

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: THE NEW VISIONS CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE HUMANITIES III (HUM CHARTER III)ⁱ



The New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities III (HUM Charter III) provides all students, regardless of their previous academic history, the highest quality education in an atmosphere of respect, responsibility and rigor.

HUM CHARTER III ensures that its graduates have the skills and content knowledge necessary to succeed in their post-secondary choices by engaging its students, teachers and administrators in coherent learning experiences that allow risk-taking, embrace multiple attempts at learning, cultivate students' imaginative and creative abilities, and celebrate achievement. Through an intensive study of the humanities – the stories, the ideas, and the words that help us make sense of our lives – students generate research questions, develop the skills necessary to answer those questions, imagine and create products that demonstrate their understanding, and defend their knowledge publicly.



For over a decade, New Visions for Public Schools has been a leader in developing, implementing and managing strategies for turning around chronically low performing schools. Our flagship enterprise, the New Century High School Initiative, remains unprecedented in the country in its intensity, scale, innovation, widespread engagement of multiple stakeholders and, most importantly, its impact on high school students.

The NCHS Initiative resulted in schools that serve higher percentages of students who receive free or reduced lunch, are African American and/or Latino and/or who enter 9th grade at levels 1 or 2 on the New York State ELA and Math assessments than the citywide average. And, NCHSI resulted in schools that outperformed the citywide average on key indicators of student performance.

Studies by Policy Studies Associates, demonstrate that New Century’s key strategies—the use of clear, research-based design principles to guide school creation and implementation; partnerships with lead civic groups, social service agencies and content experts; and the use of teacher-driven inquiry and data management strategies—have resulted in schools with substantially higher attendance, credit accumulation, and graduation rates, particularly for low income students, students with disabilities and English Language Learners. (PSA 2006, 2006, 2008)

Building upon this rich history, New Visions proposes HUM CHARTER III as the 6th charter high school in an evolving network of 18 high-performing public charter high schools in high-need neighborhoods. HUM CHARTER III is designed to meet the needs of high school aged students from across the Bronx, our target audience. Drawing upon the most promising practices from our NYC district public schools, we have defined a specific New Visions charter high school model that will drive students to success in college and careers through radically different learning opportunities and school services. The model spans grades 9-12 and includes support for students during their first year of post-secondary experience. Included in this effort is our strategy to pioneer technology-infused curricula and assessments through an instructional system that maximizes student exposure to leading-edge materials and learning. We seek to share the practices and learning from this work to our district schools (and vice versa), as well as deliver on the original promise of charter schooling as an innovation lab that impacts the larger school system and the field as a whole.

HUM CHARTER III’s key design elements include:

1. **Writing to Think:** We found that in the schools that are available to our target students, writing is not approached systematically. On the rare occasions when students are asked to write, there are no systems in place to give them coherent feedback. In our approach writing is taught systematically: all teachers are required to use writing in their classes; writing assignments are arranged in coordinated, two-week cycles; a common rubric is used with feedback going to students and the students’ team of teachers prior to the beginning of the next cycle; and, a technological platform such as Google Docs allows students to effortlessly collect their work and teachers can easily access multiple drafts of student writing for assessment purposes.
2. **Accelerating to Achieve:** We found that in the schools that are available to our target students there are few structures in place to address the fact that students enter performing below grade level. In our approach, the school will be divided into a Lower House and an Upper house.
 - a. The 8-9 Bridge, 9th grade, 9-10 Bridge, 10th grade allow students to get up to speed and to meet minimum testing requirements for graduation while working towards the ultimate goal of college and career level proficiency.
 - b. Students move into Upper House when they meet 10th grade exit criteria and demonstrate a capacity to work independently.

A trimester structure allows students to engage in a series of focused, 13 week, standards aligned courses that result in the accumulation of between 15 and 18 credits per year. This system creates the

time and space in the upper house for students to participate in internships and apprenticeships as well as take classes on college campuses while still having the support of the high school faculty.

3. **Assessing to Grow:** We found that in the schools that are available to our target students, assessment is used to classify students rather than to guide growth and learning, that assessment information is not broadly and readily accessible and that grading policies do not give students and families information about what they have learned.

In our approach diagnostic and formative assessments are used by teachers to understand what their students have mastered as well as the content and skills with which they still need to master; information from the assessments guides the lesson construction and sequencing and the grading policy will be aligned to Common Core State Standards so that students and families can clearly see where they are in the quest to graduate. We will also use a technology platform which allows assessment information to be broadly accessible to students, families and teams of teachers.

4. **Questioning to Learn:** We found that in the schools that are available to our target students, students are bored. The practiced curriculum is irrelevant and classes are disconnected...Students constantly are asking, “Why do I need to learn this?” Teachers do not have mechanisms to know how students are doing across classes inadvertently promoting incoherent planning.

