



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

2014-15 School Evaluation Report

University Prep Charter High School

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INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report presents the school's 2013-14 Performance Review and Summaries, which provide an analysis of the attainment of the key academic goals in the school's Accountability Plan. Following these achievement results, the report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit conducted on May 26, 2015. While the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the "Institute") conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks (the "SUNY Renewal Benchmarks") near the end of a charter term, most mid-cycle school evaluation visits focus on a subset of these benchmarks. This subset, the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, addresses the academic success of the school and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization. They provide a framework for examining the quality of the educational program, focusing on teaching and learning (i.e., curriculum, instruction, and assessment), as well as leadership, organizational capacity and board oversight. The Institute uses the established criteria on a regular basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

The appendix to the report contains a School Overview with descriptive information about the school, including enrollment and demographic data, as well as historical information regarding the life of the school. It also provides background information on the conduct of the visit, including information about the evaluation team and puts the visit in the context of the school's current charter cycle. Finally, the appendix displays the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks.

The report below provides benchmark evidence to support these conclusions in order to highlight areas of concern. The Institute intends this selection of information to be an exception report. As such, limited detail and evidence about positive elements of the educational program are not an indication that the Institute does not fully recognize evidence of program effectiveness. This report does not contain an overall rating or comprehensive indicator that would specify at a glance the school's prospects for renewal; however, it does summarize the various strengths of the school and notes areas in need of improvement based on the Qualitative Education Benchmarks.

SCHOOL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	October 2007
School Opening	August 8, 2008

Location and 2014-15 Enrollment

Address	District	Facility	Enrollment	Grades
600 St. Ann's Avenue, Bronx	NYC CSD 7	Co-located	375	9-12

2013-14 School Performance Review

Performance Summary

In 2013-14, the second year of University Prep Charter High School's ("University Prep's") five year Accountability Period, the school met its English language arts ("ELA") goal but did not meet its mathematics goal, both of which are calibrated to New York State's college and career readiness standards. University Prep met its science, social studies, and No Child Left Behind ("NCLB") goals. Importantly during 2013-14, University Prep graduated every student in its fourth year cohort and met its high school graduation goal. The school came close to meeting its college preparation goals.

English language arts

According to the four available measures, University Prep met its key academic goal of ELA during 2013-14. With 72 percent of the school's 2010 Accountability Cohort meeting or exceeding the state's college and career readiness standard, currently defined as achieving a score of at least 75 on the Regents English exam or fully meeting Common Core expectations on the Regents Exam in ELA, University Prep exceeded its benchmark of 65 percent proficiency. The school's Accountability Performance Level ("APL") exceeded both the state's Annual Measureable Objective ("AMO") and the Community School District 7's (the "district's") APL. University Prep fell two percentage points short of meeting its English Regents proficiency target for students who entered the school performing below grade level on the state's 8th grade ELA exam.

Mathematics

According to the four available measures, University Prep did not meet its mathematics goal during 2013-14. With 20 percent of the school's 2010 Accountability Cohort meeting or exceeding the state's college and career readiness standard (currently defined as achieving a score of at least 80 on the Regents Integrated Algebra exam or fully meeting Common Core expectations on the state's Algebra 1, University Prep fell far short of its target of 65 percent proficiency. University Prep's APL did not meet the state's APO. Based on 2012-13 results for the district¹, the school's APL is likely to exceed the district's.

Science

University Prep met its science goal during 2013-14. With 98 percent of the school's 2010 Accountability Cohort scoring at or above proficiency, the school far exceeded the district's performance and its absolute target of 75 percent proficiency on a Regents science exam required for graduation.

¹ CSD 7 mathematics results were not available.

Social Studies

University Prep met its social studies goal during 2013-14 when it met its benchmarks on all four measures under the goal. With 100 percent of the school's Accountability Cohort achieving proficiency on the Regents U.S. History exam, the school met its absolute target of 75 percent and outperformed the district's proficiency rate by five percentage points. With 98 percent of the 2010 Accountability Cohort meeting the proficiency standard on the Regents global history exam, the school exceeded its absolute proficiency benchmarks of 75 percent and exceeded the district's performance on the exam by 50 percentage points.

NCLB

University Prep met its NCLB goal as it has not been identified as a school requiring a local assistance plan, or as a priority or focus school.

High School Graduation

During 2013-14, as it had during 2012-13, University Prep graduated every student in its 2010 Total Cohort for Graduation within four years. The school's 100 percent graduation rate exceeded the district's by 52 percentage points. Measures serving as leading indicators of performance on this goal indicate that University Prep's high performance is likely to continue. The school matriculated 98 percent of its 9th and 10th graders into the subsequent grade levels during 2013-14 and 85 percent of the school's 2012 Total Cohort for Graduation have passed at least three Regents exams required for graduation by the end of their second year in the cohort.

College Preparation

University Prep came close to meeting its college preparation goal. The school fell short of meeting the statewide comparative performance of high school sophomores on the PSAT and seniors on the SAT. The school also fell short of meeting or exceeding the statewide percentage of students graduating and meeting the state's aspirational performance standard. However, with 19 percent of the 2010 Total Cohort for Graduation meeting the state's aspirational performance measure, the school outperformed the district by 12 percentage points.

