



2015-16 School Evaluation Report

MIDDLE VILLAGE PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL

Visit Date: April 21, 2016

Report Date: August 1, 2016

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Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

INTRODUCTION AND SCHOOL BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit on April 21, 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.

SCHOOL BACKGROUND

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	October 2012
Date of School Opening	September 2013

Location and 2015-16 Enrollment

Address	District	Facility	Chartered Enrollment	Grades
68-02 Metropolitan Avenue Middle Village, NY 11379	NYC CSD 24	Private	360	6-8

2014-15 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

During 2014-15, the second year of its four-year Accountability Period, Middle Village Preparatory Charter School (“Middle Village”) met both of its key academic Accountability Plan goals in English language arts (“ELA”) and mathematics. The school met its No Child Left Behind (“NCLB”) goal and does not yet have science results.

ELA

After failing to meet the available comparative and growth measures under its ELA goal in 2013-14, the school met its goal in 2014-15. The percentage of students enrolled in at least their second year scoring at or above proficiency on the state’s ELA exam bested that of New York City Community School District 24 (“the district”) by 12 percentage points. Notably, after failing to meet the comparative effect size measure in the prior year, the school posted an effect size surpassing the target in 2014-15. In comparison to schools across the state with similar proportions of students who are economically disadvantaged, the school performed higher than expected to a meaningful degree. Concomitantly, Middle Village improved on its growth measure in 2014-15, posting a percentile score 11 percentile points above the target of the state median and 19 points above its score the prior year.

Mathematics

Middle Village met its mathematics goal during both years of its first Accountability Period, having met all available comparative and growth measures. During both years, the school performed higher than expected to a large degree compared to demographically similar schools across New York State. Laudably, the school posted a mathematics effect size in 2014-15 that was among the top 93rd percentile of schools across the state. Although the school’s mean growth percentile declined slightly in 2014-15, the school met its growth measure over the entire Accountability Period. During 2014-15, the first year with students enrolled in at least their second year, the school outperformed the district by 27 percentage points.

Science

The state’s science exam is administered to students in the 4th and 8th grade. During the two years of its Accountability Period, Middle Village did not yet enroll 8th grade students, and as such does not have science exam results.

NCLB

The school met its NCLB goal as it has not been identified as a Local Assistance Plan, Focus or Priority school under the state’s NCLB accountability system.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Enrollment (N) Receiving Mandated Academic Services		(N/A)	(12)	(37)
Results	Tested on State Exams (N)	(N/A)	(12)	(37)
	School Percent Proficient on ELA Exam	N/A	0.0	18.9
	Percent Proficient Statewide	5.0	5.2	5.8

		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
ELL Enrollment (N)		(N/A)	(1)	(1)
Results	Tested on NYSESLAT ¹ Exam (N)	(N/A)	(1)	(0)
	School Percent 'Commanding' or Making Progress ² on NYSESLAT	N/A	S ³	N/A

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).

³ 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.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Middle Village Preparatory 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 Middle Village 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 24.

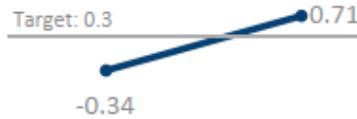
44
32

69
41

2015

2015

Comparative Measure: Effect Size. Each year, Middle Village 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.



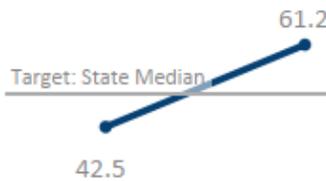
2014

2015

2014

2015

Comparative Growth Measure: Mean Growth Percentile. Each year, Middle Village'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**.



2014

2015

2014

2015

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.

Science data not yet available.

Science data becomes available after the school enrolls and administers the state science exam to students in the 4th and/or 8th grades.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

QUALITATIVE EDUCATION BENCHMARKS

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,⁴ 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.⁵

Use of Assessment Data

Middle Village collects detailed student data and makes data available to students, teachers, and parents. However, Middle Village lacks a reliable process for scoring and analyzing assessments. Although teachers have access to student-level data, they are unaware of performance trends of particular student subgroups.

