

Charter School Renewal Report
Charter School Office
2009-2010

KIPP INFINITY CHARTER SCHOOL

RENEWAL REPORT NOVEMBER 2009

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I. Introduction

A. Statutory Basis for Renewal

The Charter Schools Act of 1998 (“the Act”) authorizes the creation of charter schools to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, and community members to establish and maintain schools that operate independently of existing schools and school districts in order to accomplish the following objectives:

- Improve student learning and achievement;
- Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at-risk of academic failure;
- Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system;
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators and other school personnel;
- Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- Provide schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance based accountability systems by holding the schools accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.¹

When granted, a charter is valid for up to five years. For a school chartered under the Act to operate beyond the initial charter term, the school must seek and obtain renewal of its charter.²

A school seeking renewal of its charter must submit a renewal application to the charter entity to which the original charter application was submitted.³ As one such charter entity, the New York City Department of Education (“NYCDOE”) institutes a renewal application process that adheres to the Act’s renewal standards:

- A report of the progress of the charter school in achieving the educational objectives set forth in its charter;
- A detailed financial statement that discloses the cost of administration, instruction and other spending categories for the charter school that will allow a comparison of such costs to other schools, both public and private;
- Copies of each of the annual reports of the charter school including the charter school report cards and certified financial statements;
- Indications of parent and student satisfaction.

Where the NYCDOE approves a renewal application, it is required under the Act to submit the application and a proposed charter to the Board of Regents for its review and approval.⁴

¹ See § 2850 of the Charter Schools Act of 1998.

² See §§ 2851(4) and 2852 of the Act.

³ See generally §§ 2851(3) and 2851(4).

⁴ § 2852(5)

B. NYCDOE's Charter Renewal Process

The expiration of charters and their renewal based on a compelling record of success is the linchpin of charter school accountability. The NYCDOE's processes and procedures reflect this philosophy and therefore meet the objectives of the Act.

In the final year of its charter, a Chancellor-authorized charter school seeking renewal must demonstrate its success during the initial charter term and establish goals and objectives for the next charter term. Ultimately, the renewal process offers an opportunity for the school community to reflect on its experiences during its first term, to make a compelling, evidence-based case that it has earned the privilege of an additional charter term, and, if renewed, to build an ambitious plan for the future.

Consistent with the requirements of § 2851(4) of the Act, a school applying for renewal of its charter must use data and other credible evidence to prove its success, a case that can be organized into three questions:

1. Has your school been an academic success?
2. Has your school been a viable organization?
3. Has your school complied with applicable laws and regulations?

A school will answer these overarching questions by demonstrating that its students have made significant academic progress and that the school has met the goals and objectives pledged in its initial charter. In addition, the school will describe challenges it has faced during its charter term, the strategies used to address those challenges and the lessons learned.

This report contains the findings and recommendations of the NYCDOE regarding a school's application for charter renewal. This report is based on a cumulative record of the school's progress during its charter term, including but not limited to oversight visits, annual reports, and formal correspondence between the school and its authorizing entities, all of which are conducted in order to identify areas of weakness and to help the school to address them. Additionally, the NYCDOE incorporates into this report its findings from the renewal application process, which includes a written application, completion of student achievement data templates, and a school visit by the Charter School Office of the NYCDOE ("NYCDOE-CSO").

The NYCDOE-CSO then prepares a draft report and provides a copy to the school for its review and comment. The draft contains the findings, discussion, and the evidence base for those findings. Upon receiving a school's comment, the NYCDOE-CSO reviews its draft, makes any appropriate changes, and reviews the amended findings to make a recommendation to the Chancellor. The Chancellor's final decision, and the findings on which that decision is based, is submitted to the Board of Regents for a final decision.

Review Process

In preparing this renewal decision, the NYCDOE-CSO reviewed site visit reports from each year of the school's charter, annual reports, financial audits, achievement data and other information provided by the school in the KIPP Infinity Charter School Renewal Application Part I: Retrospective, as well as additional data from the NYCDOE Progress Report.

In addition, NYCDOE-CSO conducted a site visit at the school from June 8 – 9, 2009. Reviewers observed classrooms and reviewed documentation on finances, teacher certification, IEPs,

curricula, student data, etc. The team also spent a great deal of time interviewing leadership, the board of trustees, teachers, students, teaching assistants, operational staff, behavior specialists, and other staff in the building. The review team consisted of the following individuals:

- Joy Stopher, Cambridge Education
- Nancy Meakem, Director of Evaluation, NYCDOE-CSO
- Aamir Raza, Director of Oversight and Policy, NYCDOE-CSO
- Fred Lisker, Senior School Improvement Specialist, NYCDOE Office of Special Education Initiatives
- Elizabeth Cooley, Associate Director, Office of Portfolio Planning

After the visit, the team continued to review documents collected at the visit, requested additional data, and reviewed all documentation related to the school. All of this information was compiled, using the NYCDOE-CSO Benchmarks for Renewal, and are laid out as findings in this report.

II. School Description and History

The KIPP Infinity Charter School, founded in 2005, is a middle school located in South Harlem in District 5 with 272 students in grade 5 through grade 8. The school population comprises 27% Black, 71% Hispanic, and 2% students from other backgrounds. The student body includes 7% special education students and 4% English language learners. 83% of students have free or reduced cost lunch eligibility.

The school's **mission**, as laid out in the charter is:

To provide all of its students with the knowledge, skills and character traits necessary to prepare them for success in the nation's finest high schools and colleges, and to contribute to social improvement in their own community and society at large.

KIPP Infinity Charter School intends to *accomplish this mission by instilling in each student the SCORER values – Safety, Community, Organization, Respect, Excellence, and Results.*

The school is a part of the KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) network, which consists of three other charter middle schools in New York City and 66 KIPP schools across the country. The *vision* is that the schools will accomplish the mission by utilizing the best teaching practices refined in KIPP schools across the country, implementing a rigorous curriculum designed to meet or exceed New York State standards, and by upholding KIPP's five pillars for academic achievement:

1. High expectations;
2. More time on task;
3. Focus on results;
4. Power to lead; and
5. Choice and commitment.

The school “learns and shares” with the other KIPP New York City schools including scheduled professional development and collaboration. The use of a common content management system, KIPP Share, facilitates a shared curriculum and instructional materials.

KIPP NYC has a comprehensive “shared services team”, which manages finance, operations, fundraising, human resources, recruitment, and other organizational functions across the schools.

The school benefits from a leader who has a clear vision and the highest expectations for staff and students. The low staff turnover has been a positive influence on the development of a happy and cohesive team. The high levels of collaboration and the team's flexible response to what works and what does not, have empowered school staff.

The tables below provide enrollment and demographic information for the student body at the school. This data should be used to understand the context in which the school has operated during this chartering period.

