



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

EXCELLENCE CHARTER SCHOOL OF BEDFORD STUYVESANT

Evaluation Report 2005-2006

August, 2006

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Reader's Guide

Background on Charter Schools and the State University

Charter schools are public schools that operate independently and autonomously of local school districts and are created by civic leaders, community groups, educators and parents interested in bringing public school choice to their communities and improving student achievement, particularly for children at-risk of academic failure. The New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 authorizes the creation of charter schools.

Under the Charter Schools Act, the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the State University Trustees), the New York State Board of Regents (the Regents), or local boards of education (in New York City, authorizing power is vested in the Chancellor) have the power to create charter schools and thereafter to renew charters of successful schools. Additionally, existing traditional district-operated schools can seek to convert to charter status through their governing boards of education.

The Charter Schools Institute (the Institute) was established by the State University Trustees to assist them in their responsibilities under the act, including reviewing applications to establish charter schools as well as applications to renew the charters of existing charter schools. In each case the Institute makes recommendations to the State University Trustees. In addition the Institute is charged with providing ongoing oversight of State University charter schools.

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

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

The State University Trustees' Oversight Process

The State University Trustees, jointly with the Regents, are required to provide oversight sufficient to ensure that each charter school that the Trustees have authorized is in compliance with applicable law and the terms of its charter. The Institute, together with the State Education Department, monitors compliance through a monitoring plan (which is contained in the schools' charter itself) and other methods.

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

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

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

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

Evaluation Visits and Reports

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

In evaluating schools, the Institute uses a series of benchmarks that cover not only the strength of the academic program but the strength and effectiveness of the organizational and fiscal policies, structures and procedures that the school has instituted at the time of the visit. How these

benchmarks are used (and which are used) varies, depending on the specific year of the visit as well as whether the school is in its initial renewal cycle (the first five years) or, having been renewed one or more times, in subsequent renewal cycles.

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

Over time of course, and particularly at the school's initial renewal (and subsequent renewals thereafter), the quantitative indicators, student test scores, take on paramount importance and the qualitative indicators concordantly diminish in importance. This is consonant with the fact that charter schools are responsible for results (outcome measures).

However, while decisions at renewal in subsequent renewal cycles involving the effectiveness of the educational program are determined almost solely by its students' collective performance on standardized tests during the most recent charter period, the Institute continues to use the qualitative benchmarks regarding the educational program's effectiveness. The reason for this is that it can give the school (and parents and other stakeholders) information not only on how the school is doing but perhaps the reasons for its lack of performance if such is the case.

The Renewal Cycle and the Timing of Evaluation Visits

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

As such, each of the Institute's evaluation reports contains a chart indicating the years the school has been in operation, the year of its present charter period, when it has been renewed and for how long, and the feedback that has been previously issued to the school. This [chart](#) is set forth in the following section and is linked to the Institute's evaluation protocols, which indicate in what years the Institute conducts evaluation and renewal inspections.

¹ More often, of course, schools do not succeed or fail so much as parts of the highly complex organization are working well and parts are not.

The Present Report

The information contained within this report is the result of evidence obtaining during the Institute's visit to the Excellence Charter School of Bedford Stuyvesant conducted in the spring of the school's second year of operation. In addition to this reader's guide, the report includes a brief description of the school, a summary of the Institute's conclusions from the previous visit to the school, conclusions and analysis from the present visit, a subset of the benchmarks utilized by the inspection team as the lens through which the school was examined and, finally, data on the visit, including identities of the visitors and the date of the visit.²

The report reflects the observations and findings from the one-day inspection visit conducted typically by a two to four member team comprised of Institute staff, and, in some cases, outside experts. Consistent with the Institute's evaluation process throughout the life of the charter, Institute visitors seek evidence of effectiveness in key areas: the academic success of the school including teaching and learning (curriculum, instruction and assessment); the effectiveness and viability of the school as an organization, including such items as board operations and student order and discipline; and the fiscal soundness of the school. Issues regarding compliance with state and federal laws and regulations may be noted (and subsequently addressed), and where the Institute finds serious deficiencies in particular relating to student health and safety it may take additional and immediate action; however, monitoring compliance is not the principal purpose of the visit. Evaluation visits typically include a meeting with the principal/director, classroom visitations, and interviews of staff, students and board members, in addition to reviewing student work.

Keeping This Report in Context

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

- establishing a positive, academically focused school culture that provides high expectations, support and encouragement for students and teaching staff, and any necessary remediation for students;
- establishing operational and communication patterns with the governing school board of trustees, as well as communication patterns with staff, parents and the community;
- setting up sound fiscal processes and procedures;
- establishing the school in often less-than-ideal facilities, without ready access to facilities funding mechanisms available to district administered public schools;

² The specific benchmarks that were used are attached to the report.

- creating an environment with strong instructional leadership where teachers receive timely professional development to address changing student needs;
- ensuring that all staff are familiar with and consistently use an effective system for behavior management; and
- retaining qualified staff and minimizing the frequency and rate of any staff turnover by understanding the reason for it, and providing replacement staff with an orientation to the school and its program, as well as the necessary professional development.

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

For the reasons above, and because of the inherent complexity of an organization such as a school, this report does not contain a rating or a single comprehensive indicator that would indicate at a glance that the school is “on track” toward a subsequent renewal. It does, however, summarize the various strengths of the school and the areas that the inspection team found in need of improvement.

While there is no one rating that the Institute gives as a result of a single-day visit, it is important to note that where the inspection team identifies area after area with not just room for improvement but significant and severe deficiencies, and few, if any, countervailing strengths, the difficulty that the school may have in presenting a compelling case for renewal is likely to be substantially increased and this fact may well be noted. Conversely, where the inspection team finds that strengths outnumber weaknesses in both quantity and quality, the school is likely to be better positioned to build a strong case for renewal. So, too, this fact may be noted.

