



2015-16 School Evaluation Report

CITIZENS OF THE WORLD CHARTER SCHOOL NEW YORK- CROWN HEIGHTS

Visit Date: May 24, 2016

Report Date: June 22, 2016

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INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit on May 24, 2016. 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. It provides a framework for examining the quality of the educational program, focusing on teaching and learning (i.e., curriculum, instruction, assessment and services for at-risk students), 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.

Appendix A 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. Appendix B displays the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks.

This report does not contain an overall rating or comprehensive indicator that would specify at a glance the school’s prospects for renewal. Rather, it summarizes various strengths of the school and notes areas in need of improvement based on the Qualitative Education Benchmarks. The Institute intends this selection of information to be an exception report in order to highlight areas of concern. As such, limited detail about positive elements of the educational program is not an indication that the Institute does not recognize other indicators of program effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION AND SCHOOL BACKGROUND

SCHOOL BACKGROUND

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	July 2012
Date of School Opening	September 1, 2013

Location and 2015-16 Enrollment

Address	District	Facility	Chartered Enrollment	Grades
791 Empire Boulevard, Brooklyn, NY 11213	NYC CSD 17	Co-located	252	K-3

Network Information

Citizens of the World Charter School New York 1 (the “education corporation”) has the authority to operate two schools, Citizens of the World Charter School New York – Crown Heights (“Citizens Crown Heights”) and Citizens of the World New York Charter School – Williamsburg. The education corporation partners with Citizens of the World Charter Schools (the “network”), a California not-for-profit corporation. The network currently partners with the SUNY authorized education corporation as well as three existing schools in the Los Angeles area and has a school opening in the Kansas City area in 2016-17. The network provides limited services including start-up interest free loans, school design, school leader support and a licensing agreement for use of intellectual property.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

QUALITATIVE EDUCATION BENCHMARKS

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,¹ describe the elements in place at schools that are highly effective at providing students from low-income backgrounds the instruction, content, knowledge and skills necessary to produce strong academic performance. The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks describe the elements an effective school must have in place at the time of renewal.²

Use of Assessment Data

Citizens Crown Heights has an assessment system that provides the school with sufficient student outcome data to inform instruction. However, a wide variation in student performance on assessments renders it difficult to predict student performance on state assessments.

- Citizens Crown Heights administers Achievement Network (“ANET”) assessments four times per year for third grade and three times per year for grades K-2 to measure English language arts (“ELA”) and mathematics growth. The school also administers the Measures of Academic Progress (“MAP”) assessment to measure ELA and mathematics growth and Fountas and Pinnell (“F&P”) assessments three times per year for grades K-3 to measure literacy proficiency. Teachers administer assessments from the enVisions curriculum for mathematics and modify them as necessary to meet students’ needs. In reading and writing, teachers administer unit assessments from other schools that use the LitLife curriculum and post successful state assessment results. The network’s New York City regional office (the “region”), under the supervision of an executive director, also collaborates on assessment decisions.
- School leaders analyze assessment data and discuss student and class performance results with teachers. However, Citizens Crown Heights does not aggregate school-wide assessment results for particular subgroups (e.g., students with disabilities) to identify performance trends for these students. Also, as teachers score their own assessments with no norming, the accuracy of assessment data across classrooms is unclear.
- Despite administration of several norm-referenced assessments, Citizens Williamsburg does not have a valid assessment system for evaluating the effectiveness of its academic program. Specifically, whereas 30% of students scored proficient on the mathematics MAP assessment and 10% on the reading MAP assessment in winter of 2016, 44% of students scored proficient on mathematics ANET assessment and 28% on the reading ANET assessment in March 2016. Due to such wide variations in results, school leaders cannot predict student performance on state assessments.
- Teachers use assessment data to create summaries of student performance at the end of each trimester. The school distributes these summaries to parents, use them to inform

¹ An extensive body of research identifying and confirming the correlates of effective schools exists dating back four decades. Selected sources include: www.mes.org/correlates.html;

scholar.harvard.edu/files/fryer/files/dobbie_fryer_revision_final.pdf; and, gao.gov/assets/80/77488.pdf.

