

REVISED – MARCH 10, 2006

2005-2006 No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon Schools Program

U.S. Department of Education

Cover Sheet Type of School: (Check all that apply) Elementary Middle High K-12 Charter

Name of Principal Ms. Elaine J. Schwartz
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name The Center School MS243
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 270 West 70 Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address)

New York New York 10023
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County New York State School Code Number* 3-103=000-10243
Telephone (212) 678-2791 Fax (212) 579-9728

Website/URL http://www.thecenterschool.org E-mail eschwar@nycboe.net

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Ms. Judi Aronson
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Community School District 3, Manhattan Tel. (212) 678-2800

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Elizabeth Shell
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

[Include this page in the school's application as page 2.]

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades K-12. (Schools with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has not been in school improvement status or been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's adequate yearly progress requirement in the 2005-2006 school year.
3. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, it has foreign language as a part of its core curriculum.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2000 and has not received the 2003, 2004, or 2005 *No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools Award*.
5. The nominated school or district is not refusing the OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
6. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if the OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
7. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school, or the school district as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
8. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district: 20 Elementary schools
 12 Middle schools
 _____ Junior high schools
 _____ High schools
 _____ Other

 32 TOTAL
2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: \$9547.00

 Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: \$10,802.00

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
 Suburban
 Small city or town in a rural area
 Rural
4. 22 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.
 _____ If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?
5. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK				7	24	26	50
K				8	17	26	43
1				9			
2				10			
3				11			
4				12			
5	28	29	57	Other			
6	23	21	44				
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL →							194

[Throughout the document, round numbers to avoid decimals.]

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the students in the school: 51% White
 23% Black or African American
 19% Hispanic or Latino
 7% Asian/Pacific Islander
 0% American Indian/Alaskan Native
100% Total

Use only the five standard categories in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of the school.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 0 %

[This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.]

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	0
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	0
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	0
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1	194
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	0

8. Limited English Proficient students in the school: 2 %
2 Total Number Limited English Proficient

Number of languages represented: 2
 Specify languages:

Spanish, Hebrew

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 52 %

Total number students who qualify: 97

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or the school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: $\frac{15}{29}$ % Total Number of Students Served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u> </u> Autism	<u> </u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u> </u> Deafness	<u> </u> Other Health Impaired
<u> </u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>22</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u> </u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>8</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u> </u> Hearing Impairment	<u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u> </u> Mental Retardation	<u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities	

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

Number of Staff

	<u>Full-time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>1</u>	<u> </u>
Classroom teachers	<u>12</u>	<u> </u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u> </u>	<u>1</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>1</u>	<u> </u>
Support staff	<u>2</u>	<u> </u>
Total number	<u>16</u>	<u>1</u>

12. Average school student-“classroom teacher” ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers: 17

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. The student dropout rate is defined by the state. The student drop-off rate is the difference between the number of entering students and the number of exiting students from the same cohort. (From the same cohort, subtract the number of exiting students from the number of entering students; divide that number by the number of entering students; multiply by 100 to get the percentage drop-off rate.) Briefly explain in 100 words or fewer any major discrepancy between the dropout rate and the drop-off rate. Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates and only high schools need to supply drop-off rates.

	2004-2005	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	N/A	N/A
Daily teacher attendance	91%	92%	94	N/A	N/A
Teacher turnover rate	0%	0%	0%	%	%
Student dropout rate (middle/high)	0%	0%	0%	%	%
Student drop-off rate (high school)	%	%	%	%	%

N/A – This data is unavailable.

PART III – SUMMARY

Visitors often notice that during breaks between classes The Center School is noisy and energetic; children fill up every inch of space in the halls. These five active minutes allow children to stay focused during classes, and meet the inescapable adolescent need for frequent physical activity. That is where The Center School begins – with the needs of the children.

The middle school age group is unique. Students' thinking is developing from the concrete to the abstract and they are caught up with the power of their new ability to conceptualize, but this does not happen in every discipline at the same time. Interage grouping provides the opportunity for students to leap ahead when they are ready and to take their time when they are not. It also allows children to exercise a newly emerging social perspective and gain a more complex view of the world. Adolescents develop and test out personal standards in a setting where they can see where they are going, and from where they have come.

Adolescence is not easy. These children are struggling with puberty and new emotions, and they are desperate for peer approval and acceptance. As they struggle to establish a new value system, they constantly check their self image. Each child has an advisor to provide a caring relationship to nurture this uneven growth. All classes, except Mathematics and Latin are interage grouped and include children in grades 5 through 8. This builds a strong community.