Enrollment as articulated in the school's charter

Grade	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
K					
1					
2					
3					
4					
5	90	90	90	90	90
6		83	83	83	83
7			80	80	80
8				77	77
9					
10					
11					
12					
Total	90	173	253	330	330

Actual Enrollment

Grade	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
K					
1					
2					
3					
4					
5	79	77	77	83	84
6		77	70	68	79
7			67	59	66
8				62	68
9					50
10					
11					
12					
Total	79	154	214	272	347

Ethnicity

Race/ ethnicity	2005-06		2006-07		2007-08		2008-09	
	# of students	% of enrollment						
American Indian, Alaskan, Asian, or Pacific Islander	5	6%	4	3%	4	2%	4	1%
Black (Not Hispanic)	18	23%	38	25%	60	28%	75	27%
Hispanic	55	70%	111	72%	149	70%	198	71%
White (Not Hispanic)	1	1%	1	1%	1	<1%	1	1%

Demographics

	2005-06		2006-07		2007-08		2008-09	
	# of students	% of enrollment						
Limited English Proficient	8	10%	N/A	N/A	22	10%	10	4%
Free/Reduced Lunch Eligible	73	92%	133	86%	173	81%	226	83%
Special Education	14	18%	15	10%	16	7%	19	7%

School Year	Year of Operation	Oversight Visit	Feedback to School
2006 – 07	2	6/8/06: Visit from NYCDOE	Written Report addressed the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use of data to inform instruction varies ▪ No structures in place for incorporating parents or community partners in the school ▪ All other areas rated as high performance
2007 – 08	3	10/24/07: Visit from NYSED	Written Report addressed the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not all staff have attained Fingerprinting/criminal clearance ▪ Deviations to charter. Some revisions not presented for approval to chartering entity ▪ School cannot provide evidence of

			<p>the offering/provision of alternative instruction to suspended students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project SAVE plan has not yet been approved by the school's board ▪ Under enrollment. The school is not accepting students from the waiting list ▪ A number of students in attendance have not demonstrated full immunization
2008- 09	4	June 8 – 9, 2009: Renewal visit from NYCDOE in conjunction with Cambridge Education	This report constitutes the findings from the renewal visit and recommendation for renewal.

Challenges

The school acknowledges that it has worked hard over the course of the charter period to improve compliance with special education, health laws and to make improvements in the way it evaluates school leadership.

KIPP Infinity has clearly documented discipline policies and procedures but the school recognizes that not all staff implemented the policies consistently, largely due to a lack of formal training. Results from the 2009 Healthy Schools Survey reflect the efforts the school has made to implement fair and consistent discipline policies.

III. Findings and Recommendation

A. Findings

Recommendation: NYCDOE-CSO recommends that the State Board of Regents approve the application for renewal of the KIPP Infinity Charter School for a period of **5 years** consistent with the terms of the renewal application.

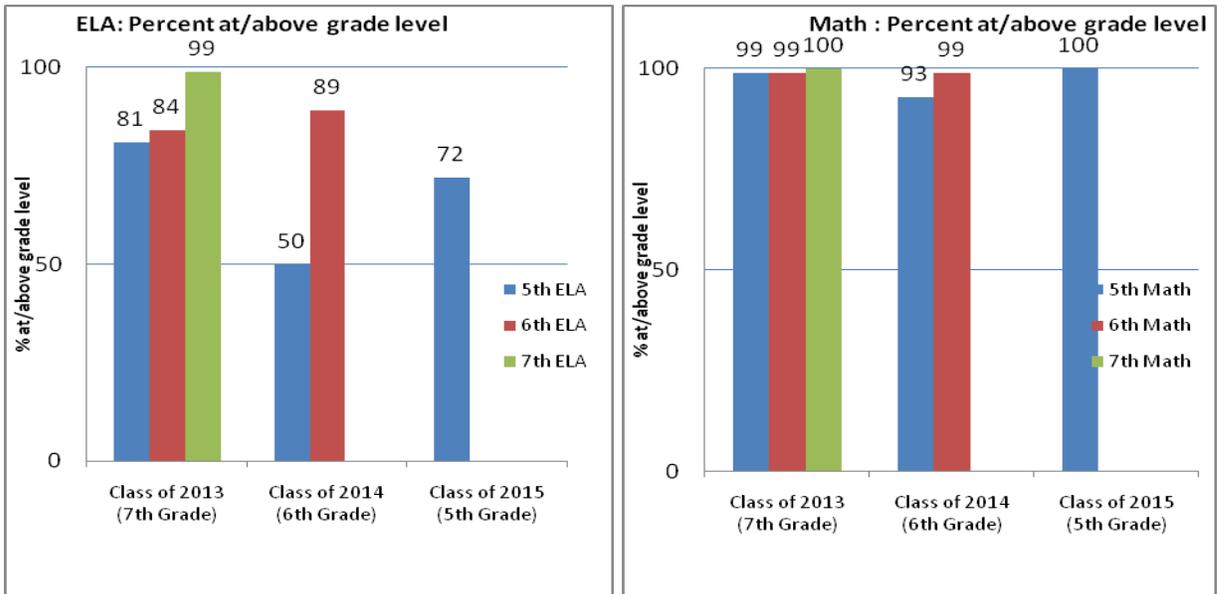
In order for the NYCDOE-CSO to recommend that a Chancellor-authorized charter school be awarded a five-year renewal of its charter, a school must show that it has met its goals as outlined in the charter or at least made consistent and meaningful progress towards meeting those outcome measures and goals. The NYCDOE-CSO has found KIPP Infinity Charter School to be an academically successful school that has made significant and consistent progress towards meeting its goals in English language arts and math. The school received A on both NYCDOE Progress Reports issued for the school year 2006-07 and 2007-08 school year. NYCDOE-CSO believes that KIPP Infinity Charter School is organizationally viable and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations pertaining to its current charter.

Based on the findings delineated below, KIPP Infinity Charter School is an educationally and fiscally sound organization, is likely to continue improving student learning and achievement, and meet the requirements of the Charter Schools Act and applicable law. It is the belief of NYCDOE-CSO that at the end of this term of renewal, the KIPP Infinity Charter School will continue to outperform other schools in its Community School District as well as the peer group schools determined by the NYCDOE Progress Report.

A. Has the School Been an Academic Success?

Finding 1:

The Department of Education’s Learning Environment Survey ranked KIPP Infinity Charter School the number one middle school in the city for the school year 2007-08. In addition to this accomplishment, as the charts using 2007-08 data demonstrate, KIPP Infinity students have been making significant gains in English language arts and sustaining high levels of student achievement in math over the course of the last three years.



KIPP Infinity students have outperformed their district and City peers at every grade level in both English language arts and math. The school has met each academic and non-academic goal outlined in its charter.

Finding 2:

The table below shows that the school has met all the academic goals set forth in the charter.