Importantly, University Prep graduated 100 percent of its Total Cohort for Graduation during 2013-14, as it had during 2012-13. Of the school's 83 graduates, all enrolled in a college program during the fall of 2014.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY University Prep Charter High School



	2012-13		MET	2013-14		MET	2014-15		MET
	2009 Cohort N	%		2010 Cohort N	%		2011 Cohort N	%	
English Language Arts									
ABSOLUTE MEASURES									
1. Each year, 65 percent of students will score at least 75 on the Regents English exam.	86	57.0%	NO	83	72	YES	N	%	
2. Each year, 65 percent of students who scored at Level 1 or 2 on their NYS 8 th grade ELA exam will score at least 75 on the Regents English exam.	Low Performing Entrants N	%	NO	Low Performing Entrants N	%	NO	Low Performing Entrants N	%	
	34	41%		49	63		N	%	
3. Each year, the Accountability Performance Level (APL)* on the Regents English exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set forth in the state's NCLB accountability system.	APL	AMO	NO	APL	AMO	YES	APL	AMO	
	157	163		172	166				
COMPARATIVE MEASURE									
4. Each year, the APL of students in the high school Accountability Cohort will exceed the APL of students from the local school district.	Comparison: Bronx CSD 7 School	District	YES	Comparison: Bronx CSD 7 School	District	YES	Comparison: Bronx CSD 7 School	District	
	157	104		172.0	(104)				
GROWTH MEASURES									
5. Each year, under the state's high school Growth Model, the relative growth of selected students will exceed the state's median growth.	School	State	-	School	State	-	School	State	
	NA	NA		NA	NA				
Mathematics									
ABSOLUTE MEASURES									
1. Each year, 65 percent of students will score at least 80 on a Regents math exam.	86	30.0%	NO	83	20%	NO	2011 Cohort N	%	
2. Each year, 65 percent of students who scored at Level 1 or 2 on their NYS 8 th grade ELA exam will score at least 80 on the Regents math exam.	Low Performing Entrants N	%	NO	Low Performing Entrants N	%	NO	Low Performing Entrants N	%	
	15	0		33	6%		N	%	
3. Each year, the Accountability Performance Level (APL)* on the Regents English exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set forth in the state's NCLB accountability system.	APL	AMO	NO	APL	AMO	NO	APL	AMO	
	130	142		120	148				
COMPARATIVE MEASURE									
4. Each year, the APL of students in the high school Accountability Cohort will exceed the APL of students from the local school district.	Comparison: Bronx CSD 7 School	District	YES	Comparison: Bronx CSD 7 School	District	YES	Comparison: Bronx CSD 7 School	District	
	130	77		120	-77				
Growth Measure									
5. Each year, under the state's high school Growth Model, the relative growth of selected students will exceed the state's median growth.	School	State		School	State		School	State	
	NA	NA		NA	NA				

Data Sources: New York State and City data, workbooks submitted by schools and databases compiled by the Institute.
() Data source for this metric is the 2012-13 accountability report.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY University Prep Charter High School



High School Graduation	2012-13				MET	2013-14				MET	2014-15				MET	
	ABSOLUTE MEASURES	Cohort	N	% >= 10 credits	MET	ABSOLUTE MEASURES	Cohort	N	% >= 10 credits	MET	ABSOLUTE MEASURES	Cohort	N	% >= 10 credits	MET	
1. Each year, 75 percent of students in the first and second year high school Total Graduation Cohort will earn at least 10 credits.	2011	90	98.0	YES	2012	87	100.0	YES	2013	94	97.0	YES	2014	N	%*	YES
	2012	97	97.0	YES	2013	94	97.0	YES	2014	N	%*	YES	2011	N	%*	YES
	All	187	97.5	YES	All	181	98.3	YES	All	N	%*	YES	2012	N	%*	YES
2. Each year, 75 percent of students in the second year high school Total Graduation Cohort will score at proficient on at least three different Regents exams required for graduation.	2011 Cohort N		% passing ≥ 3 Regents	MET	2012 Cohort N		% passing ≥ 3 Regents	MET	2013 Cohort N		% passing ≥ 3 Regents	MET	2011 Cohort N		% passing ≥ 3 Regents	MET
	90		83.0	YES	87		85.0%	YES	83		100	YES	2012 Cohort N		% passing ≥ 3 Regents	MET
3a. Each year, 75 percent of students in the Total Graduation Cohort will graduate after the completion of their fourth year.	2009 Cohort N		%	MET	2010 Cohort N		%	MET	2011 Cohort N		%	MET	2013 Cohort N		% passing ≥ 3 Regents	MET
	86		100.0	YES	83		100	YES	86		100.0	YES	2010 Cohort N		%	MET
3b. Each year, 95 percent of students will graduate after the completion of their fifth year.	2008 Cohort N		% Graduating	MET	2009 Cohort N		% Graduating	MET	2010 Cohort N		% Graduating	MET	2010 Cohort N		% Graduating	MET
	86		100.0	YES	86		100.0	YES	86		100.0	YES	86		100.0	YES
COMPARATIVE MEASURE	Comparison: Bronx CSD 7 School District				MET	Comparison: Bronx CSD 7 School District				MET	Comparison: Bronx CSD 7 School District				MET	
4. Each year, the percent of students graduating after the completion of their fourth year will exceed that of the local school district.	100		45	YES	100		48	YES	100		48	YES	100		45	YES