In our approach teachers design and students engage in Challenge Curricula and Anchor Projects that address questions relevant to students and their communities. The unit questions provide rationale for engaging in the study and create a need to know. For example, a unit designed for the Math and English classes explores ways in which the students can develop a sustainable source of revenue in order for them to develop and participate in 9th grade community building activities. The unit requires students to develop a business plan that can be implemented by the class and that will meet the established fundraising goal. This type of unit requires students to develop skills associated with, needs assessment, market research, proposal development, marketing and fundraising. Additionally, teachers have time every day to focus on the learning that is occurring in their classrooms through a formal inquiry process where they collaboratively determine strategies to use with students who are struggling.

5. **Teaming to Succeed:** We found that in the schools that are available to our target students, they and their teachers experience school as a set of isolated experiences.

In our approach students work both individually and in groups to address the curricular challenges. Teachers have time built into their schedules to participate on the Cohort Inquiry Teams and are supported by the administrative team – a Cohort Assistant Principal and a Guidance Counselor – to meet, reflect on their practice and plan on a daily basis. School Leadership Teams are supported by Charter Director of Instruction to reflect on the emerging knowledge of the Cohort Inquiry Teams. Principals have time to participate on the Network Inquiry Team and are supported in studying the performance of their schools and their colleagues’ schools, reflect on practice, and determine emerging needs of the network. Schools are teamed with Lincoln Center Institute to develop and implement the challenge-based curriculum.

6. **Practicing to Excel:** We found that in the schools that are available to our target students, they do not identify and utilize practices that lead to excellence.

In our approach students get the opportunity to practice and excel at developing questions for research, engaging in research across a variety of media, producing artifacts that show evidence of their learning and defending their knowledge to their peers, their teachers and outside audiences. Students get an opportunity to excel at writing through the broad use of the agreed upon pedagogical approach over 4 years. We are exploring additional options for students to select and participate in a long-term engagement in debate, strategic games, art, music, and performance in order to promote persistence and excellence.

II. STUDENT POPULATION: THE NEW VISIONS CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE HUMANITIES III (HUM CHARTER III)

A. Student Enrollment: Anticipated Enrollment Table

Grades	Ages	Number of Students				
		2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
K	NA	0	0	0	0	0
1	NA	0	0	0	0	0
2	NA	0	0	0	0	0
3	NA	0	0	0	0	0
4	NA	0	0	0	0	0
5	NA	0	0	0	0	0
6	NA	0	0	0	0	0
7	NA	0	0	0	0	0
8	NA	0	0	0	0	0
9	13-15	125	124	150	150	150
10	14-16	0	125	125	150	150
11	15-18	0	0	122	122	146
12	16-19	0	0	0	120	120
Total # of students		125	249	397	542	566
Number of classes per grade		5 classes /9 th grade	5 classes /9 th & 10 th grade	6 classes /9 th grade	6 classes /9 & 10 th grade	6 classes /9,10,&11 th grade
				5 classes /10&11 th grades	5 classes /11 & 12 th grade	5classes /12 th grade
		5 classes total	10 classes total	16 classes total	22 classes total	23 classes total
	Average number of students per class per class	25	25	21	21	24

The school plans on back-filling student enrollment vacancies in the 9th and 10th grades. Given the accelerated program we have designed for the Lower House (the 8-9 Bridge, 9th grade extended day and year, and the 9-10 Bridge) as well as the expectation that Juniors and Seniors will be engaging in college-learning experiences, students wishing to fill vacancies in the Upper House will be asked to demonstrate that they have met HUM CHARTER III's exit criteria for the Lower House.

Target Populations

Outreach to Families for Recruitment and Enrollment Purposes

The founding group for The New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities III (HUM Charter III) and the members of the New Visions Charter Unit have chosen to work with Bronx families and their high school aged children in order to best utilize the expertise and success we have had with this student population over the past 10 years.

Although New Visions has been successful in collaborating with the Department of Education, the United Federation of Teachers, the Council of Supervisors and Administrators and more than 200 community organizations in the Bronx to establish 25 small, district high schools of choice, there continues to be tremendous need in the Bronx, especially at the high school level. A scan of the data provides the following evidence of need:

Using District #12¹ in the Bronx as an example, 87% of the students receive free or reduced lunch, 31% are African-American and 66% are Latino (a).

Successful performance on the required examinations for graduation ranges from 38% of the students passing Integrated Algebra I to 53% of the students passing US History and Government. The need is greater if we look at passing rates on a second-level science exam, Chemistry (28%), or advanced performance on the required exams (from 1% in Algebra to 8% in US History and Government.

	Performance Index	Pass Rate	Advanced	Prev. Stand
	How New York City compares with other (100 = state median)	Percentage of students who scored 65 or higher, the threshold for graduation credit	Percentage of students who scored 85 or higher	Percentage who scored 55 or higher the previous graduation credit standard
Living Environment 1,632 students tested	50	47%	2%	69%
Integrated Algebra 1,536 students tested	44	38%	1%	60%
Global History and Geography 1,465 students tested	48	39%	4%	60%
U.S. History and Government 1,127 students tested	58	53%	8%	71%
Comprehensive English 1,677 students tested	52	48%	4%	65%
Physical Setting - Chemistry 88 students tested	35	28%	0%	45%

The need is great for additional, effective high schools. We must provide alternatives to Bronx families that ensure many more students successfully engage with curricular material that prepares them to meet the Regent's requirements at higher levels.