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

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

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

School Description

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approved the application for Excellence Charter School of Bedford Stuyvesant (“Excellence Charter School”) on May 21, 2003, and it was approved by operation of law on June 17, 2003. The school opened in August of 2004 at 598 Lafayette Avenue in Brooklyn, New York, serving 90 all-male students in Kindergarten and first grades. The school plans to grow one grade at a time, projecting an enrollment of 329 students in grades Kindergarten through five by the 2008-09 school year. Eventually the school hopes to serve students through grade eight. The school moved to 225 Patchen Avenue in Brooklyn in June 2006.

The mission statement for Excellence Charter School is as follows:

The mission of Excellence Charter School is to prepare its students to enter, succeed in, and graduate from outstanding college preparatory high schools and colleges.

According to the Executive Summary of the school’s final chartered agreement, the school’s founders were inspired by an after-school program called Bedford Stuyvesant “I Have a Dream.” This program challenges students to dream about college and to live that dream. Noting that an after-school program can only minimally address the challenges students face, the decision was made to plan a charter school. The school’s program is based on the founders’ belief that providing a rigorous educational program (adapted from the programs of successful urban charter schools in New York City and around the country) to children from the earliest elementary grades forward is the best way to ensure high academic achievement. The charter states that Excellence Charter School will achieve its mission through the following key design elements of the school:

- a culture that expects excellence;
- small class sizes;
- focus on literacy;
- homework beginning in Kindergarten;
- parent involvement;
- extended day and year;
- “Core Knowledge”;
- recruitment and retention of top teachers;
- assessment - early and often to drive instruction;
- school uniforms; and
- character development and a community of learners.

At full capacity the school would be divided into three houses: the primary academy (grades Kindergarten to two), the elementary academy (grades three to five), and the middle academy (grades six to eight). The school would not reach full capacity or serve any grades beyond fifth during the initial charter period.

The founders chose to begin an all-boys school because it was their belief that this would have the unique and important effect of focusing all of the school's attention on what it deems the most at-risk population in Bedford Stuyvesant—low-income African-American and Latino boys. The application pointed out that there is strong evidence suggesting that a single-sex environment may have a very positive effect on the teaching of boys, especially boys that fit this demographic profile, and that a single-sex environment promises academic benefits not possible in a co-ed environment. The application also noted that there were no all-boys public schools in New York City; however, an all-girls school is located in Harlem administered by the New York City Department of Education.

Excellence Charter School's administrative team includes the principal, a director of operations and a dean of students. Both the director and dean report to the principal.

Enrollment

YEAR	ORIGINAL CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	APPROVED CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT	ORIGINAL CHARTERED GRADES SERVED	APPROVED GRADES SERVED	ACTUAL GRADES SERVED	COMPLYING
2004-2005	88	88	90	K-1	K-1	K-1	Yes
2005-2006	152	152	135	K-2	K-2	K-2	Yes
2006-2007	214	214		K-3			
2007-2008	273	273		K-4			
2008-2009	329	329		K-5			

School Year (2005-06)

191 instructional days

School Day (2005-06)

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

School Charter History

Charter Year	School Year	Year of Operation	Evaluation Visit	Feedback to School	Other Actions Taken
1 st Charter – 1 st Year	2003-04	Planning Year	Planning year	Planning Year	Planning Year
1 st Charter – 2 nd Year	2004-05	1 st	Yes	Letter	None
1 st Charter – 3 rd Year	2005-06	2 nd	Yes	Evaluation Report	None
1 st Charter – 4 th Year	2006-07				
1 st Charter - 5 th Year	2007-08				

Summary of Previous Evaluation Visit

On May 9, 2005, at the close of the school's first year of operation, the Charter Schools Institute (the Institute) conducted a visit of Excellence Charter School. Institute staff observed classrooms, met with administrators and interviewed teachers. In a letter to the school's board of trustees, the Institute reported the results of the visit which are briefly summarized below.

The school was well on its way to implementing the key elements of the school's curricula — Open Court reading and Saxon Mathematics. At the time, the school was engaged in an examination of three components of Open Court in order to plan adjustments for the following year. Notably, however, the school did not yet have an effective writing program.

Classroom staffing consisted of two teachers, one Lead Teacher and one Excellence Fellow, within each classroom who delivered small group instruction to 6-8 students throughout a significant portion of the day. As observed during the visit, most teachers delivered well-paced lessons that allowed for little-to-no time for students to lose focus and disrupt instruction. Students were attentive and interested in lessons.

Classroom observations indicated that instruction was generally adequate, although instructional quality varied from teacher to teacher. Inspectors stressed that in order to achieve school-wide instructional excellence, the school must provide sufficient professional development to ensure that its new teachers develop necessary pedagogical skills.

The school assessed students early and often. From inspectors' limited review, the assessments appeared sufficient, again with the exception of writing. While it was clear that students were assessed, feedback provided to students regarding their work products appeared to be inadequate. In several instances, during instruction, teachers failed to correct students' incorrect responses. Minimal feedback was noted on student work products.

At the end of its first year of operation, Excellence Charter School had created a scholarly culture for its Kindergarten and first grade boys that was grounded in high expectations for learning and achievement by everyone in the school. Overall, this culture was reflected in school-wide routines and procedures, as well as student behavior and participation.

Executive Summary and Conclusions

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the present visit to the Excellence Charter School of Bedford Stuyvesant on March 30, 2006. Inspectors visited classrooms, reviewed documents and interviewed instructional and administrative staff. Conclusions are summarized below. The evidence base and further analysis is contained in the Benchmark Analysis and Evidence section, which follows.

Academic Attainment and Improvement

As Excellence Charter School has just completed its second year of operation and provided instruction only to Kindergarten, first and second graders, it cannot present achievement results on state examinations, which provide data for most of the measures used to determine if the subject area goals listed in its Accountability Plan have been met. The Terra Nova Test and the Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) test indicate strong progress. While encouraging, these gains, however, must be put in the context of the students' lack of familiarity with the test thereby suppressing their fall scores and the limited reliability of testing young children in general.

