



2015-16 School Evaluation Report

EXPLORE EXCEED CHARTER SCHOOL

Visit Date: May 11-12, 2016

Report Date: June 21, 2016

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INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit on May 11-12, 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	September 2011
Date of School Opening	September 1, 2012

Location and 2015-16 Enrollment

Address	District	Facility	Chartered Enrollment	Grades
443 St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11238	NYC CSD 17	Co-located	430	K-6

Network Information

Explore Exceed Charter School (“Explore Exceed”) is one of six schools within a merged education corporation. Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn (the “education corporation”) has the authority to operate a total of six schools, including two SUNY authorized schools that have not yet opened, Explore Enrich Charter School and Explore Envision Charter School. The New York City Schools Chancellor originally authorized two of the merged schools, Explore Empower Charter School and Explore Charter School. All schools within the education corporation operate under the management of Explore Schools, Inc., (“Explore Schools” or the “network”) a New York not-for-profit charter management organization based in New York City. The network by contract provides the schools with academic, operational and back-office assistance. Schools utilize the network’s curriculum and assessment materials, all purchased or designed by network curriculum teams. The network is also responsible for managing and evaluating the performance of each school and school leader.

2014-15 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

During 2014-15, the third year of Explore Exceed's four year initial Accountability Period, the school did not meet either of its key academic Accountability Plan goals in English language arts ("ELA") or mathematics, after having met them in 2013-14. The school did not meet its science goal but met its No Child Left Behind ("NCLB") goal in 2014-15.

ELA

Explore Exceed did not meet its ELA goal during 2014-15, the second year that data were available for all its required academic Accountability Plan measures. The school's absolute achievement declined by approximately 15 percentage points, with 10% of students enrolled for at least two years scoring at or above proficiency on the New York State ELA exam. After marginally outperforming Brooklyn District 17 (the "district") in 2013-14, the school fell to performing 10 percentage points below the district's comparative proficiency rate of 22. Explore Exceed performed lower than expected in comparison to New York schools enrolling similar concentrations of economically disadvantaged students after performing higher than expected earlier in the Accountability Period. The school's average growth also declined in 2014-15, when it posted a mean growth score that was more than 10 percentile points below the target of the state's median.

Mathematics

Explore Exceed did not meet its mathematics goal during the third year of its Accountability Period. The percentage of students enrolled in at least their second year proficient on the mathematics exam declined by approximately 25 points to 33. Concomitantly, the gap between the school's achievement and that of the district decreased from a difference of 31 percentage points to only three percentage points. While the school performed higher than expected to a small degree compared to schools across the state enrolling similar concentrations of economically disadvantaged students, it posted an effect size that was lower than its Accountability Plan target of 0.3 and substantially lower than in 2013-14 when it met the measure. The school also failed to grow at a rate sufficient to catch students up to proficiency, with an average growth percentile 17 points below the target of 50.

Science

Explore Exceed did not meet its science goal in 2014-15 after partially meeting it the prior year. The percentage of 4th graders enrolled in at least their second year scoring at or above proficiency on the state's science exam declined 13 percentage points to 62. The school underperformed the district's comparative proficiency rate by 19 percentage points.

NCLB

Explore Exceed met its NCLB goal and is in good standing. The school was not identified on the state's priority or focus school list for 2014-15.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Enrollment (N) Receiving Mandated Academic Services		(41)	(65)	(73)
Results	Tested on State Exams (N)	(10)	(31)	(43)
	School Percent Proficient on ELA Exam	10.0	0.0	2.3
	Percent Proficient Statewide	5.0	5.2	5.8

		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
ELL Enrollment (N)		(12)	(19)	(28)
Results	Tested on NYSESLAT ¹ Exam (N)	(10)	(12)	(20)
	School Percent 'Commanding' or Making Progress ² on NYSESLAT	30.0	8.3	25.0

¹ New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test, a standardized state exam.

² Defined as moving up at least one level of proficiency. As of 2014-15, student scores can fall into five categories/proficiency levels: Entering (formerly Beginning); Emerging (formerly Low Intermediate); Transitioning (formerly Intermediate); Expanding (formerly Advanced); and, Commanding (formerly Proficient).