¹ <http://projects.nytimes.com/new-york-schools-test-scores/counties/bronx/districts/new-york-city-district-12>

GRADUATION RATES² paint the same picture of need. In the 6 Districts that comprise the Bronx, four year graduation rates for Cohort 2004 (with data through August 2008: local + regents diplomas) range between 46% and 62% (with the median being approximately **59%**).

In the six Districts that comprise the Bronx, six- year graduation rates for Cohort 2002 (with data through August 2008: local + regents diplomas) range between 53% and 65% (with the median being approximately **57%**).

There is a great need to provide alternatives to Bronx families that will ensure students complete requirements and meet higher graduation rates.

At the proposed school, parents and community members play critical roles in student success. Through our outreach strategies and daily practices, we will demonstrate that administrators and educators at the school will: 1) ensure that parents have consistent access to teachers; 2) articulate and share high expectations for students with parents and members of the broader community; 3) provide ongoing and timely feedback on students' progress; 4) include key community groups to provide services in the areas of youth development, social and family services, arts experiences, and career and college experiences; and 5) provide parents and community partners with opportunities to serve on governance and advisory structures and be involved in school goal setting.

The New Visions Charter High Schools outreach process consists of two phases of work. The first phase focuses on continuing to build communities' understanding of charter schools and why they are an important educational option for all families of the Bronx community, as well as introducing/reintroducing New Vision's commitment to Bronx students and their families. Despite media attention devoted to charter schools, we have found that there is confusion/misinformation about charter schools in the communities with which we wish to work. For instance, we have found that community residents believe that charter schools are private schools and that only certain students are eligible for admissions; it is imperative that we help to dispel this misinformation. This community engagement and education approach we believe helps lay the groundwork for student recruitment.

The second phase of our outreach efforts focuses specifically on student recruitment. Given that we are working with the NYC Department of Education to provide new school options for persistently low performing district high schools that are identified for closure, we begin this phase immediately upon notification by the Department of Education of the school's placement. We target the feeder middle schools, their principals, guidance counselors and parent coordinators in the district in which the school is going to be placed for effective collaborations and articulations. Wherever feasible, we work with the guidance counselors, parent coordinators and youth services coordinators to convene parent information and student recruitment sessions that introduce the New Visions Charter High Schools model to students and families. At these sessions we disseminate enrollment applications, answer their questions and make a strong case for why the NV charter schools are a viable high school option for their children. We have developed a brochure, an on-line and paper application and a frequently asked questions (FAQs) sheet. All information is translated into the appropriate community languages.

New Visions also recognizes the importance of building on its history of partnering with local community based organizations with long standing ties to the community, elected officials, faith based groups, civic groups such as the community planning boards, higher education institutions and other community institutions such as libraries, public housing complexes and local businesses. These partnerships aid

² <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/cohort/2009/200708TotalCohort-District-AllStudents.pdf>

placement efforts and support the success of a school in a community. We work with the local community organizations and institutions to host or promote community forums, parent information sessions, high school enrollment fairs, open house sessions and, where feasible, allow us access to their existing programs that target students and families eligible for enrollment in our school. We also use the local print media in the neighborhoods where our schools will be located to advertise our information forums and student recruitment sessions as an additional way of promoting our schools. Our partnership efforts allow us the opportunity to not only promote our charter schools but to begin to develop relationships that can lead to partnering opportunities around student and family support services, teacher supports and overall school development and student learning opportunities.

During our first year of Charter School creation we developed a process for outreach that included:

- Information sessions and meetings with various community leaders and community group to let the community know of our intention to open charter schools and to share the vision
We met with:
 - Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., Councilwoman Annabel Palma, Chair of the Bronx Delegation of the City Council, Assemblywoman Gibson, State Senator Espaillet
 - Advocates for Children
 - Resources for Children with Special Needs
 - Administration for Children’s Services (ACS)
 - Foster Care Agency- Jewish Child Care Association (JCCA)
 - Northwest Bronx Clergy Coalition – Student Meeting
 - Bronx Works, East Side House, Mercy Center, SOBRO
 - Faith Leaders via Reverend Alfonso Wyatt
- A series of forums focused on recruitment
 - Promotion of the Forums
 - District 10 middle school outreach – 20 schools, info sent to Guidance Counselor and Parent Coordinator
 - Housing Projects/Tenants Association
 - Marble Hill Housing Projects and Tenant Newsletters and Community Programming
 - Outreach to other projects – Ft. Independence; Bailey Ave, Twin Park East & West, East 180th Street
 - CBO Partners – Bronx Works, East Side House, Hunts Point Alliance,
 - Press – mostly Bronx Papers (Daily News, Norwood News, Bronx News, Riverdale Press, Co-op City Press)
 - News Outlet Community Calendars – bronxnewsnetwork.org; Bronx 12 community calendar and NY 1 Community Calendar
 - Creation of Brochure and FAQ – disseminating at forums and posted on our website
- Website Development
 - Currently live and includes charter school overview, our application, announcement of forums

We will continue to build on these efforts and relationships in subsequent rounds of Charter school creation.

