

Bronx Preparatory Charter School

School Evaluation Report 2007-2008

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INTRODUCTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the State University Trustees), jointly with the Board of 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 State University Trustees, however, view their oversight responsibility more broadly and positively than purely monitoring compliance. Accordingly, they have adopted policies that require the Charter Schools Institute ("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:

- Facilitate Improvement. By providing substantive information about the school's
 academic, fiscal, and organizational 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 identify areas for improvement.
- **Disseminate Information**. The Institute disseminates information about the school's performance not only to its board of trustees, administration, and faculty, but to all stakeholders, including parents and the larger community in which the school is located.
- Document Performance. The Institute collects data to build a database of a school's performance over time. By evaluating the school periodically, the Institute can more clearly ascertain trends, determine areas of strength and weakness, and assess the school's likelihood for continued success or failure. Having information based on past patterns, the Institute is in a better position to make recommendations regarding the renewal of each school's charter, and the State University Trustees are better informed in making a decision on whether a school's charter should be renewed. In addition, a school will have a far better sense of where they stand in the eyes of its authorizer.

The Institute regularly collects a range of data about each school's performance over the course of its charter period, which ultimately contributes to that school's renewal decision. These data include student performance results, financial audits, any legal records of issues addressed, board meeting minutes, and reports from regular inspection visits conducted by the Institute (or external experts contracted by the Institute) and other agencies with oversight responsibilities.

This annual School Evaluation Report includes four primary components. The first, titled Executive Summary of School Evaluation Visit, provides an overview of the conclusions of the inspection team regarding this year's evaluation visit to the school. The second, titled School Description, provides descriptive information about the school, including enrollment and demographic data, as well as historical information regarding the school's establishment. The third component, titled Academic Attainment and Improvement, is a review of academic performance based on assessment results through the previous school year. Finally, this report presents the evidence and conclusions from a one-day inspection visit conducted in the current school year titled School Evaluation Visit. Within this final section is a summary of conclusions from the previous school inspection.

Because of the inherent complexity of an organization such as a school, this School Evaluation Report does not contain a rating or a single comprehensive indicator that would indicate at a glance the school's prospects for renewal. It does, however, summarize the various strengths of the school and note areas in need of improvement. To the extent appropriate and useful, we encourage school boards of trustees to use this evaluation report in planning school improvement efforts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

Governance and Instructional Leadership

As was noted in the Institute's previous School Evaluation Report, Bronx Prep's organizational structure has evolved over time. The 2007-08 school year marks the first year of the school's new organizational structure, and the board noted that they expect that "[academic] outcomes will follow." In its second charter term, the school board has recognized the rigorous standard the State University Trustees have set for subsequent renewal and has made a deliberate effort to focus on meeting the school's mission and Accountability Plan goals by putting in place a school leadership team focused on improving the school's performance.

As anticipated and described within the Institute's 2006-07 School Evaluation Report, the school's head of school and principals have identified additional instructional leadership positions within the school's organizational structure. These include department chairs for each content area and school division (middle/high school), as well as grade level leaders at the middle school. One year later, evidence suggests that in practice there remains a lack of clarity and accountability regarding the roles and responsibilities of the head of school, principals, department chairs, and grade level leaders. It seems that the new organizational structure has improved the efficacy of the school's instructional leadership in limited ways. For example, increased focus by the principals in their work with department chairs on curriculum and assessment has resulted in development of a middle school writing curriculum, a high school English portfolio process, and a scope and sequence framework with correlated interim assessments in mathematics. There was no clear evidence that the school's instructional leaders have yet implemented sufficient supervision and evaluation strategies to ensure such development across all curricular areas.

Curriculum

In its eighth year of instruction Bronx Prep has begun to create curriculum guidelines (scope and sequences/pacing charts) in each content area and in each grade level. There is some evidence that the school has begun to implement a process to make adjustments and revisions to the curriculum over time as the principals, department chairs, and team leaders apply a backward mapping approach and deepen their curriculum development training in the Understanding by Design model. At the time of the inspection visit, the school was clearly in the beginning stages of ensuring that its curriculum was aligned to state performance standards.

At the time of the inspection visit, teachers indicated that they rely upon the scope and sequences and pacing charts created by department chairs when planning instruction. However, most teachers reported that although there is some connection between the documents and their curriculum (as implemented), "not every lesson is a direct reflection of the scope and sequences." At the time of the visit there was not strong evidence that teachers utilize these curriculum guidelines to create detailed lesson plans designed to prepare the school's students to meet state performance standards.

Notably, in the school's eighth year of operation, bifurcation between the middle school and the high school curriculum persists. Over the course of the day of the inspection visit, teachers across the school indicated that there are few opportunities to interact with teachers and administrators in the other school division (middle or high school). Inspectors did not find strong evidence that the school's curriculum is aligned from the middle school to the high school, or even from grade to grade.

Use of Assessment Data

Bronx Prep has invested professional development time and resources into creating and administering an internally developed assessment system. According to the school's principals, the school's teachers (at the high school level, in particular) have participated in professional development initiatives aimed at assisting them develop the assessments in alignment with the school's newly created scope and sequences. Teachers at both the high school and middle school indicated that they had administered internal assessments that they had developed themselves, and there was some evidence that the results of these assessments were used to inform instructional decisions. This practice was new, and had not yet been implemented school-wide. In addition, the extent to which the teacher-created assessments will serve as predictors of student performance on state assessments had not yet been determined.

The school has thoroughly analyzed student achievement data within the school's Accountability Plan Progress Report (including New York State Testing Program data and Stanford 9 results). In fact, many members of the school's staff, including department chairs, were generally aware of the school's overall performance on these assessments; action plans previously submitted to the Institute and aimed at improving student performance; as well as the school's general progress toward meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals.

While the school's documented criteria for promotion from one grade to the next as well as for graduation exceed state performance standards—as evidenced by the course passing grade requirement of 70 at every grade level and required passing of Regents courses in five major subject areas and college admissions, respectively—teachers seemed generally unsure of promotion criteria across the school. Given that teachers at the high school also indicated that rising middle school students were generally unprepared for the demands of the school's high school program, school inspectors concluded that there is not a common understanding between and among teachers and administrators of the meaning and consequences of assessment results, especially those related to decisions around student promotion and retention. Due to the abbreviated nature of the school inspection visit, it was unclear whether this could be attributed to the lack of clear promotion standards at the 8th grade level, the perceived bifurcation of the middle school and high school programs, or the school's preparedness in facing challenges associated with larger cohorts of students at the middle school level.