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

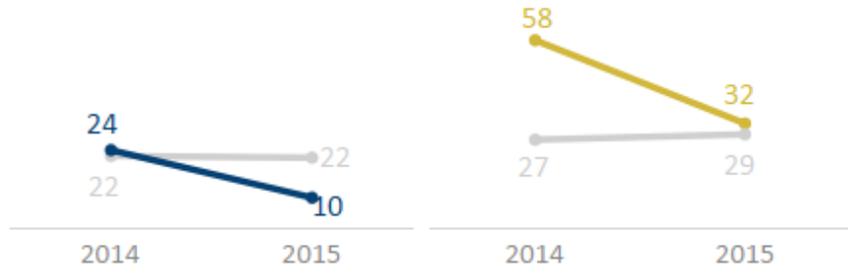
Explore Exceed Charter School

REQUIRED MEASURE DESCRIPTION

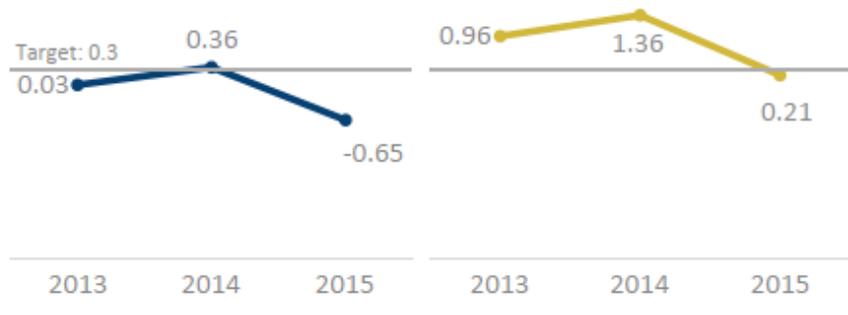
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

MATHEMATICS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

Comparative Measure: District Comparison. Each year, the percentage of students at Exceed in at least their second year performing at or above proficiency in **ELA** and **mathematics** will be greater than that of students in the same tested grades in **CSD 17**.



Comparative Measure: Effect Size. Each year, the school will exceed its predicted level of performance by an Effect Size of 0.3 or above in **ELA** and **mathematics** according to a regression analysis controlling for economically disadvantaged students among all public schools in New York State.

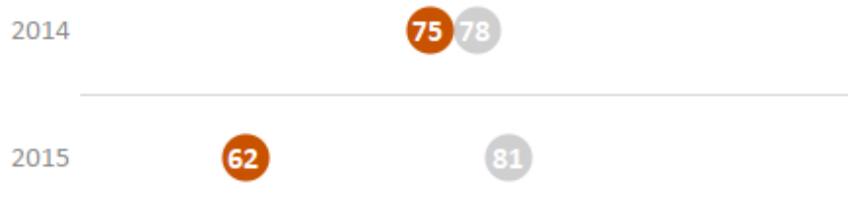


Comparative Growth Measure: Mean Growth Percentile. Each year, Exceed's unadjusted mean growth percentile for all students in grades 4-8 will be above the state's unadjusted median growth percentile in **ELA** and **mathematics**.



SCIENCE ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

Science: Comparative Measure. Each year, the percentage of students at the school in at least their second year performing at or above proficiency in **science** will exceed that of students in the same tested grades in the district.



BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

QUALITATIVE EDUCATION BENCHMARKS

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,³ 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.⁴

Use of Assessment Data

Explore Exceed has an assessment system that provides teachers and leaders with a sufficient amount of student outcome data. This year, the school is using this data to generate action plans in the interest of improving students' academic achievement.

- Under the direction of the network Explore Exceed regularly administers a variety of assessments that align to the school's curriculum. In literacy, the school administers the Fountas and Pinell ("F&P") assessment, on-demand writing assessments and Power Reading assessments (for grades 3-6) that the network develops. In mathematics, the network creates interim assessments, which the school administers at the conclusion of each term. The school also administers Core Knowledge Language Arts Assessments for grades K-2 three times per year. Teachers supplement these common assessments with exit tickets, student conferences and other informal assessments.
- Teachers use data from assessments to generate student groupings. For example, based on interim assessment results, the school split students in grades one and two into 8 differentiated skill-building groups and kindergartners into three differentiated skill-building groups.
- Explore Exceed teachers grade assessments using a rubric from the corresponding commercial curricula or one the network provides. The school holds norming sessions where instructional leaders and teachers collectively analyze sample student work to determine the characteristics of high and low quality student responses.
- The school has a system to analyze assessment results, present those results to teachers and identify instructional changes. Following each term teachers attend network-wide sessions during which they analyze F&P, on-demand writing and Power Reading assessment data to determine student placement in the school's Leveled Literacy Intervention ("LLI"), skill-building and guided reading groups. Mathematics teachers use network protocols to analyze interim assessment data. Teachers also develop action plans to meet the needs of students as identified in interim assessments, though there is not a standard action planning template for all subjects and all grades.
- Teachers discuss results on end of unit assessments as well as exit ticket data in professional learning communities ("PLCs") in order to inform short-term and medium-

³ 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.