Academic Culture

Excellence Charter School is building a solid culture for learning and community. School leaders strive to maintain rigorous academic and behavioral expectations in a way that supports students emotionally. This strong learning culture, supported by school-wide routines and behavior management systems, is supplemented by classroom-based systems. However, teaching staff expressed some concern regarding the consistent application of the school-wide behavior management system. Additional resources include a Social Worker and a Dean of Students who work with students, support teachers and communicate with parents.

Curriculum

The school is in the process of defining its curriculum for English language arts (ELA), science, and social studies; however, math is more clearly defined at this time. In the first two years of operation, the school has made several changes to its curriculum, particularly in ELA. Many of these changes have caused concern among the staff regarding how decisions are made and if teacher input is valued.

English Language Arts: In its first year, the school used Open Court for reading instruction. The school began the 2005-06 school year with Proactive Reading, but switched to Reading Mastery when the more advanced Proactive Reading materials were unsatisfactory. Reading Mastery is supplemented by several additional programs, including Urban Education Exchange's (UEE's) Guided Reading, Text Talk and Waterford.

Writing: Even though it was noted in the school's first year letter, the school has made limited progress in establishing a writing program. The program is not yet comprehensive or cohesive. At the time of the end-of-year visit, the school had established its own writing standards, named "Excellence Writing Standards." Yet interviews with teachers revealed that consistent instructional curriculum and practices were not yet in place.

Mathematics: In its second year, the school continued to use Saxon Mathematics. The math program appeared to follow a clearly defined curriculum with adjustments made to fill gaps in the text.

Social Studies and Science: The social studies and science curricula, based on Core Knowledge, need further development. The school has hired an external resource person who will create FOSS-like kits for social studies over the upcoming summer.

Instructional Staffing and Structures

Classes across the school have similar structures in place for delivery and implementation of instruction. Each classroom is staffed by a Lead Teacher and an Excellence Fellow, allowing for small group instruction. During reading instruction, each classroom followed the same routines for instruction in reading. Classroom routines appeared to maximize the time on task. While observations revealed that students are engaged in learning throughout the day, the quality of instruction varied by teacher.

Students At-Risk

The newly hired Reading Specialist provided daily supplemental reading instruction to 36 students in small groups. Students were identified through their performance on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment, Early Reading Screening Instrument (ERSI) and a spelling inventory. In terms of special education, it is critical that the Excellence Charter School employ a staff person who is New York State certified in special education (a requirement of its charter agreement), formalize its process for identifying students who may need special education programs and/or services (a requirement of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)), and its process for providing classroom instructional staff with information regarding identified students, their instructional needs and required programs and/or services.

Professional Development

Excellence Charter School provided professional development opportunities over the course of the 2005-06 school year. However, it was unclear whether those opportunities seamlessly addressed the school's mission and goals and teachers' pedagogical needs. While the school has devoted substantial resources to professional development, the novice staff continues to have substantial needs. Specifically, teachers commented that they need additional professional development in the areas of reading fluency and writing instruction as well as training resources that specifically focused on the educational needs of young, black males.

Teacher Evaluation

At the time of the school's end-of-year visit, Excellence Charter School was in the process of formalizing its teacher evaluation process. During its second year, the school did not have a consistent process that included the goal setting, observation, feedback and coaching necessary to improve teacher pedagogy. Interviews with instructional staff and school leaders indicated that the two groups have very different perspectives on the availability and usefulness of the feedback provided. While school inspectors are not advocating any particular means of teacher evaluation, the school must resolve this situation if it is to support teachers' ongoing growth.

Governance

The board of trustees of Excellence Charter School is comprised of seven members who competently fulfill their responsibilities as trustees. The board meets on a bimonthly basis, and the chair of the board frequently visits the school. At the time of the end of year visit, the board was in the process of finalizing the school's relationship with Uncommon Schools, Inc. (USI) as its educational service provider or management partner. Board members stressed that one of the areas they still need to resolve is ensuring that the school leader offers meaningful feedback to teachers to improve instruction. Board members strongly supported the school's leader, and indicated that one method to address the issue of feedback to instructional staff will be through systems and processes introduced by USI.

At the end of its second year, Excellence Charter School has built on the success of its first year and is facing a few new challenges. The school is relentless in its efforts to maintain the scholarly academic culture noted in the first year report. The continued commitment to maintaining a low teacher-to-student ratio is evident by staffing each classroom with both a Lead Teacher and an Excellence Fellow. In addition, the school has put additional supports for students in place, including a Reading Specialist, Social Worker and Dean of Students.

In the first year, the school had in place all curricular programs except writing. As its second year ends, the school has made several modifications. While their insights into the limitations of their curricular choices and the subsequent replacements reflect a willingness to examine results and adjust as needed, these adjustments have proven difficult for teaching staff, which is still comprised primarily of novice teachers who need significant professional development and feedback as they develop and refine their craft. Despite their needs, the teacher evaluation process is not in place and the professional development (though substantial) does not appear to be working as effectively as necessary. In its third year, the school will have to institute the teacher evaluation and targeted professional development necessary to build a knowledgeable and skilled faculty.

Benchmark Analysis and Evidence

Academic Attainment and Improvement

As Excellence Charter School of Bedford Stuyvesant has just completed its second year and provided instruction only to kindergarten, first and second graders, it cannot present achievement results on state examinations, which provide data for most of the measures used to determine if the subject area goals in the school's Accountability Plan have been met. The school's achievement data were limited to results on the Terra Nova Test in Kindergarten and first grade, as well as the Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) test.

In spring 2005, Kindergarten and first grade students (the only grades in the school at the time) scored above grade level on the TerraNova test in reading, language, and math. In addition to the strong TerraNova results, students also showed progress in literacy development, as measured by the DIBELS test.