- The school regularly administers NWEA’s Measures of Academic Progress (“MAP”) assessments in ELA and mathematics three times per year and teacher-created mock state assessments twice per year. Graduating students also take state Regents exams once per year. Because teachers create mock assessments based on content covered during instruction rather than the learning standards targeted on state assessments, assessments may not be reflective of all appropriate learning standards. Mock assessments are also not predictive of student performance on actual state assessments, as made evident by the school’s low performance on mock assessments compared to performance on state assessments.
- Grading is not systematically normed throughout the school. Teachers grade their own mock assessments and class assignments, thereby limiting the ability to ensure all teachers enforce similar grading standards.
- Middle Village makes assessment data available to teachers and students. Teachers are knowledgeable of performance on previous state assessments and have access to item analyses of students’ responses on state assessments, mock state assessments, and class assignments. Teachers are less familiar with student performance on MAP assessments. School leaders also review class performance regularly to monitor individual student progress. Despite access to detailed student-level data, the school does not aggregate assessment data to understand school wide trends in student performance. Therefore, while teachers are able to describe individual student progress, they are unable to provide

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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

snapshots of overall performance, such as the proficiency rates of students at risk of academic failure. The school does not regularly report detailed performance data to the board. Monthly board reports provide vague trends and summaries of performance with no specific quantitative information. Board members have access to student data during on-site visits.

- Teachers effectively use formative assessments to adjust instruction, reteach content, and arrange students for small-group instruction. Such utilization of student data occurs frequently, with one teacher rearranging groups of students based on their performance on daily brief independent assignments at the beginning of the lesson (a “Do Now”).
- The school regularly communicates with parents/guardians about their students’ progress and growth. Parents have continued access to their children’s performance on assignments and assessments via Teacher Ease. Teachers contact parents when students fail to turn in assignments or may require special interventions. School leaders also invite parents to discuss item analyses of students’ assessment results.

Curriculum

Middle Village has a curriculum in place that supports teachers in the planning and delivery of instruction.

- Teachers develop scope and sequence documents for the academic year and review them with school leadership before the start of the year. During the school year, teachers submit weekly lesson plans on Saturday for the upcoming week. School leaders review lesson plans by Monday morning and provide detailed feedback or approval of the plans. With these documents and feedback, teachers know what to teach and when to teach it.
- Teachers have flexibility in developing curriculum content and plan purposeful and focused lessons.
- Due to limited opportunities to collaborate amongst content team members, teachers often initiate informal meetings with other content area teachers to establish vertical alignment in the curriculum.

Pedagogy

High quality instruction is evident throughout Middle Village. Teachers deliver purposeful focused lessons and continuously check for students understanding. Lesson activities sustain student engagement to develop skills and competencies necessary for academic achievement. As shown in the chart below, during the evaluation visit, Institute team members conducted 10 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all evaluation visits.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

		Grade			Total
		6	7	8	
Content Area	ELA		2	1	3
	Math	1	1		2
	Science	1		1	2
	Soc Stu	1	1		2
	Other	1			1
	Total	4	4	2	10

- Teachers deliver purposeful and focused lessons aligned to the school’s curriculum (8 of 10 classroom observations). Learning objectives are clearly communicated and build on students’ previous skills and knowledge. Teachers make significant efforts to ensure lessons are personally relevant and address real world problems. For example, students were developing business plans to present to instructional leaders during a competition similar to the television show, *Shark Tank*.
- More than half of teachers effectively use techniques to check for student understanding (7 of 10 classroom observations) and monitor students’ responses during the course of the lesson. Monitoring activities aim to evaluate quality of student work and to ensure all students are on task. Teachers employ several methods during these checks, including holding conferences with individual students, circulating around workstations during group and individual work, and allowing several students to answer a question in order to build a consensus on the appropriate answer.
- Most lessons include opportunities to challenge students with questions and activities that develop depth of understanding and higher-order thinking skills (7 of 10 classroom observations). Teachers challenge students to defend and elaborate on their answers with factual evidence from the text. Teachers capitalize on opportunities to engage students in peer-to-peer discussions across the school, including literary analyses of musical lyrics and poetic stanzas, debates on political and economic foundations of a utopian community, and development of elaborate business plans that take into consideration projected financial income, expected living expenses, and student debt accrued while pursuing a hypothetical career.
- Middle Village classrooms establish and maintain consistent focus on academic achievement (9 of 10 classrooms observations). Teachers maximize learning time by communicating a sense of urgency for learning, minimizing transition time, and using appropriate pacing. All teachers are prepared with materials readily available for students. Students’ interest in the content sustains their attention and engagement in the material. In one notable instance, when students were allowed to talk amongst themselves while

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

browsing the web during a class activity, all conversations and internet searches remained lesson-related without any monitoring from the teacher.