At-risk Students

The school has initiated a number of programs designed to help students who are struggling academically, including: academic intervention services in English language arts and mathematics; tutoring during study halls and afterschool; a Saturday program; individualized action plans for some students; and at the high school level, regular teacher reflections that include action plans by class. While there are structures in place that have the potential to provide students with sufficient academic support to successfully meet state performance standards, there appears to be little coordination among these initiatives, or with the regular education program. Inspectors found neither evidence that there is systemic monitoring of the progress of students who participate in one or more of these support services, nor exit criteria for students that may have met their learning goals or desired levels of academic attainment. This was especially true at the high school level, despite claims within the school's 2006-07 Accountability Plan Progress Report, that "a critical component of the development of an academic intervention services program for [the school] will be the targeted monitoring and accountability strategies [sic]."

Across the school teachers expressed uncertainty about the services available to students with special education needs and English language learners. The inspection team found little evidence that teachers make appropriate modifications or accommodations to the regular education program.

Governance

In alignment with its mission statement, the school is committed to preparing its students for the rigors of post-secondary education. At the time of the visit, inspectors noted that lessons within the school's high school were grade level appropriate, and that its 11th and 12th grade students appeared well-prepared to handle the rigors of the school's high school curriculum.¹

The school's commitment extends beyond its academic program, however. Bronx Prep has developed a college preparation program aimed at increasing student awareness of their post-secondary options, and has hired two full-time counselors to implement its program. The school has demonstrated that information gained through this program had begun to be used to improve the school's academic program as well as to better prepare students to succeed in college.

¹ Note that this was not the case in the 9th grade, where inspectors generally concurred with teachers' comments that students promoted from the 8th grade at the conclusion of the 2006-07 school year were not prepared to handle a rigorous 9th grade curriculum.

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approved the application for the Bronx Preparatory Charter School ("Bronx Prep") on January 25, 2000, which was subsequently approved by the Board of Regents on April 4, 2000. The school opened in August 2000 with an enrollment of 100 students in grades 5 and 6, adding one grade each year thereafter. In 2007-08, Bronx Prep school enrolled 589 students in 5th through 12th grades. The school was originally located at 1508 Webster Avenue in the South Bronx in a leased building that had previously been used as a parochial school. In the fall of 2004, the school completed the planned construction of a new facility located at 3872 Third Avenue and successfully moved into the new building for the 2004-05 school year, which provided adequate space for the provision of both middle and high school instruction.

Bronx Prep submitted an Application for Charter Renewal in 2004 and was granted a full-term, five-year renewal by the State University Trustees on March 1, 2005. The Board of Regents approved the renewal charter on May 17, 2005.

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

- Scott Nelson, Chairperson
- Lawrence Bascom
- Auvril DeJesus
- Lee Flanagan
- Nancy Garvey
- Phil Gelston
- Kristin Kearns Jordan
- Angel Morales
- Andrew Paul
- Richard Schubart
- Ravi Suria
- Margaret Yates Thorne
- Alison Weaver
- Philip Wharton

The mission of the Bronx Preparatory Charter School as stated in the school's Renewal Charter is as follows:

The mission of the Bronx Preparatory Charter School is to prepare under-served middle and high school students for higher education, civic involvement and lifelong success through a structured, caring environment of high academic expectations.

The Bronx Preparatory Charter School seeks to graduate men and women who (1) think critically and creatively; (2) have attained strong skills in mathematics, language, literature, history, science, technology, and the arts; and (3) are committed to a lifetime of learning and civic involvement. The school will empower students through high intellectual and conduct standards – building on their promise, as they prepare for college, career, and citizenship.

Since its founding in 2000, Bronx Prep has emphasized reading and mathematics skills instruction in the middle school years, while preparing students to think critically and creatively as they approach high school. The school intends to ensure that the upper school curriculum is rich in the core academic areas of English language arts and mathematics, but also expansive to include advanced instruction in science, history and the arts. According to the school's original Charter Application, their expectation is that all of their students will attend college, while they seek to build a nurturing school community and culture of achievement, developed in deliberate collaboration with parents, guardians, and community. As stated in Bronx Prep's Application for Initial Charter Renewal, "...students will expand their understanding in three different ways, relying on different methods of instruction. (1) They will acquire organized knowledge with the help of didactic instruction from their teachers. (2) They will develop intellectual skills, such as problem solving and application of critical judgment, with help from teachers as coaches. (3) They will build their ideas, values, and aesthetic appreciation through Socratic seminars and artistic endeavors..."

Key design elements for Bronx Prep as stated in the school's Application for Initial Charter Renewal include:

- in the middle school grades, considerable focus is given to critical reading, mathematics and writing skills, which students develop through nearly four hours daily of English and mathematics instruction;
- in the upper school grades, students analyze and evaluate subject matter with increasing sophistication, with importance given to historical, scientific, and literature content;
- extended school day and year for middle school grades, with increasing independent assignments in the upper school grades;
- a belief in being very specific about expectations of teachers and supportive of their instructional growth through significant dedication of resources to in-house professional development;
- a positive and highly structured school culture, with a "scholar dollar" system of positive reinforcement and immediate accountability for negative behavior;
- the school believing that student performance in the arts is critical to personal growth as well as supportive of academic learning and devotes significant resources to music instruction;
- continual assessment of student growth through both quantitative and qualitative measures;
- the school believing that learning should not be drudgery lessons are expected to be engaging and fun;
- the school believing in creating an economic model that is sustainable without over reliance on private support, with the school's support organization raising significant philanthropy to build its new facility so the debt burden will be manageable and the

- school will build an operating model in which key academic programming will be supported by the per pupil revenues from public sources;
- each member of the student-parent-teacher triangle being encouraged to enter into an Achievement Agreement in which each affirms their commitments to each other and to the child's success; and
- a voting seat on the school's board of trustees being reserved for the president of the Parent Advisory Council to support parental ownership.

School Year (2007-08)

200 Instructional Days (5th – 7th grade) 210 Instructional Days (8th grade) 190 Instructional Days (9th – 12th grade)

School Day² (2007-08)

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday: 7:55 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (5th and 6th grade) 7:55 a.m. to 4:05 p.m. (7th and 8th grade) 8:15 a.m. to 3:55 p.m. (9th – 12th grade)

Wednesday:

7:50 a.m. to 1:20 p.m. (5th – 8th grade) 8:15 a.m. to 1:05 p.m. (9th – 12th grade)

 $^{^2}$ 3:15 to 4:05 p.m. is used as an Advisory Period for 5^{th} - 8^{th} grade, while 4:10 to 5:00 p.m. is used as an Enrichment Period for 5^{th} and 6^{th} grade.