In its Accountability Plan, Excellence Charter School includes a value-added outcome measure based on the Terra Nova results. It sets as its goal that students will close the gap between their current level of performance and grade level or an NCE of 50, based on spring to spring test results.

With the school only operating for one school year, the only available value added data was fall 2004 to spring 2005. Both Kindergarten and first grade showed notable increases in the percent of students scoring at or above grade level in the spring compared to the fall. While encouraging, these gains must be put in the context of the students' lack of familiarity with the test thereby suppressing their fall scores and the limited reliability of testing young children in general.

Academic Culture

The Excellence Charter School of Bedford-Stuyvesant is building a solid culture for learning and community. Students have a common language which is centered on college acceptance and high expectations for learning. College memorabilia adorn school walls and each classroom is named after a college. Teachers consistently refer to students as "scholars" and interviews reveal that students hear about college from the beginning of their school experience. School leaders strive to establish and maintain an atmosphere that encourages and supports learning and to achieve a "balance between strict and warm." To achieve that balance and since the previous school visit, school leaders have changed their orientation from a middle school model, described in the initial charter application, to a more developmental model or approach to the school's academic program. Their goal is to maintain rigorous academic and behavioral expectations in a way that supports students emotionally.

This strong learning culture is supported by routines and behavior management systems. The school continues to start each day with an all-school assembly. Following breakfast, teachers lead students in songs and chants that reinforce the academic focus of the school.

A school-wide system of behavioral management exists and students are familiar with it. It is a point system where students begin each day with four points, but can lose points throughout the

day. Each day parents are notified of their child's points. Following a second warning, students begin to lose points. If a student loses all of his/her points, teachers reported that they "get a foul." A foul results in a student being sent to the Dean of Students, followed by a letter to the student's parents and a conference. Although the system exists, the teachers felt that the school's behavior policy was not consistently enforced or applied. For example, they reported that consequences for misbehavior depend on who is involved in the situation.

Each classroom in the school has also created its own individual system of behavior management, such as the King of Kindness who enforces good behavior. One second grade teacher indicated that he had established a classroom system that enabled students to earn points to reinforce positive behaviors.

Additional resources for students and staff include a Social Worker and a Dean of Students who maintain an "Intervention and Relief" log as well as a parent contact log. The Social Worker works with students who have high levels of social and emotional needs. The Dean of Students stated she works closely with the principal to know and implement his vision. She stated her work is to maintain high expectations of the school and make sure kids are behaviorally and academically successful. She also makes sure students turn in homework and are in school daily. The school rewards students for their attendance with a "Prompt and Present Luau" once a month and contacts parents daily about lateness and absence. While teachers expressed appreciation for the Dean of Students role in working with students in need of behavioral support, they would like more support and clarity in this area.

Curriculum

At the time of the end-of-year visit, the school was in the process of defining its curriculum for ELA, science, and social studies; however, math was more clearly defined. In the first two years of operation, the school made several changes to its curriculum, particularly in ELA. Many of these changes have caused concern among the staff over how decisions are made and whether teacher input is valued.

English Language Arts

In its first year, the school used Open Court for reading instruction. While originally plans were made to continue with Open Court, ultimately the school concluded that the amount of text was insufficient and that phonics instruction was not explicit enough for the lowest level readers. Proactive Reading was chosen to replace Open Court because of its strength in phonics. Proactive is a new program and when the year began, only the first two levels were available. When the school received the more advanced materials, it was dissatisfied and made the decision to switch to Reading Mastery, a curriculum it had previously investigated.

The number of curricular changes, and their abruptness, has been difficult for the instructional staff, especially those with less instructional experience. While school leaders believe that they have made the best possible decisions, given the circumstances, these shifts have had a negative effect on teacher morale.

Reading Mastery is supplemented by several additional programs. Guided Reading, with training from Urban Education Exchange (UEE), is the "responsive teaching" portion of reading

instruction. It is used to provide students with additional opportunities to read text while supported by a teacher. Text Talk, a guided read aloud program, contains vocabulary and language activities. Waterford, a computer-based program, allows students to work independently.

Writing

In its second year, the school made progress in establishing a writing program, although the program is not yet comprehensive or cohesive. The Institute's letter to the school following its first-year site visit indicated that the "school did not yet have an effective writing program at the end of its first year."

The December school board minutes indicated that "emphasis has been placed on developing a more extensive writing program" and that "teams have developed a detailed scope and sequence." At the time of the visit, the school had established their own writing standards, named "Excellence Writing Standards."

Interviews with teachers revealed that consistent instructional curriculum and practices are not yet in place for writing. The Director of Curriculum indicated that while the school had selected *Write Source*, it was "not working." Some teachers relied on *Write Source* while others used the Teachers College writing workshop method.

School leaders indicated that the school was closer to establishing the plan for the year, yet acknowledged that the individual lesson methodology and objectives had not yet received adequate attention.

Mathematics

In its second year, the school continued to use Saxon Mathematics. The math program appeared to follow a clearly defined curriculum with adjustments made to fill gaps in the text. The Math Specialist created addendums to the Saxon lessons to cover the areas not focused on in Saxon. He examined the New York State assessments and the Terra Nova to create a similar set of interim assessments. Students completed weekly Saxon assessments, the results of which were communicated to parents.

The design and implementation of the mathematics curriculum indicates that the school holds high expectations for mathematics achievement. The school's goal is for students to complete Algebra by the eighth grade. According to the Math Specialist, he helps to generate a culture of building mathematicians. His wants to prepare students to problem solve and talk about mathematics so that "when math becomes abstract that kids can be articulate."

At the time of the visit, Kindergarten students had completed the Kindergarten Saxon curriculum and had begun the first grade text. The school accomplished this by teaching math five days a week instead of four days over a longer school year. According to the Math Specialist, the "handful" of students who struggle, receive supplementary tutoring from the Math Specialist and lead teacher, although the tutoring is sporadic.