	Goals	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Absolute	KIPP Infinity Charter School will meet the annual Chancellor’s Minimum Student Performance Objectives for “High Need” Schools. Specifically, our goal is to have the sum of the percentage of students scoring in Levels 3 and 4 on the State’s English Language Arts (ELA) and Math Assessments be equal to or greater than 109.5% each year.	For the 5 th grade class, the sum totaled 184%	For the fifth grade class, the sum totaled 143%; the sixth grade totaled 183%.	The sum of the percentages of students scoring in Levels 3 & 4 on the 2007-08 NYS ELA and Math assessments was 185.6%. For the 5 th grade the sum was 172%, for the 6 th grade the sum was 188% and the sum for 7 th graders was 199%.
		Met? Yes	Met?: Yes	Met?: Yes
Absolute	By each year’s end, KIPP Infinity Charter School will have retained at least 90% of the students that were enrolled at the commencement of the regular academic year in September. This figure will exclude students that leave due to family mobility reasons such as new source of employment, relocation, etc.	In 2005-06, KIPP Infinity retained 100% of the students who were enrolled at the commencement of the regular academic year in September.	In 2006-07, KIPP Infinity retained 97% of the students who were enrolled at the commencement of the regular academic year in September.	In 2007-08, KIPP Infinity retained 97% of the students who were enrolled at the commencement of the regular academic year in September.
		Met?: Yes	Met?: Yes	Met?: Yes
Absolute	Each year, the average daily attendance rate will meet or exceed 90%.	KIPP Infinity’s daily attendance rate for the 2005-2006 year was 98%.	KIPP Infinity’s daily attendance rate for the 2006-2007 year was 98%	For the 2007-08 school year, KIPP Infinity’s student attendance rate was 98.3%.
		Met?: Yes	Met?: Yes	Met?: Yes
200	Each year, students at KIPP infinity Charter School will demonstrate strong yearly progress toward mastery of, and excellence in ELA and Math by meeting New York’s Annual Yearly Progress requirements in accordance with the Federal No Child Left Behind Act.	5 th Grade ELA: 84% achieving proficiency on the ELA test 5 th Grade Math: 100% achieving proficiency on the Math test	The percentage of sixth graders achieving proficiency on the math test stayed constant at 99%, while the percentage achieving proficiency on the ELA test increased by 3	ELA: 89% of the 6 th grade class scored in levels 3 and 4, a 39-percentage point increase over the 50% that scored in levels 3 and 4 in 5 th grade. 99% of the 7 th grade class scored in levels 3 and 4, a 15-percentage point increase over the 84% that scored in levels 3 and 4 in 6 th grade. Math: 99% of the 6 th grade class scored in levels 3 and 4, a 6-percentage point increase over the 93% that scored in levels 3 and 4 in

			percentage points.	5th grade. 100% of the 7th grade class scored in levels 3 and 4, a 2-percentage point increase over the 98% that scored in levels 3 and 4 in 6th grade.
		Met: Y/N? N/A	Met?: Yes	Met?: Yes
Absolute	Each year, the percentage of students receiving suspensions or expulsions due to assault, firearms, and/or drug abuse will be less than 4%.	For the 2005-2006 year, zero students served by KIPP Infinity were suspended or expelled due to assault, firearms, and/or drug abuse.	For the 2006-2007 year, no KIPP Infinity students were suspended or expelled due to assault, firearms, and/or drug abuse.	For the 2007-08 school year, there were no suspensions or expulsions due to assaults, firearms, and/or drug abuse.
		Met?: Yes	Met?: Yes	Met?: Yes
Absolute	Each year, at least 80% of respondents to the annual parent survey will grade the school's effectiveness in communicating with parents, teacher effectiveness, academic rigor, and student character development at "satisfactory" or above.			For the 2007-08 school year, 99% of respondents to the annual parent survey were satisfied or very satisfied with the education their child received this year. 98% were satisfied or very satisfied with how well the school communicated with them. And 98% were satisfied with or very satisfied with the opportunities to be involved in their child's education.
				Met?: Yes

B. Has the School Been a Viable Organization?

Finding 1:

KIPP Infinity Charter School has knowledgeable board members who not only further the mission of the school but are also exploring newer strategies to meet the goals outlined in the charter agreement. The board takes pride in the progress made and the challenges faced in the past 5 years of the school's operation. The board has been reflective and willing to look inward and outward to knit solutions that will benefit the student body and the community that the school serves. The board has been, and plans to continue focus on board development and keep

accountability at the forefront of all new initiatives and decisions made at the board and the school management level.

Finding 2:

KIPP Infinity Charter School spends a high portion of its revenues on educational programs (93.2%) and overall, the state of finances at the school remains highly efficient and stable. According to the June 30, 2009 audit reports, the school had over \$1.5 million in liquid assets ready for use within 90 days. The school maintains good internal controls in collaboration with KIPP NYC, its partner organization. The school is well positioned to face the economic downturn and the school board and KIPP NYC team deserves praise for keeping the school in good fiscal health.

Finding 3:

NYCDOE Learning Environment Survey results reveal that the majority of parents who responded were satisfied with the learning environment created by the school.

NYCDOE 2007-08 Learning Environment Survey results reveal that almost all of the parents who responded (79%) were very satisfied or satisfied with the learning environment created at KIPP Infinity.

Aspect of the survey	Level of parental satisfaction
Overall quality of education	99%
Communication with families	98%
Opportunities to be involved in their child's education	98%
Safety of their child	95%

C. Has the School Been in Compliance with All Applicable Laws and Regulations?

Finding:

The school has been fully compliant with all applicable laws and regulations, and has taken swift corrective action to remedy any areas of non-compliance.

B. Conclusion and Recommendation

The New York City Department of Education’s Office of Charter Schools recommends that KIPP Infinity Charter School, as an educationally and fiscally sound organization, likely to improve student learning and achievement, and meeting the requirements of the Charter Schools Act and applicable law, be renewed for a term of 5 years to serve grades 5 through grade 8.

IV. Discussion of Findings by Benchmark

A. Renewal Question 1: Has the School Been an Academic Success?

Benchmark 1A:

An academically successful school can demonstrate outstanding student performance outcomes according to the following measures:

1. Absolute
2. Comparative
3. Value-Added
4. NCLB

Discussion of Benchmark 1A:

KIPP Infinity Charter School has met all of the academic goals that it set for itself in its charter application.

Academic Goals:

1. KIPP Infinity Charter School will meet the annual Chancellor’s Minimum Student Performance Objectives for “High Need” schools. Specifically, our goal is to have the sum of the percentage of students scoring in levels 3 or 4 on New York State’s English language arts and math assessments to be equal to or greater than 109.5% each year.
2. Each year, students at KIPP Infinity Charter School will demonstrate strong yearly progress toward mastery of, and excellence in English language arts and math by meeting New York’s Annual Progress requirements in accord with the federal No Child Left Behind, Act.
3. By each year’s end, KIPP Infinity Charter School will have retained at least 90% of the students that were enrolled at the commencement of the regular academic year in September. This figure will exclude students that leave due to family mobility reasons such as new source of employment, relocation etc.