Enrollment

	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ³	Original Chartered Grades	Revised Grades Served	Actual Grades Served	Complying
2000-01	100	100	100	5-6	5-6	5-6	YES
2001-02	150	150	150	5-7	5-7	5-7	YES
2002-03	200	200	193	5-8	5-8	5-8	YES
2003-04	250	250	250	5-9	5-9	5-9	YES
2004-05	300	350	355	5-10	5-10	5-10	YES ⁴
2005-06	450	450	440	5-11	5-11	5-11	YES
2006-07	550	550	521	5-12	5-12	5-12	YES
2007-08	600	600	589	5-12	5-12	5-12	YES
2008-09	650			5-12			
2009-10	700			5-12			

	2004-	2005	200	5-2006	200	6-2007
Race/Ethnicity	% of Enroll. Bronx Prep	% of Enroll. Community District #9	% of Enroll. Bronx Prep	% of Enroll. Community District #9	% of Enroll. Bronx Prep	% of Enroll. Community District #9
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.0 %	1.0 %	0.0 %	1.0 %	NA	NA
Black or African American	56.0 %	34.0 %	52.0 %	34.0 %	ÑΑ	NA
Hispanic	44.0 %	63.0 %	48.0 %	63.0 %	NA	NA
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	1.0 %	2.0 %	0.0 %	2.0 %	NA	NA
White	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	NA	NA

Source: 2004-05, 2005-06: School Report Card (New York State Education Department); 2006-07: New York State Education Department Database

³ 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.

⁴ The school requested from the State University Trustees and was granted permission to expand enrollment by 50 students in

grade five to coincide with the move into a new facility.

	2004	4-2005	2005	5-2006	2006	-2007
Special Populations	% of Enroll. Bronx Prep	% of Enroll. Community District #9	% of Enroll. Bronx Prep	% of Enroll. Community District #9	% of Enroll. Bronx Prep	% of Enroll. Community District #9
Students with Disabilities	NA	NA	NA	NA	4.2 %	15.0 %
Limited English Proficient	0.0 %	23.0 %	0.0 %	24.0 %	2.5 %	23.2 %

Source: Students with Disabilities: New York State Education Department Database

Limited English Proficient: 2004-05, 2005-06: New York State Education Department School Report Card; 2006-07:

New York State Education Department Database

	2004	4-2005	200	5-2006	2006	5-2007
Free/Reduced Lunch	% of Enroll. Bronx Prep	% of Enroll. Community District #9	% of Enroll. Bronx Prep	% of Enroll. Community District #9	% of Enroll. Bronx Prep	% of Enroll. Community District #9
Eligible for Free Lunch	62.0 %	77.0 %	63.0 %	81.0 %	62.2 %	79.8 %
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	17.0 %	4.0 %	18.0 %	5.0 %	14.1 %	5.9 %

Source: 2004-05, 2005-06: New York State Education Department School Report Card; 2006-07: New York State Education Department Database

School Charter History

School Year	Year of Operation	Evaluation Visit	Feedback to School	Other Actions Taken
2000-01	1 st	YES	Prior Action Letter; End-of-Year Evaluation Report	None
2001-02	2 nd	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	None
2002-03	3 rd	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	None
2003-04	4 th	NO		None
2004-05	5 th	YES	Initial Renewal Report	Granted Full-Term Renewal
2005-06	6 th	NO		None
2006-07	7 th	YES	End-of-Year Evaluation Report	None
2007-08	8 th	YES	Annual School Evaluation Report	None

ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

Background

Each charter school authorized by the State University Trustees has adopted an Accountability Plan, the primary purpose of which is to lay out the specific student achievement goals that a school agrees to meet and the specific measures that define what constitutes meeting these goals. The Institute currently requires a common set of goals and outcome measures which represent the expectations for student learning and achievement at the time of renewal. Individual schools may also have chosen to include in their Accountability Plans additional academic, organizational or other goals and measures. Schools should be aware that Accountability Plans developed prior to the Institute's establishment of common goals and outcome measures may not include all of the currently required measures. However, at renewal, those plans will be revised to reflect current measures.

Below is a narrative that provides an analysis of how this school measured up to the goals in its Accountability Plan as well as the Institute's required goals and measures should they not already be included in the school's Accountability Plan. The narrative summarizes the results of the relevant measures, and is followed by School Performance Summaries for English language arts and mathematics. The School Performance Summaries are one page compilations of performance data, for the last three years, based on the Institute's required measures. As noted above, the common measures used in the Performance Summaries may differ from the actual measures in the school's Accountability Plan, but are presented to provide trend data and consistency across schools. At the time of renewal, schools will be held accountable for the measures in their Accountability Plan, but the Institute will take into account other performance data as well.

Most state exams are administered in the winter and spring; official results are typically not released until at least early summer. Similarly, schools are not required to submit Accountability Plan Progress Reports until August. As a consequence, results for this current school year from state and school administered assessments were not available at the time this report was written. Therefore, the following evaluation of school performance addresses assessment results up to and including the previous school year. These are the same data the school would have had available and considered at the beginning of this school year and used to make critical decisions related to this year's academic program. These are also the same data the school inspection team relied on at the time of their visit.

Academic Performance through 2006-07

Performance Summary: Based on results for the various outcome measures contained in Bronx Prep's Accountability Plan, the school is not coming close to meting its English language arts goal, due in part to the low level of performance at the middle school. The school did come close to meeting its mathematics goal. Based on limited data, Bronx Prep did not come close to meeting either of the science or social studies goals in its Accountability Plan, again due to the weak performance at the middle school level. Bronx Prep is deemed to be in good standing under the state's No Child Left Behind accountability (NCLB) system.

English language arts: Middle School – Bronx Prep's middle school performance is the primary reason the school is not meeting its English language arts goal. While it came close to meeting the goals in 2004-05, its performance since then has declined. In 2004-05 when only the 8th grade took the state exam, 60 percent were proficient, which is close to the target of 75 percent. The following

year when students in 5th through 8th grade took state exams, 43 percent scored at the proficient level. In 2006-07 this rose lightly to 49 percent. In comparison to demographically similar schools, in 2004-05 Bronx Prep performed much better than predicted; however, in the subsequent two years the school has performed the same as predicted, and thus did not achieve the Effect Size target. In each of the last three years the school has exceeded the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set by the state's NCLB accountability system, and has also outperformed the local school district. In terms of growth on the state exam, none of the three grade level cohorts in 2006-07 achieved their target on the state exam, and overall performance declined slightly. In both 2004-05 and 2005-06 only one of five cohorts (6th through 10th grades) achieved their target Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) on the Stanford 9 exam. Last year the performance of each grade level cohort declined, and none finished the year above an average NCE of 47.