During our first year of Charter School creation we also sought to establish relationships with institutions and service providers whose mission is to advocate and serve students with special needs, English Language Learners and disenfranchised students such as those in the foster care system. We will continue to build on this work with Administration for Children’s Services, Resources for Children with Special Needs, Advocates for Children and other institutions who serve these populations to promote our schools as options for these students and facilitate the application and enrolment process.

Public School District Total Cohort Graduation Rate and Enrollment Outcome Summary - 2007-08
School Year by Disability Status³

COUNTY: BRONX

2004 Total Cohort - Aug 2008 Outcome

New York City Geographic District # 7	Count of Cohort Members	Graduated with Regents or Local Diplomas	Earned IEP Diploma Preparation Program	Still Enrolled	Transferred to GED	Dropped Out
All Students	1516	57%	4%	24%	0%	16%
General Education Students	1234	65%	0%	21%	NA	14%
Students with Disabilities	282	21%	20%	33%	1%	24%

New York City Geographic District # 8	Count of Cohort Members	Graduated with Regents or Local Diplomas	Earned IEP Diploma Preparation Program	Still Enrolled	Transferred to GED	Dropped Out
All Students	2862	46%	2%	30%	0%	21%
General Education Students	2325	51%	0%	29%	0%	20%
Students with Disabilities	537	24%	12%	36%	1%	26%

Additionally, *The New York Times* reports, Special education students in the city had a graduation rate of 23 percent, up four points from the class of 2007, and 36 percent of English language learners graduated, an 11-point increase.”⁴

When we look at the graduation data for students with disabilities and students learning English, we understand fully that there is much work to be done. Attention must be paid to students with special needs, English Language Learners and struggling students in this type of learning environment. In these

³ <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/cohort/2009/200708TotalCohort-District-Disability.pdf>

⁴ HERNANDEZ, JAVIER C. City’s Graduation Rates Improve, <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/06/22/citys-graduation-rates-improve/>

cases, student voice (understanding what the student is interested in), strategic selection of the appropriate and varied resources as well as the system of assessment (including mechanisms for immediate, focused and actionable feedback to the student) take on added importance. To do this well, teachers at New Visions Charter High Schools receive on-going support in identifying and understanding the individualized goals and targets for the students and in learning specific strategies that promote the progress of students with these needs. In addition, Lincoln Center Institute's focus on the arts as one of the most immediate ways to cultivate the Capacities for Imaginative Learning is a way for many students with special needs, as well as English Language Learners, to find their own entry point to complex study. Most importantly, there are systems in place for teachers at a New Visions Charter High School work collaboratively to ensure the students' needs are met.

As part of its recruitment of students from middle schools, The New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities III (HUM Charter III) will reach out directly to special education staff at nearby middle schools to explain its special education services model, and will, at all outreach and informational events, include an explanation of the school's special education supports. During recruitment, the school will collect data on applying students' special education or general education classification purely for the purposes of ensuring that the percentage of special needs students in the lottery pool is comparable to that of the Community School District. If that percentage is significantly lower than that of the local CSD, then more aggressive and targeted outreach to special education students and their families will be employed.

The New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities III (HUM Charter III) will also ensure that families of ELL students have access and opportunity to apply for enrollment. HUM CHARTER III will:

- reach out to English Language Coordinators in proximate middle schools as well as community resource centers in the community.
- create recruitment materials in both English and Spanish.
- bring Spanish-speakers (preferably teachers) to events in order to promote the school and answer questions of Spanish-speaking families and prospective students.

Through formal progress reports, the special education/Section 504 teacher will review students' academic progress and make adjustments to the supports for general education teachers, including professional development in appropriately accommodating and modifying curriculum and pedagogy to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Utilizing NYSESLAT results as well as on-going classroom assessment, the school administration will review each English Language Learner's academic progress and make adjustments to the supports for ELL students, which may include professional development in the teaching of English Language Learners. HUM Charter III will include the evaluation of the progress of ELL and special education students as part of the work of the classroom-level Cohort Inquiry Teams as well as the work of the Organizational Level Inquiry Team. The Board of Trustees will include the evaluation of the progress of students with special needs in its school evaluation, used to conduct reflective conversations with the school principal. By doing so, the principal will always be attuned to the achievement, and thereby the retention of, ELL and special needs students.

III. SCHOOL DESIGN: THE NEW VISIONS CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE HUMANITIES III (HUM CHARTER III)

THE NEW VISIONS CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL MODEL

Students learn best when they attend schools that are characterized by:

- *A highly challenging environment and culture;*
- *A rigorous, personalized learning environment with a strong emphasis on continuous assessment and differentiated instruction;*
- *Structured and relevant social service supports; and*
- *Explicit and timely postsecondary and career planning.*

We have codified a New Visions Charter High School model, based on an analysis of effective practices from the New Century High Schools Initiative, as well as the work of other charter management organizations around the country, to create the framework for a 600 student school, serving grades 9-12, with dedicated support services to graduates during their first post-secondary year. This model forms the basis of a much more powerful school strategy at the secondary level than is routinely found in urban schools.