College Preparation	2012-13				MET	2013-14				MET	2014-15				MET
	COMPARATIVE MEASURES	N	School	State		COMPARATIVE MEASURES	N	School	State		COMPARATIVE MEASURES	N	School	State	
1. Each year, the average performance of students in the 10th grade will exceed the state average on the PSAT tests in Critical Reading and Math	Reading	98	35.4	42.5	NO	Reading	87	35.6	41.1	NO	Reading	N	PSAT	PSAT	NO
	Math	98	33.8	44.0	NO	Math	87	36.7	42.8	NO	Math	N	PSAT	PSAT	NO
2. Each year, the average performance of students in the 12th grade will exceed the state average on the SAT or ACT tests in reading and mathematics.	Reading	86	423.0	496.0	NO	Reading	82	408	488	NO	Reading	N	SAT	SAT	NO
	Math	86	429.0	514.0	NO	Math	82	430	502	NO	Math	N	SAT	SAT	NO
SCHOOL DESIGNED MEASURES	School District				MET	School District				MET	N %				MET
3. College Preparation The percent of students graduating with an Advanced Regents diploma will exceed that of the local school district.	N	%	N	%	YES	N	%	N	%	YES	N	%	N	%	YES
	86	20%	1870	2%	YES	83	12%	1783	2%	YES	83	12%	1783	2%	YES
4. The percent of graduating students who meet the state's APM will exceed the state average.	N	%	N	%	NO	N	%	N	%	NO	N	%	N	%	NO
	86	27%	31.0%	NO	83	19%	31.0%	NO	83	19%	31.0%	NO	83	17.0%	NO
5. Each year, 75 percent of graduating students will pass an AP exam, CLEP exam, or successfully complete college-level coursework.	N	%	N	%	NO	N	%	N	%	NO	N	%	N	%	NO
	86	28.0%	NO	NO	83	17.0%	NO	NO	83	17.0%	NO	NO	83	17.0%	NO
6. College Attainment and Achievement Each year, 75 percent of students in the fourth year graduating class will enroll in a college or university in the year after graduation.	N	%	N	%	YES	N	%	N	%	YES	N	%	N	%	YES
	86	100.0	YES	YES	83	100.0	YES	YES	83	100.0	YES	YES	83	100.0	YES

Data Sources: New York State and City data, workbooks submitted by schools and databases compiled by the Institute.
() Data source for this metric is the 2012-13 accountability report.

Benchmark Conclusions and Evidence

Instructional Leadership. Due largely to multiple leadership transitions,² University Prep does not have strong instructional leadership focused on instructional effectiveness and teacher performance. The school's interim principal, the third leader in twelve months, focuses on tending to daily needs rather than developing and implementing strategic initiatives.

- University Prep's instructional leadership is currently inadequate to support the development of the teaching staff. The interim principal and assistant principal do not provide sustained and systemic in-classroom coaching for teachers. Instead, the school relies heavily on peer observations for feedback on classroom practices.
- Instructional leaders provide opportunities for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction within and across grade levels with weekly grade and department level meetings.
- University Prep's professional development program is not fully developed. During the first five months of the school year, the professional development program centered on the social emotional development of students and the school leader prescribed all professional development sessions. For the eight weeks prior to the evaluation visit, the professional development committee, comprised of teachers and counselors, attempted to incorporate more instructional elements and teacher requests into trainings. However, the committee has not developed a comprehensive, long-range professional development plan. For example, the committee meets Tuesday mornings to plan Friday professional development sessions and does not use student data to inform the choice of topics.
- Instructional leaders regularly conduct teacher evaluations with clear criteria aligned to classroom practice. Teachers new to the school receive two formal and four informal classroom observations per year; returning teachers receive one formal and two informal classroom observations. All teachers submit a sample work product aligned to each of the Danielson Framework for Teaching domains.
- Instructional leaders hold teachers accountable for quality instruction and student achievement to a limited degree. Leaders take some actions to improve teacher effectiveness: one teacher is on an improvement plan and, based on an examination of data on failing students, leaders worked with a group of teachers to modify instruction to better meet the specific needs of subgroups of the school's student population.

Use of Assessment Data. The school has an assessment system that supports teachers in adjusting instruction to improve student learning. However, instructional leaders do not systematically use assessment data to inform professional development activities or evaluate teachers.

² University Prep appointed a new school leader shortly after the evaluation visit. The analysis presented here refers to the program in place as of May 26, 2015.

- University Prep administers teacher-developed midterm and final exams that draw substantially from prior years' Regents exam questions. Instructional leaders review these assessments to ensure alignment to state performance standards; however, as teachers create these assessments largely independently, the validity, reliability and predictive value are not yet determined.
- The school uses Powerschool to track assessment data and provide real-time access to teachers and school leaders.
- University Prep formally sends out Powerschool-generated progress reports to parents midway through each of four marking periods and report cards at the end of the marking periods. Additionally, teachers submit monthly call logs that reflect contact with parents and communication of student assessment data.
- There is no formal system or structure that instructional leaders use to evaluate teachers based on assessment data.
- Teachers report using Powerschool as well as informal assessment results to identify students for special interventions and to adjust the pacing of their instruction.

Curriculum. University Prep does not review its curriculum in sufficient depth to ensure that all instruction prepares students to meet state performance standards.

- University Prep uses the Common Core State Standards as a curriculum framework. When developing lesson plans, teachers consult their own curriculum maps, scope and sequence charts and unit plans that are stored in binders they developed at the beginning of the year. Teachers know what to teach and when to teach it based on these documents.
- Teachers have substantial autonomy in the development of their curriculum and rely on support from their respective departments for curriculum development.
- In contrast to previous years, in which University Prep administrators monitored lesson plans on a regular basis to ensure that teachers delivered rigorous and well-paced lessons aligned to the curriculum maps, instructional leaders do not systematically collect or review lesson plans outside of formal teacher observations.
- Teachers plan generally purposeful and focused lessons but often fail to pace instruction appropriately.