Instructional Leadership

The instructional leadership at Middle Village establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance and student success as evident in the quality of classroom instruction and student achievement outcomes.

- Middle Village does not implement a singular, sustained, systemic, and effective coaching and supervision system that improves the instructional effectiveness of all teachers; rather, instructional leaders focus on struggling teachers and rely heavily on peer-to-peer support for most faculty members. Instructional leaders meet weekly with teachers who perform below expectations to provide targeted coaching and to discuss progress. Administrators support intervisitation as a means of sharpening instructional skills and provide coverage for classes to allow teachers to observe one another. While prioritizing the improvement of the instructional effectiveness of lower performing teachers has merit, it does not ensure the continual professional growth of others.
- Teachers express desire for additional opportunities and guidance for planning curriculum and instruction within and across grade levels. Weekly professional development meetings also serve as faculty meetings and do not allot adequate time for teachers to collaborate across grades or content areas. Although the schedule includes weekly common prep time, teachers often use this designated planning time to cover other teachers' classes.
- While Middle Village lacks a formal, comprehensive school-wide professional development program targeting a core set of instructional competencies, student performance suggests that teachers are well equipped with the pedagogical skills necessary to propel strong student achievement. Teachers often attend external professional development based on their own interests or based on the leaders' recommendations.
- Instructional leaders hold teachers accountable for performance with teacher evaluations that vary in frequency. Reported classroom observations range from one to six observations per year, depending on teacher need. Though frequency varies, observation-based evaluations result in high quality feedback that identifies teachers' strengths and weaknesses.

At-Risk Students

The strong performance of students with disabilities on state assessments provides evidence of the effectiveness of Middle Village's special education services. The school has appropriate supports in place to address the educational needs of students at risk of academic failure. At the time of the evaluation visit, a staffing vacancy created a gap in the school's services for its three enrolled English language learners ("ELLs").

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- Middle Village has clear and appropriate systems in place to identify at-risk students. It refers to the district’s student information database to identify students previously identified as in need of English acquisition services. The school identified three incoming students for services based on these records. Middle Village also administers the Home Language Identification Survey upon registration of students not previously enrolled in district schools. A Middle Village staff person conducts follow up interviews of families and students if indicating potential limited English proficiency. Although the school conducted 15 such interviews during the school year, it did not identify any new ELLs. To identify students in need of academic intervention, Middle Village uses classroom grades and assessment scores but does not have clear entry criteria for its Response to Intervention (“RtI”) program.
- At the start of the school year, an ELL teacher served the school’s three identified ELLs with pull-out small group ELA instruction. Following the ELL teacher’s departure, an ELA teacher began providing some instructional supports but was not certified or appropriately trained to meet students’ English language acquisition needs.
- Middle Village serves the 52 students with Individualized Education Programs (“IEPs”) mandating academic supports in integrated co-teaching (“ICT”) classrooms and with special education teacher support services (“SETTS”).
- The school implements a successful tiered RtI program. Middle Village students’ strong performance on state assessments relative to that of students in demographically similar schools statewide is one indication of the school’s effectiveness in serving economically disadvantaged students who are often at risk of academic failure. The school’s strong mean growth percentiles in both ELA and mathematics demonstrate the effectiveness of its high quality classroom instruction and academic interventions in accelerating student learning. Though the RtI program has no defined intervention cycles, classroom teachers and specialists monitor student progress using results of school-wide assessments and classroom assignments.

Organizational Capacity

The school organization supports the effective delivery of a successful academic program and establishes an engaging culture replete with opportunities for student enrichment.

- Middle Village has in place an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, policies and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program. Importantly, the organizational structure bifurcates academics and operations responsibilities, thereby freeing instructional leaders to focus on teaching and learning.
- Middle Village is deliberate in creating a strong community culture. The school promotes engagement and pride of product with extensive displays of student work throughout its

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

halls. The parent-teacher organization hosts events such as game nights throughout the year as well as an annual fundraising gala to support the academic program. Though the focus on academic achievement is unwavering, Middle Village also provides diverse enrichment activities such as a yearbook club, theater group, and athletics including track, cheerleading and basketball teams. Middle Village generates both internal and external excitement for special events. Prior to opening night of the school's production of *The Lion King Jr*, theater students received a letter of best wishes and autographs from the cast and crew of Broadway's *The Lion King*.

