



2015-16 School Evaluation Report

ROADS CHARTER SCHOOL I

Visit Date: April 4-5, 2016
Report Date: June 28, 2016

State University of New York
41 State Street, Suite 700
Albany, New York 12207

(518) 445-4250
(518) 320-1572 (fax)
www.newyorkcharters.org



INTRODUCTION AND SCHOOL BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit on April 4-5, 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	March 22, 2011
Date of School Opening	August 27, 2012

Location and 2015-16 Enrollment

Address	District	Facility	Chartered Enrollment	Grades
1495 Herkimer Street Brooklyn, NY 11233	CSD 23	DOE Co-located	250	9-12

Partner Organization

Partner Name	Partner Type	Dates of Service
ROADS Schools, Inc.	Not-for-profit charter management organization	2012-13 to Present

INTRODUCTION AND SCHOOL BACKGROUND

ROADS Charter School I's ("ROADS I's") mission is to:

"...promote academic success by ensuring that disconnected youth-overage and under-credited students aged 15-17 in New York City-graduate from high school prepared to excel in their academic, professional and personal lives. Our "second-chance" high schools offer customized and rigorous curricula, socio-emotional support and work-based experiences to foster student engagement and accelerate student progress."

The Institute and ROADS I have agreed to implement an Accountability Plan that recognizes ROADS I's target population: students who have been previously adjudicated, are in foster care, or who are homeless. This Accountability Plan aligns with the existing framework for college and career ready high schools while providing the school leeway for the time it takes its students to meet graduation requirements and for the types of meaningful post-secondary activities in which students engage. Thereby, the Institute holds ROADS accountable to a set of high standards for performance on Regents exams, for high school graduation and for post-secondary engagement while recognizing the unique life challenges of the students enrolled at ROADS charter schools. As with all SUNY authorized charter schools, the Institute uses the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks to frame its analysis of the school's program on the ground using the same benchmarks that guide the qualitative analysis of all SUNY authorized charter schools.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

QUALITATIVE EDUCATION BENCHMARKS

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

Use of Assessment Data

This year, ROADS I has implemented additional assessments to monitor the literacy levels of its students more closely. However, the school does not implement its outcome mastery assessment system in a consistent manner across departments to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning. ROADS I struggles to collect sufficient data for a systematic and timely analysis that informs the school's academic program and classroom instruction.

- ROADS I administers the Qualitative Reading Inventory (“QRI”) each trimester to assess student reading levels and the SCANTRON assessment twice a year to assess student growth in reading and math. However, the addition of the QRI to the assessment battery does not enable instructional leaders to more closely monitor students’ literacy levels and adjust instruction and group students more effectively. Although 142 students were eligible for the assessment, the school administered the QRI to 121 students during trimester 1 and to 70 students during trimester 2. Of the 70 students who completed a trimester 2 assessment, only 51 had a corresponding baseline trimester 1 score. The school has not created systems, supports and structures that successfully incent students to attend. Therefore, it does not conduct appropriate assessment activities within reasonable timeframes. This record of data does not provide instructional leaders and teachers with the necessary information to accurately adjust instruction to meet the needs of the entire student body.
- Teachers create and regularly administer in-class assessments, including exit tickets, midterms and finals, that align to objectives the school expects students to master at the end of each trimester. A student’s grade in a course ultimately consists of the percentage of outcomes that students master by the end of the trimester. ROADS I requires students to master at least 70 percent of course outcomes to be considered passing.