Pedagogy. In contrast to the previous charter term, low quality instruction is evident throughout most University Prep classrooms. Lessons do not maximize learning time and rarely provide opportunities for students to apply concepts to real world problem solving. As shown in the chart below, during the visit Institute team members conducted 12 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all school visits.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION METHODOLOGY: NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS

		Grade				Total
		9	10	11	12	
Content Area	ELA		1	2	1	4
	Math	1	2	1		4
	Science	2	1			3
	Social Studies	1				1
	Total	4	4	3	1	12

- Teachers deliver lessons with clear objectives (10 out of 12 classrooms observed); however, the lessons are not sufficiently rigorous to propel students to high levels of achievement.
- Teachers inconsistently employ effective techniques to check for student understanding (6 out of 12 classrooms observed). Some attempted checks rely on a small number of student volunteers to answer questions during whole group activities. During the course of the lesson, teachers do not systematically check the written work of all students.
- A minority of teachers include opportunities for students to exercise higher-order thinking and problem solving skills (4 out of 12 classrooms observed). Although school leadership set student discussion as a non-negotiable for every classroom, site visitors observed little peer-to-peer discussion and group work and few rich discussions with robust academic discourse during which students defend and elaborate on their answers. Instruction provides few opportunities to apply concepts to real-world situations. Though students in one observed class applied what they were learning about genetics to examples of forensic science investigations, most observed classes focused on elements such as solving discrete equations rather than the application of mathematical concepts. Similarly, humanities courses require that students summarize the content of historical documents but do not challenge them to think critically about the context in which those documents originated or how the texts relate to one another and current events.
- A slight minority of teachers utilize effective classroom management techniques and routines that create a focus on academic achievement (7 out of 12 classrooms observed), but teachers frequently miss opportunities to engage students in hands-on instructional activities and squander learning time with poorly paced instruction. For example, a teacher spent 25 minutes lecturing during a scientific demonstration that needed just a few minutes despite students being capable of conducting the experiment themselves.

At-Risk Students. University Prep’s intervention programs are inadequate to meet the educational needs of at-risk students, particularly English language learners (“ELLs”). Almost half (48%) of the total student population is at risk of academic failure.

- To identify students at risk of academic failure, instructional leaders conduct quarterly reviews of classroom data in four core subject areas. Leaders review the percentages of students failing courses (holding an average below 70) by grade and disaggregate the data to compare ELLs and students with disabilities’ performance to that of students in the general education program.
- Data provided by the school at the time of the school visit show that a sizeable percentage of students are at risk for academic failure. In the third quarter of the school year, more than 50 percent of students in 9th and 10th grades are failing at least one subject. Rates in 10th and 11th grades are also high at 43 percent and 39 percent, respectively. In most grades, ELLs and students with disabilities are performing at significantly lower rates than their general education peers are. Students receiving special education services in 12th grade are outperforming the school wide rate with 29 percent failing at least one subject compared to 54 percent overall.
- University Prep schedules two academic intervention periods per week for students identified as needing additional help. Students identified as at-risk attend teachers’ office hours for additional assistance and may be required to submit weekly timesheets detailing the intervention services utilized. In addition to intervention periods and office hours, the school provides Regents prep courses to assist students at risk of academic failure.
- University Prep serves students with Individualized Education Programs (“IEPs”) mandating academic services in integrated co-teaching (“ICT”) classrooms. In two 9th grade sections, the school offers ICT classes for ELA and science. Each of the upper grades has one ICT section with a special education teacher and subject area teacher paired for ELA, mathematics, science and social studies courses. ICT teachers’ co-planning time for daily lessons is limited and tends to occur on an ad hoc basis.
- University Prep employs one certified English as a Second Language (“ESL”) teacher to serve the school’s 43 enrolled ELLs. To identify newly enrolled students in need of English language acquisition supports, the school administers the Home Language Identification Survey and follows up with the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners. Because the ESL teacher holds other instructional duties in addition to being the primary provider of English language acquisition services, ELLs do not receive sufficient services.
- Teachers are generally aware of students’ progress toward meeting IEP goals and reaching English proficiency but do not receive adequate professional development to meet the needs of all students.

Organizational Capacity. University Prep’s leadership staff and its operational systems changed significantly during the school year thereby creating temporary disruptions in the effective delivery of the educational program.

- In previous years, the United Federation of Teachers (“UFT”) supported the school in procurement, human resources and finances. The school and UFT scaled back this relationship with the 2014-15 school year, and University Prep now manages its back office internally.
- The organizational structure establishes distinct lines of accountability with defined roles and responsibilities. Teachers know whom to approach for which resources and assistance.
- The school does not have a student discipline system that is consistently enforced across classrooms and at the administrative level. According to teachers, each of the three most recent school leaders took a different approach to managing student behavior, and these changes resulted in confusion about the consequences for misbehavior.
- The school has a history of low teacher attrition. Eight current teachers have been with University Prep for five or more years while only six of the 30 member instructional team are in their first year of teaching at the school.
- Teacher committees maintain a strong voice in the operation of the school, as was the case in the school’s initial charter term. Committees support, and sometimes lead, in areas such as programming, professional development, scheduling and community outreach. This structure of distributed leadership serves well to invest teachers in all aspects of the educational program.
- The school maintains student enrollment consistent with the terms of its charter and reports a waitlist of 95 prospective students for the 9th grade.
- University Prep has procedures in place to monitor its progress toward meeting enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities and students who are eligible applicants for the federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch program but not for ELLs.
- The SUNY Fiscal Dashboard reports University Prep as consistently fiscally strong.