- With its first 8th grade class in the 2015-16 school year, Middle Village took steps to monitor the effectiveness of its programs with indicators of high school readiness. Forty-nine 8th grade students took the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test, and 10% later received an offer from one or more specialized schools. As of the administration's April report to the school's board, Middle Village students had amassed approximately \$360,000 in scholarships to Catholic and private high schools.
- 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 in place to ensure progress toward meeting these targets. Specifically, the school serves only three ELLs, but does not appropriately adjust its recruitment materials or practices to attract additional ELL students. Repeated failure to meet its targets places a school's charter in jeopardy. When applying for renewal, Middle Village 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 if not currently meeting such targets.

Appendix A

School Overview

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Mission Statement

The mission of Middle Village Preparatory Charter School is to prepare students to enter and succeed at the college-preparatory high school of their choice.

Board of Trustees⁶

Board Member Name	Position	Board Member Name	Position
Josephine Lume	Chair	Maureen Campbell	Trustee
Serphin R. Maltese	Vice Chair	Kaiko Hayes	Trustee
Michael Michel	Founder, Trustee	Deborah Kueber	Trustee
Rosemary DeGennaro	Secretary	Monica Konopka	Trustee
Margaret Ognibene	Treasurer		

School Characteristics

School Year	Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ⁷	Proposed Grades	Actual Grades
2013-14	120	121	6	6
2014-15	240	229	6-7	6-7
2015-16	360	369	6-8	6-8

Key Design Elements

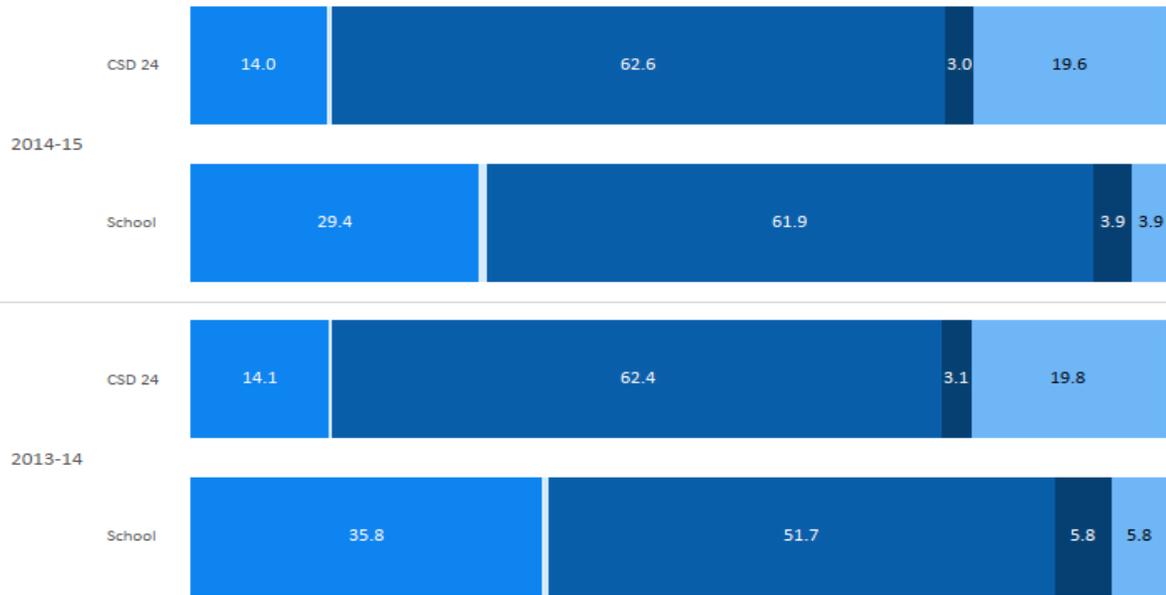
- Focus on high-quality teachers;
- Engaging content;
- Data-driven decision-making;
- Culture of high expectations;
- Focus on relationships;
- More time on task; and,
- Focus on operational excellence.

⁶ Source: The Institute's board records at the time of the visit.