² Additional details regarding the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, including greater specificity as to what the Institute looks for at each school that may demonstrate attainment of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, is available at:

www.newyorkcharters.org/suny-renewal-benchmarks/.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

student groupings for guided reading and to identify students in need of additional interventions.

- School leaders use student performance data, including unit assessment and F&P results, to shape their coaching agenda with individual teachers. Additionally, school leaders hold data days that involve an in-depth analysis of student performance trends on school-wide assessments.
- Citizen Crown Heights holds three report card conferences per year to communicate with parents and guardians regarding students' progress and growth.

Curriculum

Citizens Crown Heights has a curriculum that supports teachers in their instructional planning.

- The school implements the LitLife curriculum for reading and writing and enVisions curriculum for mathematics instruction. Common Core standards guide the social studies and science project-based curricula. These materials provide a fixed, underlying structure to support instruction.
- Citizens Crown Heights has a process for developing and reviewing its curriculum documents. The school tasks the director of instruction and the curriculum coordinator with creating yearlong curriculum maps and pacing guides as well as developing unit plans for the first trimester that serve as a template for teachers.
- Before the start of the school year, the director of instruction and the curriculum coordinator identify six projects and thematic units for each grade based on social studies standards. They develop curriculum maps for reading, writing and science corresponding with each thematic unit in social studies in order to align curricula across content areas.
- Teachers co-create unit plans for the second and third trimesters about a month before implementation and submit them to school leaders, which they review. Teachers submit the following week's lesson plans each Wednesday to review and discuss during subsequent common prep times. Teachers also use these meetings to model lessons and receive feedback. Despite teachers knowing what to teach and when to teach it based on these documents, many observed lessons lack components such as clear lesson objectives and appropriate checks for understanding suggesting gaps in the lesson plan creation and review process.
- Teachers review and finalize the curriculum maps before the start of the academic year with school leaders. During coaching and grade level team meetings, teachers provide evaluative and actionable feedback on the curriculum, discuss progress of each unit and recommend changes for the following next year.

Pedagogy

Rudimentary instruction is evident across most Citizens Crown Heights classrooms. While some teachers effectively check for student understanding, unclear lesson objectives and an inconsistent focus on student achievement limits teachers' ability to implement rigorous, high quality lessons.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

As shown in the chart below, during the visit, Institute team members conducted nine classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all school evaluation visits.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

		Grade				Total
		K	1	2	3	
Content Area	ELA	1		3	2	6
	Math		1		1	2
	Science		1			1
	Total	1	2	3	3	9

- A slight minority of teachers deliver lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school’s curriculum (4 out of 9 classrooms observed). Most teachers fail to articulate learning targets at any point during the lesson. When lesson plans do identify objectives, those objectives are often too broad and are difficult to measure.
- Most teachers effectively use techniques to check for student understanding (6 out of 9 classrooms observed). However, teachers that struggle to use effective checks circulate and monitor students as a behavior management technique rather than an opportunity to gauge student understandings.
- Teachers rarely 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 (2 out of 9 classrooms observed). Most lessons lack the rigor necessary for students to achieve performance goals defined by state standards. In some cases, teachers miss opportunities to push higher-order thinking during activities. For example, in one class where students read multiple texts to find similarities, the teacher conferenced with students to gauge the answers they generated. After reading multiple books, one student could only identify that each book’s main character was a girl. After hearing the student’s answer, the teacher failed to challenge the student to come up with a more thematic or content based response.
- Some teachers maintain a classroom environment with a consistent focus on student achievement (5 out of 9 classrooms observed). In these classes, teachers are prepared and use appropriate pacing and behavior management techniques aligning to the school’s responsive classroom practices in order to focus students on lesson activities. In other classrooms, poorly paced lessons and inefficient transitions reduce learning time.