The Center School has a theater arts program which is woven into the curriculum. Participation in school shows during the year is required. The goal is not to make little "Annies" or "Olivers." Theater is used to make the children feel more comfortable with their bodies and themselves.

The community is all of us. Students run the office by answering the phone, taking messages, and running errands. They feel that the school is "their school." Almost one half of the children in the school qualify for free lunch, and the population is a microcosm of the city.

All of this is crucial but learning is what The Center School is about. We provide a rich academic life: good literature to read, myriad opportunities to write, and occasions to think deeply. We want the children to feel that they are in control of their education, and we recognize the importance of the motto which hangs in the office:

"Learning is likely to be more effective if it grows out of what interests the learner." This sign hangs in a prominent position in a jumbled office that bustles with activity and serves as the heart of the school. All indicators point to the main philosophy of the school -- that we want all students to feel that they are in control of their education. The Center School starts with the needs of children and is constantly focused on the means to meet these needs. We provide a rich academic life with good literature to read, opportunity to think and express your thoughts, and a myriad of ways to express yourself through art, drama, and writing. Recognizing the special needs of adolescents and their struggle with puberty and emotions, the staff tries to help them develop a sense of their own value system.

** More about The Center School can be found in Clara Hemphill's book, [Public Middle Schools, New York City's Best.](#)

PART IV – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results

The Center School's eighth grade is the only grade that was part of the State assessment. In the 2005-06 academic year all four grades will be part of the state assessment. Prior to this the testing was done by the city.

In New York State there are four levels of standards.

Level 1 – Students with serious academic deficiencies

Level 2 - Students who need extra help

Level 3 - Students who meet the standards

Level 4 – Exceed the standards

These standards, and The Center School's scores, can be accessed on the nyceboe.net website. The scores we can report upon here are the ones where we have access to the State Statistics.

The scores of The Center School's Eighth Grade show a clear trend. A majority of our students, in all ethnic and economic groups, are meeting or exceeding the state standards in both math and English. The subgroups breakdown is attached at the end of this application. The disparities are minimal and the school was selected by the American Cities Foundation as one of sixteen schools in the nation that has reduced the gap of achievement between minority students and white students.

A second trend that is clearly indicated by The Center School's high test scores is that the school is continuing to grow each year. Student scores have risen during each of the past four academic years in both math and English.

In addition to these clear trends, it is obvious from our test scores that our special education students are benefiting from our policy of full inclusion. Their scores, too, have risen during the past four academic years. Nearly half of the special education population scored in the third and fourth standards in the 2003-04 academic year on the State Math Test. This rose from 37% the previous year, and 9% the year before. Similar gains were made on the State ELA. In 2002-03 18% of the special education population scored in the third and fourth standard. The next year, the number rose to 42%.

PART IV – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

2. Using Assessment Results

The City and State issue individualized mathematics and reading reports that break down skills and concepts for each child. These are called GROW reports. Each advisor checks the reports for the children in the advisory. Any recognized needs are then recorded by the advisor and the information is shared with the teachers who work with the student.

Interim assessments are also distributed by the city and scored by Scantron. Results are on line for teachers and parents to see. Suggested lessons are built into the internet responses.

There are suggested strategies included in the report. More importantly, the teachers working with the children are aware of each child's particular needs, whether this is for enrichment or remediation. Lesson plans are devised to satisfy these needs. Small groups are formed based on the skills needed.

In addition to this, The Center School has an after school program that includes homework help, tutoring, and computers.

Each student in need, whether or not they are designated a child at risk, has a prepared intervention sheet. The sheet lists the deficiencies of that student and discusses a possible plan to help reduce the deficiency. These are re-evaluated every six weeks by the advisor after consultation with the teachers and the various service providers for the child. They are then revised.

Tests do not replace learning. The daily work and evaluation of the staff who can assess the progress of each child, tests, research papers, homework and general class work are the main tools that gauge the growth of the individual child.

PART IV – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

3. Communicating Assessment Results

We want students to understand that they are responsible for their own learning. During November, each student writes an assessment of his/her own work in each class. They are told to write about what they have learned and what they can do to improve their learning in each class. They are also asked to include what they do as contributors.

The teacher in each class reviews the report, writes a brief comment, and this report goes home. The advisor compiles the reports and adds a cover sheet summarizing the reports. The parent or guardian comes in and meets with the student and the advisor to review the report.

At the end of the trimester the teacher assesses the work of the student, and the student reacts in writing to what the teacher has said as part of the report.

In addition to the reports and conferences, parents can schedule a meeting with the advisor at any time.

Notices are sent home in bookbags and also e mailed on a Center School Yahoo group.

The Parent's Association and the School Leadership Team meet each month and the principal and a teacher sit in on the meetings and report on school activities.