Academic Goal 1:

KIPP Infinity Charter School will meet the annual Chancellor’s Minimum Student Performance Objectives for “High Need” schools. Specifically our goal is to have the sum of the percentage of students scoring in levels 3 and 4 on New York State’s English language arts and math assessments to be equal to or greater than 109.5% each year.

KIPP Infinity Charter School has **met** Academic Goal 1.

Year	Historical Evidence & Examples	
2005-2006	For the grade 5 class the sum totaled	184%
2006-2007	For the grade 5 class the sum totaled	143%
	For the grade 6 class the sum totaled	183%
2007-2008	For the grade 5 class the sum totaled	172%
	For the grade 6 class the sum totaled	188%
	For the grade 7 class the sum totaled	199%

The table shows that the percentage of students scoring in levels 3 and 4 on the English language arts and math assessments significantly and consistently exceeds the goal of 109.5%.

Academic Goal 2:

Each year, students at KIPP Infinity Charter School will demonstrate strong yearly progress toward mastery of, and excellence in English language arts and math by meeting New York’s Annual Progress requirements in accord with the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

KIPP Infinity Charter School has **met** Academic Goal 2.

Year	Historical Evidence & Examples	
2006-2007	English language arts: The percentage of grade 6 achieving proficiency - increased to 50%	
	Math: The percentage of grade 6 achieving proficiency – constant at 99%	
2007-2008	English language arts: The percentage of grade 6 achieving proficiency - increased to 89%	
	The percentage of grade 7 achieving proficiency - increased to 99%	
	Math: The percentage of grade 6 achieving proficiency - increased to 99%	
	The percentage of grade 7 achieving proficiency - increased to 100%	

The school has consistently met this academic goal, as seen in the table above, and has met the Annual Yearly Progress targets as seen in the Progress report.

Academic Goal 3:

By each year’s end, KIPP Infinity Charter School will have retained at least 90% of the students that were enrolled at the commencement of the regular academic year in September. This figure will exclude students that leave due to family mobility reasons such as new source of employment, relocation etc.

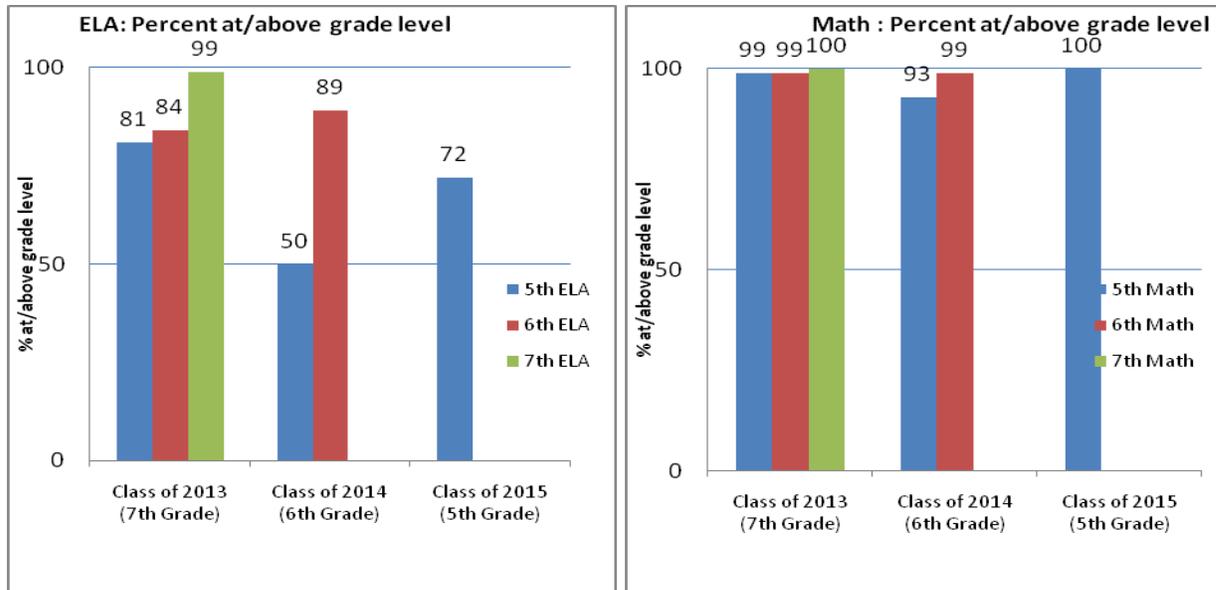
KIPP Infinity has **met** Academic Goal 3.

Year	Historical Evidence & Examples
2005-2006	The school retained 100% of students who enrolled in September
2006-2007	The school retained 97% of students who enrolled in September
2007-2008	The school retained 97% of students who enrolled in September

The table shows that the school has exceeded the goal each year and by a significant percentage.

Additional Data & Analysis

The Department of Education’s Learning Environment Survey ranked KIPP Infinity Charter School the number one middle school in the city for the school year 2007-08. In addition to this accomplishment, as the charts using 2007-08 data demonstrate, KIPP Infinity students have been making significant gains in English language arts and sustaining high levels of student achievement in math over the course of the last three years.



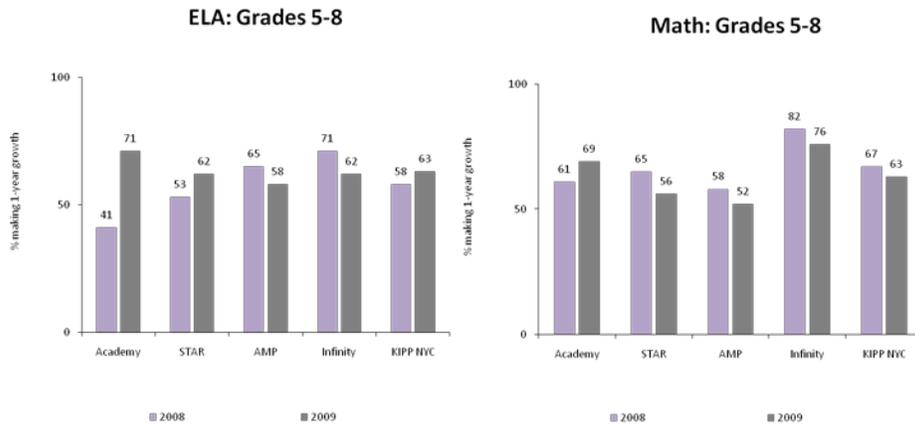
The graphs also show that:

- the class of 2013 has improved English language arts scores steadily each year, only missing 100% at/above grade level for the 2007-08 school year by one student;
- the class of 2012 showed significant growth from 50% in grade 5 to 89% in grade 6; and
- math performance remained strong across all cohorts.