Instructional Leadership

Citizens Crown Heights has adequate instructional leadership to develop the skills and competencies of teachers. Leaders set clear school-wide and individual goals with teachers, and coach teachers using these goals as a benchmark.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- Citizen Crown Heights replaced its founding leader in the second year of the charter term. The current principal establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance, setting clear, quantitative expectations for student performance on benchmark assessments such as the NWEA and F&P assessments during the school year. For example, leaders expect 95% of kindergarten students and 80% of students in grades 1-3 to perform in the 75th percentile on the NWEA assessment by the end of the year, although the school was not close to meeting these benchmarks at the time of the visit.
- The school's instructional leadership team, consisting of the principal, director of instruction, curriculum coordinator and director of student support, is adequate to support the development of the teaching staff. Instructional leaders observe teachers at least once weekly and follow-up in one-on-one meetings, referring to specific growth goals in each meeting. Leaders meet with teachers more frequently if a teacher is on a performance improvement plan or at their request.
- Instructional leaders provide sufficient opportunities and guidance for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction across grade levels. Grade level teams meet once weekly to discuss instruction and student services. Instructional leaders attend these meetings in order to support instructional planning, which teachers report as effective in helping to develop their practice. Despite teacher satisfaction, some observed lessons and lesson plans lack clear, measurable objectives suggesting that leader supports and feedback do not appropriately address all teachers' strengths and weaknesses.
- Although the school is mainly responsible for developing its professional development program, the region is beginning to play a larger role in determining professional development activities in order to align activities to those at its sister school in Brooklyn³. Professional development is responsive to the needs of teachers and interrelates with classroom practice. For example, after a particular professional development about facilitating effective morning meetings, teachers report that the principal identified specific techniques she would look for during the next round of classroom observations.
- This school year, the school transitioned to a new teacher evaluation protocol. However, teachers are unaware of the new evaluation criteria and what they will be specifically evaluated on. No formal evaluations had been completed at the time of the visit. Leaders report they will hold teachers accountable for student achievement by factoring in academic, attendance and culture data using benchmark assessments, attendance records and student and parent surveys to measure teachers' progress toward meeting performance goals.
- The regional executive director conducts formal evaluations of the principal twice a year. The executive director evaluates the leader against the school's academic and culture goals and evaluations help inform how he coaches the principal.

³ Citizens of the World Charter School New York - Williamsburg

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

At-Risk Students

Citizens Crown Heights has adequate systems in place to support the needs of students with disabilities and students struggling academically but lacks a compliant and educationally sound program to meet the needs of English language learners (“ELLs”).

- Citizens Crown Heights has a clear procedure for identifying students who struggle academically. The school’s student support team (“SST”), consisting of the director of student support, the school social worker, five special education teachers and the principal, acts as the primary vehicle to identify students in need of academic support. During summer professional development, the SST trains general education teachers to identify struggling students using classroom data as well as MAP and F&P assessment data. Teachers also access hard and soft copies of manuals for identifying and referring students to the SST.
- The SST meets weekly to discuss referrals and student progress. The school provides Leveled Literacy Intervention (“LLI”) services in 4-6 week cycles and administers assessments to track the progress of students receiving support. For mathematics, at-risk program staff access teachers’ lesson plans to reteach or pre-teach material. Although not as systematic as ELA interventions, mathematics interventions are adequate to meet students’ needs. The school sets individual timing expectations on when students should show growth with regard to interventions and refers students that do not show progress to the Committee on Special Education.
- To serve students with disabilities, Citizens Crown Heights offers an integrated co-teaching (“ICT”) classroom in the third grade and special education teacher support services (“SETSS”) for remaining students with disabilities.
- Citizens Crown Heights does not provide required English language acquisition support for its two currently enrolled ELLs. There was a significant gap in services provided to ELLs earlier in the school year. The previous English as a second language (“ESL”) teacher was not substituted while on maternity leave or replaced after ultimately resigning. As a result, the school could not clearly articulate services ELLs received before a part-time ESL teacher was hired on March 1st.
- The ESL teacher currently provides pull-out services to students twice per week, with one student receiving language acquisition services in a mixed setting with non-ELL students. However, at the time of the visit, school leaders were unable to locate current students’ previous results on the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners. Because of this, neither school leaders nor teachers could verify if ELLs currently receive the appropriate services. The Institute is unable to provide data supporting the effectiveness of previous English language acquisition services as few students⁴ have taken the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test.
- The at-risk program staff attends weekly grade level meetings. During these meetings, SETSS and other providers give updates on students’ progress toward meeting the goals of their Individualized Education Programs (“IEPs”), to offer general education teachers