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

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

² Additional details regarding the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, including greater specificity as to what the Institute looks for at each school that may demonstrate attainment of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, is available at: www.newyorkcharters.org/suny-renewal-benchmarks/.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- The school is working with an outside consulting firm to refine the assessment system and some departments report norming both the creation and scoring of assessments. Notwithstanding, the visit team could not find evidence that this is a consistent practice across all departments at the school. It is unclear if the school is able to effectively assess students' growth with regard to their individual academic goals across all subject areas.
- The director of curriculum and instruction ("DCI"), along with department chairs, reviews midterm and final exams to gauge alignment between those assessments, state standards and the format of Regents exams. While some departments use a valid and reliable process for scoring and analyzing these assessments, the visit team could not conclude that all departments use these processes consistently across the school. Without these standard protocols in place, the school cannot accurately determine the extent to which internal assessments match the rigor of the Regents exams.
- ROADS I does not formally use assessment results to evaluate teacher effectiveness. The school continues to consider ways to gauge teacher success that it can attribute to effective teaching in light of the school's 58 percent average daily attendance rate. As leaders continue to increase the frequency and intensity of teacher coaching at the school, they are able to assess teacher strengths and weaknesses and have identified several teachers in need of additional supports with regard to instructional planning and assessment creation.
- The school makes assessment data available to school stakeholders. Specifically, it uses the "JumpRope" online portal to house student grades and assessment data. Teachers, leaders, and student caretakers regularly access this portal to monitor student progress. Board members also receive regular reports of student assessment results that they use during monthly board meetings to monitor student progress toward completing graduation requirements. The school regularly communicates student progress and growth to parents and caretakers through formal report cards at the end of each trimester, as well as during caregiver/teacher conferences at the middle of each trimester.

Curriculum

While the school's curriculum generally supports teachers in daily instructional planning, the instructional and credit accumulation design does not accomplish what was envisioned in the school's original charter design. ROADS I lacks clear systems for using student data to develop and adjust curriculum materials as necessary.

- ROADS I uses a curriculum framework that provides an overarching framework linking lesson content to student performance expectations. Although teachers were charged with creating this year's outcomes over the summer, the new DCI and department chairs are responsible throughout the school year for reviewing outcomes to ensure they align to state standards, align vertically within the curriculum for each subject area and are

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

rigorous. Outcomes also serve as a pacing guide to ensure teachers cover all necessary standards for each course. The school partners with an outside consulting firm to increase the rigor of the outcomes and aligned materials.

- In addition to this framework, teachers use EngageNY materials, such as scope and sequence documents, for ELA, math and social studies, and New York City Science materials that adequately serve as supporting tools to bridge state standards and outcomes to daily lesson plans.
- The aforementioned materials allow teachers to know what to teach and when to teach it. They also allow flexibility for the school to pace the academic program differently for students who struggle to maintain adequate attendance; however, other structural factors limit the effectiveness of this strategy.
- While teachers review assessment data to inform changes to upcoming lessons, the school does not currently have an effective overarching system for using assessment results and student performance to review and adjust the overall curriculum framework, trimester outcomes and supporting materials. Leaders and teachers continue to adjust the ways they review informal and formal assessment data with the goal of making these processes more consistent across the school.
- Teachers plan lessons using a lesson plan template consistent across classrooms and departments. Many lessons are teacher centered, sometimes involving the teacher reciting facts and students copying notes at their desk without substantive discourse. As a result, some teachers miss opportunities to provide questioning and activities that would develop students' higher-order thinking and problem solving skills.

Pedagogy

Pedagogy at ROADS I does not prepare students to perform at the level of rigor required by Regents exams or for post-secondary success. Rather, instruction continues to focus on task completion instead of on students' depth of knowledge. Many teachers rely on a guided note taking approach to pedagogy that focuses students on factual information without providing opportunities to explore open ended problems or challenges. As shown in the chart below, during the evaluation visit, Institute team members conducted 13 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all school evaluation visits.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

		TOTAL OBSERVATIONS
		CONTENT AREA
	ELA	1
	Writing	2
	Math	4
	Science	2
	Soc Stu	2
	Specials	2
	Total	13