New Visions Charter Schools will, for example, create or implement the following strategies:

Classroom

- Extend learning time and redefine the school schedule to better serve student achievement goals;
- Use effective, research-based curricula and assessments to diagnose students' needs and tailor instruction appropriately;
- Nurture students' imaginative and creative abilities as part of a rigorous academic curriculum
- Explore the delivery of innovative instruction using new technologies that support teachers' efforts to differentiate instruction to meet students' needs and interests and permit the students to directly engage in materials.

Systems in the School

- Pilot new admission systems for charter schools that encourage the application of all types of high-need students by year four and serve a proportionate share of our most challenged youth;
- Intensify transition assessment and support services where they are needed—students entering the 9th grade and students exiting 12th grade – with services extending into the first year of post secondary; and
- Alleviate central office distractions and demands through aggressive support and the placement of a business staff in every school.

People

- Actively engage communities, parents and students in the schools, including mapping the assets of each community to engage in specific areas of work and provide outreach to parents and students;
- Implement a new professional growth ladder, support plan and performance management system for teachers and better, flexible pay and benefits for all teachers.

Teaching at The New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities III (HUM Charter III) will be informed by pedagogical evaluation, with the school structured so that each grade level has its own Cohort Inquiry Team comprised of teachers. The purpose of this team is to systematically study the connection between the pedagogical strategies the team believes best meets the needs of their students and the actual student outcomes.

Through facilitated inquiry, teachers on the Grade-level Inquiry Team work together during dedicated time within their regular programs to:

- study their students' progress and socio-emotional data, including student performance on diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments (such as the deliverables the students produce in their challenge work);
- determine the skills and sub-skills students in their classes need to master;
- develop the lesson series, create the challenge projects, and determine the pedagogy that will engage students in systematic work to develop the skills they need;
- implement the work; and
- assess whether or not their hypothesis is correct based on the student outcomes for the unit and on the teams' progress toward their agreed upon end-of-year goals for the grade.

1. A Challenge-based Curriculum

The New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities III (HUM Charter III) offers a comprehensive core curriculum that prepares its students for college and career readiness. HUM CHARTER III also provides students with opportunities to take higher level English, History and Arts classes by providing opportunities for advanced coursework through their seven elective choices. The students are given the option to take science classes beyond high school chemistry – i.e. AP English, AP US History, as well as college History and Arts classes.

HUM CHARTER III charter school students use the knowledge they attain through the comprehensive core curriculum to interact with a challenge-based curriculum that is designed to foster imaginative capacities that support the Common Core Standard. The model is built around fourteen challenge-based anchor projects, one at the end of each trimester, one embedded in the 8-9 bridge class, and one embedded in the 9-10 bridge class. The anchor projects at HUM CHARTER III build an authentic, challenged based project around core English and History content and skills. For example, The Immigration Anchor Project at HUM Charter explores local immigration statistics, issues facing local immigrant populations and existing policies.

In a typical unit, groups of students are:

- introduced to a finite set of resources that focus on a particular topic (a work of art, a budget, a newspaper article, a website, and a political cartoon for example);
- asked a question or questions that do not have a pre-determined answer;
- taught to explore the resources to determine how they might construct an answer that could be supported by evidence found in them;
- asked to construct a product (with particular attention being paid to the selection of appropriate media (a position paper, a PowerPoint presentation, a newscast, a video blog) that will be used to share their response with others;
- expected to present their product to students and teachers and other community members; and
- required to defend their position.

In order to be successful in this type of unit, the appropriate balance between students needing to know something and having the skills to access what they need to know has to be struck by the unit design, the resources selected, and the teachers' facilitation of the work.

2. The school's lower and upper house structure will allow staff to systematically support students in their college and workplace preparation. Students in the school will:
 - have an individualized, college-preparatory learning plan and college access system that is consistently reviewed and revised with students based on their needs and growth;
 - participate in two required summer bridge programs (8-9 and 9-10);
 - have access to extra academic and social supports in the ninth and tenth grade and as needed (individual and small group coaching for up to two periods every day);
 - have access to Saturday support in preparing for and implementing the challenge projects;
 - Move from "hand-holding" to independent learning;
 - Participate in internships, Advanced Placement classes and college courses for credit in the upper house; and
 - upon graduation, receive intensive school and alumni support through their first year of post-secondary education.