⁷ 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

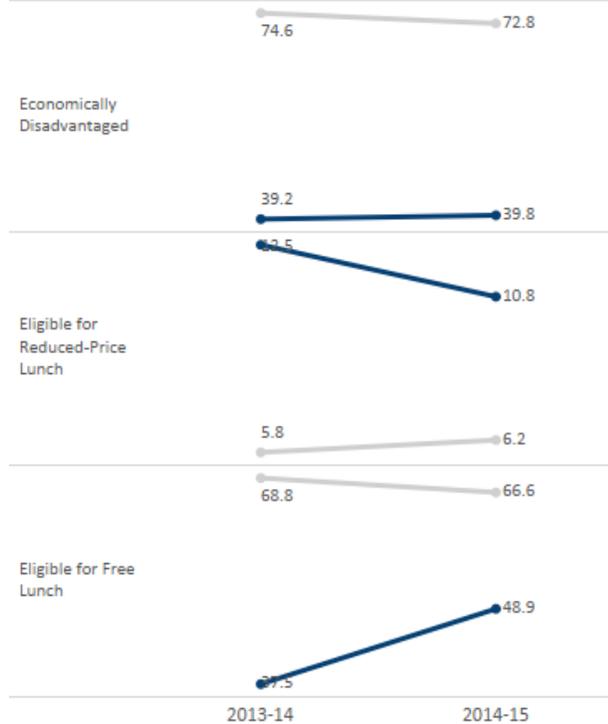
Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity



Race/Ethnicity Color Legend

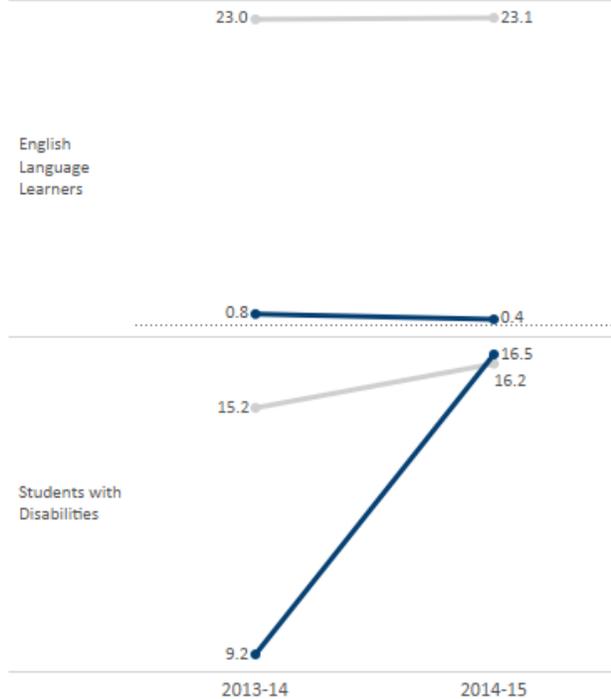
■ American Indian or ..
 ■ Asian, Native Hawaii..
 ■ Black or African Ame..
 ■ Hispanic
 ■ Multiracial
 ■ White

Student Demographics: Free/Reduced Lunch



The charts show the trends in enrollment in the **school** and the **district** for each subgroup. Economically disadvantaged includes those students eligible for Free and Reduced-Price lunch among other qualifying income assistance programs.

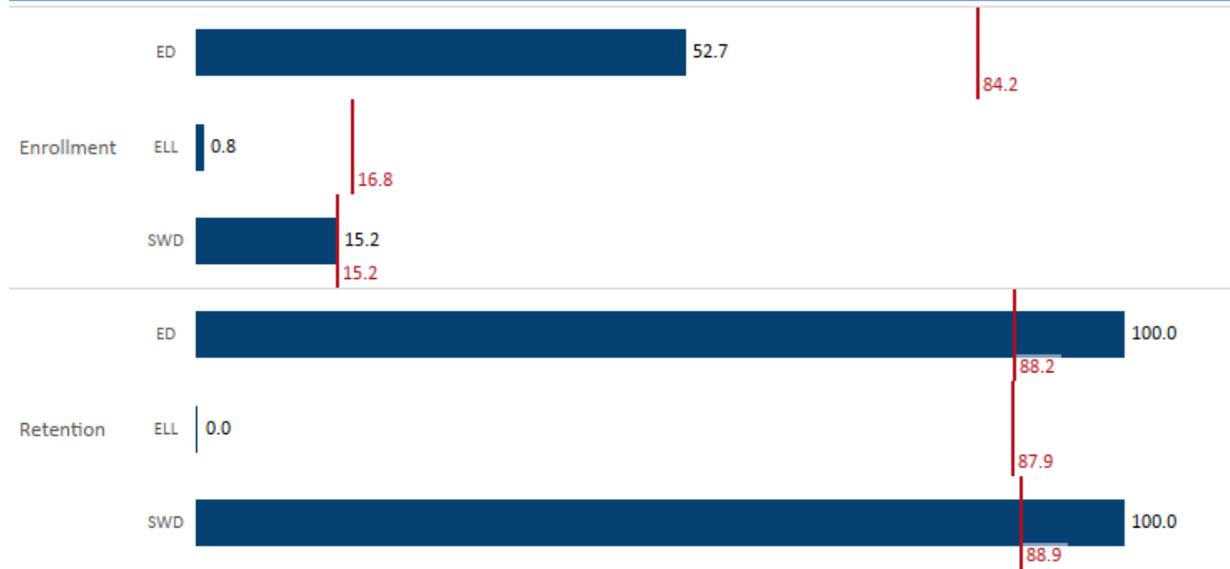
Student Demographics: Special Populations