High School – 2006-07 was the first year Bronx Prep had a 12th grade cohort with which to evaluate high school performance. Although not all of the results for high school measures were reported in their Accountability Plan Progress Report, the evidence provided by the school indicates some success at the high school level. On the English Regents exam 85 percent of the Class of 2007⁵ achieved a passing score, exceeding the target of 75 percent. Comparison data for the local school district were not available, but the school reports that historically the district has not performed as well. The school also reports that 40 percent of the Class of 2008 and 28 percent of the Class of 2009 have passed the English Regents exam. The school had no results to report for its 10th grade portfolio measure. In the 12th grade, 86 percent of students completed their final project and 89 percent were deemed proficient, which was short of the 100 percent target.

Mathematics: Middle School – Bronx Prep has made progress in student performance from 2004-05 through 2006-07, such that the school is now coming close to meeting its Accountability Plan goal for mathematics. In absolute terms, 53 percent of 8th grade students were proficient in 2004-05 on the state exam, which is far from the target of 75 percent proficient. The next year when students in 5th through 8th grade took the exam, overall 57 percent were proficient. In 2006-07, 65 percent of students achieved at the proficient level, coming within 10 points of the target; however, performance notably declined from 5th to 8th grade, with only 30 percent of 8th grade students proficient in 2006-07. In each of the last three years the school has exceeded the AMO set by the state's NCLB accountability system, and has also consistently outperformed the local school district by a large margin. In comparison to demographically similar schools, Bronx Prep has performed better than predicted and exceeded its Effect Size target in all of the last three years. In terms of growth on the state exam, in 2006-07 the 6th grade cohort achieved its target while the other two cohorts declined. On the Stanford 9 exam the performance of each grade level cohort (6th through 10th grades) declined from the previous year; the average NCE in 2006-07 ranged from 43 to 57.

High School – based on limited data, Bronx Prep has performed well on the high school component of its Accountability Plan goal. On the Math A Regents exam 92 percent of the Class of 2007 achieved a passing score, exceeding the target of 75 percent. Comparison data for the local school district were not available, but the school reports that historically the district has not performed as well. The school also reports that 93 percent of the Class of 2008, 94 percent of the Class of 2009, and 67 percent of the Class of 2010 have passed the Math A Regents exam.

⁵ From the school's Accountability Plan Progress report, it is not clear whether this is the high school accountability cohort, i.e., all students who were in the 9th grade four years prior, or just students who were in the 12th grade in 2007.

<u>Science</u>: **Middle School** – On the state science exam 31 percent of 8th grade students were proficient in 2006-07, which is far from the 75 percent target. Comparison data for the local school district were not available.

High School – Examining the Class of 2007, 92 percent have passed a science Regents exam, exceeding the target of 75 percent. Comparison data for the local school district were not available.

<u>Social Studies</u>: **Middle School** – On the state social studies exam 27 percent of 8th grade students were proficient in 2006-07, which is far from the 75 percent target. Comparison data for the local school district were not available.

High School – Examining the Class of 2007, 85 percent have passed the Global History Regents exam and 85 percent have passed the U.S. History Regents exam, exceeding the 75 percent target in each subject. Comparison data for the local school district were not available.

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

Additional Goals (optional): Bronx Prep met its goals of having all of the graduating class of 2007 accepted by at least one college. The school did not report results for the artistic performance goals or the character skills and civic responsibility goals in its Accountability Plan Progress Report. The school also did not report on its three organizational viability goals.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: English Language Arts

Bronx Preparatory Charter School



Charter Schools Institute The State University of New York

	<u>ট</u>	2004-05 Grades Served: 5-10	5-10	Z	<u>ල්</u>	2005-06 Grades Served: 5-11	- -			2006-07 Grades Served: 5-12	7 d: 5-12	Ē
	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	
ABSOLUTE MEASURES	. 7	(0)	(0)		60 4	00	00	*******	ω 4 −	(0)		p*====
who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above					9 /	50.5 (111) 48.0 (100) 43.5 (46)	(0) 50.0 (92) 44.0 (43)	***		52.3 (128) 49.2 (120) 54.1 (98)	(0) 49.2 (120) 54.1 (98)	***
Level 3 on the New York State exam. Note: A comparison of overall results for all students and 2+ years students is not valid if the school's first	&	57.7 (52)	60.0 (45)	8	- 8 I	32.5 (62) 45.1 (319)		NO	8 II	37.0 (46) 50.0 (392)	37.0 48.9 (<u>8</u>
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam	Grades	ā	AMO		Grades	Ы	AMO		Grades	죠	AMO	*****
will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	4 œ	153	131	YES	5-8	140	122	YES	5-8	148	122	YES
COMPARATIVE MEASURES	Comparise	Comparison: (Bronx District 9)	istrict 9)		Compariso	Comparison: (Bronx District 9)	istrict 9)	****	Compari	Comparison: (Bronx District 9)	District 9)	*****
3. Each year the percent of students	Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District	
and performing at or above Level 3 will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	4 &	90.0	20.0	YES	8-9	43.4	29.3	YES	6-8	48.9	33.2	YES
4. Each year the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the	Grades	Actual Pred	Effect redicted Size		N Actual	ual Predicted	Effect ed Size	******	% FL /	Actual Pred	Effect Predicted Size	
State exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3) based on its Free Lunch (FL) rate.	4 &	57.7 36	30.5 1.38	YES	319 45	45.1 44.9	0.01	õ	62.2	50.5 50	50.3 0.00	Q 2
VALUE ADDED MEASURE	Assessm	Assessment: SAT-9			Assessm	Assessment: SAT-9		******	Assessr	Assessment: NYSTP	•	
5. Each grade level cohort will reduce by one half the difference between the	Grades	Cohorts Ma			Grades	Cohorts Ma		,.	G.	Base Ta	Target Result	2
previous year's baseline and 50 NCE on a norm referenced test or 75	6-10 N 6-10	1 of Base Target	1 of 5 rget Result	2	6-10 N Ba	2 of Base Target	2 of 5 rget Result	<u></u>			, ,	
percent proficient on the NYSTP. An asterick indicates cohort met target.	204 50		48.0		and a month of the state of the			44======	7 95 8 44	49.5 6% 45.5 6%	62.3 54.7 60.3 38.6	
									All 248	50.0	62.5 48.4	