3. Furthermore, through our partnership with Lincoln Center Institute (LCI), students will practice and master habits of learning on which they can rely across the curriculum. Students and teachers at a New Visions Charter High School will learn how to use *The Capacities for Imaginative Learning*⁵ to organize their thinking and to inform their learning. These Capacities, derived from LCI's study of works of art with students and teachers for over thirty years, nurture students' abilities to imagine and create—abilities necessary not only for artists, but also for scientists and mathematicians. Students, for example, will practice how to "notice deeply" in a science classroom or learn to "question" difficult text in an English classroom and "make connections" between classes. These habits will create a common language and culture among students and teachers, and, therefore, coherence from class to class within one day and from project to project over time – "[T]he importance of [cultural] coherence across the [charter] schools, combined with the work ethic and a commitment to continuous improvement, produces strong student outcomes." (Merseth, 2009) Using the rubrics developed by Lincoln Center Institute at the High School for Arts, Imagination and Inquiry, students at New Visions Charter High Schools will be able to assess themselves on their ability to draw upon and use the appropriate capacity when faced with an unknown. These rubrics will be adapted and strengthened at New Visions Charter Schools, as appropriate.

In this type of learning environment attention must be paid to students with special needs, English Language Learners and struggling students. In these cases, student voice (understanding what the student is interested in), strategic selection of the appropriate and varied resources as well as the system of assessment (including mechanisms for immediate, focused and actionable feedback to the student) take on added importance. To do this well, teachers at New Visions Charter High Schools are supported in identifying and understanding the individualized goals and targets for the students and in learning specific strategies – such as those found in READ 180 and the Sheltered English Language Instruction for Content Area classes program, for instance– that support the progress of students with these needs. In addition, Lincoln Center Institute's focus on the arts as one of the most immediate ways to cultivate the Capacities for Imaginative Learning is a way for many students with special needs, as well as English Language Learners, to find their own entry point to complex study. Most importantly, there are systems in place for

⁵Holzer, Madeleine Fuchs, *Capacities for Imaginative Learning*, in *Aesthetic Education, Inquiry and the Imagination*. Lincoln Center Institute. 2008.

teachers at a New Visions Charter High School work collaboratively to ensure the students' needs are met.

In schools using the New Visions Charter High School Model, on-going, embedded assessment of student learning takes place through the implementation, two times per trimester, of formal practitioner prepared interim assessments that are focused on assessing student performance against city and state standards. These assessments are based on the work Stiggins' outlines in "Rethinking the Motivational Dynamics of Productive Assessment" (Stiggins, 2005) where he changes the paradigm from "assessment of learning" to "assessment for learning."

According to Stiggins, the teacher's role in this process is to complete the following progression:

- Start by clearly understanding the standard to be mastered.
- Deconstruct it into the enabling classroom achievement targets that form the foundations of learning leading to the standard.
- Create a student-friendly version of those targets to share with students from the beginning of the learning.
- Create high quality assessments of those classroom targets.
- Use those in collaboration with the students to track improvement over time.

Teachers in a New Visions Charter High School are themselves learners. Each teacher participates on a Cohort Inquiry Team. The purpose of this team is to systematically study the connection between the pedagogical strategy the team believes best meets the needs of their students and the actual student outcomes. Through facilitated inquiry, teachers on the Cohort Inquiry Team work together, during dedicated time within their regular programs to:

- study their students' progress and socio-emotional data, including student performance on diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments (such as the deliverables the students produce in their challenge work),
- determine the skills and sub-skills students in their classes need to master,
- develop the lesson series, create the challenge projects and determine the pedagogy that they hypothesize will engage students in systematic work to develop the skills they need,
- implement the work, and
- assess whether or not their hypothesis is correct based on the student outcomes for the unit and on the teams' progress toward their agreed upon end-of-year goals for the grade.

Key to the success of the New Visions Charter High School model is the ability to provide all students with highly effective teachers. We believe that truly effective teachers have the capacity to close the gap in academic achievement between students from traditionally *poor*, non-white, and/or urban backgrounds and their peers. To this end, the formal and systematic inquiry work described above becomes the basis of our professional development and the key mechanism to certify teachers through our embedded teacher certification program.

Good teachers, as The Center for Public Education suggests, have a substantial effect on student achievement, especially when assigned to work with disadvantaged students as is shown in the following studies:

- Teacher quality more heavily influenced differences in student performance than did race, class, or school of the student; disadvantaged students benefited more from good teachers than did advantaged students (Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004).

- Achievement gains from having an effective teacher could be almost three times as large for African American students than for white students, even when comparing students with the same prior school achievement (Sanders & Rivers, 1996).
- The effects of teacher quality accumulate over the years. Fifth-grade math students in Tennessee who had three consecutive highly effective teachers scored between 52 and 54 percentile points ahead of students who had three consecutive teachers who were least effective, even though both groups had the same achievement rates prior to entering second grade. A similar study in Texas showed a difference of 34 percentile points in reading and 49 percentile points in math (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Jordan, Mendro, & Weerasinghe, 1997).

