



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2006-2007

## SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

### University Heights Charter School

**Startup and Current Year.** University Heights Charter School commenced implementation in the 2006-2007 school year and just completed its first year of operation.

**Address.** The school is located at 74 Hartford Street, in Newark, NJ 07103.

**Facility.** The school is located in a two story brick building that formerly served as an Abbott Preschool. The facility is owned by Bethany Baptist Church.

**Number of Students, Grades and Classes.** The school's charter authorized a maximum enrollment of 120 students in 2006-07 in grades Kindergarten, 1 and 2. The enrollment at the beginning of the school year was 120 students. At the end of the year the enrollment was 117 students. There are two classes at each grade level.

**Maximum Class Size.** Class size is approximately 20 students per class.

**School Day:** The school day begins at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m. for a total time of seven hours. Total instructional time is six hours and thirty minutes per day.

**School Year:** School began September 1, 2006 and ended June 30, 2007, for a total of 185 school days.

**Student/Teacher Ratio:** 12:1

**Planned Expansion.** In the 2007-08 school year, the school will add grades 3, 4, and 5 and expand to include 240 students.

**Approved District(s) or Region of Residence.** The school draws its students from the following districts: Newark

**Employees.** The school employs a lead person, seven classroom teachers, two aides, a special education teacher, a nurse, and a physical education teacher.

**Lead Person.** The school's lead person is Dr. Linda Woodson. (Tel: 973.623.1965), (Fax: 973.623.8511), (email: lwoodson@uhcsnewark.org).

**Theme/Defining Attributes.** The defining attributes of the school are its emphasis on Character Education.

**Organizational Affiliation .** The school is affiliated with Bethany Baptist Church as its tenant.

**1. REVIEW OF STATE AND LOCAL ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES  
AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS  
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL'S GOALS  
AND REQUIRED NCLB ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS**

**Academic Goals and Objectives: Assessment Results (Present data in this section.)**

**State Assessment Results**

University Heights Charter School served students in Kindergarten through Grade 2 during the 2006 to 2007 academic year. The administration of state assessments is initialized in Grade 3. Therefore, there is no state assessment data, district-of-residence student performance comparison data, or discussion of Adequate Yearly Progress provided in this summary.

The Terra Nova Standardized Assessment was administered, to collect baseline data for incoming Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students. Although the data is not disaggregated, it does provided insight to the academic strengths and weaknesses of the incoming students by class and by grade level. This data was analyzed and reviewed with teachers and parents, respectively, at the beginning of the school year. While this initial assessment was important in establishing a point of departure relative to setting realistic expectations for achievement during the school year, additional insight was provided by the mid-year and end-of-year assessments.

The mid-year student assessment data was used to gauge the effectiveness of curricula and instruction. The mid-year assessment was administered in **February** to all students in Kindergarten through Grade 2. The cumulative assessment was derived from the Reading/Language Arts/Language Arts and Math curricula from which students were receiving instruction. Students were allotted four days for testing and four days for make-up testing, similar to the state testing schedule. The same schedule and format was offered in May for the end of the year assessment.

The Curriculum Committee established the targeted percentile for academic achievement at 75%. That is, all students in Kindergarten through Grade 2 would achieve a score of 75% or greater in Reading/Language Arts/Language Arts and Math by the end of the school year.

Reading/Language Arts/Language Arts data reflects 53% of Kindergarten students were meeting the targeted 75% achievement goal at mid-year. Reading/Language Arts/Language Arts data in Grade 1 reflects 58% of students were meeting the targeted achievement goal at mid-year. Reading/Language Arts Language Arts data in Grade 2 revealed only 38% of students were meeting the targeted 75% achievement goal.

| <b>University Heights<br/>Charter School</b> |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Mid-Year Assessment</b>                   |  |   |   |
| <b>Reading/<br/>Language<br/>Arts</b>        |  |   |   |
|  | <b>Total<br/>students<br/>who met<br/>75% target</b> | <b>Mean<br/>score for<br/>students<br/>who met<br/>75% target</b> | <b>Mean score for total students<br/>tested</b> |
| <b>Grades</b>                                |  |   |   |
| K  | 53%  | 84%   | 75%   |
| 1st  | 58%  | 82%   | 76%   |
| 2nd  | 38%  | 85%   | 67%   |

A mid-year assessment in Math was not administered at the Kindergarten level. Math data in Grade 1 reflects 24% of students were meeting the targeted achievement goal at mid-year. Math data at Grade 2 reveals only 10% of students were meeting the targeted 75% achievement goal

| <b>University Heights<br/>Charter School</b> |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Mid-Year Assessment</b>                   |  |   |   |
| <b>Math</b>                                  |  |   |   |
|  | <b>Total<br/>students<br/>who met<br/>75% target</b> | <b>Mean<br/>score for<br/>students<br/>who met<br/>75% target</b> | <b>Mean score for total students<br/>tested</b> |
| <b>Grades</b>                                |  |   |   |
| K  | NA   | NA  | NA  |
| 1st  | 24%  | 84%   | 59%   |
| 2nd  | 10%  | 90%   | 47%   |

The end of year assessment was administered to the same cohort of students who were given the mid-year assessment, with a few exceptions in Kindergarten. In May, the assessment data revealed 93% of Kindergarten students were performing at the targeted goal of 75% in Reading/Language Arts and 73% were performing at the targeted goal of 75% in Math. Grade 1 students show consistent performance with 60% and 63% of students meeting the target in Reading/Language Arts and Math,

respectively. Grade 2 assessment data shows 32% of students reached the academic goal in Reading/Language Arts and 28% of students reached the 75% goal in Math.

| <b>University Heights Charter School</b>                  |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Mid-Year and End of Year Comparative Data Analysis</b> |  |  |  |  |
|   | <b>Reading/<br/>Language<br/>Arts</b>                |  | <b>Math</b>  |  |
|   | <b>Total<br/>students<br/>who met<br/>75% target</b> | <b>Total<br/>students<br/>who met<br/>75% target</b> | <b>Total<br/>students<br/>who met<br/>75% target</b> | <b>Total<br/>students<br/>who met<br/>75% target</b> |
| <b>Grades</b>   | <b>Mid-Year</b>                                      | <b>End of Year</b>                                   | <b>Mid-Year</b>                                      | <b>End of Year</b>                                   |
| K   | 53%  | 93%  | NA   | 73%  |
| 1st   | 58%  | 60%  | 24%  | 63%  |
| 2nd   | 38%  | 32%  | 10%  | 28%  |

**Discussion of Progress**

University Heights Charter School has 5 primary academic goals with associated objectives.