Social Studies and Science

In social studies and science, a curriculum based on Core Knowledge was provided to teachers. However, these curricula and supporting materials need further development. Interviews revealed that Core Knowledge instruction was inconsistent and “not engaging for boys.” The principal indicated that in the past insufficient time was devoted to curricular planning. The school has hired an outside resource person who will create FOSS-like kits for social studies this summer. In addition, when the school library is established for the 2006-07 school year, the librarian will collect materials that support the Core Knowledge sequence.

Instructional Staffing and Structures

Classes across the school have similar structures in place for implementation of the school’s curriculum and the delivery of instruction. Each classroom is staffed by a Lead Teacher and an Excellence Fellow, allowing for small group instruction. During reading instruction, each classroom followed the same routines for instruction in reading. Students were divided into three groups at all times. The teacher worked with one group, the Excellence Fellow worked with another and the third group worked independently. The three groups rotated during the reading period. Typically, the teacher conducted the guided reading portion of the lesson, the Excellence Fellow worked on language skills and students completed worksheets at their desks.

While this degree of consistency suggests clear messages for teachers about instructional practices, teachers, when interviewed, expressed strong interest in clarifying and possibly revising the role and responsibilities of the Excellence Fellows. At the time of the school visit, at the Kindergarten and first grade levels, the Excellence Fellows helped with mathematics. (At the second grade level, teachers received assistance from the Math Specialist.) Also, in one first grade classroom, the Excellence Fellow taught social studies and science. The classroom teachers and the fellows do collaborate on lesson plans. Teachers at the first and second grade levels stated that they do not evaluate the fellow. The school may want to consider providing greater clarity regarding the role and responsibilities of Excellence Fellows in order to maximize their use in providing instruction and supporting student learning.

Classroom routines appear to maximize the time on task. While observations revealed that students were engaged in learning throughout the day, the quality of instruction varied by teacher. At the end of its second year, the school had a predominantly novice teaching staff who were still learning their craft, and based on interviews with school administrators, such will be the case in the upcoming school year as well.

Students At-Risk

The newly hired Reading Specialist provided supplemental reading instruction to 36 students in small groups daily. Students are identified through their performance on the DIBELS assessment, ERSI and a spelling inventory. The Reading Specialist saw nine groups of students four to five times a week. There were two groups whose instruction was based on the Benchmark Word Detectives Program, a program for dyslexic students, and one group whose instruction was adapted from that program. For Kindergarten students, there were three groups in which the focus was phonemic awareness and letter recognition. In addition, the specialist taught three additional groups called “guided reading,” “reading group” and “reading room”

respectively. The Reading Specialist reported that she had received extensive and adequate support in implementing the program from the Director of Curriculum.

In terms of special education, it is critical that the Excellence Charter School employ a staff person who is New York State certified in special education (a requirement of its charter agreement), formalize its process for identifying students who may need special education programs and/or services (a requirement of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)), and its process for providing classroom instructional staff with information regarding identified students, their instructional needs and required programs and/or services. Teachers were unclear regarding the process to be used to refer a student to be evaluated, including who was responsible for any particular aspect of the process. Teachers were also unclear about how to access information regarding students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in their classrooms, and the instructional needs of those students. At the time of the end of year visit, the school enrolled fewer than five students with IEPs. At the time of the site visit, the Director of Curriculum and the Social Worker (neither of whom possess New York State certification in special education) were responsible for ensuring the school's legal and regulatory compliance in the area of special education. School leaders indicated that, beginning with the 2006-07 school year, the school will hire a special education coordinator/teacher to fulfill the school's responsibilities regarding the identification and provision of programs and services to students with disabilities, to support the school's instructional staff, and to provide direct support to students with disabilities, as dictated by their IEPs.

Professional Development

The Excellence Charter School provided professional development opportunities over the course of the school year. However, it was unclear whether those opportunities seamlessly addressed the school's mission and goals and teachers' pedagogical needs. While the school has devoted substantial resources to professional development, the novice staff continues to have substantial needs. It was also unclear to inspectors the degree to which the various professional development components worked together to meet these needs effectively.

Each Friday, students are dismissed early to allow staff a half day for professional development. That time is used for grade level teams to lesson plan and analyze student work and assessment data, share best practices and work on refining curriculum and instruction.

Interviews revealed that teachers participated in a wide variety of professional development over the course of the 2005-06 school year, including Responsive Classroom and Guided Reading training provided by the Urban Education Exchange (UEE). In addition to professional development, the school facilitated visits to successful charter schools for teachers. Instructional staff were also supported by a Math Specialist and a Director of Curriculum, "whose primary focus is to strengthen the reading and writing programs."³

While there were numerous opportunities for teachers, there were also limitations to the professional development offered. Teachers reported that while they have access to information and materials regarding literacy instruction (including UEE's website), they need more specific

³ Minutes of the June 7, 2005 meeting of the Board of Trustees

guidance regarding pedagogy. Specifically, teachers commented that they need additional professional development in the areas of reading fluency and writing instruction as well as training resources that specifically focused on the educational needs of young, black males.

Teacher Evaluation

At the time of the school's end-of-year visit, the Excellence Charter School was in the process of formalizing its teacher evaluation process. During its second year, the school did not have a consistent process that included the goal setting, observation, feedback and coaching necessary to improve teacher pedagogy.

When the year began, teachers were informed that they would be observed at mid-year and at the end of the year. Not long before the end-of-year school inspection, teachers received a letter informing them that the evaluation information in the staff manual was going to be changed to refer only to an end-of-year observation/evaluation. The letter also contained an informal observation. At the time of the visit (March 30), school leaders were in the midst of completing the first, and only, teacher evaluations of the year. Prior to this, teachers had not had any formal meetings regarding their performance. Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the manner in which the school administration kept teachers aware of their performance. School leaders attributed the change in evaluation procedures, in part, to the loss of the school's Director of Operations, a key member of the administrative team. The principal acknowledged that the formal processes need to be improved, although he believes that the informal feedback is substantial.