New Visions Charter High Schools incorporate the “teaching hospital” model. Adults entering the teaching profession will have the opportunity at New Visions Charter Schools to be certified by working with a master teacher, teaching a reduced load at the school, participating on the school’s cohort inquiry team and taking part in a reflective seminar with other beginning and master teachers. Residents, as the novice teachers are known, will be given immediate accountability for one section of students in the school. As such, they plan and implement curriculum, instruction, and assessment collaboratively under the tutelage of the master teacher. At each school, the resident and master teachers participate on the Cohort Inquiry Team: they analyze both qualitative and quantitative student data to understand student needs; design, implement, and continually refine effective learning strategies in collaboration with colleagues; and evaluate student progress based on evidence from student work. Harnessing the expertise of master teachers, and supporting them in creating and maintaining an adult learning culture within the school, serves as a catalyst for overall school improvement by cultivating a reflective professional culture.

In order for information to be shared across the school community, the Cohort Inquiry Teams have representatives who join the Principal, Assistant Principals and other key instructional and operational staff members in school-wide inquiry through the Organizational Inquiry Team that meets monthly after-school. The purpose of this work, that mirrors in process the Cohort Inquiry Team, is to analyze and coordinate the various streams of inquiry across the school in order to determine the best use of resources as well as to determine if the school is on track to meet its organizational goals.

Finally, for the school to be successful, clear organizational goals and targets must be set. New Visions Charter High Schools share these goals:

- 90% of students will be promoted each year by meeting credit requirements and passing State Regents Exams with at least a 75 for ELA and Math and with at least a 65 in other subjects.
- New Visions Charter High Schools will graduate at least 95% of their entering 9th-grade cohort within five years.
- Schools will meet or exceed 90% average daily attendance.
- Schools will ensure that 90% of students in each cohort return each year. If a student and family select to leave the school, it is the responsibility of the school’s faculty and staff to make certain that the departing student is on-track to College and Career Ready.
- 90% of graduating seniors will register for college and complete 10 college credits their first year.

In order to achieve these organizational goals, teachers and administrators participate in a formal, yearly process of assessing where they are in creating the conditions for the school to meet these goals, set specific targets that would move the school closer to their goal, and track their progress to meeting the targets on a bi-weekly basis. Students, under the guidance of their cohort team, engage in a similar goal setting process. This alignment of student, teacher, administrator and organizational goals is critical for school success.

Additional New Vision Charter High School Practices

Below are other effective practices, culled through an analysis of New Visions' school creation and implementation work over the past 20 years; the on-going development of these practices will be supported through a professional development plan as well as through the evolving culture of the schools in the network.

- Core focus skills mapped to the Common Core Standards embedded in core subjects of ELA, social studies, math and science (e.g., compare and contrast, support evidence, cause and effect) necessary for career and college
- Extended school day and school year
 - 50% of students (flexible group depending on assessment of student needs at any given time) will attend the extended day program for 1.5 hours per day, four days a week and Saturday classes throughout the year
- Course syllabi distributed to students at the beginning of each course, with course overview and Regents standards
 - Curriculum outlines for each content area mapped back from graduation skill requirements
- College and career trips offered to all students
- Teacher office hours set up for students and parents
- Schools participate in learning walks at other schools in the network with specific purpose, protocols and “look fors” for feedback to host school, as well as strategies for participants to adopt
- Schools present content to other schools in the network and are judged on quality
- Common grading policy applied to all schools
- Community asset map created by each school to identify services and opportunities (political, community, and cultural) for collaboration with partnership organization

We believe that the following practices found in the proposed educational program at The New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities III (HUM Charter III) will address the statutory purposes of charter schools:

1. Increasing the learning opportunities for all students including, in particular, expanded learning opportunities for children “at-risk” of academic failure.
 - Creating high school seats for students residing in the Bronx
 - Intentionally encouraging the application of high-need students
 - Expanding learning opportunities for children “at-risk” of failure:
 - The systematic use of diagnostics for guiding instruction combined with New Visions On-Track/Off-Track System. This system is being refined through the custom design of a student information system, Datacation.
 - Pedagogical Resources - Integrating Q-TEL strategies across curriculum integrating the Capacities for Imaginative Learning across the curriculum and designing and implementing a structured writing program for all Students across all classes
 - At the Lesson Level, explicitly teaching the capacities (noticing, questioning, making connections, etc.) as a support mechanism for the writing program
 - Using pilot Common Core State Standard assessment tasks to guide the development of the writing program and therefore, aligning the day-to-day work with the upcoming formal Assessment system

- Staffing – A Special Ed and ELL Specialist for every cohort of students as an integral part of the grade team – responsible for direct services to students and the support for teachers on integration of Q-Tel and special education strategies across their teams.
 - The use of Time: Morning coaching – small groups focused on the students’ immediate needs and extended day focused on writing and logic
2. Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods
 - Institutionalizing “challenge-based” curriculum that includes cultivating imaginative learning
 - Integrating formal inquiry into the teaching and learning process at the schools
 - Integrating student, teacher and administrator aligned goal-setting process
 3. Create professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators and other personnel
 - Embedding the teacher certification program (UTR) [to begin in the second year of school implementation]
 - Embedding the leadership certification program (SAM) [to begin the third year of school implementation]
 4. Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available to the public school system
 - Expanding the number of charter high schools available to parents in the Bronx
 5. Institute a change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems for meeting measurable student achievement goals
 - Integrating student, teacher and administrator aligned goal-setting process
 - Setting and organizing for organizational goals and targets
 - Ongoing formative assessment of student learning in inquiry teams to assist with differentiated instruction aimed at improving student achievement