**Academic Goal #1:**

To ensure the intellectual development of students through acquiring core proficiency skills in reading, writing and mathematics, problem solving skills, development of critical thinking, analytic ability, research skills, and the acquisition and practical application of knowledge.

**Objective 1A.** Students will learn to read, to write and to perform mathematics functions at or above grade level.

**Objective 1B.** Students will demonstrate exemplary critical thinking, analytic and problem solving skills.

**Objective 1C.** Students will demonstrate a grasp of information at or above grade level.

**Academic Goal #2: To teach the rights, responsibility and duties of citizenship, and instill in students a sense of duty and honor for their community and country.**

**Objective 2A.** Students will learn the structure and operation of government in an age appropriate manner.

**Objective 2B.** Students will appreciate the process of our common history.

**Academic Goal #3: To provide competency with computers and technology.**

**Objective 3A.** All students will have access to and operate computers.

**Objective 3B.** Students will demonstrate age-appropriate proficiency with computers.

**Academic Goal #4: To build academic self-confidence through the experience of academic success.**

**Objective 4A.** All students will be challenged by high expectations and demonstrate high achievement.

**Academic Goal #5: To demonstrate academic relevance through application of skills to school and community based projects.**

**Objective 5A.** Students, teachers and parents will design and implement community projects.

As a nascent elementary school, University Heights Charter School has strived to meet all of its academic goals. **To insure the intellectual development of students, Academic Goal #1**, every effort has been made to track student ability and performance. Where great potential was evidenced, we endeavored to further extend the proximal development of the student. Where potential seemed to be harnessed, we gave attention to intervention strategies to build greater capacity for achievement. When an entire class is struggling, instructional remedies are implemented to improve student achievement.

The mid-year assessment data, for example, gave rise to concern at the overall low performance of second grade students in both Reading/Language Arts and Math. As a result of these findings, program modifications were made. Students in Grade 2 were regrouped according to their performance. Low performing students were monitored more closely and provided in class support by a third certified teacher. Additionally, Grade 2 was quasi-departmentalized. Of the three second grade teachers, two teachers were assigned Reading/Language Arts instruction, making the teacher to student ratio 1:10 in the class with the most low performing students. While the third teacher was assigned math instruction for all Grade 2 students, the teacher to student ratio was maintained at 1:20 in both math classes.

When analyzing the end of year data in comparison to the mid-year data, it can be noted that decreasing class size and departmentalizing instruction in Reading/Language Arts resulted in decreased achievement for students in this content area. In Math, however, students showed an improvement in performance. Students in Grade 2 were promoted to

Grade 3 with a plan for remediation being infused into their daily schedules. Progress of these students will continue to be closely monitored by the Reading/Language Arts Specialist, Math Specialist and Principal. This is one example of how data was used to modify the academic program and hence, more closely, inform instruction.

Mid-year assessment data was also used to add a Gifted and Talented class to the school's academic program. Students in Grade 1 and Grade 2 who achieved the academic goal of 75% Reading/Language Arts and Math comprised the GT class. A total of twelve students were identified. In an effort to infuse Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences, students were given the opportunity to write, choreograph, direct, videotape and design the set of a play. By so doing, students were provided an opportunity **to gain competency in technology, Academic Goal #3 and build academic self-confidence through the experience of academic success, Academic Goal #4.**

Academic self-confidence was evidenced by a larger body of Kindergarten through Grade 2 who participated as members of the University Heights Charter School "Legal Eagles," our Mock Trial Team. Students had the distinguished opportunity of "trying" "The Case of the Missing Puppy" in a real courtroom on a field trip to the Newark Superior Court. Students toured the historical landmark, learned a bit of case law and asked questions of a Superior Court Judge who "hear" the case, along with other local attorneys impressed by the confidence and overall presence of the team.

Finally, the entire student body demonstrated **academic relevance through application of skills necessary to complete the community based "Clean Up New Jersey" project, Academic Goal #5.** Students were given rakes and gloves to clean up their community, not to mention tee-shirts. University Heights Charter School was the only school that had school wide participation. Students were honored at the close of the school year with a plaque and a reception in their honor at Liberty State Park. By involving students in this community based activity, we endeavored to **teach the rights, responsibility and duties of citizenship, and instill in students a sense of duty and honor for their community and country, Academic Goal #2.**

University Heights Charter School continues to strive to reach its academic goals. While all students did not reach the targeted achievement goal of 75%, in the required content areas on the end of year assessment, the data provided a host of variables to consider as longitudinal data will be collected for cohort analysis of our students in the upcoming year. All forms of data will be obtained, including NJASK 3, 4, and 5, disaggregated and utilized to enhance achievement for our students and professional development opportunities for the instructional staff. The Performance Excellence Group, a team of Professional Development providers, will support this effort with the instructional staff on an ongoing basis.

**Non-Academic Goals and Objectives: Assessment Results (Present data in this section.)**

**Assessment Results and Discussion of Progress**

University Heights Charter School has 3 non-academic goals and objectives.