KIPP Infinity students have outperformed their district and city peers at every grade level in both English language arts and math. The school has **met** each academic and non-academic goal outlined in its charter.

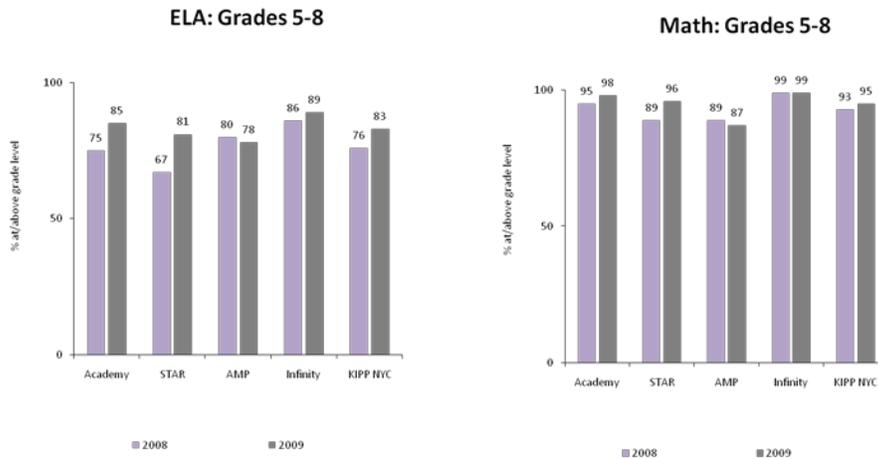
The provisional results below for 2008-09, also indicate that the school has continued its academic success in terms of absolute, comparative and value-added performance and progress. It is a ‘school in good standing’ and has met all its yearly progress targets fulfilling the requirements of ‘No Child Left Behind’. The tables below detail the overall performance and progress and show the school in comparison with the other KIPP schools in the network.

ELA and Math Progress: % of students making 1-year growth Grades 5-8



2008 figures for AMP and Infinity include grades 5-7 only.

ELA and Math Performance: % of students at/above grade level Grades 5-8



A student makes 1 year of growth if he/she achieves at least the same or higher proficiency rating on the current year's exam as he/she attained the previous year.

2008 figures for AMP and Infinity include grades 5-7 only.

Benchmark 1B:

In addition to outstanding student performance outcomes, a school that is an academic success has the following characteristics:

1: A Rigorous Instructional Program that includes:

- Clearly-defined essential knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn, and that are aligned with State standards
- Curriculum that is organized coherently across subjects and grades, and reflects the school’s mission and goals
- Academic expectations that adults in the school clearly and consistently communicate to students
- Classroom lessons with clear goals aligned with the curriculum
- Classroom practices that reflect competent instructional strategies
- Assessments and data that the school systematically generates and uses to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning, and that has led to increased student performance
- Formal and successful strategies to identify and meet the needs of students at-risk of academic failure, students not making acceptable progress towards achieving school goals, students who are ELL, and special education students

Discussion of Benchmark 1B1:

Clearly defined essential knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn, and that are aligned with State standards

KIPP Infinity has implemented a curriculum driven by clear performance standards for what students should know and be able to do. For each grade level, it has based standards on National and State curriculum frameworks. Content area teams have developed vertically and horizontally aligned scope and sequences for grade 5 through grade 8. Consequently, there is a solid foundation in place for English language arts, history, science, and math. There is clear evidence that the school continuously communicates the skills and knowledge that they expect students to learn. Hallways and classrooms display rubrics, goals and achievement levels leaving students in no doubt as to what their next steps are.

Curriculum that is organized coherently across subjects and grades, and reflects the school’s mission and goals

A key principle of the KIPP school network is the commitment to “more time”. Consequently, students receive a longer school day, a longer school year, and a summer school. This gives more curriculum time and time for extracurricular experiences and character development.

As part of its extended school day model, the school offers students the opportunity to take part in band, dance, chorus, and drama activities. There are rich displays of student artwork in many classrooms and hallways although this area is not yet part of the formal curriculum.

KIPP Infinity has worked hard, during the course of the charter period, to develop a range of electives for students. During the 2008-09 school year 100% of sixth, seventh and eighth grade students took part in electives ranging from the KIPP Infinity yearbook to yoga and French. However, the school is keen to continue to broaden its range of extra curricular activities.

The school places a strong emphasis on research and independent work. The introduction of a “non-fiction” unit of study provides the vehicle for this. This is a project designed to help students develop the skills required to meet the State Standards in reading and writing, but also to make learning interesting and fun. Student engagement is high as they can choose a topic that interests them. Students report that they enjoy project work. This aspect of the curriculum is also helping staff to explore the interdisciplinary links between content areas. Every student in the school took part in the Non-fiction Winter Exhibition, hosted by KIPP Infinity and attended by over two hundred families. Teachers are currently exploring ways to ensure greater continuity and progression from grade to grade, particularly in the area of non-fiction teaching, where greater choice inevitably leads to less consistency. Weekly literacy meetings (including history and science) have a beneficial impact on curriculum revisions and development.

In line with its mission and goals, KIPP Infinity implements systems and processes to build character strengths, including the paycheck system (described below), end of year trips and the integration of character strengths into daily instruction. Students benefit from a broad range of opportunities to experience activities and environments outside their own community and city. These include fifth grade visits to Washington D.C., sixth grade camps and hikes in Bryce and Zion Canyons in Utah, seventh grade tours of universities and top-quality private high schools in Boston. The eighth graders spent two weeks learning in California in May.

Academic expectations that adults in the school clearly and consistently communicate to students

The school is highly effective in communicating high academic expectations to all students. Relationships are very positive and this aids the level of communication. The principal has the highest expectations and a clear vision for the school. He communicates this very effectively and consistently. Students are clearly aware of the school’s expectations for all areas of their education. Current progress, levels of achievement and aspirations are visible throughout the school. Students speak freely about their teachers challenging them, setting goals, and “pushing hard”.

Classroom lessons with clear goals aligned with the curriculum

The school has been very successful in setting and promoting academic goals and this has resulted in high levels of achievement. The goals clearly align to the curriculum and State standards. All teachers use a common instructional mapping format for their lesson plans and the director of curriculum and instruction monitors these and provides feedback. KIPP Share, the content management program, enables teachers across the KIPP NYC network to share their planning.

Classroom practices that reflect competent instructional strategies

There is a good level of consistency in the classroom practices, techniques, and strategies that teachers use to promote high quality learning. The school has clearly articulated expectations, which support this very effectively. The school environment, in classrooms and hallways, sets a

positive standard and reflects a commitment to learning. The excellent practice seen in one classroom included the display of big goals (100% Mastery of Level 4 in 2009), the commitments, and the individual achievement records for every student. Word walls reinforce vocabulary and “academic all-stars” display examples of exemplar work. There is a very high emphasis on rewarding success and achievement using, for example, photographs and stickers to identify “hard-workers” “experts” and “masters”. Teachers make a real effort to engage and challenge students by using a range of techniques to motivate and involve them in their work. Some teachers make effective use of technology to enhance instruction, but this is at an early stage of development in the school.