- Across the school, a slight majority of teachers deliver lessons with clear objectives that align to the school’s curriculum (8 out of 13 classrooms observed). In classrooms where objectives were clear and purposeful, teachers consistently communicated their expectations for student performance by posting the objective and discussing it with students. Also in these classrooms, learning activities engaged students in meaningful discourse and supported their achievement of the stated objective by providing questioning and activities that challenge students’ higher order thinking. In some classrooms, the stated objective described an activity rather than a learning goal and did not include any way to measure student success.
- A majority of teachers check for factual recall or low level student understanding (8 out of 13 classrooms observed). Most commonly, teachers circulate to monitor students’ written work, admonishing them to complete the assigned task, or to question students for factual recall. Teachers throughout the school do not question students to gauge more complex conceptual understanding. In one notable exception, a teacher structured a lesson such that the students engaged so deeply in the material that they drove the conversation in the class enabling the teacher to assess the content thereof and redirect students when the conversation wandered outside of content germane to the lesson. In most classrooms, teachers prompted students with questions without providing appropriate wait time before answering the question themselves. In other cases, teacher questioning and monitoring of written work were not only ineffective checks for student understanding, but also failed to deepen students’ understanding of the lesson content.
- Teachers do not challenge students with questions and activities that develop depth of understanding and higher-order thinking and problem solving skills (1 out of 13 classrooms observed). Most teachers implement lessons using a direct instructional method limiting opportunities for students discourse about the lesson content. Teachers admonish students to provide factually accurate responses without prompting them to defend or elaborate on their answers.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- Most teachers maintain a focus on academic achievement in their classrooms where students who are present that day are mostly engaged in learning activities (11 out of 13 classrooms observed). Most teachers have successfully built trust and a strong rapport with their students. Students respond by staying on task and engaged in learning activities. Notwithstanding, expectations for academic engagement and success are not consistent throughout the school. In one notable example, a student independently left the class to chat with friends in the hallway with no consequence or acknowledgement from the teacher.

Instructional Leadership

ROADS I has yet to develop strong, stable instructional leadership. In the fourth year of its charter term, the school now employs its third principal and continues to experience turnover in other key academic leadership roles, which limits leaders' ability to support teachers in developing the skills and competencies necessary to accelerate student learning.

- This year, the DCI left early in the school year. The school's instructional coach stepped in as the acting DCI and remains in the position at the time of the visit. During the fourth year of the charter term, the school's third principal and the new interim DCI have primary responsibility for teacher coaching and evaluation. Other school leaders and the network's managing director of teaching and learning provide informal coaching for teachers about specific aspects of their practice: for instance, the special education coordinator coaches teachers about the best methods to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms. Teachers report having performed goal setting routines with their coaches although they are not able to articulate their goals.
- Teachers report regular visits from instructional leaders for in classroom observations and coaching. This year, the school implemented an online tool for storing and sharing observation notes and proficiency scores on each domain within the observation. Teachers have access to these notes and may use them to discuss improvements to their pedagogical practice with school leaders. Although the system is in place only half of the school's teachers have accessed the online portal to read and discuss their feedback. Under this system, the totality of teacher evaluation is based on evidence that instructional leaders collect qualitatively in the classroom with no consideration of student performance on outcome mastery.
- Instructional leaders provide sustained and consistent coaching, but this is not translating into a school that attracts students to attend on a regular basis nor does it sufficiently translate into strong outcomes for students. Teachers report that a coach observes a class and provides feedback generally once every two weeks with teachers who need more support receiving coaching more frequently. Notwithstanding these efforts, instructional leaders' predominantly vague feedback to teachers lacks specific recommendations for

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

actions likely to increase instructional effectiveness or measurable targets for improvement.

- During the third trimester this year, school leaders adjusted teacher schedules to provide common planning time for co-teachers and meeting time for department teams. Previously, co-teachers lacked formal opportunities to plan together. At the time of the visit, most classrooms with co-teachers implemented a model where a lead teacher relied on a co-teacher for classroom management support; however, co-teachers played limited roles in instruction.
- Instructional leaders and the network staff members provide teachers with professional development that interrelates with classroom practice. Weekly sessions during the school year focus on topics addressing pedagogical shortcomings identified using teacher observation data. Summer professional development focused on developing the school's culture and curriculum.

At-Risk Students

In its original charter design, ROADS I promised to successfully support an over-age, under-credited population. Now in its fourth year of operation, the school considers all of its students at risk but fails to meet the needs of the very students it promised to serve when it applied for its charter. ROADS I does meet the educational needs of some at-risk students, but eight percent of students receiving special education services have one academic course where they do not receive services mandated as part of their Individualized Education Program ("IEP").