**Non-Academic Goal #1: To provide character education integrated seamlessly into all aspects of the school's culture of excellence.**

**Objective 1A.** Teach students the importance of character traits such as integrity, fairness, respect, responsibility, and citizenship

**Objective 1B.** Incorporate character education through the existing curriculum

**Objective 1C.** Create a safe school

**Objective 1D.** Create classroom environments that promote effective learning and encourage students to respect one another

**Objective 1E.** Teach students how to solve conflicts fairly and respectfully without resorting to intimidation or violence

**Objective 1F.** Develop leadership skills and offer students opportunities to serve others

**Objective 1G.** Engage parents and the community in cooperative efforts to build and model good character.

The instructional staff received Professional Development in Character Education at the beginning of the school year. Identifying Ten Pillars of Character, or ten character traits, based on the staff's common core values and Affirmation of Character statement was developed for students to recite each morning. Students also recited the Affirmation of Character statement at the beginning of school wide assemblies. The hope was that as students repeatedly verbalized the statement, they would also visualize the statement such that the vision would spring forth as a reality and naturally evolve as part of the school culture. The University Heights Charter School Affirmation of Character Statement reads as follows:

*At University Heights Charter School, we are all **equal**.  
I have the **courage** and the **humility** to be a leader and a follower.  
I take **responsibility** for my own actions.  
I have the **freedom** to make "right choices."  
I will treat others with **kindness**.  
**Sharing** is caring.  
I will **respect** myself, my classmates, my teachers and the entire school community.  
I will display **honesty** in everything I do.  
I will be **generous** with my time to help others.  
At University Heights Charter School we strive for **EXCELLENCE!***

The Affirmation of Character statement was instrumental in assisting teachers in the identification of "Community Helpers." Community Helpers, in lieu of students of the month in most schools, were identified based on the character trait they displayed, that trait being necessary to infuse into the school community for the greater good of the



student body. For this reason, students were asked to perform various tasks including, but not limited to, assisting in the cafeteria, in the classroom and school office. Community helpers also served as mentors supporting students in lower grade levels with homework after school.

A Peer Mediation/Student Council Group was also started whereby students with identified exemplary character were asked to participate in problem solving tasks to resolve conflicts in the classroom. For example, a student might be asked to sit with another student at lunch or play with another student on the playground who has expressed feelings of isolation or may have experienced a case of bullying. While the school's discipline policy has remedies for social ills in the school environment, students in the Peer Mediation/Student Council Group have been a catalyst for creating humanistic approaches to problems solving in the school community.

The Mission of the University Heights Charter School is to provide each student with innovative, experiential and collaborative learning experiences emphasizing character education that develop positive intellectual, social, and physical outcomes of significance; to promote self directed, lifelong learning skills; and to facilitate the student's ability to make responsible decisions. During the 2006-2007 school year, Character Education was introduced into the school culture in various ways, however, not to the extent that it will be incorporated into the curriculum during the 2007-2008 school year in ways that are clearly measurable. Such data will be utilized to continue to strive for excellence.

**Non-Academic Goal #2: To incorporate parent/caregivers, staff, students and community into a collaborative unit sharing ownership, responsibility and commitment to success.**

**Objective 2A.** Board members will reflect this Goal.

**Objective 2B.** Parent/caregivers will participate in school activities; supporting student achievement, sharing in setting school policy, and improving their own skills.

**Objective 1C.** A school - community partnership will be developed.

Throughout the 2006-2007 school year, parent involvement in school activities, supporting student achievement and sharing in setting school policy was evident. In addition to "Back to School Night" which was well attended in September, Parents were also involved in the community service project "Clean Up Your City." October offered parents an opportunity to volunteer to man our annual Scholastic Book Fair. November brought parents out to a Thanksgiving Feast. The School/Parent Organization coordinated the entire event for over 120 students, parents and teachers. In January, parents volunteered to serve on the Curriculum Committee and in May parents participated in a Strategic Planning day. As we enter the 2007-2008 school year, increased parental representation will be sought for the University Heights Charter School Board of Directors. We are proud of our current level of parent involvement and will seek to measure its growth as we expand to include Grades 3, 4, and 5 in the coming year.

**Non-Academic Goal #3: To encourage the physical growth and development, hygiene and health of students; including concerns relating to AIDS, STDs, sexuality, and violence.**

**Objective 3A.** All students will receive regular health exams and health care referrals.

**Objective 3B.** An age appropriate health education curriculum will be developed and implemented.

Students were afforded physical growth, development and movement opportunities through regularly scheduled physical education classes. Each class was provided 3 days of physical education within a six day cycle. In the upcoming school year while physical activity is important, greater emphasis will be placed on health education because child obesity and juvenile diabetes is more rampant than ever. It is incumbent that we determine what we can do as educators, knowing that we cannot replace medical doctors, and combat excessive weight gain amongst our students.

## **2. REVIEW OF PROGRESS: INCORPORATING THE NJCCCS, DELIVERING AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM LEADING TO HIGH ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL STUDENTS**

### **Incorporation of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards**

#### **Summary of Curriculum Development Progress.**

During the first year of University Heights Charter School's existence, the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards were introduced to staff for incorporation into lesson plans. The novice staff, primarily composed of former preschool teachers, had to learn curriculum content in all subject areas. Curriculum alignment would have to be addressed after content mastery was evidenced. This fact alone suspended the anticipation of "unpacking" the standards or identifying the 'power standards' or any progressive undertaking such as Curriculum Mapping.

Curriculum Development took the form of formulating an understanding, and therefore respect, of pacing. Curriculum Development in-services provided support in the delivery of a quality educational program to ensure the acquisition of knowledge fostering the level of achievement expected of University Heights Charter School students. Curriculum Development involved reading literature that clarified the word, what it "is" and what it "is not."

An innovative practice for Professional Development delivery was implemented. Professional Development assumed the form of an internal, on-site, verses external, off-site, model. Three approaches were provided to maximize opportunity for teachers to learn from their peers and from their administrator.

First, all teachers received Professional Development prior to the opening of school in the content areas of Open Court Reading, EveryDay Math, Handwriting Without Tears, Character Education and Responsive Classroom. The second opportunity for Professional Development was on a monthly basis. On the third Saturday of each month, instructional staff convened for “Saturday Academy.” Saturday Academies began in September and ended in March. During the seven months of implementation, teacher education was provided in areas where there were observed deficiencies. Professional Development topics included the following:

1. STC Mathematics
2. “Hands-On” Learning and Instruction
3. Differentiated Instruction
4. Cooperative Learning
5. Effective Classroom Management Skills
6. Guided Reading & Literacy Stations
7. Responsive Classroom/Guided Discovery

The last approach to Professional Development was achieved on a weekly basis during common planning time, also termed “grade level” meetings. Teachers met with the Principal to discuss classroom issues and concerns unique to the specific grade level. During this fundamental use of time, teachers would often discuss student referrals, instructional content, pacing of the curriculum and classroom management issues.