⁴ In order to comply with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act regulations on reporting education outcome data, the Institute does not report assessment results for groups containing five or fewer students.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

strategies that will support these students and to develop lesson material for push-out services.

- Although the current ESL teacher attends grade level meetings, the teacher does not provide strategies or materials to general education teachers to support ELL students during instruction.

Organizational Capacity

The school organization is building its capacity to support the delivery of the education program.

- Citizens Crown Heights establishes an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, policies and procedures that allow the school to carry out its program. In addition to instructional staff, the school benefits from a director of operations and additional staff who oversee facilities, the nutritional program, busing, purchases and general human resources, which allows instructional leaders to focus solely on supporting the academic program.
- The school's organizational structure establishes distinct lines of accountability, with clearly defined roles. Teachers report knowing who to go to for what and having a thorough understanding of the school's accountability structure.
- Although Citizens Crown Heights uses a responsive classroom model that focuses on linking learning to the social-emotional needs of students, it does not have a clear discipline system. Leaders expect teachers to use techniques such as private conferencing and time-outs to address behavior issues; however teachers do not consistently use these techniques across classrooms. The effectiveness of these techniques often depends on the strength of teachers' management skills.
- The school recognizes staff retention as an area of growth, particularly as several teachers did not return after the 2014-15 school year, and one teacher chose to leave during the 2015-16 school year. The leader anticipates two teachers not returning for the coming school year.
- Citizens Crown Heights allocates sufficient resources to support the achievement of goals. In addition to purchasing ample curriculum and technology to support learning, Citizens Crown Heights encourages teachers to attend numerous external professional development opportunities to improve their practice.
- The school maintains adequate enrollment. Leaders report an enrollment of 276 students and a waitlist of 235 students at the time of the visit.
- While the school is aware of targets relating to enrolling and retaining students with disabilities, ELLs and eligible applicants to the federal free and reduced priced lunch ("FRPL") program, it does not have effective or systematic procedures to monitor its progress toward meeting these targets. Specifically, the school serves only two ELLs, but has not adjusted its recruitment materials to include literature in a variety of languages reflecting the surrounding community. Citizens Crown Heights falls far short of meeting its enrollment targets, particularly for FRPL eligible students and ELLs; the school also falls short of meeting its retention target for students with disabilities. Repeated failure to meet its targets places a school's charter in jeopardy. When applying for renewal, Citizens

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Crown Heights must detail the efforts it has, and will, put in place to meet or exceed SUNY's enrollment and retention targets for at-risk students.

- Citizens Crown Heights analyzes academic and culture data each trimester and uses this data to make adjustments throughout the year. However, the school does not have adequate procedures in place to analyze data over longer periods of time in order to gauge the effectiveness of the school's program from year-to-year.

Board Oversight

The board works sufficiently in the interest of achieving the school's Accountability Plan goals.