We believe that the charter model will build on the success that New Visions has demonstrated in its previous small school creation work. Preliminary evaluations by PSA and the recent comprehensive study by MDRC suggest that New York City has made considerable progress stemming the failure of large comprehensive schools: increasing the use of data by all constituents, improving student attendance, increasing credit accumulation and improving graduation rates for all groups, most notably for minority students. The study’s key findings include:

- By the end of their first year of high school, 58.5 percent of enrollees were on track to graduate in four years (as measured by credit accumulation and number of Regents exams passed) compared with 48.5 percent of their counterparts in other schools. These positive effects on students’ graduation prospects were sustained over the next two years.
- By the fourth year of high school, overall graduation rates increased by 6.8 percentage points (68.7 percent vs. 61.9 percent), which is roughly *one-third the size of the gap in graduation rates* between white students and students of color in New York City. Most of the effect on graduation was driven by an increase in New York State Regents diplomas.
- These schools’ positive effects are seen for a broad range of students, including male high school students of color and students with lower academic proficiency, whose educational prospects have been historically difficult to improve.

To understand the significance of this work, consider that in 2001, only one in three students graduated in the failing schools these small schools replaced. Today, many of the small schools in these same buildings routinely graduate approximately 70% of their students. The report concludes that New

Visions and its partners helped the NYCDOE create a school system the size of Houston in four short years that is showing demonstrated performance gains for our neediest students.

Policy Studies Associates Year 1

“NCHS Initiative is on track to create a network of new or transformed small high schools that employ research-based principles to provide high quality educational experiences to students who might otherwise be at risk of educational failure.”

Policy Studies Associates Year 2

Early indicators of higher attendance rates, lower suspension rates and lower rates of attrition suggest that “NCHS schools may be creating positive educational settings for students which are likely to be born out later by high graduation rates.”

Policy Studies Associates Year 3

“NCHS students out-performed comparison group students and learning outcomes were related to implementation of proven instructional practice. NCHS schools contributed importantly to the educational achievement of enrolled students.”

Policy Studies Associates Final Report

“The study’s central finding is that NCHS graduated more students on time than did high schools with comparable youngsters, by 18 percentage points (78.2 versus 60.6 percent) and more students than did New York City high schools generally, by 20 percentage points (78.2 versus 58.2 percent).”

2009 Graduation Highlights (based on NYC Department of Education data):

- 72.6 % graduation rate compared to 62.7% city-wide average
- Overall 48% of NCHS students from the 2009 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma compared to 46% of NYC students
- 57% of ELL students graduated compared to 44% city-wide
- 44% of special education students graduated compared to 27% city-wide

2008 Graduation Highlights (based on NYC Department of Education data):

- 2008 graduation rates are 15 percentage points higher for NCHS students than for NY city-wide
- NCHS graduation rates for Black and Hispanic students are 20 percentage points higher than the NY city-wide
- NCHS graduation rates for ELL students are 21 percentage points higher than for NY city-wide
- NCHS graduation rates for SpEd students are 26 percentage points higher than for NY city-wide
- Overall 47% of NCHS students from the 2009 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma compared to 43% of NYC students

ⁱ We are pleased to submit the Prospectus for **The New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities III (HUM Charter III)** as part of a package of 4 charter school applications: the New Visions Charter High School for Advanced Math and Science II, the New Visions Charter High School for Advanced Math and Science III, the New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities II, and the New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities III. These schools are conceived of as pairs of sister schools – one Math and Science with one Humanities school - that would be co-located on two different campuses and help to address the need for effective high school seats established by the closure of Persistently Low Performing schools.

Please note that New Visions is working closely with the New York City Department of Education to define the role it might play in schools eligible for Federal SIG funding. After the opening of the 90th New Century High School this fall, our focus has shifted to pioneering a new model of charter high schools – potentially starting 18 charter schools over the next 5 years.

Our goal would be to establish campuses under the New Visions umbrella that combined no more than 2 charter schools each with district high schools started within the New Visions Partnership Support Organization. This arrangement would facilitate our goal of consistently sharing promising practices across the charter/district divide at a depth that has eluded previous CMO practice in NYC and elsewhere. It would also allow for the test of a single model of school in both charter and non-charter contexts. We believe that it would also allow for campus-wide provision of services currently not affordable to any single small school – especially clinically rich teacher training and leadership development, technology and data initiatives. New Visions would also commit to deep and extended community engagement around the establishment of such campuses and to work collaboratively with the UFT and CSA to resolve building specific issues. We see outreach to educators in the host schools to staff planning teams for new schools, provided that they accept the curriculum and model of the New Visions charter schools, as a critical element to landing new schools in the community.