- The size and structure of the at-risk program staff is adequate to support the needs of the school's large at-risk population. The at-risk program staff consists of a special education coordinator, 11 teachers responsible for providing special education services (some are special education certified and some have met the criteria for classification as highly qualified; not all are classified as solely special education teachers), two reading specialists and an English as a Second Language ("ESL") teacher who serves the schools nine English language learners ("ELLs").
- In order to meet the needs of the 109 students with IEPs mandating academic interventions, the school provides integrated co-teaching ("ICT") classes, special education teacher support services ("SETSS") and 15:1 classrooms settings. ELLs receive push-in services by the ESL teacher and also attend a stand-alone class during the school day depending on level of English proficiency. Due to the large volume of social-emotional needs across the student population, the counseling and student support staff has grown to include 10 staff members and additional interns.
- In this, the fourth year of the school's charter, the network added a special education compliance coordinator to ensure compliance with all IEP mandates. While the Institute

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

finds this important for the students this year, the Institute also notes that in prior years the school has not sufficiently addressed the needs of all at-risk students.

- Despite providing appropriate settings for the majority of students with IEP mandates for academic supports, eight percent of students have one academic course where they were not receiving appropriate mandated services at the time of the visit. While network leaders report this is due to staff constraints (one staff member did not pass the exam to be classified as highly qualified and another is out on leave), they are aware of the seriousness of the issue and are working to ensure students receive mandated services in all classes. At-risk program staff and general education teachers coordinate informally and formally within departments on a weekly basis to discuss student progress toward meeting academic goals and instructional planning. These meetings are a sufficient amount of time to allow for appropriate coordination. During and outside of these meetings, staff members monitor the progress and growth of at-risk students by reviewing data including QRI and SCANTRON assessments, final exams, Regents exams, attendance records and counseling data. As the ESL teacher is part of the ELA team, she coordinates with teachers in department meetings or individually with the general education teachers who serve the schools ELLs.
- The managing director of learning conducts weekly professional development sessions with at-risk program staff, which the school expects them to turnkey to other teachers. At-risk program staff members also attend external professional development sessions with organizations such as the Charter School Center's Special Education Collaborative, which are beneficial in developing teachers' ability to support student needs.

Organizational Capacity

ROADS I struggles to retain high quality staff; high turnover hampers the school organization's effective delivery of its academic, disciplinary, and social-emotional learning programs. The school organization has yet to demonstrate the strong student outcomes promised in its original charter application.

- The school and the network have planned an administrative structure with distinct lines of accountability and clearly defined roles and responsibilities that should allow the school to carry out its mission. The network supports the school's operations, fiscal monitoring, talent recruitment and provides coaching to its academic leadership and some teachers. However, in its fourth year of operation, the systems, policies and procedures the school needs to deliver its total educational program have not resulted in the promising design presented in the school's original charter.
- The school has a clear discipline system but teachers and culture coordinators do not apply the system consistently throughout classrooms and in the hallways. Some teachers redirect low level misbehaviors and keep students engaged in learning activities while others permit disruptive behaviors like students calling out and students leaving the

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

classroom. This year, the school is implementing a house structure where students have a primary contact person within the house. The smaller houses and primary person structure is designed to match students with a trusted staff member who will provide guidance and emotional support.

- ROADS I invests heavily in its social emotional learning program. The school's 13 counselors and specialists on staff work with students to meet non-academic needs so students are able to focus exclusively on academics while attending school. The effectiveness of these efforts remain to be determined because the school is not able to provide data about changes in students' behaviors or other softer measures, for instance, feelings of self-efficacy.
- As has been the case throughout the charter term, ROADS I does not retain quality staff. Of 25 teachers on the faculty during 2014-15, only seven returned for the 2015-16 school year: 10 chose to leave prior to the start of the year and six were not rehired. Another 10 teachers left after the beginning of this school year. The DCI, a key academic leader in the school, also left voluntarily after the start of the current school year.
- With 243 students at the time of the evaluation visit, ROADS I maintains student enrollment that is adequate for the school to allocate resources aligned, to some extent, with elements of the school design proposed in the original application approved by the SUNY Trustees. However, this allocation of resources has not produced the strong results promised in the charter application. Despite adequate official enrollment figures, ROADS I fails in its efforts to encourage students to attend school on a regular basis. The school's average daily attendance rate at the time of the visit was 58 percent, which falls far short of its Accountability Plan target of 75 percent of students attending 75 percent of the time.
- This year, ROADS is monitoring the effectiveness of its disciplinary policies and structures supporting students' social-emotional needs. The school is also monitoring student attendance rates on an individual basis. In the fourth year of the charter term, ROADS I implemented a tiered system of incentives and interventions designed to increase student attendance. The school continues to struggle to evaluate its academic program in the absence of a coordinated and reliable assessment system and an average daily attendance rate of only 58 percent.