As University Heights Charter School prepares to expand to Grade 5 in the 2007-2008 school year, in order to meet the school’s mission and achieve its academic goals, careful consideration would have to be accorded teacher identification and the appropriate model of Professional Development for the incoming staff.

Careful attention has been given to the selection of qualified teachers for the upcoming school year. Teachers were identified who possessed experience in elementary education, advanced degrees in education, mastery of content specific to the grade level being considered and demonstrated excellence in classroom management skills.

A new Professional Development model, resembling the “traditional” model, will be implemented. Teachers will receive off-site PD in the primary content areas prior to the beginning of the school year. Thereafter, ongoing PD will be provided once per month after school and once per week during the course of the school day. All on-site PD will be offered by the Reading Specialist, Math Specialist, Dean of Students and Principal. It is anticipated that having experienced elementary teachers on staff who will be able to turnkey rudimentary pedagogy and content, will enable the Principal to introduce the concept of Curriculum Mapping.

## **Delivery of an Educational Program Leading to High Achievement for All Students**

### **Delivery of Services to At-Risk Students**

University Heights Charter School anticipates that many of its students are inherently at-risk by association with the urban environment in which the school is an integral part. As such, the school program is designed to accommodate the needs of a 100% at-risk student body.

The School's design is particularly applicable to the needs of at-risk students: active in-depth learning, attention to development, appreciation of diversity, opportunities for collaborative learning, collective perspective across the school, structures for caring, connections to family and community and the use of technology as a tool for learning and communication. The School is designed with a child-centered focus, small class sizes, individual attention to each student, and high level active learning experiences.

In-class support is provided to at risk students by a Reading/Math Interventionist teacher. Additionally the classroom teacher is expected to differentiate instruction, scaffold instruction and offer instruction using various learning modalities specific to the learner. These strategies all support meeting the needs of at-risk students and those students in at-risk situations. At-risk children and those children in at-risk situations are included in all regular classroom activities, with support as needed.

Students At-Risk of Failure are classified as such through the process of qualifying for the Department of Agriculture's "free and reduced" lunch program. Students are also identified as at-risk according to previous school records. In the absence of this data, a new criterion was necessarily established.

An at-risk student was any student who failed to engage in the learning process on a consistent basis, including excessive tardiness and/or absences. An at-risk student was any student who manifested discipline issues warranted administrative intervention. Finally, an at-risk student was any student who scored below the academic goal of 75% on the mid-year assessment. Observations by the classroom teacher also played an integral part in the identification process. The School will respond to the needs of at risk students by providing a highly personal learning environment that promotes the belief that ALL children can learn. Tutoring and remediation will be provided as needed. Counseling and referrals for other services will also be available as needed for children and families in crisis.

### **Innovative/Exemplary Programs and Practices**

An exemplary curriculum component for the 2006-2007 school years has been the school wide implementation of Responsive Classroom (RC). Developed by the Northeast Foundation for Children, RC provides classroom strategies to help students reach their full potential through social and academic learning throughout the school day. For teachers, Responsive Classroom offers tools and techniques for creating a learning community that reflects all that we value in a democracy.

There are Seven Guiding Principles of Responsive Classroom. They are as follows:

1. The social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum.
2. How children learn is as important as what they learn.
3. The greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interaction
4. Children need to learn cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy and self-control in order to succeed academically and socially.
5. Knowing the children we teach is as important as knowing the content we teach.
6. Knowing the students' parents/guardians helps us know the students.
7. A healthy adult school community provides the best model for excellence.

Through the lenses of a responsive classroom, we were able to see Character Education in operation. Students are engaged in active learning, experimentation, problem solving and risk taking. Students take turns without arguing, pouting or quitting. Conflict resolution is achieved through talking and reaching mutually acceptable decisions without name-calling or hurtful behavior. Teachers ask open ended questions. Small learning groups are created where all are welcome to join. Teachers provide choices in learning. Everyone CARES which is an acronym for cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy and self-control.

There are 6 Components of Responsive Classroom. They include Morning Meeting, Rules and Logical Consequences, Guided Discovery, Academic Choice, Classroom Organization and Family Communication Strategies. In the first year of University Heights' existence, the focus was primarily on the implementation of Morning Meeting.

The goals of Morning Meeting are to build community, cultivate friendliness and genuine interest in one another, model CARES, merge social and academic learning and build a positive classroom climate. From 9:00 am to 9:30 am each morning, all classes, school wide, were expected to conduct morning meeting.

In classrooms where morning meeting was successfully implemented, where morning meeting was sequentially and routinely practiced each morning, there was great impact. The Principal often observed students and teacher sitting in a circle, students and teacher giving eye contact to the person speaking, and students and teacher listening carefully and respectfully. During morning meeting students exhibited self control, unlike at other parts of the day during instructional time in the classroom.

In the 2007-2008 school year, Responsive Classroom Morning Meeting will continue to be implemented school wide. To further the social curriculum, Rules and Logical Consequences and Academic Choice will also be introduced.

### 3. REVIEW OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

#### Board of Trustees

The University Heights Charter School Board of Trustees' major accomplishments are evidenced in the critical policies and resolutions adopted during the 2006-2007 academic year. The resolutions passed by the 2006-2007 school board pertained to the following:

1. School Discipline Policy
2. Affirmative Action Committee
3. Comprehensive Equity Plan
4. Corrective Action Plan
5. 2006-2007 Annual Report
6. Lead Person

The school charter requires a nine (9) voting member Board of Trustees, formed with at least three (3) members being parent/guardians of children enrolled at University Heights Charter School. In addition, the charter requires that there are three (3) non-voting members consisting of the Principal, the Business Administrator and a Teacher Representative selected by the school's teachers. The school charter states officers will consist of a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.

