2014-15 School Evaluation Report

Children's Aid College Prep Charter School

INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit on May 7, 2015. While the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the "Institute") conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks (the "SUNY Renewal Benchmarks") near the end of a charter term, most mid-cycle school evaluation visits focus on a subset of these benchmarks. This subset, the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, addresses the academic success of the school and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization. They provide a framework for examining the quality of the educational program, focusing on teaching and learning (i.e., curriculum, instruction, and assessment), as well as leadership, organizational capacity and board oversight. The Institute uses the established criteria on a regular basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

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

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

SCHOOL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	September 13, 2011
School Opening	August 29, 2012

Location and 2014-15 Enrollment

Address	District	Facility	Enrollment	Grades
1919 Prospect Avenue, Bronx, NY 10457	NYC CSD 12	Co-Located	275	K-3

Partner Organization

Partner Name	Partner Type	School Year(s)
Children's Aid Society	Institutional Partnership	2012-13 to Present

Benchmark Conclusions and Evidence

Instructional Leadership. Children's Aid College Prep Charter School ("Children's Aid") continues to build toward strong instructional leadership, specifically working to systematize its coaching program to best develop the pedagogical competencies of teachers. Consistent with the school's commitment to family involvement, Children's Aid maintains an academic parent-teacher team ("APTT") in each classroom to engage parents in discussing academic goals for students.

- Children's Aid employs an academic dean and an instructional coach who, together with the principal, have the capacity to adequately support the teaching staff. The dean and coach aid the principal in setting high expectations for teacher performance, which they communicate in weekly grade team meetings and with teachers individually during coaching cycles.
- Although instructional leaders provide adequate support to teachers, conducting daily "snapshot" observations and administering regular coaching cycles with written and verbal feedback, leaders are continuing to develop a systematic process to determine which teachers are coached by which leaders.
- The principal and academic dean conduct separate weekly meetings, using a shared template, with each grade level team to review lesson plans and discuss student data. Teams also receive additional time during the week to plan collaboratively without leader facilitation, providing them with sufficient time to meet and discuss instruction.
- Children's Aid has regular professional development activities that take place during both summer pre-service training and grade level meetings during the school year. The school bases professional development activities on clear foci including emotional intelligence and the development of teachers into teacher-leaders. "Snapshot" and coaching cycle observations allow professional development to interrelate with classroom practice.
- The school also utilizes APTT meetings as professional development opportunities. During these quarterly meetings, parents convene with their students' co-teachers to discuss academic goals. These meetings allow teachers to gain a better understanding of how parents support students outside of school, thus informing instructional adjustments that may be necessary in classrooms, as well as giving parents the opportunity to learn best practices to support students with academic work. Teachers receive training in implementing this particular initiative before each meeting occurs.
- The principal, academic dean and instructional coach conduct mid- and end-of-year teacher evaluations using clear criteria. As leaders conduct regular conversations with teachers during coaching cycles prior to formal observations, both leaders and teachers are aware of teacher strengths and weaknesses. Teacher evaluations also take into account student performance, with the principal not rehiring one teacher in the previous school year due to low student performance on several key assessments throughout that year.

Curriculum and Assessment. Children's Aid has a curriculum framework to support teachers in their instructional planning. The school also gathers a variety of assessment data and is beginning to use that data deliberately to improve student learning.

- The school has a curriculum framework, including a scope and sequence for each grade and subjects that provides a fixed, underlying structure for the academic program. In contrast to the last visit, the school now uses detailed units that align to Common Core State Standards and commercial products such as Singapore Math, Journeys, NY State Modules and FOSS science materials as resources in delivering this curriculum. Although these curricular improvements allow teachers to know what to teach and when to teach it, teachers continue to struggle in using units to develop clear and focused daily lessons as evidenced through the review of lesson plans and classroom observations.

- To evaluate student progress and mastery, Children's Aid administers the Developmental Reading Assessment ("DRA") four times a year, Fountas & Pinnell ("F & P") assessments every six to eight weeks, a math baseline, mid-year and end-of-year assessment, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills ("ITBS") and on-demand writing prompts after each unit. The school also administers an early literacy assessment at the beginning and end of the year for Kindergarten and 1st grade, and Ready NY assessments for 3rd grade throughout the year.

- Children's Aid utilizes an online portal to house and aggregate assessment results. Leaders regularly review results through the portal and the school makes assessment data available to teachers and school stakeholders. Parents also receive updates on student assessment results via scheduled APTT meetings.

- Teachers use grade team meetings to norm and score writing and other teacher-created assessments, to discuss unit plans and to decide subject lesson planning responsibilities. Instructional leaders meet with teachers regularly to support them in the development of curriculum documents, particularly to increase lesson planning abilities in order to improve lesson implementation in classrooms.