Board Oversight

With only one founding trustee still active, the ROADS I board has not developed the original vision articulated in its charter application into a strong school organization. The current board possesses deep experience related to all aspects of the programming at the school, but its oversight has not resulted in a high quality and effective educational program.

- Leadership turnover at both the board and network level has been significant. Only one founding trustee remains on the board; seven are no longer active. Current trustees apply

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

a wealth of relevant skills to their governance of ROADS I but have been unable to steer the school on a clear path from the promises in the original charter design to the realities of a robust school program. With three different chief executive officers and other staff transitions during the charter term, the network has also not provided stability and has not put in place sufficient structures and daily routines that would enable the school to meet its academic and social emotional learning goals.

- Board members possess impressive experience in law, finance, K-12 education, and supporting young people who have experienced life trauma. Despite this knowledge and experience, the board is still adjusting its monitoring of the fiscal, social emotional, and academic program at ROADS I. Recently, the board engaged a consulting firm to support the school's financial management. The board also asked for revisions to its dashboard to include deeper information about the school's academic progress and leading indicators of success. The changes have resulted in greater fiscal stability and improved information for decision making.
- The board identifies stabilizing the school's academic and operational leadership and more closely monitoring student progress as its priorities for this year. The board has taken strategic steps to address these during 2015-16, tasking the network and school leaders to implement additional measures of student literacy levels to more closely monitor academic progress and student attendance. As more students move toward graduation, the board prioritizes monitoring and ensuring students' engagement in meaningful post-secondary activities.
- The network and board have been unable to identify and deploy effective strategies for the recruitment and retention of school leaders and trustees. Key academic leadership positions turned over for the fourth time in four years at ROADS I. The board and the network are still in the process of developing a clear, valid and reliable method for evaluating the school leader's performance.

Appendix A

School Overview

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Mission Statement

Our mission is to promote academic success by ensuring that disconnected youth-overage and under-credited students aged 15-17 in New York City graduate from high school prepared to excel in their academic, professional and personal lives. Our “second-chance” high schools offer customized and rigorous curricula, socio-emotional support and work-based experiences to foster student engagement and accelerate student progress.

Board of Trustees³

Board Member Name	Position	Board Member Name	Position
Jeffrey Li	Chair	Martin Kurzweil	Vice Chair
Ashley Dills	Treasurer	Jane Wilson	Secretary
Carrie Braddock	Trustee	Gwendolyn Baker	Trustee
Jane Mitchell	Trustee	Stacy Gibbons	Trustee
Mark Gallogly	Trustee		

School Characteristics

School Year	Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ⁴	Proposed Grades	Actual Grades
2012-13	150	144	9-10	9
2013-14	200	246	9-11	9-10
2014-15	200	195	9-12	9-11
2015-16	250	243	9-12	9-12

Key Design Elements

- Competency-based assessment and progression to college and career readiness;
- Emphasis on Literacy and Numeracy;
- Customization and integration of technology;
- Job readiness skills;
- Socio-emotional supports;
- Extended time; and,
- Human capital strategy.

³ Source: The Institute’s board records at the time of the visit.