The Board of Trustees is not currently operating at full strength. There are eight (8) members who comprise the Board of Trustees, seven (7) of whom are voting members.

**Richard W. Roper**, founder and president of the Roper Group, a public policy consulting firm specializing in economic and social policy research and evaluation, has had a 30-year career in public affairs. He has held senior levels positions in local, state, regional, and federal government agencies and has experience in nonprofit organizations and academic research, teaching, and administration. Mr. Roper is a voting member of the Board of Trustees.

**Ollie Washington** worked for over 30 years for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the Social Security Administration. When she retired she was the Assistant Regional Commissioner for Programs in the Chicago Regional Office. Ms. Washington was born and raised in Newark, N.J. so that when she retired she returned to her home state. She has a keen interest in education so when she retired she began substituting in the Newark Public Schools. She enjoys traveling and will continue to pursue this and other interests. Ms. Washington is a non-voting member of the Board of Trustees.

**C. Lawrence Crump** has been a board member of the University Heights Charter School since January 2005. He is the lead attorney in the newly opened Newark office for the law firm of Cooper Levenson. He is a life-long resident of Newark and a graduate of Morehouse College and Rutgers School of Law. He clerked for the Honorable F. Michael Giles in Essex County and currently specializes in Real Estate, Zoning, Land Use, Personal Injury and Worker's Compensation. He is a Fellow with Project Leadership, a United Way program, and is a graduate of Leadership-Newark. He is a member of the Garden State Bar and New Jersey Bar Associations and the former president of the Northern New Jersey Morehouse College Alumni Chapter. Mr. Crump is a voting member of the Board of Trustees.

**Raymond Ocasio** is the Executive Director of La Casa de Don Pedro, Inc., a Newark, New Jersey community based development organization. Mr. Ocasio is actively involved in local, citywide and state initiatives. He is the board member and former chair of Leadership Newark, an organization fostering informed civic engagement. In the housing and community development arena, Mr. Ocasio is member and ex-officio board member of the Newark Community Development Network and board member of the NJ Housing and Community Development Network. He has provided leadership on municipal issues related to City's master plan, community planning, "community schools", and contributed to the work of the Downtown Redevelopment Blue Ribbon Committee as well as the New Jersey's Governor Corzine Transition Committee for Revitalizing and Investing in Communities. On children's issues, he is active with the Early Childhood Coalition of Newark, the Newark Advocates for Children Committee, United New Jersey and the Coalition for Our Children's Schools, in addition to others. He is former Trustee of Ramapo College of New Jersey, while remaining active as an adviser to the Cornwall Institute of Rutgers University and a Board member of NJ Citizen Action. Mr. Ocasio has been a board member of University Height Charter School since January 2005 and served as a member of the formation group. Mr. Ocasio is a voting member of the Board of Trustees.

**Gareth Malebranche Zamba** states "It has been an honor for me to be on the board of University Heights Charter School since January 2005. I have resided in Newark since 1989, and am a member of the Bethany Baptist Church but am not an officer. I am a pharmacist by profession who is certainly concerned with the welfare and education of all children." Mrs. Zamba is a voting member of the Board of Trustees.

**Debra D Beauford** states "I've lived in Newark New Jersey for the past 14 years. I am married with two school aged children. I am a founder and Board Member of University Heights Charter School since January 2005. My daughter Mattie attended University Heights Charter School (UHCS) and completed the 2nd grade. Prior to that she attended Bethany Abbott Pre-K 4 program, which is how I became involved with the establishment of UHCS. I work in the Financial Industry as a Global Systems Training Administrator. I am a very involved parent and have always been when it came to the education of my children." Mrs. Beauford is a voting member of the Board of Trustees.

At least three (3) parent/guardians of children enrolled at University Heights Charter School are in the process of becoming new board members for the 2007-2008 school year. A nominating committee consisting of three Trustees appointed by the President is slated to review applications and nominate parent/guardians for membership.

To date, new board members have not been added since the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year. Last September, at the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year, all board members received Professional Development in Character Education. This September the Board of Trustees will attend board member training at the Forrestal Center.

It is difficult to anticipate the myriad of issues the Board of Trustees will address in the near future. In the immediate future, however, the Board of Trustees will submit its books, records and memoranda to an annual audit by a disinterested certified public accountant who shall audit the same and render a report in writing to the Board of Trustees. Additionally, teacher contracts will require the board's attention at the next scheduled meeting.

### **School Administrators**

University Heights Charter School opened its doors in September 2006 without a Professional Development Plan. A formidable professional development program was soon developed and followed for all teachers. There were several positive aspects of the 2006–2007 professional development program.

Topics for professional development were directly aligned to improving the educational experience of all students while enhancing the professional attributes of the classroom teacher. All of the teachers, being former preschool teachers, were novices to Open Court Reading, Everyday Math and Carolina Biological Science. So, in addition to the need to be exposed to the components of the core curriculum, teachers also needed to learn why such components were selected, namely to produce the learning experiences espoused by such educational theorists as John Dewey, Carl Rogers and Howard Gardner. From Lucy Calkins' Writer's Workshop to maintaining classroom management based on Harry Wong's approach, topics were selected that would impact teacher performance and effect student performance as well.

Time allocated for professional development cultivated a nascent school culture and nurtured its commitment to excellence in classroom instruction and professionalism. Twice per month, teachers convened for professional development opportunities. Once per month, teachers met from 8:30-3:30 on Saturday for "Saturday Academy." A hands-on, interactive workshop was facilitated by the Principal. Teachers worked in small groups learning to effectively implement the core curriculum ensuring that the Core Curriculum Content Standards for the state of New Jersey were being met in each content area of instruction. Additionally, teachers met from 1:30 -3:30 on the third Thursday of each month for a "Literature Review." The Principal facilitated the review of literature, the reading necessary to support effective curriculum delivery and implementation. The First Days of School by Harry Wong, for example, was read by the staff, as was Literacy



Work Stations: Making Centers Work by Debbie Duller. Each teacher was assigned a chapter to lead colleagues in discussion.