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: Mathematics

Bronx Preparatory Charter School



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

	<u> </u>	2004-05 Grades Served: 5-10	5-10	MET	<i>ত</i>	2005-06 Grades Served: 5-11	5-11	M E	******	2006-07 Grades Served: 5-12)7 9d: 5-12	<u> </u>
	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	*********	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	
ABSOLUTE MEASURES	*	0	(0)		8	(0)	(0)			(0)	(0)	******
1. Each year 75 percent of students	t	9	<u>(</u>)		t ro	(0) 67.0 (109)	<u>(</u>)		4 ro	(0) 78.9 (128)	_	*****
who are enfolled in at least their second year will perform at or above					9	74.5 (98)			ဖ	78.2 (119)	78.2 (
Level 3 on the New York State exam.	c	E0 0 (E0)	(2) 2 (4E)	9	~ 0	30.4 (46)			۲.	64.9 (97)	64.9	*****
Note: A comparison of overall results for all students and 2+ years students is not valid if the school's first	0	07.0	33.3 (40)	2	• =	41.9 (62) 59.0 (315)	56.6 (205)	2	×₩₩	30.4 (46) 69.5 (390)	30.4 (46) (64.9 (262)	2
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam	Grades	ā	AMO		Grades	ā	АМО		Grades	ā	AMO	
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accountability system.	∞	142	693	YES	3	3	3	3		9	8	3
COMPARATIVE MEASURES	Comparise	Comparison: (Bronx District 9)	strict 9)		Comparisc	Comparison: (Bronx District 9)	strict 9)	*****	Compari	Comparison: (Bronx District 9)	District 9)	ļ
3. Each year the percent of students	Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District	. * * * * .	Grades	School	District	****
and performing at or above Level 3 will	4					C C		,			***************************************	,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,
be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	8	53.3	21.5	YES	p o	9.90	24.6	ΥΩ 	φ φ	64.9	36.2	չ - Տ
4. Each year the school will exceed its expected level of performance on the	Grades	Actual Predicted	Effect cted Size		N Actual	ual Predicted	Effect od Size		% FL	Actual Pre	Effect Predicted Size	
State exam by at least a small Effect	4	Marie 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1					1	· • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •	1	•		
Lunch (FL) rate.	∞	52.8 38	38.7 0.69	YES	315 59.0	.0 46.5	0.54	YES	62.2	7.07	59.4 0.57	YES
VALUE ADDED MEASURE	Assessment: SAT	ent: SAT			Assessment: SAT	ent: SAT		ļ	Assessr	Assessment: NYSTP		
5. Each grade level cohort will reduce	Grades	Cohorts Ma	Making Target		Grades	Cohorts Making Target	king Target		z ō	Base Tar	Target Result	2
previous year's baseline and 50 NCE	6-10	2 of	آ ئ	õ	6-10	2 of	f 5	8	4		AND THE PERSON NAMED IN COLUMN 1	,
on a norm referenced test or 75	N Ba	Base Target	t Result		N Base	se Target	Result		5	902 302	* 407	
An asterick indicates cohort met target.	202 62.1	.1 62.2	58.7						7 93		64.5	
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October 1997 Stay Working Stay		:						••••	All 244	63.5 69.3	.3 64.8	*****
Data Sources. New 10th State and City data, workbooks submitted by schools and databases compiled by the Institute.	, workbooks	submitted by	schools and	databas	es compile	d by the Instil	ute.				•	16

SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

Regardless of the type of visit, Institute evaluations of SUNY authorized charter schools are organized around a set of benchmarks that address the academic success of the school including teaching and learning, e.g. curriculum, instruction, assessment, and the effectiveness and viability of the school as an organization, including such items as board operations and student order and discipline. Called the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks, these established criteria are used on a regular and ongoing basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

While the primary focus of the inspection visit is an evaluation of the school's academic program, issues regarding compliance with applicable 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 for compliance is not the principal purpose of the visit.

This section of the School Evaluation Report begins with a summary of the observations and conclusions from the previous inspection visit to the school. This information is used by the inspection team in preparation for this year's inspection and assists the observers in understanding the accomplishments and challenges the school has faced. Similarly, this information provides the reader with insight into the Institute's monitoring of the school's academic program and conclusions from prior inspection visits, including those conducted by external experts on behalf of the Institute. Following this summary is a detailed analysis of the observations and conclusions from this year's inspection, along with supporting evidence. Finally, information regarding the conduct of the inspection, including the date of the visit and information about the Inspection Team is provided.

Summary of Previous Evaluation Visit

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the previous visit to the Bronx Preparatory Charter School on April 24, 2007. Inspectors visited classrooms, reviewed documents and interviewed instructional and administrative staff. Each of their conclusions is summarized below.

Governance and Leadership

Bronx Prep had benefited from a strong and committed board of trustees and a longtime executive director who, in addition to serving as a board member, was also the founding lead applicant. While the board's priority remained "increasing academic performance across the board," much of its work during the school's early years had been on securing a suitable facility to provide stability for the school's students and staff and to allow for the planned growth of the school. Beginning in the 2006-07 school year, the school added a second principal and began transitioning to a model of leadership that placed primary responsibility for the development of teachers' pedagogical skills with the two principals and teacher-leaders who serve as department chairs. The longtime executive director planned on stepping down as leader of the school at the end of the 2006-07 school year, and it was unclear to the inspection team what, if any, changes would be made to the school's evolving leadership structure as a result of the skills and vision of a new head of school.

Instructional Leadership

At the end of the school's seventh year of instruction, its leadership model continued to evolve. Specifically, the school was transitioning to a model that placed teacher-leaders in the role of providing ongoing support and coaching for teachers. It was unclear to the inspection team whether or not the teacher-leaders had the appropriate training and experience to provide support to other teachers. In contrast to what was in place at the time of the Institute's renewal visit, the school no longer had in place an effective and coherent system of instructional coaching. At the time of the seventh end-of-year evaluation visit, little ongoing coaching was occurring in either the middle school or high school programs.

Curriculum

The documented curriculum was generally developed by individual teachers without internal consistency within content areas and across grade levels. Specifically, there appeared to be no identifiable scope and sequence for the content areas in the middle and high school grades. The absence of these tools was particularly problematic in the context of the school's primary focus on the development of interim assessments. Teachers noted that the development of such assessments was hampered by the teachers' inability to determine what students should know and be able to do within each grade and subject. The ad hoc and fragmented development of curriculum bifurcated the middle and high school programs.

Use of Assessment Data

The inspection team found some evidence that the results of formal assessments administered by the school were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the academic program. However, these efforts did not appear to be conducted in a systematic fashion and it was unclear what processes and/or products result from these efforts. The inspection team did not see evidence that teachers were using assessment data to make changes and improvements in their curriculum and instruction, despite the

fact that school leaders had identified assessment development as a recent school priority with significant resources being allocated for this purpose. Finally, Bronx Prep had not yet made progress toward meeting one of the goals within its Accountability Plan related to the use of portfolio assessment in the high school grades.

Student Order and Discipline

Student order and engagement during classroom instruction varied throughout the school and appeared to be a function of the quality of instruction. While students in the upper high school grades were generally observed as being engaged and on-task, of particular concern to the evaluation team was the ineffective management of students in common areas and whole class transitions. Taken together, the evidence collected in this area suggested that the school had not yet maximized the use of the significant time available during its school day.