The GROW Report which is generated for each student in both Reading and Mathematics is sent home with an explanation of its meaning to each home. The reports delineate strengths and weaknesses. The parent/guardian can follow the progress of the child through these reports, the school reports, and contact with the Advisor.

4. Sharing Success

The School is a member of a Community School District that shares information through the internet and the offices of the Community Superintendent.

Because The Center School scores so well on tests and is not a Gifted and Talented School, we have many visitors. Teacher's College brings groups of principals that are enrolled in the leadership program. Other educators from around the country also come because they have read about the school in Clara Hemphill's book, Public Middle Schools, New York City's Best.

We mentor approximately 20 student teachers each year and they too are able to bring information back to their peers and colleges and universities about our successes.

PART V – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum

The Center School is a fifth through eighth grade middle school. The core curriculum is based on the requirements of New York City and New York State.

The standards, as dictated by the State are followed, but the staff tends to aim higher than the posted standards. Classes are not tracked until 8th grade when some students take 9th grade mathematics and prepare to take the New York State Math A Regents examination.

The school operates on a trimester plan. Each student remains with the same Literature Group and the same Math group for the entire school year.

The mathematics curriculum is a four year curriculum. The scope and sequence is followed for all grades. The school is exempt from the standard math curriculum as directed by the NYC Department of Education, but not from the requirements imposed by the State Standards.

The English curriculum is divided into two sections. Each student meets in Literature Circles, which operate like Great Books discussion groups. Titles range from The Little Prince, to The Adventures of Huck Finn, to To Kill a Mockingbird. These meet twice a week. Writer's Workshops, which focus on general writing skills, vary in focus from Essay Writing to Poetry. Over the course of the school year, each student will study three different genres of writing.

The only foreign language we teach is Latin. Each student begins the study of Latin in 6th grade, and continues the study through 7th and 8th grade.

We do not have a Science Laboratory but we do offer an excellent science program. Each student has three different science concentrations each year for the four years they are with The Center School. When they graduate they have had twelve different sciences and a background considered as General Science as they move on to high school. Sciences cover a variety of subjects from Ichthyology to Botany to Evolution. The school has a greenhouse, which is incorporated into Botany and Hydroponic Gardening.

Social Studies is also based on a four year curriculum. The entering student will study a different area of history each year. They areas covered are United States History, from the beginning to 1860, United States History from 1860 to the present, Eastern Civilization and Western Civilization.

Art is offered one to three times each week depending on the individual student's schedule. Different genres are explored and trips to local Museums are used as inspiration.

PART V – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

2. English

To repeat, the English curriculum is divided into two sections. Each student meets in Literature Circles, which operate like Great Books discussion groups. Titles range from The Little Prince, to The Adventures of Huck Finn, to To Kill a Mockingbird. These meet twice a week. Writer's Workshops, which focus on general writing skills, vary in focus from Essay Writing to Poetry. Over the course of the school year, each student will learn three different genres of writing.

Small groups are incorporated into the schedule to help struggling learners. Sessions where a student is tutored one on one are also included in the schedule. In addition to these scheduled sessions, The Center School has a strong after school component that offers homework help and tutoring and is conducted by Center School staff.

Therefore, the teachers who work with the children and are aware of their needs are the ones who are working one on one with them as well. We also have access to GROW reports that are issued to each student following State and Citywide testing. These reports break down specific skills and focus on the needs of each student.

We have successfully brought up the reading level of approximately 85% of children who scored below state standards and are continuously working at further improving their skills. Time is also spent enriching the curriculum for all students so each one is stretched.

PART V – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

3. The Arts

The arts are incorporated into the entire curriculum under the direction of the art teacher, a theater arts staff, and the Director of the school. The positive use of the arts has a multiplier effect that is apparent in all areas. The discipline that is intrinsic in the arts carries over to the content area subjects.

- Through literature and social studies the children become familiar with multicultural contributions in all of the arts.
- Children attend a variety of arts activities, such as theater, concerts, and museums.
- Music theory is a required class for 2/3 of the school.
- In theater the children create and perform at least three times a year. In the process of the creation they use all school internet, and library resources.
- Children develop their own projects in Art using a variety of media including paints, watercolor, charcoal, papier mache, wood, tile, etc. They also study the history of art and visit local museums.
- Children receive basic and advanced voice training.
- They receive instruction in music history and appreciation.

All of the above standards are reflected in all areas of the curriculum. Work is placed in portfolios that reflect students' experiences. In addition, reports in art, theater, dance, music are issued with the regular reports sent home to all parents.

As a result of this focus on the arts, the children take greater pride in their work. Exhibits are held regularly where their work is displayed or their talents are expressed.