APPENDIX

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Mission Statement

The mission of University Prep Charter High School is to prepare students for success in college, leadership and life.

Student Demographics³

	2012-13		2013-14		2014-15⁴
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 7 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 7 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment
Race/Ethnicity					
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	1	0	0	0
Black or African American	29	28	28	27	29
Hispanic	66	69	69	70	68
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	2	1	2	1	1
White	0	1	1	1	1
Multiracial	2	0	0	0	1
Special Populations					
Students with Disabilities	12	21	15	24	18
English Language Learners	11	19	12	18	12
Free/ Reduced Lunch					
Eligible for Free Lunch	76	88	84	90	-- ⁵
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	12	4	8	3	--
Economically Disadvantaged	93	95	93	93	90

³ Source: 2012-13 and 2013-14 New York State School Report Cards.

⁴ The Institute derived the 2014-15 Students with Disabilities, ELL and Economically Disadvantaged statistics from the school's October 2014 student enrollment report to NYSED (2014-15 BEDS Report). District data are not yet available. Because NYSED releases data up to a full year after the conclusion of any one school year, the data presented in this table may differ from current information reported by the school and included in this report.

⁵ School FRPL enrollment data for 2014-15 are not available.

School Characteristics

School Year	Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ⁶	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades
2008-09	115	121	9	9
2009-10	225	212	9-10	9-10
2010-11	325	294	9-11	9-11
2011-12	420	376	9-12	9-12
2012-13	375	373	9-12	9-12
2013-14	385	353	9-12	9-12
2014-15	385	375	9-12	9-12

Board of Trustees⁷

Board Member Name	Position
Steve Barr	Chair/President
Donial Rodriguez	Trustee
Burton Sacks	Trustee
Gideon Stein	Trustee
Randi Weingarten	Trustee

School Leadership History

School Year(s)	School Leader(s) Name and Title(s)
2008-09 to 2013-14	Ashish Kapadia, Principal
July 2014 to March 2015	Leticia Peniero, Principal
March 2015 to June 2015	Julie Seda, Interim Acting Principal
July 2015 to Present	Andrea D'Amato, Principal

⁶ Source: The Institute's official enrollment binder. Figures may differ slightly from New York State School Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.

⁷ Source: Institute records at the time of the visit.

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2008-09	First Year Visit	Institute	March 10, 2009
2009-10	Evaluation Visit	External (Class Measures)	March 22-23, 2010
2010-11	Evaluation Visit	Institute	May 4, 2011
2012-13	Initial Renewal Visit	Institute	November 13-14, 2012
2014-15	Evaluation Visit	Institute	May 26, 2015

CONDUCT OF THE SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

School Visit Team

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Member	Title
May 26, 2015	Natasha Howard, PhD	Managing Director of Program
	Sinnjinn Bucknell	Program and Systems Analyst
	Adam Aberman	External Consultant

Context of the Visit

Charter Cycle	
Charter Term	2 nd Year of Five-Year Subsequent Charter Term
Accountability Period ⁸	3 rd Year of Five-Year Accountability Period
Anticipated Renewal Visit	Fall 2017

⁸ Because the SUNY Trustees make a renewal decision in the last year of a charter term, the Accountability Period ends in the next to last year of the charter term. For initial renewals, the Accountability Period is the first four years of the charter term. For subsequent renewals, the Accountability Period includes the last year of the previous charter term through the next to last year of the current charter term.

State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

Version 5.0, May 2012

Introduction

The State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks¹ (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) serve two primary functions at renewal:

- They provide a framework for the Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) to gather and evaluate evidence to determine whether a school has made an adequate case for renewal. In turn, this evidence assists the Institute in deciding if it can make the required legal and other findings in order to reach a positive recommendation for renewal. For example, the various benchmarks that the Institute uses to determine whether the school has had fiscally responsible practices in place during the last charter period allow the Institute to determine with greater precision whether the school will operate in a fiscally sound manner during the next charter period, a finding that the New York Charter Schools Act requires the SUNY Trustees to make.
- At the same time that the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks provide a framework for the Institute to collect and review evidence, they also provide the school with a guide to understanding the Institute’s evaluative criteria. As the Institute uses the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks (or some sub-set of them) as the framework for conducting its ongoing school evaluation visits, school leaders should be fully aware of the content of the Benchmarks at the time of renewal.

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks are organized into four inter-connected renewal questions that each school must answer when submitting a renewal application. The benchmarks further reflect the interwoven nature of schools from an academic, organizational, fiscal and/or legal perspective. For example, the Institute could reasonably place many of the academic benchmarks under the heading of organizational effectiveness. More generally, some redundancy exists because the Institute looks at the same issue from different perspectives.