- School leaders use assessment results as a factor in evaluating both teacher performance and the academic program as a whole, specifically considering benchmark assessment data to determine the effectiveness of teachers and the curriculum. In classrooms, teachers use results to drive instructional decision-making including student groupings and curriculum changes. With the assistance of an instructional leader, grade teams use a data analysis protocol to review the assessment results and make instructional changes.

- The school regularly communicates to parents about student performance through monthly progress reports, report cards three times a year and APTT meetings four times a year.

Pedagogy. Despite some strength in the instructional leadership and curriculum and assessment materials, instruction of low quality is evident throughout most of Children's Aid's classrooms. Lessons often lack a clear focus and poor pacing and inadequate checks for understanding do not promote urgency for learning. As shown in the chart below, during the visit, Institute team

members conducted 8 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all school evaluation visits.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION METHODOLOGY: NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS

	Grade				
Content Area	K	1	2	3	Total
ELA	1	1	1	2	5
Math			1	1	2
Science					
Social Studies				1	1
Total	1	1	2	4	8

- Institute visitors observed few purposeful lessons with clear objectives (3 out of 8 classrooms observed). Written lesson aims often were not aligned to the activities taking place during the class period and most objectives did not outline what students should know and be able to do at the end of the lesson.
- A minority of teachers effectively used techniques to check for student understanding (3 out of 8 classrooms observed). While some teachers included methods to assess student learning, such as cold calling and using random Popsicle sticks, other teachers conducted classes without any checks for understanding or with ineffective methods. In one 3rd grade class, the teacher called on a student with their hand raised and promptly moved on without assessing the understanding of any other student in the class.
- Teachers did not challenge students with questions and activities that develop depth of understanding and higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills (3 out of 8 classrooms observed). In cases where teachers did ask higher-order questions, they often did not follow up and challenge students to defend and elaborate upon their answers. For example, when a teacher posed a higher order question in an ELA class but received incorrect answers from two different students, she then answered the question herself instead of breaking down the content and question while pushing the students to think through the problem.
- While some classes focused on academic achievement (4 out of 8 classrooms observed), during Institute observations teachers generally did not maximize learning time. Classes lacked a sense of urgency, marked by slow pacing and teacher-centered lessons that engendered moderate amounts of low-level student misbehaviors. Pacing issues and ineffective monitoring of students during independent work periods often left students unsure of classroom expectations and how to proceed if they finished assignments early. In one 2nd grade class, a student was given no other assignment to complete when she finished

her work early and simply put her head down on her desk while the class finished the assignment.

At-Risk. Children's Aid has robust systems in place to meet the needs of at-risk students.

- Children's Aid provides academically struggling general education students, students with Individualized Education Programs ("IEPs") and English language learners ("ELLs") with effective services to meet a wide range of student needs. In addition, the school emphasizes students' social-emotional development, employing life coaches to help students and families with health, nutritional and other supports.
- The school has clear procedures for identifying at-risk students. It uses a response to intervention process to identify students struggling academically and those in need of additional supports. Children's Aid also administers the Home Language Identification Survey and New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners ("NYSITELL") to identify ELLs. As life coaches are part of weekly meetings with the academic dean, at-risk staff and general education teachers to discuss the progress of at-risk students, the school is also able to identify families in particular need of extra supports.
- Children's Aid has robust intervention programs to meet the needs of at-risk students. The school operates with an integrated co-teaching ("ICT") model where special education certified teachers provide extra intervention support to its 32 students with IEPs and other students struggling academically. The school also provides special education teacher support services ("SETSS") to the five students in need of more specific small group instruction.
- To determine if a student is in need of extra push-in or pull-out services, the school uses assessments such as the DRA and commercial math assessments and analyzes this data four times a year in intervention cycles. The academic dean coordinates the intervention cycles and meets with grade level teams to discuss results and also to determine which students need to continue with interventions, which students can be moved out and which students should be referred to the committee on special education ("CSE") if they do not already have an IEP.
- An English-as-a-Second Language ("ESL") teacher serves the school's 29 ELLs. She provides both push-in and pull-out services for those students based on the number of ELLs in each grade and students' specific level of proficiency. She meets with each grade level team weekly to track student progress and provide strategies and best practices for teachers to use in the general education setting. Special education teachers also share specific ways to support other at-risk groups in these meetings. The ESL teacher and special education staff report attending regular, off-campus professional development sessions to improve their practice.

Organizational Capacity. Children's Aid's organization generally supports the delivery of the educational program, though some leaders' and staff members' roles and responsibilities remain unclear.