⁴ 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/.

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term instructional planning as well as student grouping. However, there is not a standardized protocol, or frequency, to evaluate exit tickets and student work during PLC sessions.

- Assessment results partly inform professional development and coaching strategies but are not the primary determinants. Though the school's instructional leaders use assessment results to inform some teacher training sessions, school leaders rely primarily on classroom observations to determine the needs for teacher training. Similarly, the focus of coaching sessions stems mainly from classroom observations and the progress teachers are making to meet their individualized development plan goals, which may not relate directly to student assessment results.
- Explore Exceed provides parents with information on student progress and growth. During three annual parent teacher conferences, teachers discuss with parents information about their child's academic performance including performance on unit and interim assessments. The school sends report cards to parents at the end of each of its five academic terms.

Curriculum

In response to the school's low academic performance, particularly with regard to ELA, the network implemented wide-spread changes to the curriculum across all Explore schools. As part of these changes, the school now has curricula and corresponding documents that support teachers in their instructional planning.

- Under the direction of the network Explore schools are implementing a three year turnaround plan to address low academic performance. As part of the plan the network is assessing the strength of the curriculum and is making changes to much of the school's program. As a result, Explore Exceed now uses Core Knowledge for grades K-2 and Expeditionary Learning for grades 3-6 in the interest of generating better ELA results and aligning more closely with Common Core State Standards. Because the network and school determined that the central mathematics curricula were not fully aligned with Common Core standards, the school plans to transition to another version of TERC Investigations next year for lower school mathematics instruction. At the upper school, teachers use Math in Focus, which the network piloted at Explore Exceed in February of this year, to better align with Common Core standards. The school will continue using Math in Focus at the upper school next year.
- The network is responsible for curriculum selection and supports the development of these materials. A team that includes the chief academic officer, the network's director of literacy or mathematics and some school-based instructional leaders makes decisions regarding which curricula to use. The network provides pacing guides, scope and sequence documents, unit plans, lesson outlines and other scaffolding documents for teachers to use when planning instruction. Teachers have access to network-wide shared drives that contain lesson plans across subjects and grade levels. Based on these documents, teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. However, there have been instances in which the school was not able to ensure student mastery of particular content

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because the school pacing guide did not always allow for student re-teaching when necessary.

- Explore Exceed’s instructional leaders use coaching sessions and time during PLC meetings to support teachers in making curricular modifications. While teachers do not receive regular, formal feedback on their lesson plans, teachers have opportunities to identify areas of strength or concern with regard to their instructional planning during PLCs. For example, during some PLCs, teachers and academic leaders analyze a particular teacher’s lesson plans or specific lesson components to identify areas of strength and improvement for teachers participating in the PLC.

Pedagogy

While adequate instruction is evident at the lower school, the upper school suffers from particularly low quality instruction. Despite lessons with clear objectives across both campuses, Explore Exceed’s lack of academic rigor and inconsistent effective classroom management techniques do not support a sustained focus on academic achievement, especially at the upper school. As shown in the chart below, during the visit, Institute team members conducted 22 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all evaluation visits.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

		Grade						Total	
		K	1	2	3	4	5		6
Content Area	ELA	1	1	1		2	3	3	11
	Math					1	1	2	4
	Science		1			1			2
	Soc Stu							2	2
	Other				1			2	3
	Total		1	2	1	1	4	4	9

- Teachers at the lower and upper schools deliver lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school’s curriculum (21 out of 22 classrooms observed). Teachers consistently utilize age and content appropriate vocabulary and hold students accountable for using academic vocabulary during lessons.
- Approximately half of teachers observed do not regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding (12 out of 22 classrooms observed). Particularly at the upper school, some teachers check for understanding only with individual students, missing key opportunities to check for understanding across the entire class. As a result, many teachers do not adjust their instruction during lessons in response to student misunderstandings.
- Few teachers across both campuses include opportunities in their lessons to challenge students with questions and activities that develop higher-order thinking and problem solving skills (7 out of 22 classrooms observed higher-order thinking). Instruction is typically teacher-centered and focuses on acquisition of knowledge or developing reading

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comprehension skills rather than exploring open-ended questions or complex problems. Most observed teachers also provide few meaningful opportunities for students to interact with their peers; teachers do not provide students the norms and protocols necessary to facilitate higher-order thinking opportunities through peer interactions. For example, in one classroom the teacher expected students to discuss a book with a peer but did not provide any structures or protocols upon which to base their discussion. As a result many students did not engage in academic discourse regarding the text.