The instructional model for professional development was internal, on-site, rather than external, off-site. The school principal identified areas of professional development needed for a new school, a novice staff and a nascent school culture. The majority of teachers were experienced in preschool, rather than elementary, models of instruction. Moreover, teachers were not experienced with elementary curriculum in any of the content areas. For this reason, all professional development experiences were designed to provide mastery in every content area for effective instruction, as all curriculum content being implemented in Grades K through 2 was new to the staff. When one reflects upon where the instructional staff began its educational journey in September, vis-a-vis where students culminated their educational journeys in June, end of the year test results reflect Professional Development positively impacted teacher performance and, consequently, student learning.

University Heights Charter School began the academic year with a bifurcated administrative structure, namely, a Principal and an Executive Director. In March, the administrative structure was consolidated in an effort to free up resources needed to strengthen the school's academic program. The Principal assumed full administrative and academic leadership of the school. The position of Executive Director was eliminated.

During this time of transition, the Board of Trustees also eliminated an Administrative Assistant, Program Manager and Food Service worker. The full-time Nurse position was reduced to a part-time position. Fortunately, no families transferred their children in the wake of these changes and 95% of our Kindergarten through Grade 2 students are returning in the fall.

#### **4. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES TO INVOLVE PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES**

##### **Parent and Community Involvement Activities and Outcomes**

###### **Outreach Procedures.**

Upon becoming a parent at University Heights Charter School, many opportunities are afforded parents to become involved in the school and in their child's education process. Parents learn of these opportunities when they attend "Parent Orientation," held in August, and "Back to School Night," held in September. The School is a center for learning, actively involving parents, students, teachers, and community members in an ongoing learning process. In the 2006-2007 school year parents have been able to participate in the following school-based activities:

- Share information with a student or class about a hobby;
- Help coach an athletic team;
- Help put out a school or classroom newsletter (can also be done at home);
- Help sew or paint a display;
- Help build something
- Help students work on a final exhibition or project
- Help answer the school's phone;
- Help plan a theme-based presentation for students;
- Help present a theme-based program for students;
- Share a particular expertise with faculty
- Help students plan a project to beautify the outside of the school;
- Help coach students competing in an academic competition
- Go on a local field trip with a teacher and a group of student
- Serve on a particular school committee
- Help organize a parent organization for the school;
- Help design a parent or student survey for the school;
- Help conduct and or tabulate results of a parent survey regarding the school
- Go to a school board meeting to advocate for the school;
- Provide transportation to a parent/teacher conference for a parent who needs a ride;
- Writing an article for publication in a magazine about the school's activities
- Donate materials to the school
- Help with a fundraiser for the school
- Help write, publish and distribute a list of parenting tips.

Thus far, parent involvement has been relatively successful. "When schools, families, and communities work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more." That's one finding of a January 2003 report from the National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Research also shows that a good school has strong and professional administrators and teachers, an ongoing assessment system that supports good instruction and a high level of parent and community involvement and support. At University Heights Charter School, we are not striving to be good; we are striving to be excellent. For this reason our door stands open to welcome increased parent involvement in all facets of the school community. The addition of three (3) parents to the Board of Trustees will communicate the importance of parent involvement and foster their engagement on a level that has not been evidenced heretofore.

There are no rigid or prescribed procedures for parent or community involvement. The Board of Trustees and Principal welcome parents and community partners to enrich the University Heights Charter School community. During the past school year the local fire department came for Fire Prevention Week. Members of the Police Department visited for an assembly on Crime and Safety. Rita's Water Ice donated food products to our end

of year school party. Our school web-site, [www.uhcsnewark.org](http://www.uhcsnewark.org), was designed by a vested community member.

Parents organized the fall and Spring Scholastic Book Fair while another parent sponsored a monthly “Movie Night” and raised money for transportation for our school wide trip to Jersey City’s Liberty State Park to receive the New Jersey School Clean –Up award. Additionally, University Heights Charter School has forged partnerships with St. Vincent’s Academy and St. Benedict’s Academy whereby high school senior provide mentoring support during the school day to our students in Grades K-2.

Parents, board members, teachers, community members and administration were collectively involved in the first annual Strategic Planning Session held in June. The participants met in various focus groups to strategize and plan for the upcoming 2007-2008 and beyond. The focus groups included:

- Curriculum and Assessment
- Parental Involvement
- Community Partnerships
- Technology Development
- Policies and Procedures
- Professional Development

These are a few examples of parent and community involvement. In the coming year, we anticipate even greater school based participation by a wider range of participants which we will begin to follow more closely. With the help of the Performance Excellence Group, we plan to track the rate of increased parent and community involvement over time. By so doing, we will be able to measure the growing level of parent and community involvement, as well as parent satisfaction and community interest.

### **Parent Satisfaction**

Parent feedback was formally obtained after the second and fourth marking periods of the school year. A parent survey was conducted in the fall. The survey revealed parents were primarily concerned with the After School program.

Initially in September, the Executive Director introduced the After School program with such activities as Karate, Creative Movement and Piano Lessons. The Executive Director discontinued those activities in November when she determined they could not be maintained in the current school budget.

Additionally, there seemed to be a faction of parents who verbally expressed that their children were not being “challenged” by the curriculum. The Board of Trustees responded by forming a Curriculum Committee that met weekly to begin, then monthly,

to monitor the Principal and the delivery of instruction. When the matter of curriculum was presented to the Board of Trustees, three (3) parents, each and officer of the Parents Encouraging Teachers and Students (PETS) organization, supported one another in their curriculum concerns. Mid-year assessment scores revealed, however, that students were being appropriately “challenged” and in some cases the curriculum was too challenging for our students. The students who did seem to need additional challenge, namely those who scored 75% or greater in Reading/Language Arts and Math on the Mid-Year Assessment, were placed in our Gifted and Talented Program.