At-Risk Students

The school primarily used a pull-out model to meet the needs of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), with the Learning Enhancement Team coordinator serving as the only full-time permanent staff member providing special education services. At the time of the evaluation visit, teachers reported little to no contact with special education staff regarding the planning of instruction and support for classified students. The school did not have in place a well-defined remedial program for literacy and mathematics for non-classified students in need of academic support at the middle school grades and had not implemented a structured remediation program in the high school grades.

Evaluation Visit Benchmark Analysis and Evidence

Governance and Instructional Leadership

As was noted in the Institute's previous School Evaluation Report, Bronx Prep's organizational structure has evolved over time. In the 2006-07 school year, the school hired a middle school principal to complement the school's existing leadership, which had consisted of an executive director and high school principal. At the conclusion of that same year, the school board recognized the need to place a greater focus on increasing the strength of Bronx Prep's academic program during its second charter. In doing so, the school's founder and executive director resigned⁶, and the school board replaced her with a head of school with significant and successful experiences as an instructional leader. In the words of one board member, "We looked for a candidate that would help us achieve the outcomes that we need to achieve in our charter...[The new head of school] fit the bill, having had that focus in previous roles..." The 2007-08 school year marks the first year of the school's new organizational structure, and the board noted that they expect that "[academic] outcomes will follow." In its second charter term, the school board has recognized the rigorous standard the State University Trustees have set for subsequent renewal and has made a deliberate effort to focus on meeting the school's mission and Accountability Plan goals by putting in place a school leadership team focused on improving the school's performance.

As anticipated and described within the Institute's 2006-07 School Evaluation Report, the school's head of school and principals have identified additional instructional leadership positions within the school's organizational structure. These include department chairs for each content area and school division (middle/high school),⁷ as well as grade level leaders at the middle school. At the time of the 2006-07 school evaluation visit, the high school principal indicated that the role of the department chairs would evolve to include specific responsibilities related to pedagogical coaching in addition to curriculum development. Within the 2006-07 School Evaluation Report inspectors concluded: "it was unclear to the inspection team whether or not these teacher-leaders had the appropriate training and experience to provide support to teachers;" "the school has not clearly articulated the roles, responsibilities and expectations of all staff related to the present and proposed organizational structure;" and "Bronx Prep did not yet have in place a structure to ensure the alignment between teacher evaluation conducted by the school principals and coaching provided to teachers primarily by the teacher-leaders and department heads." Indeed, one year later evidence suggests that in practice there remains a lack of clarity and accountability regarding the roles and responsibilities of the head of school, principals, department chairs, and grade level leaders.

For example, evidence collected on the day of the visit revealed that the school's principals are to supervise and evaluate the school's teachers, including department chairs and grade level leaders. In contrast, department chairs have been asked to provide pedagogical coaching to the school's teachers, as identified by the school principals; grade level leaders provide coaching and support related to classroom management, rituals, and routines. Despite this division of labor, in some cases, department chairs indicated that they have been asked by the school's principals to complete formal evaluations of the teachers within their departments, which has compromised their ability to provide

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⁶ The school's founder and former executive director continues to serve on the school board.

⁷ In some instances school staff referred to "department heads" at the middle school level as "coaches." However, the school's organizational chart, shared with the Institute prior to the school inspection visit, identified these individuals as "department heads." This report follows the naming conventions used by the school on its organizational chart.

peer coaching to their colleagues. One department chair regretted that, although she had been formally evaluated in her teaching responsibilities by the school principal, the principal has never provided her with feedback or an evaluation of her role as a department chair. Further, some department chairs indicated that the feedback they have provided to teachers was not based on clearly delineated priorities set by the school or its leaders. In fact, department chairs across the school indicated that they have had few opportunities to meet with the school's two principals and head of school, indicating that, despite the fact that this critical responsibility appears to have been delegated to department chairs, the school's leadership has not set school-wide priorities or put in place accountability structures for the school's department chairs. This conclusion was corroborated by the school's teachers, who reported limited instances in which the school's department chairs have provided targeted feedback based on classroom observations, review of lesson plans, or other pedagogical activities, despite the fact that these individuals are only assigned to teach one or two classes per day - a significant amount of release time from teaching duties. Based on the lack of clarity regarding the expectations and accountability for responsibilities of the school's department chairs, inspectors were unable to conclude with certainty that Bronx Prep has maximized its financial investment in the school's new organizational structure, or that the new organizational structure has improved the overall efficacy of the school's instructional leadership in more than a limited manner.

Curriculum

In its eighth year of instruction Bronx Prep has continued previous efforts to create curriculum guidelines (scope and sequences/pacing charts) in each content area and in each grade level. Building upon its process of creating curriculum "diary maps" during the 2006-07 school year, the school hosted a retreat during the summer of 2007, during which the school's department chairs used state performance standards to create local curriculum standards, scope and sequences for each content area, and pacing charts by grade level. These were shared with the school's teachers prior to the start of the 2007-08 school year with an intent to gather their feedback. One school inspector noted that "teachers were unanimous in their enthusiasm about the new scope and sequence documents." According to one department chair, the school is comparing the newly created scope and sequences with the previous year's diary maps, and making adjustments where necessary. There is some evidence that the school has begun to implement a process to make adjustments or revisions to the curriculum over time as the principals, department chairs, and team leaders apply a backward mapping approach and deepen their curriculum development training in the <u>Understanding by Design</u> model. The school was clearly in the beginning stages of ensuring that its curriculum is aligned to state performance standards.

At the time of the inspection visit, teachers indicated that they rely upon the scope and sequences and pacing charts created by department chairs when planning instruction. However, despite their enthusiasm for the new scope and sequence documents, most teachers reported that although there is some connection between the documents and their curriculum (as implemented), "not every lesson is a direct reflection of the scope and sequences." Department chairs and principals reported that they only review lesson plans prior to a scheduled observation, indicating limited oversight of teachers' strict adherence to the scope and sequence documents. Therefore, at the time of the visit there was not strong evidence that teachers utilize these curriculum guidelines to create detailed lesson plans designed to prepare the school's students to meet state performance standards.

Notably, in the school's eighth year of operation, the bifurcation between the middle school and the high school curriculum persists. Over the course of the day of the inspection visit, teachers across the school indicated that there are few opportunities to interact with teachers and administrators in

the other school division (middle or high school). One teacher lamented, "The 5 through 12 model attracted me, but we are not taking advantage of it. Structurally things in the model need to change." Another teacher reported "We generally do not meet with the middle school teachers. We remain pretty separate." Teachers at the high school specifically noted that middle school students had not been prepared to meet the rigors of the school's high school program, perhaps due to the lack of alignment between the school's middle school and high school curriculums. Inspectors did not find strong evidence that the school's curriculum is aligned from the middle school to the high school, or even from grade to grade.