Interviews with instructional staff and school leaders indicated that the two groups have very different perspectives on the availability and usefulness of feedback provided. The principal indicated that he was in classes daily and that he gave feedback regularly. He reported that in addition to regular conversations with teachers, he sent weekly emails that presented his assessment of what the teacher was doing well, what needed to improve and what must change.

However, these processes do not appear to be adequate for the teaching staff. While the school leaders indicated that a number of teachers were not responsive to feedback, teachers had a different impression. Most teachers and staff had not yet been provided the formal feedback and goal-setting opportunities to develop their craft and support student achievement. The first and second grade teachers stated that they would like the benefit of the wealth of knowledge resident in the school's leaders, and believed that more observations and feedback would be beneficial.

While school inspectors are not advocating any particular means of teacher evaluation, the school must resolve this situation if it is to support teachers' ongoing growth. Similar to numerous other charter schools, this school has a predominantly novice staff that is just beginning to develop its craft. As a strong instructional staff is an essential component in increasing student achievement, the school has an obligation to effectively support teachers' development.

Governance

The board of trustees of Excellence Charter School is comprised of seven members who competently fulfill their responsibilities as trustees. The board meets on a bimonthly basis, and

the chair of the board frequently visits the school. At the time of the end of year visit, the board was in the process of finalizing the school's relationship with Uncommon Schools, Inc. (USI) as its educational service provider or management partner. When the agreement between the school and USI is final, the school's board of trustees will include two members of the USI board. While the board will yet remain in compliance with its Charter Agreement regarding having less than 49% of its membership affiliated with any other organization, it will have to seek a formal revision to its charter to allow members of its not-for-profit management organization to sit on its board. (We note that more recently issued charters approved by the State University Trustees allow two members of a not-for-profit management entity to be school trustees subject to certain restrictions).

When interviewed, board members were very clear regarding their goal in the selection of the leadership of the school (including the management organization). In identifying the school leader and engaging USI, the board's goal was to ensure that the school's instructional staff would have access to "the best intellectual capital" available in the area of charter school educational programs, and that the expertise of those individuals would result in a strong academic program, and ultimately high student performance.

When questioned about the concern expressed by instructional staff regarding the limited feedback to improve pedagogy, the board, to its credit, was aware that the school's teachers were "hungry for concrete feedback." Board members stressed that one of the areas they still need to resolve is ensuring that the school leader offers meaningful feedback to teachers to improve instruction. Board members strongly supported the school's leader, and indicated that one method to address the issue of feedback to instructional staff will be through systems and processes introduced by USI. In particular, the school board planned to require USI to provide a number of documents and/or products to the school, including a school leader evaluation protocol. The protocol under consideration included a strong professional development component for the school leader, which would provide him with feedback regarding all aspects of his performance, including coaching and supervision of staff.

Appendix – Benchmarks Used During the Visit

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
<p style="text-align: center;">Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?</p>	
<p>Benchmark 1A</p> <p>Academic Attainment & Improvement</p>	<p>1A.1 English Language Arts: The school meets or has come close to meeting the English Language Arts goal in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.</p>
	<p>1A.2 Mathematics: The school meets or has come close to meeting the mathematics goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.</p>
	<p>1A.3 Science: The school meets or has come close to meeting the science goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.</p>
	<p>1A.4 Social Studies: The school meets or has come close to meeting the social studies goal contained in its Accountability Plan over the term of its charter.</p>
	<p>1A.5 NCLB: The school has made adequate yearly progress as required by NCLB.</p>
<p>Benchmark 1B</p> <p>Use of Assessment Data</p>	<p>1B The school has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and to use it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present, and which the Institute will look for, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the regular administration of assessments, and the regular assignment of student work, e.g., projects, papers, etc., that are aligned to the state performance standards and to the school’s curricular scope and sequence;

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the systematic collection of data from such assessments and student work; the use of protocols and procedures that ensure that the scoring of standardized and other assessments as well as student work is reliable and trustworthy; the school's use of assessment data to determine accurately whether the school's Accountability Plan goals are being achieved; the school leadership's use of assessment data to monitor and make improvements and changes to the school's curriculum and instruction, e.g., changes to remediation, professional development, personnel, etc.; teachers' use of assessment data to make changes and improvements to curriculum and instruction, e.g., re-teaching a key skill where data indicates that the skill was not learned the first time; a common understanding between and among teachers and administrators of the meaning and consequences of assessment results, e.g., access to remediation, promotion to the next grade; and the regular communication of assessment outcomes to the entire school community, including communication to parents not only of their children's individual performances but of the performance of the school as a whole.
Benchmark 1C Curriculum	1C The school has a clearly defined and aligned curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards. Elements that are generally present, and which the Institute will look for, include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school has defined with precision in each grade and core academic subject the essential knowledge and skills that all students are expected to achieve—at a minimum such skills and knowledge are aligned with and as rigorous as the relevant state performance standards; teachers are fully aware of the curricula for which they are responsible for teaching and have timely access to guidelines (scope and sequence, pacing

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	<p>charts, etc.) available for developing lesson plans;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers develop lesson plans that are in alignment with the guidelines and follow those plans; and • the curriculum <i>as implemented</i> is organized, cohesive, and seamless from grade to grade.
<p>Benchmark 1D</p> <p>Pedagogy</p>	<p>1D.1</p> <p>The school has strong instructional leadership.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present, and which the Institute will look for, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the priorities set by the school’s leadership are responsive to and consistent with achieving the school’s academic Accountability Plan goals and addressing deficiencies; these priorities are communicated to, and understood by, the school’s instructional staff; • the school’s leadership has taken concerted and consistent action in line with these priorities; • the school’s leadership has in place a comprehensive and on-going system for evaluating teachers’ effectiveness and quality; • the school’s leadership, based on classroom visits, and other data available to it, provides direct ongoing coaching and support in classrooms as well as structured opportunities for teachers to plan for the delivery of the instructional program; • the school’s leadership makes staffing decisions that are driven by its evaluation system and has in place a system for recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers and other instructional personnel that the school needs to meet its academic goals and measures; • the chief executive has deployed a leadership team whose members, in executing their roles and responsibilities, are able to support the effective delivery of the instructional program; and • the school’s leadership establishes an environment of high expectations.