- A slight majority of teachers establish and maintain an academic environment focused on academic achievement (13 out of 22 classrooms observed), although classrooms with a clear focus on learning were more prevalent at the lower school. Observed upper school teachers do not have effective classroom management techniques to address student misbehaviors. For example, in one upper school classroom the teacher assigned demerit points in over 20 different instances to numerous students during the lesson. However, the application of demerits did not encourage students to change their behaviors. In lower school classrooms, most teachers appropriately address students' low-level misbehaviors. However, some teachers allow students to opt out of lessons; for instance, in three co-taught classrooms teachers allowed at least one student to sleep through a significant portion of the lesson.

Instructional Leadership

Recent staffing changes and unclear roles and responsibilities across the organization impede instructional leaders' abilities to effectively support the development of the teaching staff. Insufficient support of teachers notwithstanding, Explore Exceed's instructional leadership sets relevant priorities, including increasing ELA and math state test scores by 10% and 15% respectively.

- During the 2015-16 school year, Explore Exceed experienced numerous leader and staff transitions at the upper school requiring large shifts within the school's instructional leadership. After the departure of the upper school's assistant principal earlier in the school year, the principal now spends four days a week at the upper school due to the absence of an on-site, instructional leader. The lower school academic director and two academic coordinators provide the majority of instructional supports at the lower school.
- Entering into the current school year, Explore Exceed was thoughtful about filling vacant and creating new instructional leadership roles to support the school, particularly as it grew to two campuses for its lower and upper schools. However, as some leaders are new to their roles and some roles are new to the school, the function and responsibility of many of Explore Exceed's instructional leaders is unclear, often preventing leaders from effectively implementing core responsibilities such as grade and content team support necessary to meet student performance goals. In addition, pervasive staff turnover at the upper school and a lack of adequate, direct support from the network in the midst of these transitions impedes leaders' ability to fulfill their roles with fidelity.
- Instructional leaders conduct informal observations of teachers. Observations notwithstanding, Explore Exceed does not have strong systems to norm observations and streamline feedback and to ensure teachers receive consistent messaging to inform their

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practice. Lower school staff report observations are less frequent and effective in the latter half of the school year, correlating with the departure of the upper school assistant principal and, as a result, stretched capacity of remaining instructional leaders to support both school sites.

- Despite the intentionality of Explore Exceed’s differentiated teacher support model, the frequency and intensity of contact between leaders and teachers are not sufficient to support the needs of all teachers, as evidenced through instructional gaps observed by the visit team across classrooms. As part of the school’s differentiated model, leaders work directly with teachers to establish individualized development goals using a three-tier support structure. The most struggling teachers meet once a week with an instructional leader to discuss observational data, review video lessons and to adjust implementation practices for future instruction. Teachers receiving tier two supports meet in working groups that school leaders facilitate in order to discuss best practices and analyze student data. Stronger teachers receive tier three supports that are more independent, with a leader serving more as a partner on how to improve their practice.
- Instructional leaders provide opportunities for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction within grade levels and content areas. However, increased instructional needs at the upper school limit leaders’ ability to take part in grade-level and content planning. The school requires teachers to take part in content area PLC meetings, but teacher leaders often facilitate PLCs. As a result, instructional supports for teachers are not consistent across grade levels due to differences in each teacher leaders’ own instructional capabilities.
- Despite thoughtful planning with regard to professional development, the program does not provide all teachers the training they need to increase their pedagogical competencies as evidenced during observations of classroom instruction. The network is largely responsible for the design of the school’s professional development program beginning with its three week, pre-service summer training that includes curriculum, at-risk support and school culture sessions. Explore Exceed’s leadership team has the ability to adjust or supplement the network’s professional development schedule as needed. Teachers also have the opportunity to provide input on the effectiveness of professional development during coaching meetings, although this process is not systematic.
- Instructional leaders have not put in place consistent and functional systems to ensure the professional development program interrelates with classroom practice. For example, leaders do not consistently implement a process following professional development where they might identify a specific skill teachers learn in a session, inform teachers of expectations on incorporating that skill into lesson plans and circle back to observe if teachers effectively incorporate the skill during lesson implementation.
- Instructional leaders conduct evaluations of teachers annually using a network protocol. However, some teachers report not being aware of evaluation criteria or leader identified strengths and weaknesses. Leaders analyze math interims, F&P and other assessments to factor student performance into teacher evaluation results.