Multimedia projects that include photography, video, and computer will be introduced to the curriculum in content area classes, as well as in computer classes.

PART V – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

4. Instructional methods

The School's philosophy relies heavily on Dr. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and the staff uses areas of this that they feel most appropriate for their curricula.

The intelligences include

Linguistic intelligence, Naturalist intelligence, Intra and Interpersonal intelligence, Kinesthetic intelligence, Musical intelligence, Logic/Math intelligence, and Spatial intelligence.

Many classes use project-based learning activities that allow students to use multiple intelligences. These projects incorporate the arts as well as the content areas.

Classes also revolve around cooperative learning, and since all classes (except for Math and Latin) are mixed grades, this is built into the school's structure.

Teachers develop their own curriculum and, therefore, have ownership of it, take pride in its successes, and struggle with correcting it when necessary.

5. Professional Development

Professional Development has many different faces at The Center School. A variety of methods are incorporated.

- Outside consultants from the Department of Education
- Outside experts from local colleges and universities
- Formal courses taken by teachers
- Peer learning where materials from formal courses or workshops are shared
- Ongoing computer technology taught
- Teachers develop their own curricula
- Teachers collaborate to develop areas of study
- Teachers are mentors to students and constantly relearn as a result of that
- Teachers mentor each other
- Teachers travel to enrich their own background knowledge to use in our culturally diverse school

Our focus is to enrich learning for all of the students. The children who have trouble meeting the standards as dictated by New York State are a major concern. Much of the formal teacher training introduces us to new methods that are being used. We have significantly reduced the gap of achievement between our minority population and others. We were recognized by The American Cities Foundation as one of sixteen school who achieved this reduction.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

**The Center School (MS 243)
New York State Test: Mathematics
Grade 8**

	2005	2004	2003	2002
% At or Above Meets State Standards (Level 3 & 4)	91%	86%	84%	70%
% At Exceeds State Standards (Level 4)	28%	12%	25%	7%
15Number of Students Tested (All Students - General & Special Education)	47	43	51	43
Number of Students Alternatively Assessed	0	0	0	0
Percent of Students Alternatively Assessed	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES				
% Low Income Students At or Above Meets State Standards (Level 3 & 4)	79%	75%	73%	N/A
Number of Low Income Students Tested	14	16	15	N/A
% At Exceeds State Standards (Level 4)	0	19%	0%	
% Black Students At or Above Meets State Standards (Level 3 & 4)	85%	80%	80%	N/A
Number of Black Students Tested	13	5	15	N/A
% At Exceeds State Standards (Level 4)	15%	0%	14%	
% White Students At or Above Meets State Standards (Level 3&4)	100%	89%	92%	N/A
Number of White Students Tested	22	28	25	N/A
% At Exceeds State Standards (Level 4)	50%	18%	40%	
% Hispanic Students At or Above Meets State Standards (Level 3 & 4)	89%	60%	82%	N/A
Number of Hispanic Students Tested	9	5	11	N/A
% At Exceeds State Standards (Level 4)	NA	NA	18%	

N/A - This data is unavailable.

The Center School (MS 243)
New York State Test: ELA(English Language)
Grade 8

	2005	2004	2003	2002
% At or Above Meets State Standards (Level 3 & 4)	85%	84%	65%	56%
% At Exceeds State Standards (Level 4)	45%	31%	20%	
Number of Students Tested (All Students - General & Special Education)	47	43	51	43
Number of Students Alternatively Assessed	0	0	0	0
Percent of Students Alternatively Assessed	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES				
% Low Income Students At or Above Meets State Standards (Level 3 & 4)	71%	44%	50%	N/A
At Exceeds State Standards (Level 4)	21%	19%	0	
Number of Low Income Students Tested	14	16	26	N/A
% Black Students At or Above Meets State Standards (Level 3 & 4)	77%	67%	73%	N/A
At Exceeds State Standards (Level 4)	46%	0%	7%	
Number of Black Students Tested	13	6	15	N/A
% White Students At or Above Meets State Standards (Level 3 & 4)	100%	93%	77%	N/A
At Exceeds State Standards (Level 4)	60%	46%	41%	
Number of White Students Tested	22	28	22	N/A
% Hispanic Students At or Above Meets State Standards (Level 3 & 4)	67%	20%	33%	N/A
Number of Hispanic Students Tested	9	5	11	N/A
At Exceeds State Standards (Level 4)	NA	NA	9%	
% Asian Students At or Above Meets State Standards (Level 3 & 4)	67%	100%	40%	N/A
Number of Asian Students Tested	3	4	5	N/A

N/A - This data is unavailable.