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	<p>1D.2 High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present, and which the Institute will look for, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers demonstrate subject-matter competency in the subjects they teach; • lessons are focused on specific learning objectives aligned to state performance standards and reflect a clear understanding of students' current skill and knowledge; • students are fully engaged in focused, purposeful activities; • instruction is delivered efficiently with clear expectations for what students must know and be able to do in each lesson; • instructional time is maximized, transitions are efficient, there is day-to-day instructional continuity; and • teachers ask challenging questions to provoke student problem solving skills and assess student learning.
	<p>1D.3 The school has programs that are demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically to meet the school's academic Accountability Plan goals, including programs for students who require additional academic supports, programs for English Language Learners and programs for students eligible to receive special education.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present, and which the Institute will look for, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deployment of resources sufficient to support interventions and implement programs, which reflect a range of services and needs (in-class and remedial support, special education and ELL programs), depending on students' academic and/or behavioral needs; • screening procedures for identifying students and providing them with the appropriate intervention, including appropriate Child Find procedures; • a common understanding among classroom teachers of the interventions and services available

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	<p>to students at risk of academic failure, as well as procedures for accessing them;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordination of interventions and services with those of the mainstream program; and • monitoring the performance of students and using established school-wide and legal exit criteria for students, who based on their performance or other required assessments and evaluations, no longer need special interventions or services.
<p>Benchmark 1E</p> <p>Student Order & Discipline</p>	<p>1E</p> <p>The school’s culture allows and promotes a culture of learning.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present, and which the Institute will look for, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a documented discipline policy that is consistently applied; • classroom management techniques and daily routines have established a culture in which learning is valued; • low-level misbehavior is not tolerated, e.g., students are not allowed to opt-out of learning or engage in quiet chatter during class time; • throughout the school, a safe and orderly environment has been established.

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
Benchmark 1F Professional Development	<p>1F</p> <p>The school’s professional development program assists teachers in meeting student academic needs and school goals, by addressing identified shortcomings in student learning and teacher pedagogical skill and content knowledge.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present, and which the Institute will look for, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school provides sufficient resources to support a comprehensive program; • the content of the program dovetails with the school’s mission, curriculum, and instructional strategy; • annual plans are derived from a school needs-assessment, based on identified instructional weaknesses, teacher interests, and analyses of student outcomes; • the school earmarks effective, ongoing support and training to novice teachers and teachers new to the school; and • the professional development program is systematically evaluated to determine its effectiveness.

Renewal Question 2

Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?

Benchmark 2C Governance	<p>2C.1</p> <p>The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school’s mission and specific goals.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present, and which the Institute will look for, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school board will have received regular reports in writing from the school leadership in regards to key indicators of the school’s academic progress; the content of those reports, and a calendar for them, will have been agreed to by the board and the leadership team; • the board (or a committee thereof) will understand the core business of the school—student achievement—in sufficient depth to permit the
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Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	<p>board to provide effective oversight;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the board will have conducted formal evaluations of the school’s management and will have acted on the results where such evaluations demonstrate shortcomings in management’s performance; where there have been demonstrable deficiencies in the school’s academic, organizational or fiscal performance, the school board will have taken effective action to correct those deficiencies and put in place benchmarks for determining if the deficiencies are being corrected in a timely fashion; the board will not have made financial or organizational decisions that have materially impeded the school in fulfilling its mission; the board will have established a set of priorities and a strategic plan that are in line with the school’s goals and mission and will have effectively worked to implement those goals and plans; and the board will have in place a process for selecting new members as needed and structural continuity.
	<p>2C.2</p> <p>The board has implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes and has abided by them.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present, and which the Institute will look for, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school board has implemented a comprehensive and strict conflict of interest policy (and a code of ethics)—which are consistent with those set forth in the charter—and has consistently abided by them through the term of the school’s charter; the school board has generally avoided creating conflicts-of-interest where possible; where not possible, the school has managed those conflicts-of-interest in a clear and transparent manner; the school board has instituted a process for dealing with complaints (and such policy is consistent with that set forth in the charter), has

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	<p>made that policy clear to all stakeholders, and has followed that policy, including acting in a timely fashion on such complaints;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school has abided by its by-laws, including, but not limited to, provisions regarding trustee elections, removals and filling of vacancies; and the school board has in place a set of board policies which are reviewed regularly and updated as needed.
<p>Benchmark 2E</p> <p>Legal Requirements</p>	<p>2E</p> <p>The school has substantially complied with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present, and which the Institute will look for, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> during the term of its charter, the school has compiled a record of substantial compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable state and federal laws and regulations, including, but not limited to, submitting items to the Institute in a timely manner, and meeting teacher certification (including NCLB highly qualified status) and background check requirements; at the time of renewal, the school will be in substantial compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable laws and regulations; the school will have maintained and have had in place effective systems and controls for ensuring that legal and charter requirements were and are met; the school should also be able to demonstrate that the school has an active and ongoing relationship with in-house, and where appropriate, independent legal counsel that reviews relevant policies, documents, transactions and incidents and makes recommendations as needed.