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At-Risk Students

Although the school provides sufficient supports at the lower school for students struggling academically and students with disabilities, Explore Exceed does not have robust systems in place to meet the needs of all at-risk students. Particularly, the school does not provide adequate services to support these students at the upper school. Explore Exceed does not have a legally compliant and educationally sound program to support English language learners (“ELLs”) at either campus.

- Explore Exceed has clear procedures for identifying at-risk students. The school uses its child study team (“CST”), consisting of general education teachers, counselors, deans and learning support specialists, as the primary vehicle for identifying students with disabilities and students struggling academically. The school convenes CST meetings at the request of a teacher or staff member using a student’s performance data. CSTs create SMART goals for students that it monitors, evaluates and revisits as needed. CSTs recommend supports and interventions for students and can refer students for special education evaluation as a result of students not responding to interventions. The school identifies ELLs using the Home Language Identification Survey and the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners.
- Explore Exceed does not effectively use its response to intervention (“RTI”) framework for providing interventions and supports to students who are struggling academically. Teachers lack a consistent understanding of Explore Exceed’s RTI model, what each tier of intervention looks like and when a student is academically struggling versus when a student may need a special education referral. While some teachers display initiative in creating and implementing their own interventions based on student performance data prior to initiating the RTI and CST processes, many teachers do not display such capacity and view RTI and CST as the first recourse when a student appears to have significant learning or behavioral gaps.
- The lower school provides adequate services for its students with disabilities. The lower school provides integrated co-teaching (“ICT”) supports across all grades except for fourth grade, where there are no students who require ICT services. The lower school also provides special education teacher support services (“SETSS”), and provides self-contained 12:1:1 classroom settings. In particular, Explore Exceed’s 12:1:1 classroom settings are unique across the network’s schools.
- Explore Exceed did not provide legally compliant services to its students with disabilities at the upper school at the time of the visit. Significant staff turnover at the upper school during the school year, including two support services teachers, limits the upper school’s ability to provide appropriate services, resulting in several school-wide and lower school teachers and staff members splitting time between the two campuses or working entirely at the upper school. The upper school does not currently provide ICT services to students that require them. The upper school also does not provide appropriate SETSS or 12:1:1 services to students with these mandates.
- Explore Exceed lacks a legally compliant and educationally sound program to meet the needs of its ELL students. No school staff members have adequate, language acquisition training to oversee the needs of the school’s ELLs or to deliver language acquisition instruction. While ELLs receive the additional literacy interventions available to all students

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that need them, there is no evidence that these supports are sufficient to address ELL students' specific language acquisition needs.

- The student services coordinator provides all teachers at the beginning of the school year with rosters consisting of their students who have Individualized Education Programs ("IEPs") and those that have past CST involvement along with their required services and accommodations, IEP and CST goals. Teachers participate in IEP students' annual and tri-annual reviews and update students' progress toward their IEP goals at least once per term. Explore Exceed does not systematically provide teachers with information on ELL students' progress toward meeting language acquisition goals.
- Explore Exceed provides regular opportunities for instructional and curricular collaboration between ICT teachers and general education teachers at weekly grade team meetings. Explore Exceed's weekly professional development sessions provide additional opportunities for collaboration between at-risk and general education staff. The school and network provide adequate sessions during summer pre-service and throughout the year on information concerning at-risk students including reading and writing IEPs, the RTI and CST processes and testing accommodations but do not provide regular sessions on providing students with necessary interventions to support learning needs.

Organizational Capacity

The school's organization does not effectively support the delivery of the school's educational program.

- After several years of poor academic results across Explore schools, the network recently implemented a three year turnaround plan to address curriculum gaps, staff attrition and leader effectiveness. As part of the plan, Explore Exceed added and adjusted instruction and operations leadership roles in the interest of supporting the school's expanding program.
- Explore Exceed has faced significant challenges in opening its upper school at a second location. In particular, the upper school lost its academic leader and four teachers during its first year of operation. Explore Exceed leadership is adjusting personnel and resources in response to the needs of the upper school to some success, however teachers and staff are experiencing a lack of clarity and a decrease in supports due to the re-allotment of resources.
- Explore Exceed does not establish an administrative structure with operational systems, policies and procedures that effectively support the school in carrying out its academic program. The administrative structure at the school lacks clear systems and processes to undergird programmatic effectiveness.
- The organizational structure at Explore Exceed does not have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, particularly with regard to school leaders. The school has a number of new leaders this year which, combined with significant midyear staffing changes, creates confusion and a lack of clarity across positions, subsequently impacting teachers' understandings of who to go to for what.
- While Explore Exceed has a discipline system in place that it consistently applies across classrooms, the system does not effectively meet the needs of all students. The lower