The total enrollment in our Gifted and Talented program for the 2006-2007 school year was twelve (12) students, or 15% of our Grade 1 and Grade 2 student population. Next year, the criteria for entry into the Gifted and Talented Program is a score of 80% or greater on the End of Year Assessment. At University Heights Charter School we will continue to “raise the bar,” challenging every student in accordance with his/her demonstrated academic ability and observable intelligence.

In the final analysis, one can safely assert that parents are pleased with the academic curriculum and overall school environment at University Heights Charter School. The 95% student return rate for the 2007-2008 school year supports such a conclusion. Our growing waiting lists in Grades K-4 also points to parents spreading the word that University Heights Charter School is impacting the educational landscape in the city of Newark.

### **Parent Information**

Parents are notified of school information in various ways depending upon level of urgency. In May, University Heights Charter School launched its school website. Information is posted here for parents with internet access. Direct mail is another communication tool, as is the telephone. In the event of an emergency school closing due to inclement weather, all parents are systematically notified by telephone. Information that is of a more sensitive nature is communicated at the monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees. The University Charter School Annual Report will be shared at the September board meeting, posted on our website where interested parties can download a copy, and a copy maintained in the main office for public review.

### **Training/Support**

During the course of the school year, parents were offered training to increase their understanding of the school’s academic curriculum. “Curriculum Nights” offered training to all parents in the hope of facilitating their support in their child’s educational development at University Heights Charter School. Parent training/support was offered in the instructional components of Open Court Reading. “Hands-On” training was also offered in EveryDay Math and STC Science. Curriculum Nights will be offered to parents of all students in Grades K-5 in the first and second quarters of the 2007-2008 school year.

## **Plans**

The parent and community level of interest in University Heights Charter School is perceived to be high, however, there is still room for growth. With the planned addition of three (3) parents to the Board of Trustees, it is anticipated in anticipated more parent engagement will ensue. Community members will be leveraged to support the school financially which is sure to heighten awareness of the school's presence in the community. With the help of the Performance Excellence Group, we look forward to monitoring and measuring the increased parent and community involvement anticipated in the emerging school year.

## **Public Relations and Outreach Activities and Outcomes**

### **Public Relations/Engagement and Partnerships**

During the 2006-2007 school year, there were few public relations activities. Prior to the beginning of school, there was an "Ice Cream Social" which allowed new students and parents to come to the school and meet one another. During the school year, there were Curriculum Nights, and Back to School Nights, however, there were no press releases, or media coverage for these school based events. A newsletter was distributed bi-monthly and a school brochure is being developed for the upcoming school year. There is a proposed partnership on the horizon with a Newark based company.

The expansion of University Heights Charter School to Grade 5 will encompass the addition of Media Center. Unlike traditional "libraries" with stacks of books, which we will also have, our Media Center will be more streamlined because its content will primarily be audible.

A pioneer in the industry, Audible Inc. invented the first networked digital audio player in 1995. Audible Inc. is the Internet's leading provider of audio entertainment, information, and educational programming. Executives at Audible have expressed an interest in providing a state of the art Media Center for University Heights Charter School. The Media Center will not only be a place for students to read books, they will also be able to listen to them. Students of all ages possess unique learning styles. Using audio as a delivery modality in conjunction with the written word has proven to be an effective partnership for auditory and visual learners. Students will be able to download and listen to the spoken word to develop reading and study skills, improve comprehension and expand one's knowledge base. We look forward to working with Audible Inc. in bringing this project to fruition.

## **5. DESCRIPTION OF STUDENT AND STAFF RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES**

### **Admissions Policies**

The University Heights Charter School shall be open to all students from Kindergarten to Grade 5 on a space available basis and shall not discriminate in its admission policies or practices on the basis of intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, status as a handicapped person, proficiency in the English language, or any other basis that would be illegal if used by a charter school.

Admission will be determined by age. In accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:11-4.6, a Kindergarten student must be 5 years of age on or before **October 1<sup>st</sup>** to be considered for admission. A 1st grade student must be 6 years of age on or before October 1<sup>st</sup> to be considered for admission. Completion of Kindergarten in privately sponsored programs will not qualify a child for first grade unless the age requirement is met.

A certificate of the child's birth will be required as evidence of age. The legal evidences of age, in order of preference, are as follows:

1. Certificate of birth;
2. Baptismal certificate;
3. Passport;
4. Immigrant certificate.

The Principal is responsible for verifying each applicant's eligibility for admission to school according to the following criteria and procedures:

1. Initial entrance into kindergarten or first grade shall be according to administrative regulations.
2. Residence shall be established at the time of admission, checked periodically by the following:
  - a) Legal home address of parent guardian.
  - b) Evidence of domicile or residence will be required of each parent or guardian, established by appropriate documentation.

### **Immunization**

The University Heights Charter School requires that every child who enters school produces a certificate of immunization for all necessary inoculations.

Preference for enrollment shall be given to students who reside in the Newark Public School District in which this charter school will be located. If there are more applicants to enroll in the University Heights Charter School than there is space available, the students will be selected by lottery held in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:11-4.4. The school shall allow any student who was enrolled in the school in the immediately preceding school year to enroll in the charter school in the appropriate grade. The school shall give enrollment priority to a sibling of a student enrolled in the charter school.

Any student whose parents or guardians have moved from the school district during the school year can be authorized to attend the University Heights Charter School until the conclusion of the school year at the discretion of the Principal and approval of the Board of Trustees.

### **Admissions Timeline and Recruitment Activities**

If there are fewer applicants than the number of spaces available, the School will initiate an intensive outreach program until all spaces are filled. An intensive outreach was conducted for students in Grades Kindergarten, 4 and 5 for the upcoming 2007-2008 school year. Students were recruited on the school's website where parents could download applications and submit them online. The school advertised enrollment opportunities on the local Cablevision channel. Flyers were distributed at movie theatres. The school provided local churches inserts for Sunday bulletins. The best outreach of all was that performed by 95% of our parents who have re-enrolled their children at University Heights Charter School for the upcoming 2007-2008 school year.