- Board members' experience in K-12 education, law and finance enables the board to monitor the school. The board seeks to add additional members, with a goal of doubling its current size to 10 board members by the end of the calendar year. The board also plans to increase its professional, racial and gender diversity.
- After the board expressed dissatisfaction with his performance, the founding regional executive director left the role at the end of the 2014-15 school year. Since then, the board has collaborated with the region's new executive director to determine the information it receives in order to provide rigorous oversight of the school's program. In addition to trimester academic reports comprising benchmark assessment data, the board receives monthly data sheets that include attendance, discipline, culture and parental involvement data. The board also receives regular financial data from an external provider including audits and balance sheets.
- Board members establish clear priorities and goals. Recognizing the need to streamline assessment data it receives, it plans to compare state test results the school will receive in July to determine which benchmark assessment the school will continue to use to predict student performance. The board also supports the regional executive director's priorities such as aligning the school's academic program more closely to its sister school in New York City. However, the board does not set benchmarks it can clearly articulate to track its progress toward meeting goals.
- While the board is not responsible for recruiting and hiring key personnel outside of the executive director, it is aware of and gives input on major leadership changes happening at the schools. Board members were made aware of the current principal's planned departure and consult with the executive director regularly to ensure the school replaces her with a leader that will be able to fulfill the school's mission. The board identifies talent retention as a growth area across the organization and plans to bring on a board member with expertise in talent recruitment to increase the board's effectiveness in this area.
- The board has a clear process to evaluate the regional executive director twice yearly. The board uses an external consulting group to evaluate its effectiveness and areas of strength and weakness. The board also participates in board retreats yearly to discuss priorities and how it can improve its effectiveness.
- The board does not directly communicate with the school community. As part of its plan to increase board membership, board members are engaging school and regional leaders to identify a potential parent board member. Also, as part of the board's short-term goals,

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

board members are putting together a board calendar that will include two board visits to the school per school year and events students and parents attend so board members can increase their presence in the community.

Appendix A

School Overview

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Mission Statement

The mission of Citizens Crown Heights is to provide our diverse community of students with an intellectually challenging, experiential learning environment. Together we inspire each student, educationally and socially, to discover and refine their individual voice. As a collective community, we empower our students to become true Citizens of the World.

Board of Trustees⁵

Board Member Name	Position	Board Member Name	Position
Theodore Straub	Chair	Matt Scott	Trustee
Kelly Bowers	Secretary	Erik Wilson	Trustee
Evan C. McLaughlin	Trustee	Keely Ball	Trustee

School Characteristics

School Year	Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ⁶	Proposed Grades	Actual Grades
2013-14	126	126	K-1	K-1
2014-15	189	200	K-2	K-2
2015-16	252	275	K-3	K-3

Key Design Elements

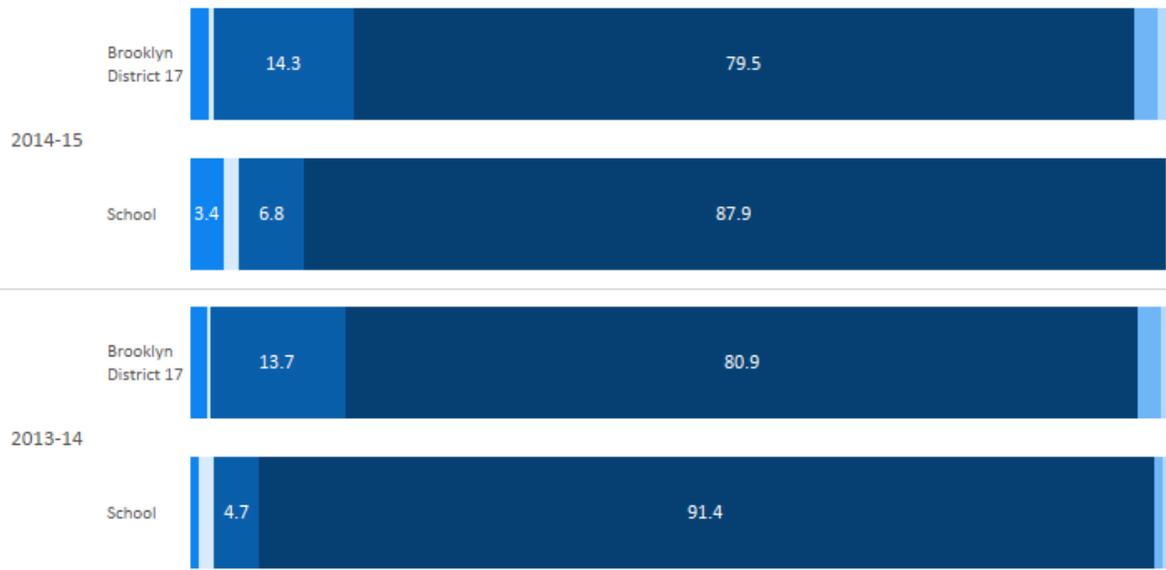
- Academic Excellence;
- Diversity;
- Community; and,
- Talent & Leadership.