Use of Assessment Data

Bronx Prep has invested professional development time and resources into creating and administering an internally developed assessment system. The efforts have been focused in the areas of science and mathematics, while internal assessments in English language arts and social studies remain works in progress. According to the school's principals, the school's teachers (at the high school level, in particular) have participated in professional development initiatives aimed at assisting them to develop the assessments in alignment with the school's newly created scope and sequences. Teachers at both the high school and middle school indicated that they had administered internal assessments that they had developed themselves, and there was some evidence that the results of these assessments were used to inform instructional decisions. For example, some middle school teachers reported using a spreadsheet to complete an item analysis, and some high school teachers maintained data binders in which they documented individual student progress toward mastery of state standards, as well as action plans and modifications to the curriculum. There was also evidence that these had been reviewed by and commented upon by the school's high school principal. However, this practice was new (the first internal assessments had been administered in the weeks just prior to the inspection visit), and had not yet implemented school-wide. In addition, the extent to which the teacher-created assessments will serve as predictors on state assessments had not yet been determined.

The school has thoroughly analyzed student achievement data within the school's Accountability Plan Progress Report (including New York State Testing Program data and Stanford 9 results). In fact, many members of the school's staff, including department chairs, were generally aware of the school's overall performance on these assessments; action plans previously submitted to the Institute and aimed at improving student performance; as well as the school's general progress toward meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals.

While the school's documented criteria for promotion from one grade to the next as well as for graduation exceeds state performance standards, teachers seemed generally unaware of promotion criteria at the school as reported above. Notably, despite the fact that only 30.4 percent of the school's 8th graders during the 2006-07 school year achieved level 3 (Meeting Learning Standards) or level 4 (Meeting Learning Standards with Distinction) on the New York State Testing Program assessment in mathematics, all of the 8th grade students were promoted to the 9th grade. One teacher reported that the students were promoted after compiling a mathematics portfolio and attending an intensive mathematics program during the month of June; inspectors were not informed of any additional assessment of student learning in relation to state performance standards other than the portfolio. Further, teachers across the school were unaware of promotion standards. In fact, one department chair, unaware of the promotion standards, and therefore unable to discuss them encouraged a school inspector to look them up herself in the school's handbook. Given that teachers at the high school also indicated that students were generally unprepared for the demands of the

school's high school program, school inspectors concluded that there is not a common understanding between and among teachers and administrators of the meaning and consequences of assessment results, especially those related to decisions around student promotion and retention.

At-risk Students

The school has initiated a number of programs designed to help students who are struggling academically, including: academic intervention services in English language arts and mathematics; tutoring during study halls and afterschool; a Saturday program; individualized action plans for some students; and at the high school level, regular teacher reflections that include action plans by class.

While there are structures in place that have the potential to provide students with sufficient academic support to successfully meet state performance standards, there appears to be little coordination among these initiatives, or with the regular education program. For example, some teachers expressed concern that student participation in afterschool or Saturday tutoring is "voluntary" or "limited," thereby limiting the effectiveness of this time. In particular, teachers expressed frustration that the afterschool tutoring program is largely uncoordinated with the regular education program, as it relies upon the initiative of the volunteer tutors to communicate with teachers regarding the content or skills that should be reinforced or practiced during the tutoring sessions.

Inspectors found neither evidence that there is systemic monitoring of the progress of students who participate in one or more of these support services, nor exit criteria for students that may have met their learning goals or desired levels of academic attainment. This was especially true at the high school level, despite claims within the school's 2006-07 Accountability Plan Progress Report, that "a critical component of the development of an academic intervention services program for [the school] will be the targeted monitoring and accountability strategies [sic]."

Across the school teachers expressed uncertainty about the services available to students with special education needs and English language learners. Several teachers interviewed on the day of the visit indicated that they had previously raised concerns about struggling students (including students whose first language is not English) through the school's referral program, yet they remained unaware of the status of those referrals after several months. Some teachers expressed a desire to be more involved in discussions regarding their students, such as through a response to intervention process. Further, teachers were not able to describe examples of modifications or other accommodations to curriculum, instruction, or assessments, suggesting that they are perhaps unaware of or unprepared to meet the goals contained within their students Individualized Education Programs. The inspection team found little evidence that teachers make appropriate modifications or accommodations to the regular education program.

Governance

In alignment with its mission statement, the school is committed to preparing its students for the rigors of post-secondary education. At the time of the visit, inspectors noted that lessons within the

school's high school were grade level appropriate, and that its 11th and 12th grade students appeared well-prepared to handle the rigors of the school's high school curriculum.⁸

The school's commitment extends beyond its academic program, however. For example, the school has developed a college preparation program aimed at increasing student awareness of their post-secondary options, and has hired two full-time counselors to implement its program. The college readiness program provides Bronx Prep's students with trips to colleges beginning in the 5th grade, college preparation seminars, individual college counseling services, and outreach to parents and families. In addition, the school has devoted time and resources to tracking the post-secondary experiences of its alumni through telephone and email communication, personal visits, and further communication with college- and university-based academic advisors. Through this program, the school's college counselors monitor former students' academic progress, participation in extracurricular initiatives, access to campus-provided academic support services (such as a college writing center), and whether students reside on or off campus. Bronx Prep demonstrated that information gained through this program had begun to be used to improve the school's academic program as well as efforts to prepare its students to succeed in college.

⁸ Note that this was not the case in the 9th grade, where inspectors generally concurred with teachers' comments that students promoted from the 8th grade at the conclusion of the 2006-07 school year were not prepared to handle a rigorous 9th grade curriculum. Due to the abbreviated nature of the school inspection visit, it was unclear whether this could be attributed to the lack of clear promotion standards at the 8th grade level, the perceived bifurcation of the middle school and high school programs, or the school's preparedness in facing challenges associated with larger cohorts of students at the middle school level.

Conduct of the Visit

The Charter Schools Institute conducted the Annual Inspection Visit at Bronx Preparatory Charter School on March 18, 2008. Listed below are the names and backgrounds of the individuals who conducted the visit:

Kim Wechtenhiser (Team Leader) left the Institute in May of 2008, but at the time of this school visit, she served as the Associate Vice President of the Charters Schools Institute at the State University of New York. Ms. Wechtenhiser had primary responsibility for the Institute's charter renewal process; overseeing a comprehensive evaluation of each SUNY authorized charter school as it comes up for renewal. Ms. Wechtenhiser joined the Institute in September 2005 as a Senior Analyst. Prior to her work with the Institute, Ms. Wechtenhiser served as the Coordinator of New Schools Development in the Charter School Office at the Massachusetts Department of Education, where she led the review of new charter school applications, provided technical assistance to newly chartered schools, participated in the ongoing review of their academic and organizational performance, and oversaw the charter amendment process. Ms. Wechtenhiser is the former Lead Teacher of Spanish at City on a hill Charter Public School in Boston, where she also served as faculty representative to the school's Board of Trustees. She taught Spanish at Westfield Public High School and English at the Universidad de Córdoba in Spain. Ms. Wechtenhiser holds a B.A. in Spanish and Secondary Education and a M.A. in Spanish Language and Literature, both from Simmons College. She earned an Ed.M. in School Leadership from Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

Ron Miller, Ph.D., is the Vice President for Accountability at the Charter Schools Institute at the State University of New York. Dr. Miller was the Educational Accountability Officer for the New York City Department of Education. After teaching grades three through five in New York City public schools for seven years, he joined the central offices of the New York City schools, where he conducted evaluative research and organizational studies. As Director of the Office of School Planning and Accountability, he worked with school leaders to develop their capacity to use data for school improvement. In this capacity he developed PASS, a school performance review system which was adopted in 600 city schools. Dr. Miller holds an AB degree from the University of California at Berkeley and a Ph.D. in Applied Anthropology from Columbia University.