Assessments and data that the school systematically generates and uses to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning, and that has led to increased student performance

Teachers use regular assessments to measure how well students are mastering the standards and parents receive regular reports to enable them to monitor the progress of their child.

The school conducts initial independent reading assessments for all entering students so that teachers can use this information to set up differentiated instructional groups. In line with its emphasis on character development, KIPP Infinity is part of a pilot project to measure student growth in this area, as part of a partnership with the University of Pennsylvania. The school has implemented quarterly writing assessments at each grade level to ensure that students are making progress in writing.

Predicting performance is part of the weekly non-negotiable assessments of student performance. Teachers’ predicted scores have had a high degree of accuracy.

School leaders have access to Power grade to monitor teachers’ assessments and this informs the need for interventions as well as analyzing the effectiveness of instruction. Weekly meetings take place, during which teachers make use of the data and information to decide how best to improve student achievement.

The school communicates weekly with parents through the ‘paycheck’ system and almost all attended for student report cards.

Formal and successful strategies to identify and meet the needs of students at-risk of academic failure, students not making acceptable progress towards achieving school goals, students who are ELL, and special education students

KIPP Infinity strives to ensure that all students receive the support that they need to achieve at high levels. Seventh and eighth grade students have the opportunity to take part in single sex advisory sessions, providing them with time to discuss self-image and other non-academic topics that affect their development. The school makes frequent use of partner work and regularly plans for group work, particularly in the topic/project activities.

This year, KIPP Infinity has created quarterly objectives by breaking down individual education plan goals for all special education students and using these to support daily instruction. This has enabled staff to monitor the progress made by each individual. The inclusion team meets on a weekly basis to discuss the progress of special education students and to monitor the effectiveness of programs.

The school provides English language learner and special education students with reading and math intervention to ensure that they get targeted appropriately. Individual support staff completed the KIPP Healthy Schools survey in January 2009. This reported that 96% of KIPP Infinity staff teach using a mixture of whole class, small group and independent study and 70% reported feeling that the school is meeting the needs of special education students and English language learners.

Benchmark 1B (continued):

In addition to student performance outcomes, a school that is an academic success has the following characteristics:

2: A School Environment that Promotes Successful Teaching and Learning that includes:

- An environment where students and staff feel safe and secure
- Behavioral and cultural expectations that adults in the school clearly and consistently communicate to students
- Clear policies and strategies to address student behaviors to promote learning—those behaviors that are both appropriate and inappropriate
- Documented discipline policies and procedures for general and special education students that the school enforces fairly and consistently with appropriate due process
- A professional culture focused on teaching and learning, with a qualified and competent teaching staff
- Professional development activities at or sponsored by the school that are aligned with the mission and goals of the school, support the instructional program, meet student needs, and result in increased student achievement
- A system for ongoing teacher evaluation and improvement that builds the school’s capacity to reach its academic goals, with effective strategies to assist inexperienced or struggling teachers

Discussion of Benchmark 1B2:

An environment where students and staff feel safe and secure

The results from the 2007-08 Learning Environment Survey show that students and staff are highly positive about this aspect of school life. 94% of staff strongly agreed (and the remaining 6% agreed) that “order and discipline are maintained at my school”. The student survey results show that 88% of students feel safe in the hallways and bathrooms. Students reported that they feel staff “treat us like a family”. Any fears they have about safety emanate from their concerns about students from other schools who share the building. The overall environment of the school is warm and welcoming, and students are encouraged to contribute to this. The student group “the agents of change” worked well together to enhance the entrance to KIPP Infinity’s part of the building, raising funds and making decisions about the layout. This also contributes to the strong sense of identity within the school, well promoted in the displays of work and notices in classrooms and hallways.

Behavioral and cultural expectations that adults in the school clearly and consistently communicate to students

The school has an organized and articulated system in place to promote its behavioral and cultural expectations. These form a major part of the KIPP schools' mission. There are consistent expectations and well-established routines and rituals both in classrooms and in the hallways. Transition times are highly organized, for example.

The parent and student handbook sets out the school's "non-negotiable behavioral expectations for students". This includes the classroom expectations that students will "work hard, be nice", "be organized and prepared for all classes", "conduct oneself in an orderly manner", and "make the right choice without being told or supervised". Evidence from the review demonstrated a growing level of maturity and responsibility. Following an accidental spillage of water in one classroom, two fifth grade boys, not involved in the incident, quietly cleared it up without anyone requesting them to do so.

Although there is high level of consistency, particularly in the school-wide expectations, school leaders have recognized that not all staff are equally successful at implementing the expectations. School leaders provide very effective support in these circumstances and are currently investigating putting a "hierarchy of consequences" in place for faculty.

Clear policies and strategies to address student behaviors to promote learning—those behaviors that are both appropriate and inappropriate

KIPP Infinity bases its discipline policy on its mission to "*create a learning environment where students feel safe and teachers can focus on raising the achievement level of their students*". Thus, the "Commitment to Excellence" sets out the expectations of teachers, students, and parents, which they agree and sign. The school's policies and strategies in this area are very comprehensive.

Documented discipline policies and procedures for general and special education students that the school enforces fairly and consistently with appropriate due process

The basic premise of discipline at KIPP Infinity is that "*good things happen when an individual makes wise decisions and bad things happen when an individual makes poor decisions. Therefore, everything that happens to a student, the good, and the bad, is earned, and is a direct result of his/her behavior.*" Consequently, the school uses the "paycheck" system to motivate and reward students. The paycheck acts as a form of weekly report card to parents. Teachers write comments and the paychecks go home to parents each week. The school has yet to develop a hierarchy of consequences to ensure consistency throughout the school.

A professional culture focused on teaching and learning, with a qualified and competent teaching staff

There is a collegiate culture among the staff and a genuine desire to learn and improve. The school makes good use of videotaped lessons and has a regular stream of visitors to classrooms. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and make use of a good range of techniques to engage their students. Some teaching observed during the review was of an exceptionally high standard. It is evident from the way in which teachers work together to promote consistent messages, that the school has been successful in promoting a professional culture. Morale is good, as demonstrated by the low staff turnover. Teachers are appreciative of the principal's

leadership style, the level of curriculum autonomy and resources, and the opportunities for reflection and professional development.

Professional development activities at or sponsored by the school that are aligned with the mission and goals of the school, support the instructional program, meet student needs, and result in increased student achievement

The school provides a comprehensive program of professional development for staff, well tailored to the needs of individuals and designed to achieve its goals. Like many aspects of the work of the school, there is an intelligent and innovative approach to professional development.

All staff have received professional development on *Love and Logic*, a program that facilitates positive classroom management and the school made very effective use of “*The Influencer*” to guide their thinking with school-wide issues. Effective use is made of the five-day KIPP school summit in the summer, literacy team meetings, visits to other schools and attendance at conferences.