- While Children's Aid has put in place an administrative structure with staff, policies and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program, the organizational structure does not establish distinct lines of accountability. The roles of the principal, academic dean and instructional coach are not clearly defined, with the academic dean and instructional coach in particular performing very similar duties. Also, as the distinction between the roles of instructional leaders is blurred, teachers report not being clear on whom to go to for what purpose.
- A dean of students and culture assists teachers in the implementation of the discipline system. Specifically, teachers and staff utilize "sun chips" across classrooms in order to emphasize positive behaviors. Teachers track "sun chip" scores on bulletin boards in classrooms and students and classes with the most chips receive rewards.
- The school retains quality staff with only one teacher not returning from the previous year and another teacher leaving during the current school year for personal reasons.
- Children's Aid allocates sufficient resources to support the achievement of goals.
- The school has robust enrollment, serving 275 students, which is above the chartered enrollment of 222. It also reports 931 students on its waitlist at the time of the visit. The Institute has identified that Children's Aid has operated in the third quarter of the 2014-15 academic year above the 120% chartered enrollment collar. The Institute has sent notification to the board identifying the enrollment overage. For the 2015-16 school year the Applications and Admissions Summary submission to the Institute correctly identified the chartered enrollment of 265.
- Children's Aid emphasizes a preference for serving students who are at-risk of academic failure, particularly students with IEPs, ELLs and those coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. It has procedures in place to monitor its progress in meeting enrollment and retention targets.
- Children's Aid regularly monitors and evaluates its program at the end of the year and on an on-going basis. For example, after comparing the math *Rally!* assessments to Engage NY modules early in the school year, instructional leaders decided to switch to Ready New York assessments to increase the rigor of the math assessments and to better prepare students for state tests.

Board Oversight. Children's Aid's board provides sufficient oversight and is working effectively to support the school in achieving its Accountability Plan goals. The board has struggled to properly inform the Institute of changes in the board membership.

- Several founding board members continue to serve on the Children's Aid board. It has an appropriate skill set with members having K-12, higher education, charter management and

legal backgrounds. The board operates with several subcommittees including the academic, governance and finance committees, and has structures and procedures in place to ensure the school is financially healthy and legally compliant. In the last year, the board did not properly notify the Institute regarding changes in board membership as it is required to do under the terms of its charter. The Institute will work with the board to ensure proper notice regarding board membership changes.

- The school's principal and academic dean present data including assessment scores, attendance numbers and enrollment and retention percentages to board members at regularly held board meetings. These reports enable the board to effectively oversee the school's program.

- The Children's Aid board is reflective and responsive to the school's needs. It sets clear priorities for the school and school principal. For example, noticing early on that the school would need more instructional supports to achieve academic goals, the board was instrumental in plans to hire an academic dean and instructional coach going into the school's second year. The board recognizes the need to continue to fine-tune the school's organizational structure and has set priorities to refine the roles of instructional leaders.

- The board is also forward-thinking in terms of the school's growth and setting goals for future success. Under the board's leadership, Children's Aid broke ground on a new facility in the Bronx in April of 2015. Consequently, they prioritize fund-raising and are searching for potential board members with finance backgrounds to help guide fundraising and fiscal decision-making in the future.

- Although Children's Aid's board is still determining the role it should play in the hiring of non-leadership positions at the school, the board is active in ensuring that staff members at all levels have the resources they need to function successfully.

- The board regularly evaluates its own performance, bringing in an outside consultant to help provide a blueprint of how it should move forward in its oversight of the school. The board chair also takes time to check-in regularly with board members to get a pulse of what member concerns are, and members are planning a board retreat later this year. The board uses the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education ("Val-Ed") to evaluate the principal's performance. Through the Val-Ed, the board and the principal are able to target specific areas of improvement, such as continuing to refine organizational systems as the school grows.

- The board maintains a presence in the school community by having at least one board member visit the school weekly and by conducting "learning walks" with teachers to discuss topics such as lesson planning and instructional differentiation strategies. Children's Aid's board is also intentional about having board representation at key parent events.

APPENDIX

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Mission Statement

> The Children's Aid College Prep Charter School is a Children's Aid Society community school whose mission is to prepare elementary school students for success in middle school, high school, college and life by providing them with a rigorous instructional experience; addressing their physical, emotional and social needs; fostering a sense of pride and hope; and serving as a safe and engaging community hub.

Student Demographics[1]

	2012-13		2013-14		2014-15[2]
	Percent of School Enrollment	**Percent of NYC CSD 12 Enrollment**	**Percent of School Enrollment**	**Percent of NYC CSD 12 Enrollment**	**Percent of School Enrollment**
Race/Ethnicity					
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	1	2	1	1
Black or African American	45	27	41	27	43
Hispanic	48	69	53	69	52
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	2	2	1	2	1
White	0	1	1	1	2
Multiracial	2	0	1	0	1
Special Populations					
Students with Disabilities	17	22	18	19	19
English Language Learners	10	19	13	20	11
Free/ Reduced Lunch					
Eligible for Free Lunch	87	87	84	86	--[3]
Eligible for Reduced–Price Lunch	9	3	6	4	--
Economically Disadvantaged	91	91	84	95	85

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[1] Source: 2012-13 and 2013-14 New York State School Report Cards.