Jason L. Sarsfield left the Charter Schools Institute in June of 2008. However, at the time of this school visit he served as a Senior Analyst at the Charter Schools Institute at the State University of New York. Mr. Sarsfield fulfilled a leadership role in informal and annual visits to SUNY authorized charter schools as well as participated in the charter renewal review process, provided technical assistance to schools as needed, and contributed to the Institute's research agenda. Prior to joining the Institute in January, 2007 Mr. Sarsfield was a Contract Analyst at The Center for Charter Schools at Central Michigan University - Office of Academic Accountability where he was responsible for evaluating the academic performance of authorized schools, reviewing school curricula and educational programs, and measuring progress toward educational goals. While at Central Michigan University, Mr. Sarsfield worked closely with the Michigan Department of Education on annual legislative reports, grant reviews, and policy recommendations. Previously, Mr. Sarsfield taught social studies in grades 7-12 in Michigan and Alaska while also completing curriculum development responsibilities and serving as an Advanced Placement Exam Reader for The College Board. Mr. Sarsfield holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Secondary Education from Northern Michigan University and is completing the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in Educational Leadership from Central Michigan University

Susan Seymour is a Senior Analyst at the Charter Schools Institute of the 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.

In addition, the Institute was pleased to have the following consultant(s) join the school visit team:

Timothy Gembka is currently serving as a principal of the Claremont Elementary School (Grades 4 &5) in Ossining, NY. Prior to this position, he served as the program supervisor for mathematics at the secondary level as well as the summer school principal for the Math Summer Academy and Summer Support Program. Prior to working in the Ossining School District, Mr. Gembka was an assistant principal at West Side High School and a mathematics teacher at Mabel D. Bacon Vocational High School and Sarah J. Hale High School at the New York City Board of Education. Mr. Gembka has taught numerous mathematics courses – Regents Algebra, sequential mathematics, college algebra and pre-calculus as well as AP computer science. He holds degrees from Colgate University and the City College of New York.

Scott McCue is the Founding Head of School at Boston Preparatory Charter Public School. Mr. McCue coordinated the work of the school's Founding Group, beginning in 2002. This group won one of five charters awarded to 25 applicant groups in the 2002-2003 Massachusetts charter application cycle. Since the school's opening, Mr. McCue has hired and managed staff, raised over \$750,000 from private sources, and overseen the creation of the school's educational and operational systems. In the school's opening years, BPCPS students have outperformed their peers across the city and state on standardized tests. Prior to founding BPCPS, Mr. McCue served as the Dean of Students and as History Department Chair at the Academy of the Pacific Rim Charter School. Mr. McCue holds a B.A. in Social Studies from Harvard College and a M.A. in Teaching Social Studies from Columbia Teachers College.

APPENDIX A: RENEWAL BENCHMARKS USED DURING THE VISIT

Evidence Category		Benchmarks
		Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
Benchmark 1A Academic Attainment & Improvement	14.1	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.
	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.
	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.
	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.
	1A.5	NCLB: The school has made adequate yearly progress as required by NCLB.
Benchmark 1B Use of Assessment Data	18	The school has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and to use it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.
Benchmark 1C Curriculum	1C	The school has a clearly defined and aligned curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards.

Benchmark 1D Pedagogy	10.1	The school has strong instructional leadership.
	1D.2	High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.
	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.
Benchmark 1E Student Order & Discipline	1E	The school's culture allows and promotes a culture of learning.
Benchmark 1F Professional Development	1R	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.

Evidence Category	Benchmarks
	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
Benchmark 2C Governance	2C.1 The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school's mission and specific goals.

APPENDIX B: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Charter Schools and the State University of New York

The New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 ("the Act") called for the creation of tuition-free public schools that would operate independently and autonomously of local school districts, schools by design committed to improving student achievement for all students, particularly those at-risk of academic failure.

The Act specifies that civic leaders, community groups, educators and/or parents interested in bringing public school choice to their communities may apply to one of three chartering entities in the state to open a new charter school: 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). 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 carrying out their responsibilities under the Act, including reviewing applications to establish charter schools as well as the review of renewal applications for those schools (as detailed more fully below, an initial charter is granted for a period of five years only). In each case the Institute makes recommendations to the State University Trustees. In addition the Institute is charged with providing ongoing oversight of SUNY authorized 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. While independent, public charter schools and their boards, like traditional public schools and school boards, are subject to oversight and monitoring. 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 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 within the charter period, 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 Renewal Cycle and the Timing of School Inspection 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 the number of

years that a school has provided instruction. Thus for example, a school that is in its seventh year of operation may be in its fifth year of instruction and facing initial renewal, having previously received a short-term planning year renewal for a period of time equivalent to the number of planning years the school took. It will therefore receive a renewal visit, whereas another school that did not take any planning years and 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 inspection report, which all schools in that position receive. As such, each of the Institute's inspection 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.

In evaluating schools at renewal and on a regular and ongoing basis, 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 ("the State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks"). 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, the Institute uses a subset of the State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks 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. This subset, State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks 1B-1F, is often referred to as the "Qualitative Education Benchmarks," or "QEBs." In the formative years of a school (generally the first three years of operation), the QEBs 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.⁹

Over time, and particularly at the school's initial renewal (and subsequent renewals thereafter), the quantitative indicators (as defined by Renewal Benchmark 1A, the school's progress in meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals) take on paramount importance and the qualitative indicators concordantly diminish in importance. This is consonant with the fact that charter schools must demonstrate results or face non-renewal. However, while subsequent renewal decisions are based almost solely by the school's progress toward meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals during the charter period, the Institute continues to use the Qualitative Education Benchmarks in its evaluation of charter schools. The reason for this is that it can give the school, 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).

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⁹ 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.

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. 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;
- 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.

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.