During the weekly literacy meetings (which also include history and science) for fifth to eighth grades, teachers have the opportunity to reflect on their instruction and modify lesson plans as needed. The school strongly believes that these meetings have contributed to the high levels of student achievement in English language arts.

To enable staff to understand what KIPP Infinity is offering its students and to promote improvement, the school provides staff with the opportunity to take part in the “Day in the life of a KIPPster program”. Teachers follow students for a full day of instruction and then reflect on the process.

A system for ongoing teacher evaluation and improvement that builds the school’s capacity to reach its academic goals, with effective strategies to assist inexperienced or struggling teachers

School leaders set professional goals with individual teachers at the beginning of the year. These guide discussions and observations during the year. Although the school has access to KIPP evaluation criteria for classroom observation, the principal is committed to meeting individual needs and is experimenting with different models in this area. He has an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement for his staff. Senior leaders provide one on one support and effective feedback and advice. There are good procedures in place for mentoring and coaching. The director of curriculum and instruction works closely with teachers to ensure that effective planning takes place to enable students to reach their goals. She regularly monitors the planning and gives feedback to staff.

B. Renewal Question #2: Has the School Been a Viable Organization?

Benchmark 2A:

A school that is organizationally viable can demonstrate outstanding non-academic performance outcomes according to the following statistical analyses:

- Absolute
- Comparative
- Value-Added

Discussion of Benchmark 2A:

Non-Academic Goals:

1. Each year, the average daily attendance rate will meet or exceed 90%.
2. Each year, the percentage of students receiving suspensions or expulsions due to assault, firearms and/or drug abuse will be less than 4%.
3. Each year, at least 80% of respondents to the annual parent survey will grade the school's effectiveness in communicating with parents, teacher effectiveness, academic rigor and student character development as "satisfactory" or above.

Non-Academic Goal 1:

Each year, the average daily attendance rate will meet or exceed 90%.

The figures show:

2005 **98% attendance**
2006 **98% attendance**
2007 **98% attendance**
2008 **98% attendance**

KIPP Infinity Charter School has **met** Non-Academic Goal 1.

Non-Academic Goal 2:

Each year, the percentage of students receiving suspensions or expulsions due to assault, firearms and/or drug abuse will be less than 4%.

The evidence shows **0%** of student suspensions or expulsions during the school years 2005 – 2008.

KIPP Infinity Charter School has **met** Non-Academic Goal 2.

Non-Academic Goal 3:

Each year, at least 80% of respondents to the annual parent survey will grade the school's effectiveness in communicating with parents, teacher effectiveness, academic rigor, and student character development as "satisfactory" or above.

KIPP Infinity Charter School has **met** Non-Academic Goal 3.

NYCDOE 2007-08 Learning Environment Survey results reveal that almost all of the parents who responded (79%) were very satisfied or satisfied with the learning environment created at KIPP Infinity.

Aspect of the survey	Level of parental satisfaction
Overall quality of education	99%
Communication with families	98%
Opportunities to be involved in their child's education	98%
Safety of their child	95%

Benchmark 2B:

In addition to outstanding non-academic performance outcomes, a school that is a viable organization has the following characteristics:

Effective School Governance that includes:

- A clear and common understanding of the school’s mission, priorities, and challenges among all members of the board of trustees and school leadership, as evidenced by the strategies and resources used to further the academic and organizational success of the school
- An evidenced commitment to serving a student population that reflects the full range of students throughout the city.
- Meaningful opportunities for staff and parents to become involved in school governance
- Avenues of communication from the board of trustees to other members of the school community and vice-versa
- Communication between the school leadership and school staff that facilitates coordinated actions and messages toward other members of the school community
- Processes to address parent, staff, community, and student concerns appropriately and in a timely manner
- Annual evaluations of the school leadership, based on clearly-defined goals and measurements
- A board of trustees with a diversity of opinions and perspectives that promotes a healthy and vigorous dialogue of ideas
- A process for board development to build its capacity to oversee the school’s operations and to ensure the school’s continued progress
- A conflict of interest policy and code of ethics that are followed consistently
- Activities that are in substantial compliance with the Open Meetings Law and Public Officers Law
- An active and ongoing relationship with independent legal counsel that reviews relevant documents, policies, and incidents, and makes recommendations as needed

Discussion of Benchmark 2B

A clear and common understanding of the school’s mission, priorities, and challenges among all members of the board of trustees and school leadership, as evidenced by the strategies and resources used to further the academic and organizational success of the school

The KIPP Infinity board of trustees is focused on the mission and several priorities (principal retention, sustainable growth and improvement, successful opening of elementary and high school, etc.) that may not only benefit KIPP Infinity but the entire KIPP network in New York City. Board members expressed pride in the task that has been achieved but also paused to recognize the challenges faced during the start-up period and how mistakes could be minimized during future school openings.

An evidenced commitment to serving a student population that reflects the full range of students throughout the city.

Through evidence of the school's enrollment of special education and English language learners, it is clear that the school has made some progress in its commitment to serving a student population that reflects the full range of students in the Community School District. However, there is some way to go as the percentage of special education students in Community School District 5 in grades 5-8 is 20.5% whereas KIPP Infinity currently serves 12% special education students. The services that are currently provided for special education students show minor need for improvement in order to ensure all students are served effectively. The school is working to accommodate all students accepted through the lottery. The school's recruitment efforts need boosting to attract more special education students enabling it to provide an increased range of services.

Communication between the school leadership and school staff that facilitates coordinated actions and messages toward other members of the school community

Board meetings are posted at the school. The superintendent makes regular rounds to all KIPP schools and spends time with school staff to discuss school-wide instructional and non instructional issues. The principal holds meetings with staff regularly to set priorities.

Annual evaluations of the school leadership, based on clearly defined goals and measurements

The board of trustees, in collaboration with the superintendent, evaluates the principal on goals clearly defined and linked to the academic performance of the students at the school.

A board of trustees with a diversity of opinions and perspectives that promotes a healthy and vigorous dialogue of ideas

The school's board of trustees consists of educational, financial, development, management, and legal expertise. Some of the board members have been involved with the school since its founding. The board has some sub-committees to help with the ongoing discussions, planning, and in-depth analysis of the school's performance. The board is strong and evaluates services provided by KIPP NYC shared team on an ongoing basis. The notion of accountability is not lip service but a quality control tool practiced by this school's board.

A process for board development to build its capacity to oversee the school's operations and to ensure the school's continued progress

The board plans to participate in a retreat this year to create academic and long-term goals of the school. The current board chair understands and values board development. It is seldom that any KIPP Infinity board member attends workshops at the NYCDOE or trainings offered by the charter advocacy organizations.