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school uses a color behavior system and the upper school uses a point system to monitor and enforce behavior expectations. In comparing the 2015-16 academic year to date to the previous academic year, there are 48 in-school suspension this year compared to 46 in-school suspensions last year (increase of 4%) and 155 out-of-school suspensions this year compared to 91 out-of-school suspensions last year (increase of 70%). The school cites its stretched capacity to coach teachers on behavior management techniques and teachers' skill levels with regard to independently managing low-level student misbehaviors as main factors contributing to the increase of suspensions. In addition, high midyear staff turnover and pervasive teacher changes at the upper school impede the campus' ability to establish school culture norms.

- Explore Exceed maintains adequate student enrollment. At the time of the visit the school reported an enrollment of 437 students and a waitlist of 1,365 students.
- Teacher turnover is a significant issue for Explore Exceed with 39% of teachers leaving the school between the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years. The high degree of teacher turnover presents the school with several challenges regarding the continuity of school culture at the adult and student levels, the ability to retain institutional knowledge and additional professional development needs of more new school staff.
- Explore Exceed's resources support the school in meeting its academic goals. The school's operations team regularly reviews the school's needs and actively encourages teachers to voice additional tools they need to support learning. Teachers have access to a myriad of materials such as classroom libraries with high-interest grade-appropriate books, core curricular materials and supplemental materials, student organizational materials, iPads for student services staff, two carts of Chromebooks and laptop stations.
- Explore Exceed regularly monitors and evaluates its programs and makes changes if necessary, although the effectiveness of changes has yet to be determined. School leadership regularly uses student performance data in the form of network assessments, F&P assessments and embedded curricular assessments to monitor the effectiveness of its academic program. Leaders use behavioral data and classroom observations to monitor the success of its discipline program, and meets regularly with teachers to gather observational data and ensure that teachers have the time and resources to carry through on their instructional and non-instructional responsibilities.

Board Oversight

The Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn board is developing its ability to provide effective oversight to Explore Exceed. While the board corresponds regularly with the network on the performance of the school, it does not have systems in place to evaluate the strength of the network's support of the academic program, particularly as the school struggles with staff retention and meeting academic targets.

- Board members' experience in finance, law and non-profit work enables the board to monitor the operations and fiscal state of the school. While the board monitors the academic performance of the school, it lacks strong K-12 education experience and depends largely on the network to understand student performance data and inform any decisions made to adjust the school's program.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- As part of the network's three year turnaround plan, the board now receives sufficient dashboards at each board meeting containing academic, school culture, attendance, retention and financial data. While the board is not responsible for implementing the network's plan, it approved the plan and works collaboratively with the network to determine what information it receives in these dashboards and from network leaders. The information the board requests aligns with stated priorities including increasing ELA performance using F&P assessments as a benchmark, as well as tracking progress toward a 90% retention goal for school leaders.
- The board identifies staff retention as one of its main priorities, although the network is responsible for hiring key personnel and tracking retention. With several members of Explore Exceed's upper school staff leaving during the 2015-16 school year, the board has had conversations with the network to ensure they find quality staff members to fill those roles, although they are not directly involved in this process. In response to high teacher attrition, the board continues to work with the network to review hiring policies and to introduce teacher incentives, such as increasing teacher pay, to improve its ability to retain and attract high quality instructors.
- Despite board members' regular contact with the network, the board has no formal or systematic process to evaluate the network's support of the school, which is particularly problematic as Explore Exceed's upper school has experienced critical staff and programmatic changes with inadequate direct, instructional assistance from the network. The board does not have a systematic and effective procedure to evaluate its own performance. The network is responsible for evaluating the performance of the principal, although the board is aware of the content of leader evaluations.
- The board does not adequately communicate with the school community. As the board mainly confers with the network, it does not interact with school leaders, teachers or families. One board member reports that many parents do not know of the board's existence. The presence of board members at the school, which members report as rare, is also insufficient to allow for clear understandings of gaps with regard to the program on the ground. The board recognizes this as an area of improvement and reports working to increase its visibility in the future.

Appendix A

School Overview

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Mission Statement

The mission of Explore Schools is to provide students with the academic skills and critical-thinking abilities they need to succeed in a college-preparatory high school. We know that *all* children can succeed in an environment with high expectations, rigorous academics, and caring and committed adults. We are committed to serving all students, including students with special needs and English Language Learners.