⁴ 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

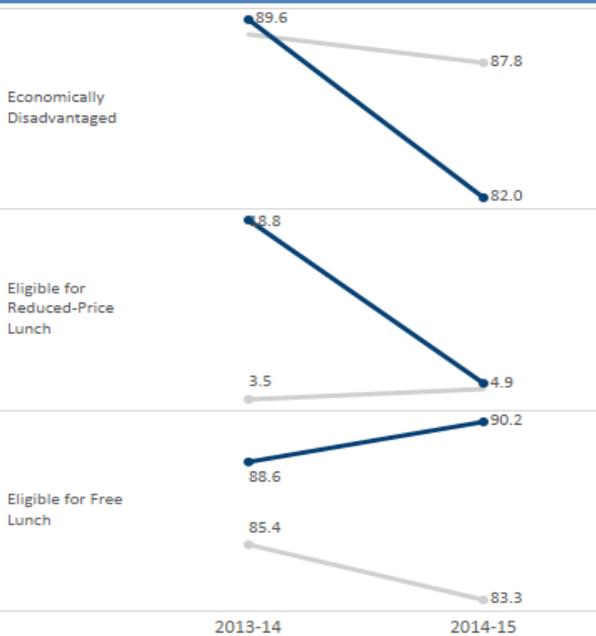
Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity



Race/Ethnicity Color Legend

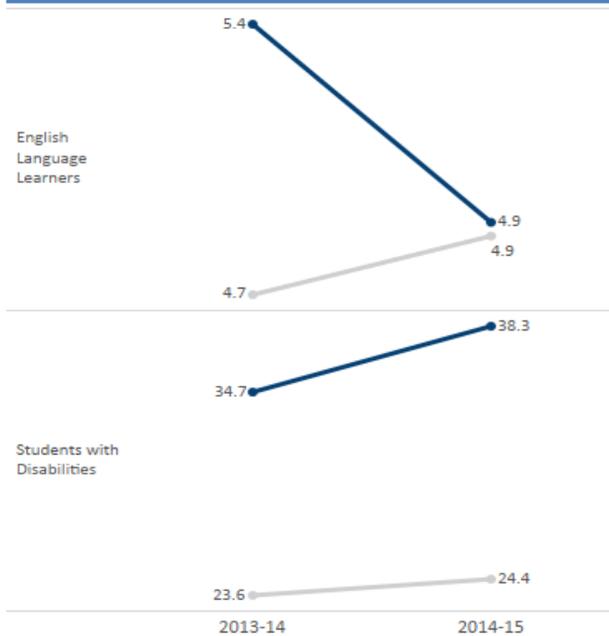
American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander, Black or African American, Hispanic, Multiracial, White

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.

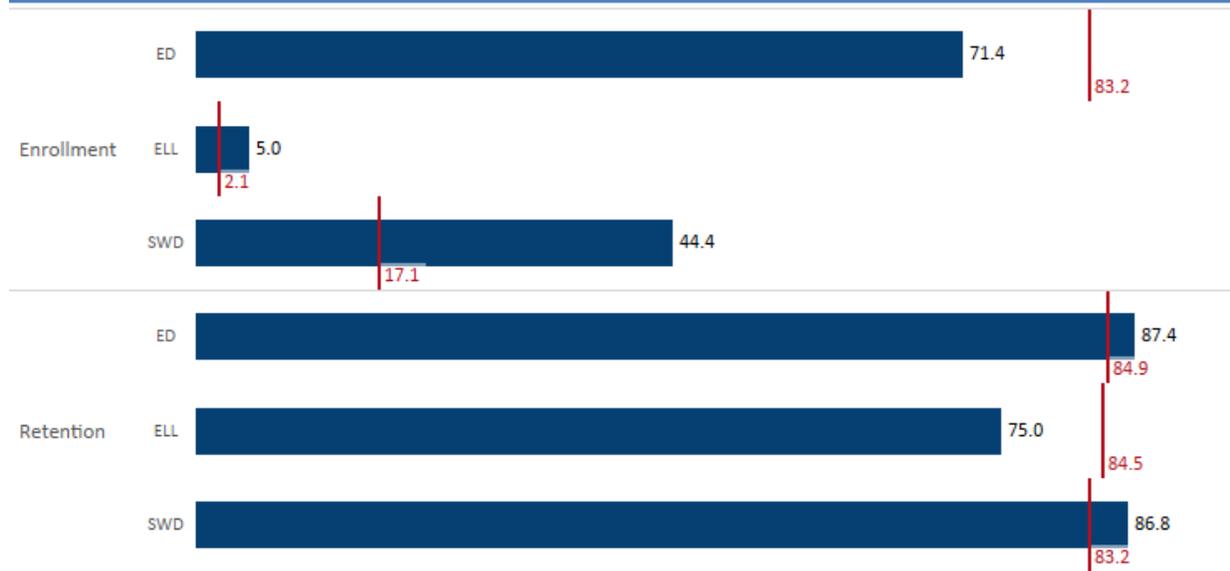
Student Demographics: Special Populations