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

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, ELLs, and FRPL students. This analysis is based on the most recently available data provided by the school.

Persistence in Enrollment

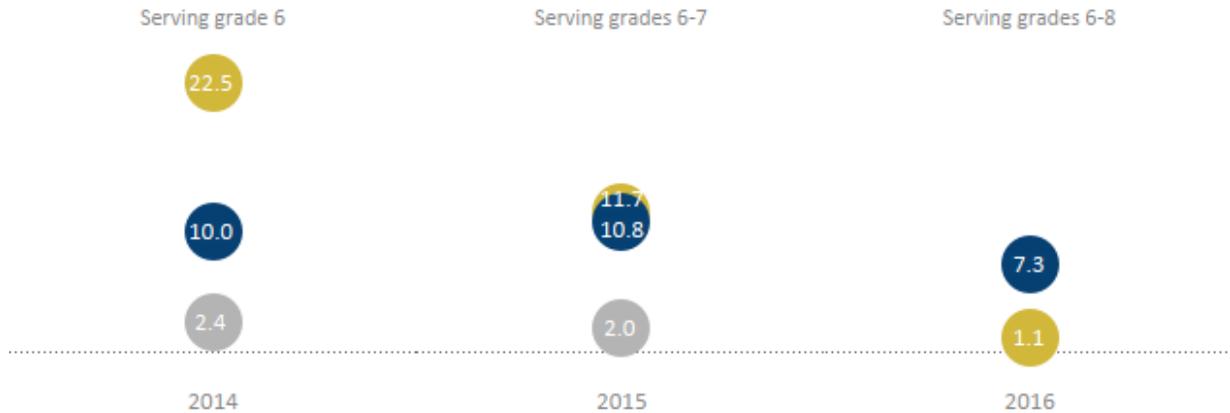


Persistence in enrollment illustrates the percentage of students not scheduled to age out of the school who re-enroll from the previous year. The Institute derived the statistical information on enrollment persistence from its database. No comparative data from NYCDOE or NYSED is available to the Institute 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: Middle Village Preparatory 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
1	0	0

School Leaders

School Year(s)

Name(s) and Title(s)

2013-14 to Present	Ronald Rivera, Principal
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School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Date
2013-14	First Year	March 12, 2014
2015-16	Evaluation	April 21, 2016

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Conduct of the Visit

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Member	Title
April 21, 2016	Chastity McFarlan, PhD	Senior Analyst
	Natasha M. Howard , PhD	Managing Director of Program

Charter Cycle Context

Charter Term	3 rd Year of Five-Year Charter Term
Accountability Period ⁸	3 rd Year of Four-Year Accountability Period
Anticipated Renewal Visit	Fall 2017

⁸ Because the SUNY Trustees make a renewal decision in the last year of a charter term, the Accountability Period ends in the next to last year of 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>
<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;

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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.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3C</p> <p>Financial Reporting</p>	<p>The school has complied with financial reporting requirements by providing the SUNY Trustees and the State Education Department with required financial reports that are on time, complete and follow generally accepted accounting principles.</p> <p>The following reports have generally been filed in a timely, accurate and complete manner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual financial statement audit reports including federal Single Audit report, if applicable; • annual budgets and cash flow statements; • un-audited quarterly reports of income, expenses, and enrollment; • bi-monthly enrollment reports to the district and, if applicable, to the State Education Department including proper documentation regarding the level of special education services provided to students; and • grant expenditure reports.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3D</p> <p>Financial Condition</p>	<p>The school maintains adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations. Critical financial needs of the school are not dependent on variable income (grants, donations and fundraising).</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school maintains sufficient cash on hand to pay current bills and those that are due shortly;

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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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	<p style="text-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 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.