Board of Trustees⁵

Board Member Name	Position	Board Member Name	Position
Graeme Daykin	Chair	Kimesha Carnagie	Trustee
Henry Mannix	Vice Chair	Morty Ballen	Trustee
Beth Cohen	Treasurer	Peter Walker	Trustee
Angelica Thomas	Trustee		
Jana Reed	Trustee		

School Characteristics

School Year	Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ⁶	Proposed Grades	Actual Grades
2012-13	224	234	K-3	K-3
2013-14	280	303	K-4	K-4
2014-15	336	366	K-5	K-5
2015-16	430	444	K-6	K-6

Key Design Elements

- Beginning Young;
- Continuing Through 8th Grade;
- Small Class Size;
- Meeting the Needs of At-Risk Students;
- Continuous Research to Drive Improvement;
- Instructional Decision Making; and,
- Governance and Organizational Design.

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

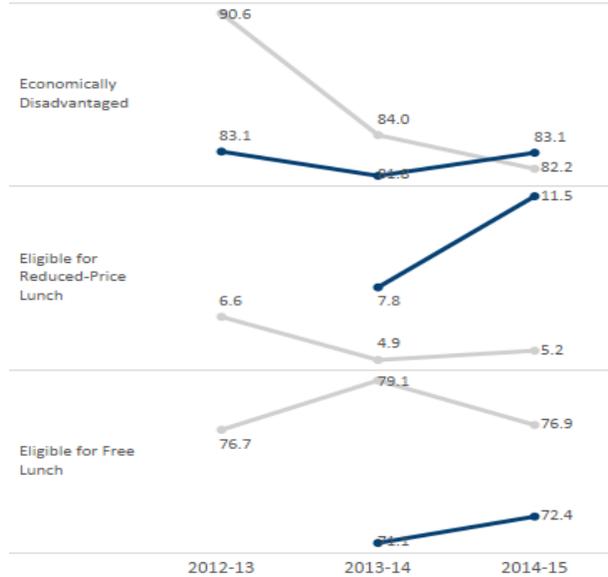
Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity



Race/Ethnicity Color Legend

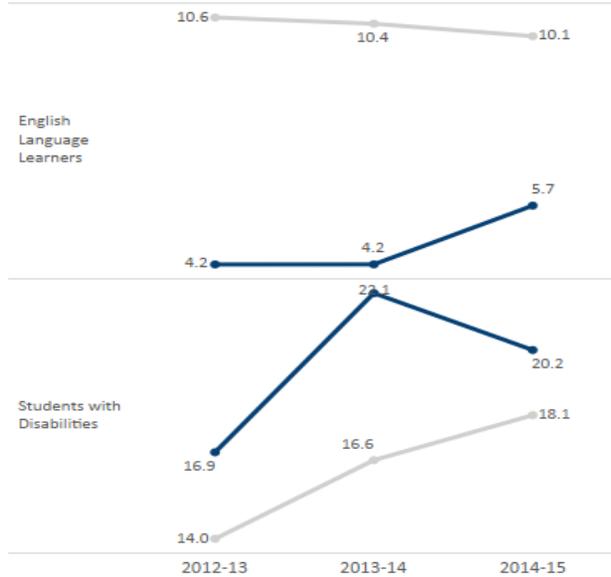
■ American Indian or Alaska Native
 ■ Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander
 ■ Black or African American
 ■ Hispanic
 ■ Multiracial
 ■ White

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.