⁵ Source: The Institute's board records at the time of the visit.

⁶ Source: Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

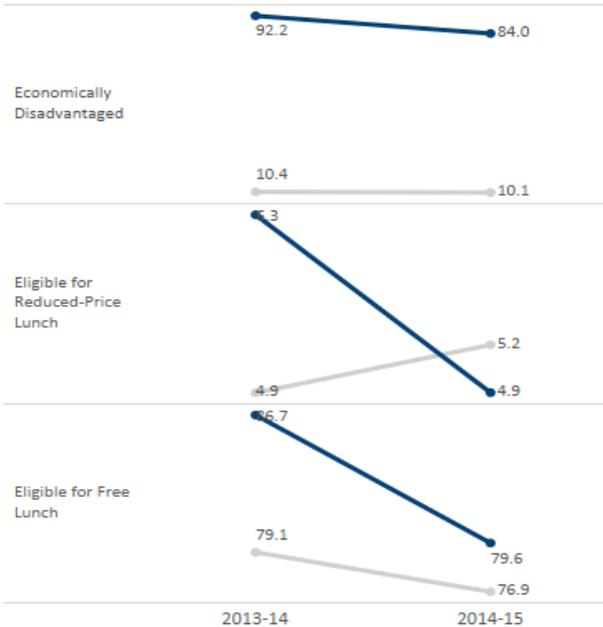
Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity



Race/Ethnicity Color Legend

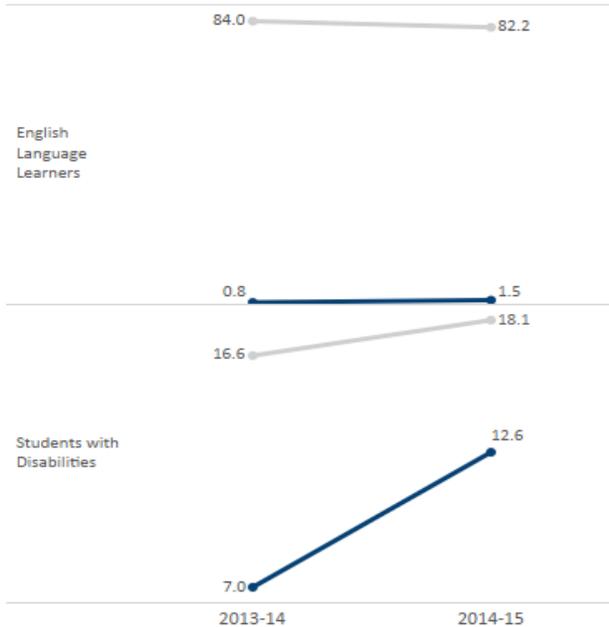


Student Demographics: Free/Reduced Lunch



The charts show the trends in enrollment in the **school** and the **district** for each subgroup over the charter term. Reduced-Price and Free Lunch data are not available for 2014-15. Economically disadvantaged includes those students eligible for Free and Reduced-Price lunch among other qualifying income assistance programs.