Precisely how the Institute uses the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, during both the renewal process and throughout the charter period, is explained in greater detail in the *Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University of New York* (the “SUNY Renewal Practices”), available on the Institute’s website at: www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsRenewOverview.htm. Responses to frequently asked questions about the Institute’s use of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks appear below:

¹ Research on public school reform, known as the effective schools movement, has embraced the premise that, given certain organizing and cultural characteristics, schools can teach all children the intended curriculum and hold them to high academic standards. Over the decades, the accumulated research into effective schools has yielded a set of common characteristics that all effective schools share. These characteristics are so consistently prevalent among successful schools that they have come to be known as the *Correlates of Effective Schools*. The Renewal Benchmarks adapt and elaborate on these correlates.

- Revised May 2012 -

- The Institute does not have a point system for recommending renewal. A school cannot simply tally up the number of positive benchmark statements in order to determine the Institute’s recommendation.
 - Some benchmarks are weighed more heavily than others. In particular, the Institute gives the greatest weight to how well the school has met its academic Accountability Plan goals.
 - Despite the fact that the Accountability Plan comprises only a single benchmark, a school’s performance on that benchmark is critical. In fact, it is so important that while the Institute may recommend non-renewal for fiscal and organizational failures (if sufficiently serious), excellence in these areas will not excuse poor academic performance.
- The Institute does not use every benchmark during every kind of renewal review, and how the benchmarks are used differs depending on a school’s circumstances. For example, the Qualitative Education Benchmarks (Benchmarks 1B-1F, 2C and 2D) are given far less weight in making a renewal decision on schools that the Institute has previously renewed. Similarly, less weight is accorded to these benchmarks during an initial renewal review where a school has consistently met its academic Accountability Plan goals.
 - The Institute also may not consider every indicator subsumed under a benchmark when determining if a school has met that benchmark, given the school’s stage of development or its previous track record.
- Aside from Benchmark 1A on academic Accountability Plan goals (which is singular in its importance), no school should fear that a failure to meet every element of every benchmark means that it is not in a position to make a case for renewal. To the contrary, the Institute has yet to see a school that performs perfectly in every respect. The Institute appreciates that the benchmarks set a very high standard collectively. While the Institute certainly hopes and expects that schools aim high, it is understood that a school’s reach will necessarily exceed its grasp in at least some aspects.

In this fifth edition of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, the Institute has made some revisions to the Qualitative Educational Benchmarks, namely those benchmarks used for ongoing school evaluation visits, to streamline the collection of evidence. For example, the Institute has incorporated Student Order and Discipline into Pedagogy, and Professional Development into Instructional Leadership. The Institute has rewritten some of the overarching benchmark statements to capture the most salient aspects of school effectiveness, organizational viability, legal compliance, and fiscal soundness. Some of the bulleted indicators within benchmarks have been recast or eliminated. Finally, the Institute has added some indicators to align the benchmarks with changes in the Charter Schools Act (e.g., provisions in meeting enrollment and retention targets when assigned and abiding by the General Municipal Law).

It is important that the entire school community understand the renewal process. All members of a school’s leadership team and board should carefully review both the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks and the SUNY Renewal Practices. Note that a renewal overview document for parents, teachers and community members is also available on the Institute’s website at: www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsRenewOverview.htm. Please do not hesitate to contact the Institute with any questions.

State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1A</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Academic Accountability Plan Goals</p>	<p>Over the Accountability Period, the school has met or come close to meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals.</p> <p>The Institute determines the extent to which the school has met the Accountability Plan goals in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English language arts; • mathematics; • science; • social studies (high school only); • NCLB; • high school graduation and college preparation (if applicable); and • optional academic goals included by the school.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1B</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Use of Assessment Data</p>	<p>The school has an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school regularly administers valid and reliable assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum and state performance standards; • the school has a valid and reliable process for scoring and analyzing assessments; • the school makes assessment data accessible to teachers, school leaders and board members; • teachers use assessment results to meet students’ needs by adjusting classroom instruction, grouping students and/or identifying students for special intervention; • school leaders use assessment results to evaluate teacher effectiveness and to develop professional development and coaching strategies; and • the school regularly communicates to parents/guardians about their students’ progress and growth.

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1C</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Curriculum</p>	<p>The school’s curriculum supports teachers in their instructional planning.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has a curriculum framework with student performance expectations that provides a fixed, underlying structure, aligned to state standards and across grades; • in addition to the framework, the school has supporting tools (i.e., curriculum maps or scope and sequence documents) that provide a bridge between the curriculum framework and lesson plans; • teachers know what to teach and when to teach it based on these documents; • the school has a process for selecting, developing and reviewing its curriculum documents and its resources for delivering the curriculum; and • teachers plan purposeful and focused lessons.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1D</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pedagogy</p>	<p>High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers deliver purposeful lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school’s curriculum; • teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding; • teachers include opportunities in their lessons to challenge students with questions and activities that develop depth of understanding and higher-order thinking and problem solving skills; • teachers maximize learning time (e.g., appropriate pacing, on-task student behavior, clear lesson focus and clear directions to students); transitions are efficient; and • teachers have effective classroom management techniques and routines that create a consistent focus on academic achievement.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1E</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Instructional Leadership</p>	<p>The school has strong instructional leadership.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school’s leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance (in content knowledge and