A conflict of interest policy and code of ethics that are followed consistently and activities that are in compliance with the Open Meetings Law and Public Officers Law

The school follows its adopted code of ethics and the conflict of interest policy. School posts timing of the board meetings to encourage parental and community input.

An active and ongoing relationship with independent legal counsel that reviews relevant documents, policies, and incidents, and makes recommendations as needed

The school has an active relationship with an independent legal counsel to get documents and relevant policies reviewed prior to them going into effect at the school.

Benchmark 2C:

In addition to outstanding non-academic performance outcomes, a school that is a viable organization has the following characteristics:

Healthy and Sound Financial Practices that include:

- A long range financial plan that guides school operations
- Realistic budgets that are monitored and adjusted when appropriate
- Effective oversight, and financial decisions that further and reflect the school's mission, program, and goals
- Internal controls and procedures that are followed consistently and that result in prudent resource management
- Capacity to correct any deficiencies or audit findings
- Financial records that are kept according to GAAP
- Adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations
- Processes that maintain and successfully manage the school's cash flow
- Non-variable income streams that support critical financial needs

Discussion of Benchmark 2C

The school continues to maintain strong internal controls at all levels in financial matters. The school, in collaboration with KIPP NYC shared service team, has appropriate degree of segregation of functions to maintain proper internal controls. During the renewal visit, school officials were interviewed regarding the procurement process, check signing, paid invoices, staff files, and fingerprinting of school based staff. All processes were found intact and the school is following its adopted financial and human resource policies. Paid invoices had the right purchase order approvals, ordering and receiving of goods, presence of packing slips and invoices along with proof of payment with proper signatories. The school has tagged its assets for inventory purposes. Teacher and staff files contained proper fingerprint clearance, W-4, and I-9.

NYCDOE-CSO's review of the documents, policies and procedures and interviews with fiscal staff and board led visiting team to believe that most adopted policies are being enforced properly and the school is currently in good financial standing. The school board is engaged in addressing few significant findings identified in the most recent audit report. While setting up the credit card account, it is advised not to link the credit card account to an operating bank account since those purchases are usually not covered in case of fraudulent charges. No journal entries (incorrect or otherwise) must be deleted and an efficient calculation must be conducted before audit to minimize adjusting entries in the accounting system. All transactions, significant transfers, and

voting requirements must be in compliance with the Open Meetings law and must be documented in the board minutes.

The financial statements of KIPP Infinity Charter School were prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) acceptable in the United States of America.

According to the school's most recent audited financial statements for year ended June 30, 2009, the school possessed assets totaling \$1,901,278 and total liabilities of \$439,704. All the total net assets totaling \$1,461,574 is unrestricted for use purposes. KIPP Infinity had over \$1.5 million in liquid assets that could be converted to cash generally within 90 day period. The school spent a total of \$3,844,492 of which 93.2% was spent on educational activities, 6.35% on management and general expenses, and 0.4% on fundraising. The school is a member of KIPP Foundation's KIPP Network of Schools and is eligible for several fee-based services. The school is under agreement subject to a license fee of 1% (capped at \$30,000) of per pupil operating revenue. The KIPP NYC's centralized service team provides several back-office services (operational, fiscal, data analysis etc.) to the school and in return, the school pays its portion of the salaries. The school received contributions totaling \$151,571, interest and other income totaling \$21,257 and does not rely solely upon governmental revenues.

The school's budgeting process is collaborative and involves the principal, superintendent, KIPP NYC's central team, and KIPP Infinity board members. The board receives timely financial oversight documents and updates that helps fulfill the goals agreed upon in the charter. The school continues to maintain the tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Benchmark 2D:

A school that is a viable organization has the following characteristics:

Parent and Student Satisfaction, demonstrated by survey results as well as other valid and reliable measures.

Discussion of Benchmark 2D

NYCDOE 2007-08 Learning Environment Survey results reveal that almost all of the parents who responded (79%) were very satisfied or satisfied with the learning environment created at KIPP Infinity.

Aspect of the survey	Level of parental satisfaction
Overall quality of education	99%
Communication with families	98%
Opportunities to be involved in their child's education	98%
Safety of their child	95%

NYCDOE 2007-08 Learning Environment Survey results reveal that almost all of the KIPP Infinity students who responded (93%) strongly agreed or agreed that:

Aspect of the survey	Level of student agreement
The school helps me develop challenging academic goals	93%
Most adults know who I am	96%
Teachers inspire me to learn	85%
I am safe at school	88%

The school’s low attrition rate, high daily attendance, and long waiting list support the schools assertion that all constituents are highly satisfied. However, the school only tracks staff attrition from July to July of each year instead of tracking attrition figures year to year.

KIPP Infinity hosts an annual Non-fiction Winter Exhibition where families celebrate student’s work on their independent research projects. In 2008, 200 families attended.

Benchmark 2E:

In addition to outstanding non-academic performance outcomes, a school that is a viable organization has the following characteristics:

Sufficient Facilities and Physical Conditions conducive to the school implementing its program and meeting its goals.

KIPP Infinity is located in a NYCDOE facility in West Harlem. The annual fee for the allocated public space is \$1.

Discussion of Benchmark 2E:

C. Renewal Question #3: Has the School Been in Compliance with All Applicable Laws and Regulations?

Benchmark 3A:

A school that is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations has the following characteristics:

Sufficient Reporting that includes

- Annual reports and financial reports submitted completely and by deadline
- Responses to NYCDOE’s or NYSED’s requests for information or for changes to school operations (in accordance with legal requirements) in a timely manner

Discussion of Benchmark 3A

KIPP Infinity is consistent and thorough in its reporting. The school promptly notifies NYCDOE-CSO of any changes in school operations or revisions to the charter, and the school is largely operating based on the initial charter agreement. All annual reports, financial audits, responses to

requests for information, and other documentation are submitted in a timely fashion and according to guidelines provided.

Benchmark 3B:

A school that is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations has the following characteristics:

An Appropriate Admissions Policy that includes

- Opportunities for all interested parents to submit a complete application for enrollment
- A random selection process that is conducted fairly, and when a wait list is generated, it is used appropriately to ensure a fair admissions process

Discussion of Benchmark 3B

The school conducts a blind lottery, giving preference to those students residing in Community School District 5 as well as to students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. The school's application for admissions is clear and a wait list of students is maintained in an organized fashion.

Benchmark 3C:

A school that is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations has the following characteristics:

A Record of Substantial Compliance with:

- Applicable health laws and regulations
- Title I regulations
- IDEA regulations to meet the needs of special education students

Discussion of Benchmark 3C:

At the time of the visit, the school had three special education teachers, two of whom were providing SETSS in a push in/pull out fashion. Parents receive quarterly objectives on the IEP goals. The IEP and confidential records are kept in a secure cabinet. The school has a social worker and guidance counselor that provide the mandated counseling. An outside agency provides the speech therapy for mandated students. Four students are not receiving OT services and the school has to request two RSAs for parents from the CSE.