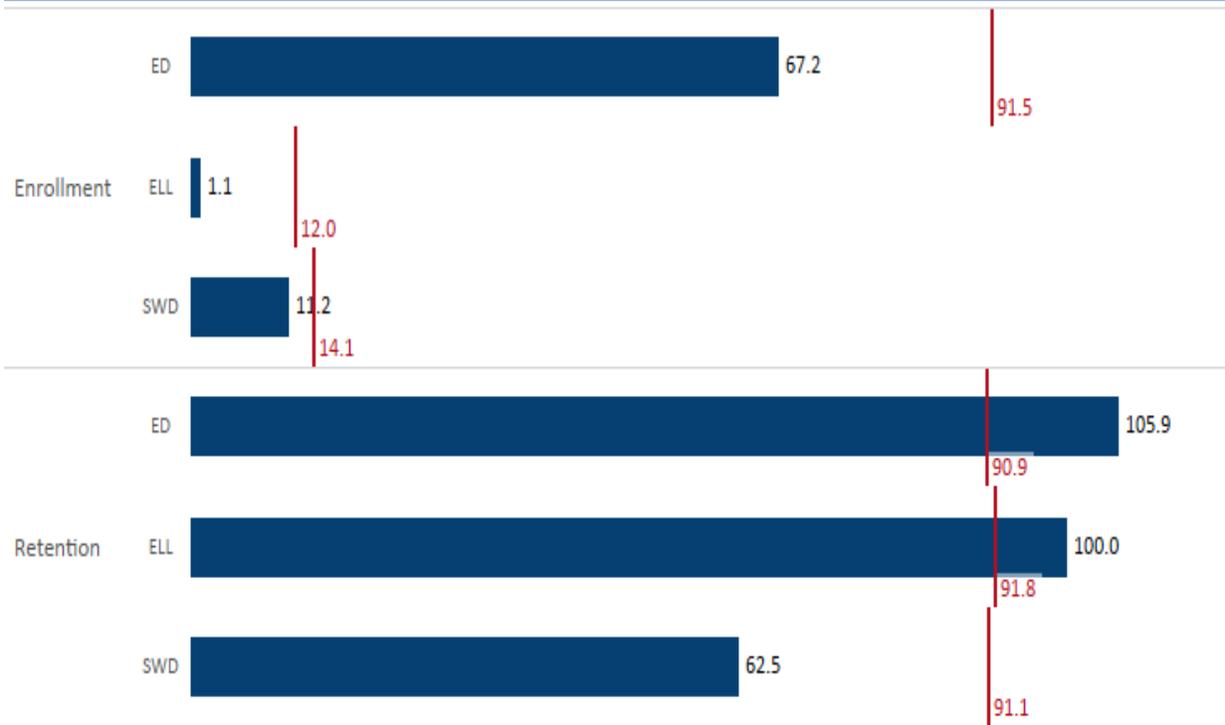
Student Demographics: Special Populations



The charts show trends in enrollment in the **school** and the **district** for each subgroup over the charter term.

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Enrollment and Retention Targets



The chart illustrates the school's **current enrollment and retention percentages** against the **enrollment and retention targets**. As required by Education Law § 2851(4)(e), a school must include in its renewal application information regarding the efforts it has, and will, put in place to meet or exceed SUNY's enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, ELL, and FRPL students. This analysis is based on the most recently available data provided by the school.

