean managed the discipline and supported teachers in the area of classroom management. The roles of each were clearly defined and were articulated by teachers and staff members. The dean and six of the nine teachers for the school’s first year of operation were brought to Henry Johnson by the principal from her former school. Three additional teachers were successfully recruited. At the end of the first year, one teacher was not invited to return and, at the time of the visit, two teachers were identified by the principal as under consideration for removal but no decision had yet been made. The principal documented for the team the support that had been provided for the teachers and articulated a plan for making the appropriate decision about whether or not to invite them to return. The inspection team concurred with the principal’s assessment of the teachers’ vulnerabilities.

At the time of the visit, there were 191 students enrolled. The principal reported that there was a waiting list of students for entrance into kindergarten and a few openings in first and second grade. However, she indicated that the student enrollment was close to the anticipated number for the 2008-09 school year.

All evidence suggested that Henry Johnson had established a school structure and organization that supported its academic program.

Board Oversight

At the time of the visit, the board of trustees consisted of six members. One of the six now lived in New York City and participated in board meetings by telephone as a non-voting member. One of the board members was a parent representative. The trustees interviewed indicated that the board used to meet once a month but had recently begun to meet every other month. One of the trustees described the committee structure, including a two-member finance committee, which provided supervision and support of the business manager and the financial issues for the school. Other committees reported were a fundraising committee and a building committee which, at the time of the visit, was examining whether or not there was enough space to expand to fourth grade in the current building.

The board received a data package with information about various aspects of the school from the principal several days before the next scheduled meeting. Information included MAP assessment results and enrollment numbers. However, the board indicated that they hadn’t seen Terra Nova data since fall 2008 and were not sure that the gains on those and the interim assessments were satisfactory. They told the inspection team that they would be “looking at other diagnostics at the next board meeting and that they wanted predictive assessments.” To

that end, the trustees shared their desire to engage an outside educational consultant group to be an “extra set of eyes” for the board, to spend a week looking at data and “checking on the educational leader” to ensure that the development of the school’s academic program was moving in the “right direction.” The consultants would give the board the ability to provide educational oversight. Trustees also reported that they were searching for prospective members with educational backgrounds to provide additional internal capacity for oversight of the school’s instructional program. In addition, the trustees expressed a desire to hire an outside auditor to check the school’s financial internal controls and to check bank reconciliations in order to prevent any irregularities. The trustees appeared to be clear about their roles and responsibilities to provide oversight to the school and to leave the development of the instructional program to the school leader.

The board members indicated that they evaluated the principal and the business manager. During the first year of operations at Henry Johnson, the principal’s performance was rated based on her ability to provide a “smooth” opening of school, meeting attendance and recruitment goals, school culture, conveying information to the board, external relations and gains on the Terra Nova and the MAP scores for first grade. The outcome of the evaluation determined whether the principal would receive merit pay in addition to her salary. The trustees acknowledged that the opening of Henry Johnson was “very seamless” but that after the first year, there were minimal amounts of data. The trustees present reported that, in the second year of operation, the board was interested in using more data as criteria for the principal’s evaluation. The board president was taking the lead in the process of developing a new set of measurable standards through which to hold the principal accountable. Trustees reported that she planned to gather information about evaluations systems used at other charter schools to incorporate into the new standards for the evaluations of Henry Johnson’s leaders.

The inspection team concluded that the board of trustees understood its responsibilities for oversight of the school and, where it did not have the internal capacity to provide that supervision directly, had a plan to expand its own capabilities in the areas needed.

Governance

The trustees interviewed were aware of the challenges in starting a new school for students whose academic achievements were not yet measured on standardized New York state assessments. They clearly articulated specific priorities to ensure that leaders, both instructional and financial, were provided with sufficient support and direction and that they understood unmistakably how to achieve them.

The trustees reported that there was a conflict of interest policy in place. One member of the board who worked for the New York Charter Schools Association indicated that, although there has not yet been a situation which would create a conflict, he was prepared to recuse himself from discussions or voting should one arise.

The trustees conducted regular open meetings, but parents did not regularly attend. The trustees reported that they had no direct contact with parents and received information through the parent representative on the board. At the time of the visit, the only issue brought to the board involved coordinating the dismissal and busing schedules. The board directed the principal to correct the situation. The members concluded that, since enrollment and retention were high, parents were largely satisfied.

Board meetings were conducted regularly and minutes were available to the inspection team. While the board did not modify any new policies, it regularly approved contracts, budgets, salary and benefits, personnel issues and other appropriate actions.

Evidence suggested that the board of trustees had implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes consistent with their roles and responsibilities.

4. Methodology

The inspection of Henry Johnson Charter School was conducted on May 13 and 14, 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 Masters 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 Masters 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 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.