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1F</p> <p>At-Risk Students</p>	<p>pedagogical skills) and in which teachers believe that all students can succeed;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the instructional leadership is adequate to support the development of the teaching staff; • instructional leaders provide sustained, systemic and effective coaching and supervision that improves teachers’ instructional effectiveness; • instructional leaders provide opportunities and guidance for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction within and across grade levels; • instructional leaders implement a comprehensive professional development program that develops the competencies and skills of all teachers; • professional development activities are interrelated with classroom practice; • instructional leaders regularly conduct teacher evaluations with clear criteria that accurately identify teachers’ strengths and weaknesses; and • instructional leaders hold teachers accountable for quality instruction and student achievement. <p>The school meets the educational needs of at-risk students.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school uses clear procedures for identifying at-risk students including students with disabilities, English language learners and those struggling academically; • the school has adequate intervention programs to meet the needs of at-risk students; • general education teachers, as well as specialists, utilize effective strategies to support students within the general education program; • the school adequately monitors the progress and success of at-risk students; • teachers are aware of their students’ progress toward meeting IEP goals, achieving English proficiency or school-based goals for struggling students;

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school provides adequate training and professional development to identify at-risk students and to help teachers meet students' needs; and • the school provides opportunities for coordination between classroom teachers and at-risk program staff including the school nurse, if applicable.

	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2A</p> <p>Mission & Key Design Elements</p> <p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2B</p> <p>Parents & Students</p> <p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2C</p> <p>Organizational Capacity</p>	<p>The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school faithfully follows its mission; and • the school has implemented its key design elements. <p>Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school regularly communicates each child's academic performance results to families; • families are satisfied with the school; and • parents keep their children enrolled year-to-year. <p>The school organization effectively supports the delivery of the educational program.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has established an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, policies and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program; • the organizational structure establishes distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities; • the school has a clear student discipline system in place at the administrative level that is consistently applied; • the school retains quality staff; • the school has allocated sufficient resources to support the achievement of goals; • the school maintains adequate student enrollment; • the school has procedures in place to monitor its progress toward meeting enrollment and retention targets for special education students, ELLs and students who qualify for free and reduced price lunch, and adjusts its recruitment efforts accordingly; and • the school regularly monitors and evaluates the school's programs and makes changes if necessary.

	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2D</p> <p>Board Oversight</p>	<p>The school board works effectively to achieve the school’s Accountability Plan goals.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • board members possess adequate skills and have put in place structures and procedures with which to govern the school and oversee management of day-to-day operations in order to ensure the school’s future as an academically successful, financially healthy and legally compliant organization; • the board requests and receives sufficient information to provide rigorous oversight of the school’s program and finances; • it establishes clear priorities, objectives and long-range goals, (including Accountability Plan, fiscal, facilities and fundraising), and has in place benchmarks for tracking progress as well as a process for their regular review and revision; • the board successfully recruits, hires and retains key personnel, and provides them with sufficient resources to function effectively; • the board regularly evaluates its own performance and that of the school leaders and the management company (if applicable), holding them accountable for student achievement; and • the board effectively communicates with the school community including school leadership, staff, parents/guardians and students.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2E</p> <p>Governance</p>	<p>The board implements, maintains and abides by appropriate policies, systems and processes.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the board effectively communicates with its partner or management organizations as well as key contractors such as back-office service providers and ensures that it receives value in exchange for contracts and relationships it enters into and effectively monitors such relationships; • the board takes effective action when there are organizational, leadership, management, facilities or fiscal deficiencies; or where the management or partner organization fails to meet

	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<p>expectations; to correct those deficiencies and puts in place benchmarks for determining if the partner organization corrects them in a timely fashion;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the board regularly reviews and updates board and school policies as needed and has in place an orientation process for new members; • the board effectively recruits and selects new members in order to maintain adequate skill sets and expertise for effective governance and structural continuity; • the board implements a comprehensive and strict conflict of interest policy (and/or code of ethics)—consistent with that set forth in the charter and with the General Municipal Law—and consistently abides by them throughout the term of the charter; • the board generally avoids conflicts of interest; where not possible, the board manages those conflicts in a clear and transparent manner; • the board implements a process for dealing with complaints consistent with that set forth in the charter, makes the complaint policy clear to all stakeholders, and follows the policy including acting on complaints in a timely fashion; • the board abides by its by-laws including, but not limited to, provisions regarding trustee election and the removal and filling of vacancies; and • the board holds all meetings in accordance with the Open Meetings Law and records minutes for all meetings including executive sessions and, as appropriate, committee meetings.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2F</p> <p>Legal Requirements</p>	<p>The school substantially complies with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school compiles a record of substantial compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations including, but not limited to, submitting items to the Institute in a timely manner, and meeting teacher certification (including NCLB highly qualified status) and background check requirements, FOIL and Open Meetings Law;

	<p style="text-align: center;">Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?</p>
<p><u>Evidence Category</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school substantially complies with the terms of its charter and applicable laws, rules and regulations; • the school abides by the terms of its monitoring plan; • the school implements effective systems and controls to ensure that it meets legal and charter requirements; • the school has an active and ongoing relationship with in-house or independent legal counsel who reviews and makes recommendations on relevant policies, documents, transactions and incidents and who also handles other legal matters as needed; and • the school manages any litigation appropriately and provides litigation papers to insurers and the Institute in a timely manner.