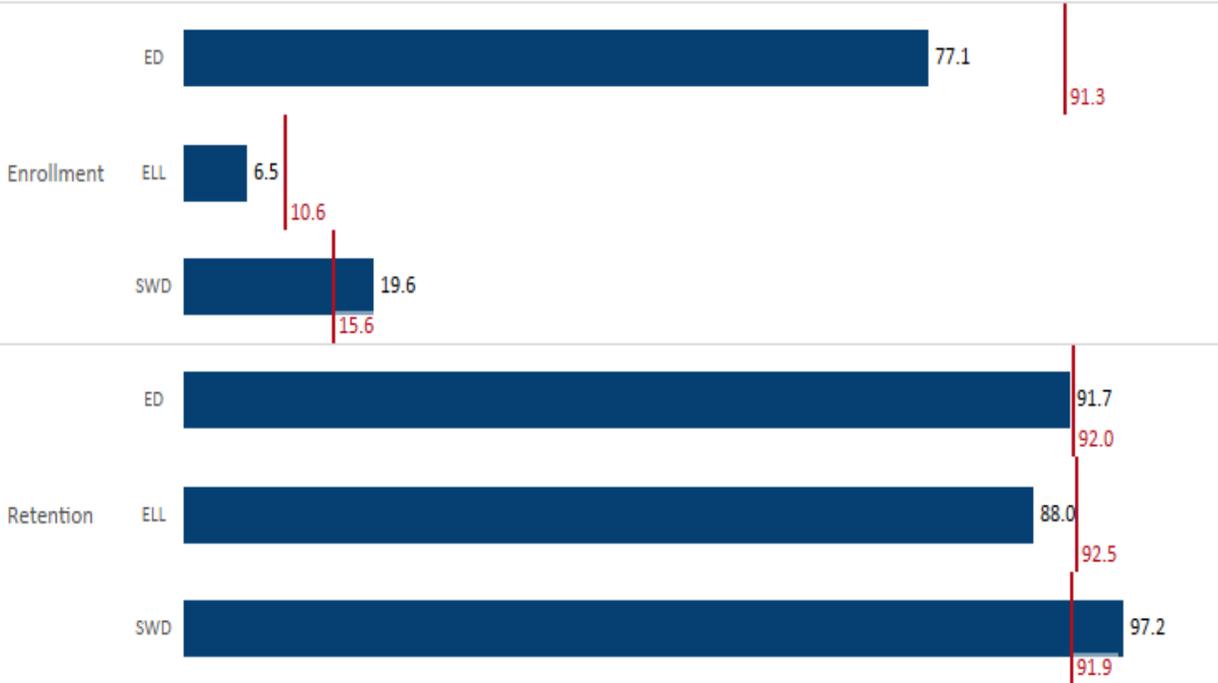
Student Demographics: Special Populations



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

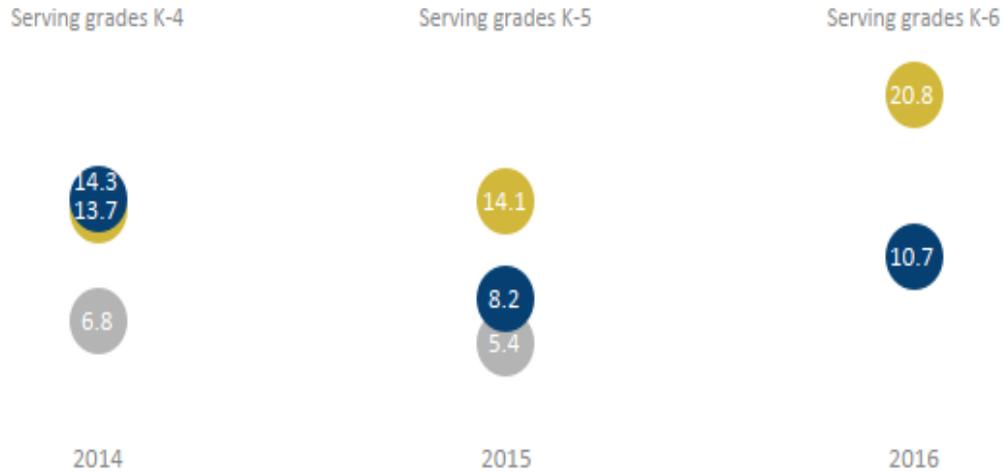


Persistence in enrollment illustrates the percentage of students not scheduled to age out of the school who re-enroll from the previous year. The Institute derived the statistical information on enrollment persistence from its database. No comparative data from NYCDOE or NYSED is available to the Institute 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: Explore Exceed Charter School'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)
2012-13 to Present	Curtis Palmore, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Date
2012-13	First Year	May 17, 2013
2015-16	Evaluation	May 11-12, 2016

Conduct of the Visit

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Member	Title
May 11-12, 2016	Aaron Campbell	Senior Analyst
	Adam Aberman	External Consultant
	Jared Boyce	External Consultant

Charter Cycle Context

Charter Term	4 th Year of Five-Year Charter Term
Accountability Period ⁷	4 th Year of Four-Year Accountability Period
Anticipated Renewal Visit	Fall 2016

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

APPENDIX B: SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARKS

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.

APPENDIX B: SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARKS

	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 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;

APPENDIX B: SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARKS

	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.

APPENDIX B: SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARKS

	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.

	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;

	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
<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;

APPENDIX B: SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARKS

	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;

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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	<p align="center">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?</p>
<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 <p align="right">S</p> <p>indicate that it will be managed in an effective, sound and viable manner including appropriate oversight of the academic and</p>

APPENDIX B: SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARKS

<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.
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