Because there were more applicants than spaces available in the incoming Kindergarten class, a lottery process was conducted in January. Applicants were assigned a number. The number was recorded on equal slips of paper, placed in a box and drawn at random from the box. The drawing was publicly held with all interested parents/caregivers invited.

Although there was a lottery process conducted for the incoming Kindergarten class, the waiting list for Kindergarten and Grades 1,2,3 and 4 continues to grow. Enrollment opportunities are still available for students in Grade 5 as parents may be reluctant to remove a child from the current educational institution for a year's matriculation since University Heights Charter School does not currently have a 6<sup>th</sup> Grade class.

The admission policy for all grades is designed to be inclusive. University Heights Charter School makes a strong effort to enroll students who are representative of all of Newark's diverse groups. The strategy for publicizing the application process ensures that all parents and students are made aware of the school.

An "Open House" is scheduled each spring where visitors are invited to see what the school is like. An application packet is distributed to prospective families. A parent/student interview is scheduled when indicated. A questionnaire is utilized to determine appropriate placement in the school. All parents in grades K-5 and students in grades 3-5 sign a contract promising commitment to the school's behavioral and academic standards.

The school employs formal, newspaper, flyers, public service announcements, and informal networking methods of publicizing the school. All applications are accepted, dated and evaluated. Although Newark's population is predominantly minority, the UHCS will encourage all district students in grades K-5 regardless of racial or academic factors to apply for admission.

The application process is designed to ensure that race, religion, gender and academic ability, are never considered as part of the admission process.

**Admissions Results**

The following chart highlights enrollment data for the 2006-2007 school year. A retention rate of 95% for the first year is encouraging. The data for the 2007-2008 also speaks volumes for the positive foundation that was established which University Heights will strive to build upon in its second year of operation with Grades K-5, the full compliment of grades according to the charter.

| <b>Student Enrollment Data</b> |  |  |                       |
|--------------------------------|--|--|-----------------------|
| <b>Academic Year 2006-2007</b> |  |  |                       |
| <b>Grade</b>                   | <b>Students Enrolled<br/>2006-2007</b> | <b>Student<br/>Returning<br/>2007-2008</b> | <b>Retention Rate</b> |
| K                              | 38                                     | 37   | 97%                   |
| 1                              | 39                                     | 37   | 95%                   |
| 2                              | 40                                     | 38   | 95%                   |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>117</b>                             | <b>112</b>                                 |                       |

| <b>Student Enrollment Data</b> |  |                                   |                     |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Academic Year 2007-2008</b> |  |                                   |                     |
| <b>Grade</b>                   | <b>Students Enrolled<br/>2007-2008</b> | <b>Anticipated<br/>Enrollment</b> | <b>Waiting List</b> |
| K                              | 40                                     | 40                                | Yes                 |
| 1                              | 40                                     | 40                                | Yes                 |
| 2                              | 40                                     | 40                                | Yes                 |
| 3                              | 40                                     | 40                                | Yes                 |
| 4                              | 40                                     | 40                                | Yes                 |
| 5                              | 23                                     | 40                                | No                  |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>223</b>                             | <b>240</b>                        |                     |



**Student Withdrawals and Exit Interviews**

Unfortunately, students do leave the University Heights Charter School family. The reasons vary from changes to the student’s family and/or geographical location to parents being dissatisfied with the level of attention being given to their child’s perceived ability level. It is important that the school addresses and records the reasons for each student’s exit.

An “exit interview” is scheduled with the parent(s) and the Principal. Students in grades 4 and 5 may also attend. All information is recorded on the form below. This form becomes a part of the student’s permanent school file. Additionally, the form is filed in the main office with all separation data. Separation data, for example, number of students who withdrew, reasons for their withdrawal and parent comments, are maintained for future disaggregation of data.

| Student Separation Data        |                | Reason: Check all that apply.      |       |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|-------|
| <b>Academic Year 2007-2008</b> |                |                                    |       |
| Date of Separation             | Student's Name | Family relocation                  | _____ |
|                                |                | Did not meet family's expectations | _____ |
|                                |                | Unmet academic expectations        | _____ |
|                                |                | Unmet behavioral expectations      | _____ |
|                                |                | Other                              | _____ |
|                                |                |                                    | _____ |
|                                |                |                                    | _____ |

**Staff Recruitment**  
**Recruitment Results**

For the 2006-2007 school year, the Executive Director recommended five (5) pre-existing teachers, two (2) instructional aides, and hired two (2) new teachers. The Principal met the staff in August. During this time, the Principal interviewed and hired the Special Education teacher. Of the ten (10) instructional staff who began the 2006-2007 school year, five (5) were retained, a retention rate of 50%. The problems encountered were primarily due to a lack of instructional experience and a lack of classroom management skills at the elementary level.

### **Exit Interview Procedures and Data**

Each teacher was individually informed of whether or not their contract would be renewed by the Board of Trustees. Reasons for separation were also discussed. All data on the five (5) teachers who were not retained for the 2007-2008 school year remains on file for future reference.

## **6. REVIEW OF THE SCHOOL'S SELF-EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN (SEAP)**

### **Self-Evaluation and Accountability Plan**

#### **Description of Major Areas of Self-Evaluation**

The 2006-2007 school year was fraught with unanticipated changes. There has been little time for reflection or self-evaluation. In the fall, the Performance Excellence Group, led by Ken Biddle, will assist University Heights Charter School in completing its self-evaluation process and accountability plan.

Biddle brings a rich background in quality practices from his experiences as a management consultant who specialized in process management and performance excellence. As the founder and president of the Performance Excellence Group, LLC, Ken specializes in organizational assessments and performance improvement. He has provided training and consultation to an impressive list of clients including GE Capital Services, US West Wireless Communications, Department of Veteran Affairs, City of Philadelphia, and the New York State Department of Social Services.

Biddle will be contracted to closely work with the Board of Trustees, administrative staff, teaching staff and parents to track the progress of University Heights Charter School toward the achievement of its mission, goals and objectives. University Heights Charter School has embarked upon a journey towards excellence.