Persistence in Enrollment

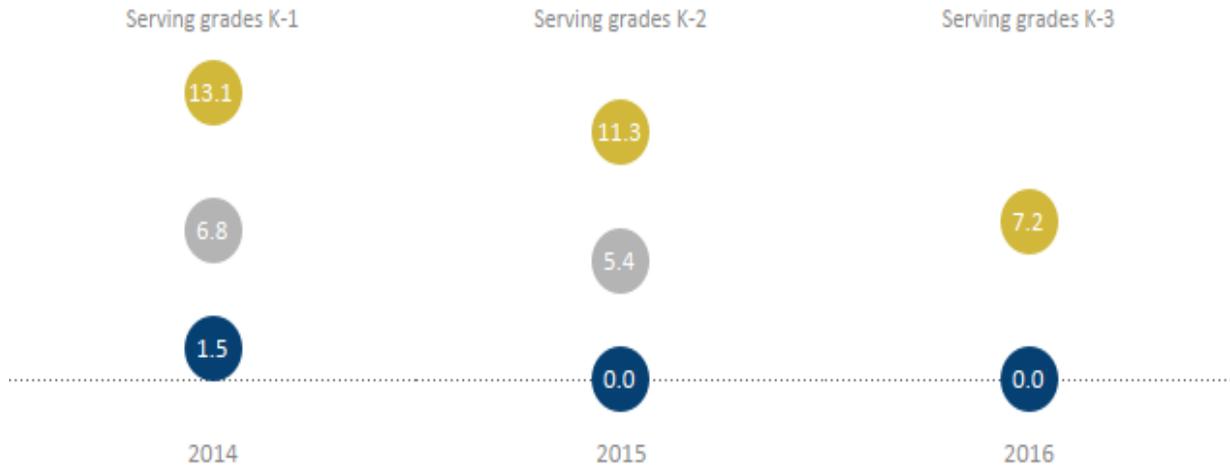


Persistence in enrollment illustrates the percentage of students not scheduled to age out of the school who re-enroll from the previous year. The Institute derived the statistical information on enrollment persistence from its database. No comparative data from NYCDOE or NYSED is available to the Institute to provide either district wide or by CSD context. As such, the information presented is for information purposes but does not allow for comparative analysis.

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

School Discipline

Suspensions: Citizens Crown Heights's in school suspension rate and out of school suspension rate and the district overall suspension rate.



Although Community School District ("CSD") and school suspension rates are presented on the same graph, a direct comparison between the rates is not possible for three primary reasons. Available CSD data includes Kindergarten through 12th grades and school data includes only the grades served by the school. CSD data are not available that show multiple instances of suspension of a single student, the overall number of suspensions, the durations of suspensions, or the time of year when the school administered the suspension. CSD data showing the difference between in school and out of school suspensions are not available. The percentage rate shown here is calculated using the method employed by the New York City Department of Education: the total the number of students receiving an in school or out of school suspension at any time during the school year is divided by the total enrollment, then multiplied by 100.

Expulsions: The number of students expelled from the school each year.

2014	2015	2016
0	0	0

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

School Leaders

School Year(s)	Name(s) and Title(s)
2013-14	Martine King, Principal
2014-15 to Present	Liz Rawlins (Runco), Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Date
2013-14	First Year	March 20, 2014
2015-16	Evaluation	May 24, 2016

Conduct of the Visit

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Member	Title
May 24, 2016	Aaron Campbell	Senior Analyst
	Chastity McFarlan, PhD	Senior Analyst

Charter Cycle Context

Charter Term	3 rd Year of Five-Year Charter Term
Accountability Period ⁷	3 rd Year of Four-Year Accountability Period
Anticipated Renewal Visit	Fall 2017

⁷ 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 that charter term. For schools in initial charter terms, the Accountability Period is the first four years that the school provides instruction. For schools in subsequent charter terms, the Accountability Period includes the last year of the previous charter term through the next to last year of the current charter term.

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Appendix B

SUNY Renewal Benchmarks



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.

APPENDIX B: SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARKS

- 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>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>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.

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	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

	<p style="text-align: center;">Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?</p>
<p><u>Evidence Category</u></p>	<p><u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u></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>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1F</p> <p>At-Risk Students</p>	<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;

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	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.

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	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2A Mission & Key Design Elements	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2B Parents & Students	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2C Organizational Capacity	<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.

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	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2D Board Oversight	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2E Governance	<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;

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<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<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;

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	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3C Financial Reporting	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3D Financial Condition	<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;

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	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.

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	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.