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

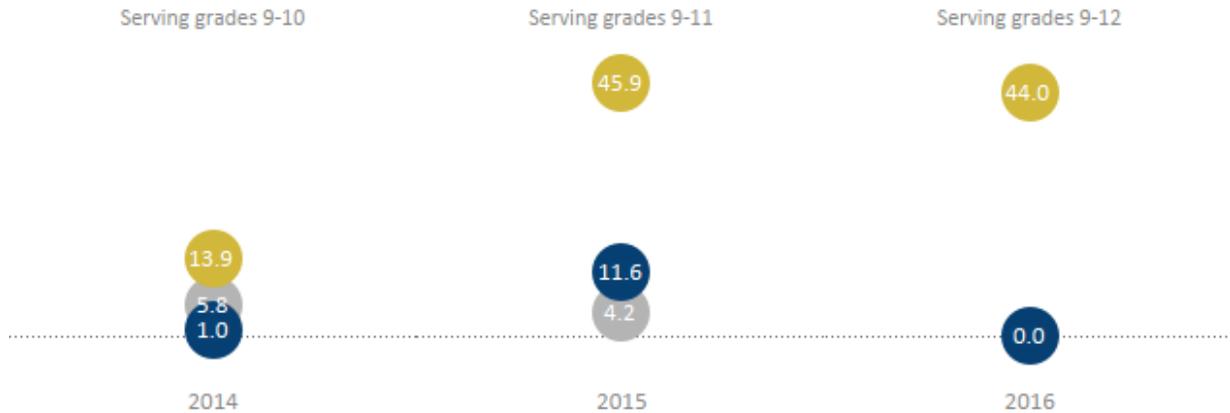


Persistence in enrollment illustrates the percentage of students not scheduled to age out of the school who re-enroll from the previous year. The Institute derived the statistical information on enrollment persistence from its database. No comparative data from NYCDOE or NYSED is available to the Institute 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: ROADS Charter School I'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
3	0	1

School Leaders

School Year(s)	Name(s) and Title(s)
2012-13 to 2013-14	Travis Brown, Principal
2014-15	Abeku Hayes, Principal
2015-16	Kristin Greer, Principal

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Date
2012-13	First Year	March 14, 2013
2013-14	Evaluation	March 27, 2014
2014-15	Evaluation	April 27, 2015
2015-16	Pre-Renewal	April 4-5, 2016

Conduct of the Visit

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Member	Title
April 4-5, 2016	Aaron Campbell	Senior Analyst
	Jeff Wasbes	Executive Deputy Director of accountability

Charter Cycle Context

Charter Term	4 th Year of Five-Year Charter Term
Accountability Period ⁵	4 th Year of Four-Year Accountability Period
Anticipated Renewal Visit	Fall 2016

Charter Cycle Context

⁵ 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.

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.

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;

	<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>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school provides adequate training and professional development to identify at-risk students and to help teachers meet students' needs; and • the school provides opportunities for coordination between classroom teachers and at-risk program staff including the school nurse, if applicable.

Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2A</p> <p>Mission & Key Design Elements</p>	<p>The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school faithfully follows its mission; and • the school has implemented its key design elements.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2B</p> <p>Parents & Students</p>	<p>Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school regularly communicates each child's academic performance results to families; • families are satisfied with the school; and • parents keep their children enrolled year-to-year.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2C</p> <p>Organizational Capacity</p>	<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.
<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;

	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.

APPENDIX B: SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARKS

	<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.

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.
---	---