	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3A</p> <p>Budgeting and Long Range Planning</p>	<p>The school operates pursuant to a long-range financial plan in which it creates realistic budgets that it monitors and adjusts when appropriate.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has clear budgetary objectives and budget preparation procedures; • board members, school management and staff contribute to the budget process, as appropriate; • the school frequently compares its long-range fiscal plan to actual progress and adjusts it to meet changing conditions; • the school routinely analyzes budget variances; the board addresses material variances and makes necessary revisions; and • actual expenses are equal to, or less than, actual revenue with no material exceptions.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3B</p> <p>Internal Controls</p>	<p>The school maintains appropriate internal controls and procedures.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school follows a set of comprehensive written fiscal policies and procedures; • the school accurately records and appropriately documents transactions in accordance with management’s direction, laws, regulations, grants and contracts; • the school safeguards its assets; • the school identifies/analyzes risks and takes mitigating actions; • the school has controls in place to ensure that management decisions are properly carried out and monitors and assesses controls to ensure their adequacy; • the school’s trustees and employees adhere to a code of ethics; • the school ensures duties are appropriately segregated, or institutes compensating controls; • the school ensures that employees performing financial functions are appropriately qualified and adequately trained; • the school has systems in place to provide the appropriate information needed by staff and the board to make sound financial decisions and to fulfill compliance requirements;

	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3C</p> <p>Financial Reporting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a staff member of the school reviews grant agreements and restrictive gifts and monitors compliance with all stated conditions; • the school prepares payroll according to appropriate state and federal regulations and school policy; • the school ensures that employees, trustees and volunteers who handle cash and investments are bonded to help assure the safeguarding of assets; and • the school takes corrective action in a timely manner to address any internal control or compliance deficiencies identified by its external auditor, the Institute, and/or the State Education Department or the Comptroller, if needed. <p>The school has complied with financial reporting requirements by providing the SUNY Trustees and the State Education Department with required financial reports that are on time, complete and follow generally accepted accounting principles.</p> <p>The following reports have generally been filed in a timely, accurate and complete manner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual financial statement audit reports including federal Single Audit report, if applicable; • annual budgets and cash flow statements; • un-audited quarterly reports of income, expenses, and enrollment; • bi-monthly enrollment reports to the district and, if applicable, to the State Education Department including proper documentation regarding the level of special education services provided to students; and • grant expenditure reports.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3D</p> <p>Financial Condition</p>	<p>The school maintains adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations. Critical financial needs of the school are not dependent on variable income (grants, donations and fundraising).</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school maintains sufficient cash on hand to pay current bills and those that are due shortly;

	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school maintains adequate liquid reserves to fund expenses in the event of income loss (generally three months); • the school prepares and monitors cash flow projections; • If the school includes philanthropy in its budget, it monitors progress toward its development goals on a periodic basis; • If necessary, the school pursues district state aid intercepts with the state education department to ensure adequate per pupil funding; and • the school accumulates unrestricted net assets that are equal to or exceed two percent of the school's operating budget for the upcoming year.

Renewal Question 4 If the School’s Charter is Renewed, What are its Plans for the Term of the Next Charter Period, and are they Reasonable, Feasible and Achievable?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4A</p> <p>Plans for the School’s Structure</p>	<p>Key structural elements of the school, as defined in the exhibits of the Application for Charter Renewal, are reasonable, feasible and achievable.</p> <p>Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school is likely to fulfill its mission in the next charter period; • the school has an enrollment plan that can support the school program; • the school calendar and daily schedules clearly provide sufficient instructional time to meet all legal requirements, allow the school to meet its proposed Accountability Plan goals and abide by its proposed budget; • key design elements are consistent with the mission statement and are feasible given the school’s budget and staffing; • a curriculum framework for added grades aligns with the state’s performance standards; and • plans in the other required Exhibits indicate that the school’s structure is likely to support the educational program.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4B</p> <p>Plans for the Educational Program</p>	<p>The school’s plans for implementing the educational program allow it to meet its Accountability Plan goals.</p> <p>Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for those grades served during the last charter period, the school has plans for sustaining and (where possible) improving upon the student outcomes it has compiled during the last charter period including any adjustments or additions to the school’s educational program; • for a school that is seeking to add grades, the school is likely to meet its Accountability Plan goals and the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks at the new grade levels; and • where the school will provide secondary school instruction, it has presented a set of requirements for graduation that students are likely to meet and that are consistent with the graduation standards set by the Board of Regents.

Renewal Question 4 If the School’s Charter is Renewed, What are its Plans for the Term of the Next Charter Period, and are they Reasonable, Feasible and Achievable?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4C</p> <p>Plans for Board Oversight and Governance</p>	<p>The school provides a reasonable, feasible and achievable plan for board oversight and governance.</p> <p>Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school trustees are likely to possess a range of experience, skills, and abilities sufficient to oversee the academic, organizational and fiscal performance of the school; • plans by the school board to orient new trustees to their roles and responsibilities, and, if appropriate, to participate in ongoing board training are likely to sustain the board’s ability to carry out its responsibilities; • if the school plans to change an association with a partner or management organization in the term of a future charter, it has provided a clear rationale for the disassociation and an outline indicating how it will manage the functions previously associated with that partnering organization; and • if the school is either moving from self-management to a management structure or vice-versa, or is changing its charter management organization/educational service provider, its plans indicate that it will be managed in an effective, sound and viable manner including appropriate oversight of the academic and fiscal performance of the school or the management organization.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4D</p> <p>Fiscal & Facility Plans</p>	<p>The school provides a reasonable, feasible and achievable fiscal plan including plans for an adequate facility.</p> <p>Based on the elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school’s budgets adequately support staffing, enrollment and facility projections; • fiscal plans are based on the sound use of financial resources to support academic program needs; • fiscal plans are clear, accurate, complete and based on reasonable assumptions; • information on enrollment demand provides clear evidence for the reasonableness of projected enrollment; and • facility plans are likely to meet educational program needs.