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
<p style="text-align: center;">Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?</p>	
<p>Benchmark 3A</p> <p>Budgeting and Long Range Planning</p>	<p>3A</p> <p>The school has operated pursuant to a long-range financial plan. The school has created realistic budgets that are monitored and adjusted when appropriate. Actual expenses have been equal to or less than actual revenue with no material exceptions.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present, and which the Institute will look for, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear budgetary objectives and budget preparation procedures; • the budget process starts early and input from board members, school administration and staff is solicited and considered in developing the budget; • the school’s long-range fiscal plan is compared frequently to actual progress and adjusted to meet changing conditions; and • budget variances are analyzed routinely and material variance are discussed and addressed at the board level including any necessary budget revisions.
<p>Benchmark 3B</p> <p>Internal Controls</p>	<p>3B</p> <p>The school has maintained appropriate internal controls and procedures. Transactions have been accurately recorded and appropriately documented in accordance with management’s direction and laws, regulations, grants and contracts. Assets have been and are safeguarded. Any deficiencies or audit findings have been corrected in a timely manner.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present, and which the Institute will look for, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school follows a set of comprehensive written fiscal policies and procedures; • the school safeguards its assets; • the school identifies and analyzes risks and takes actions to mitigate such risks; • the school has controls in place to ensure that

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	<p>management decisions are properly carried out;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school monitors and assesses controls to ensure their adequacy; the school's board members and employees adhere to a code of ethics; the school makes purchasing decisions that consider price, quality and dependability and makes each purchasing selection with the intention of maintaining a top-quality school; the school ensures duties are appropriately segregated, or institutes compensating controls; the school ensures that employees performing financial functions are appropriately qualified and adequately trained; the school has systems in place to provide the appropriate information needed by staff and the board to make sound financial decisions and to fulfill compliance requirements; a staff member of the school reviews grant agreements and monitors compliance with all stated conditions; the school prepares payroll according to appropriate state and federal regulations and school policy; the school ensures that employees, board members and volunteers who handle cash and investments are bonded to help assure the safeguarding of assets; and the school takes corrective action in a timely manner to address any internal control or compliance deficiencies identified by its external auditor, State Education Department, or the Institute, if needed.
<p>Benchmark 3C</p> <p>Financial Reporting</p>	<p>3C</p> <p>The school has complied with financial reporting requirements. The school has provided the State University Board of Trustees and the State Education Department with required financial reports on time, and such reports have been complete and have followed generally accepted accounting principles.</p>

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	<p>The following reports will have generally been filed in a timely, accurate and complete manner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual financial statement audit reports, including federal Single Audit report if applicable. • annual budgets and cash flow statements. • un-audited quarterly reports of income and expense. • bi-monthly enrollment reports to the district and State Education Department; and • grant expenditure reports.
<p>Benchmark 3D</p> <p>Financial Condition</p>	<p>3D</p> <p>The school has maintained adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations and has monitored and successfully managed cash flow. Critical financial needs of the school are not dependent on variable income (grants, donations and fundraising).</p> <p>Elements that are generally present, and which the Institute will look for, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school maintains sufficient cash on hand to pay current bills and those that are due shortly; • the school prepares and monitors cash flow projections; • the school provides education services at a level that meets the needs of all students demonstrated by student results that meet or exceed state standards; and • the school accumulates unrestricted net assets that are equal to or exceed two percent of the school's operating budget for the upcoming year.

Visit Data

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the Second Year Visit at Bedford Stuyvesant Charter School for Excellence on March 30, 2006. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit and/or contributed to the report:

MARK CLARKE **Senior Analyst**

Mr. Clarke is a recent graduate of the Building Excellent Schools program in Boston, Massachusetts, a program designed to both train future charter school leaders and to assist them in creating excellent schools. Prior to his participation in that program, Mr. Clarke had been a middle school mathematics teacher, a mathematics coach for the Office of Curriculum and Instruction for the Boston Public Schools, and a team leader for the Harbor School in Dorchester, Massachusetts. Mr. Clarke has also worked with elementary and middle school children in a variety of community programs. He received his Bachelor of Science in Business Management and Finance from Johnson and Wales University in Providence, Rhode Island.

SUSAN SEYMOUR **Senior Analyst**

Susan Seymour is a Senior Analyst at the Charter Schools Institute, State University of New York. In the past Mrs. Seymour taught pre-kindergarten through 10th grade. From 1996 to 1999 she worked in the Governor's Office of Regulatory Reform as an analyst. There she assisted various state agencies, among others the banking department and the Office of Children and Family Services, in cutting "red tape" from their New York State regulations. Interested in education reform, she joined the Charter Schools Institute in 1999. She received her B.S. from The University of Rochester and her M.A. from Manhattanville College concentrating in Special Education and Reading.

HILLARY JOHNSON, ED. D. **Educational Consultant**

Dr. Johnson is an independent educational consultant with 14 years experience as a teacher, staff developer and researcher. Past projects include providing professional development in reading and writing instruction, analyzing the alignment between standards and curriculum, and designing video-based professional development to support principals in developing instructional monitoring skills. She began her career as a Spanish bilingual teacher and a Reading Recovery teacher in Oakland CA. Subsequently, she served as a Literacy Content Coach and Whole School Change Coach to several Boston Public Schools. Dr. Johnson earned her B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, her M.Ed. from Harvard University and her Doctorate of Education from Harvard University with a concentration through its Urban Superintendents Program.

JENNIFER G. SNEED, PH.D.
Senior Vice President

Dr. Sneed is a veteran educator with 29 years of experience as a public school special education teacher and administrator [Illinois and New York], an Assistant Manager for Deaf Services at the postsecondary level [Indiana], and as a state level education policymaker [New York]. She received both her Bachelor of Science in Education of the Blind and Partially Sighted and Master of Science in Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing from Illinois State University in Bloomington, Illinois. Dr. Sneed earned both her Certificate of Advanced Study and her Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Administration with a focus on Education Policy, Politics and Law from the State University of New York – Albany.