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

[3] School FRPL enrollment data for 2014-15 are not available.

School Characteristics

School Year	Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment[4]	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades
2012-2013	120	132	K-1	K-1
2013-2014	175	207	K-2	K-2
2014-2015	222	275	K-3	K-3

Board of Trustees[5]

Board Member Name	Position
Karen Drezner	Chair
Terri Eagle	Vice Chair
Michelle DeLong	Secretary
Delois Coleman	Trustee
Jane Goldman	Trustee
Drema Brown	Trustee

School Leadership History

School Year(s)	School Leader(s) Name and Title(s)
2012-13 to Present	Ife Lenard, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2012-13	First Year Visit	Institute	April 11, 2013
2014-15	Evaluation Visit	Institute	May 7, 2015

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[4] Source: The Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State School Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)
[5] Source: Institute records at the time of the visit.

CONDUCT OF THE SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

School Visit Team

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Member	Title
May 7, 2015	Aaron Campbell	Senior Analyst
	Jennifer David-Lang	External Consultant

Context of the Visit

Charter Cycle	
Charter Term	3rd Year of Five-Year Charter Term
Accountability Period[6]	3rd Year of Four-Year Accountability Period
Anticipated Renewal Visit	Fall 2016

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

State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

Version 5.0, April 2012

<u>**Introduction**</u>

The State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks[7] (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:

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

- Revised April 2012 -

- **The Institute does not have a point system for recommending renewal. A school cannot simply tally up the number of positive benchmark statements in order to determine the Institute's recommendation.**
  - **Some benchmarks are weighed more heavily than others. In particular, the Institute gives the greatest weight to how well the school has met its academic Accountability Plan goals.**
  - **Despite the fact that the Accountability Plan comprises only a single benchmark, a school's performance on that benchmark is critical. In fact, it is so important that while the Institute may recommend non-renewal for fiscal and organizational failures (if sufficiently serious), excellence in these areas will not excuse poor academic performance.**

- **The Institute does not use every benchmark during every kind of renewal review, and how the benchmarks are used differs depending on a school's circumstances. For example, the Qualitative Education Benchmarks (Benchmarks 1B-1F, 2C and 2D) are given far less weight in making a renewal decision on schools that the Institute has previously renewed. Similarly, less weight is accorded to these benchmarks during an initial renewal review where a school has consistently met its academic Accountability Plan goals.**
  - **The Institute also may not consider every indicator subsumed under a benchmark when determining if a school has met that benchmark, given the school's stage of development or its previous track record.**

- **Aside from Benchmark 1A on academic Accountability Plan goals (which is singular in its importance), no school should fear that a failure to meet every element of every benchmark means that it is not in a position to make a case for renewal. To the contrary, the Institute has yet to see a school that performs perfectly in every respect. The Institute appreciates that the benchmarks set a very high standard collectively. While the Institute certainly hopes and expects that schools aim high, it is understood that a school's reach will necessarily exceed its grasp in at least some aspects.**

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

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

State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

Evidence Category	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
	SUNY Renewal Benchmarks
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1A **Academic Accountability Plan Goals**	**Over the Accountability Period, the school has met or come close to meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals.** The Institute determines the extent to which the school has met the Accountability Plan goals in the following areas: • 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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1B **Use of Assessment Data**	**The school has an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning.** The following elements are generally present: • 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.

Evidence Category	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
	SUNY Renewal Benchmarks
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1C **Curriculum**	**The school's curriculum supports teachers in their instructional planning.** The following elements are generally present: • 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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1D **Pedagogy**	**High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.** The following elements are generally present. • 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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1E **Instructional Leadership**	**The school has strong instructional leadership.** The following elements are generally present: • the school's leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance (in content knowledge and

Evidence Category	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
	SUNY Renewal Benchmarks
	pedagogical skills) and in which teachers believe that all students can succeed; • 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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1F **At-Risk Students**	**The school meets the educational needs of at-risk students.** The following elements are generally present: • 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; • the school provides adequate training and professional development to identify at-risk students and to help teachers meet

	Renewal Question 1
	Is the School an Academic Success?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	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?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2A **Mission & Key Design Elements**	**The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.** The following elements are generally present: • the school faithfully follows its mission; and • the school has implemented its key design elements.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2B **Parents & Students**	**Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.** The following elements are generally present: • 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**	**The school organization effectively supports the delivery of the educational program.** The following elements are generally present: • 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?	
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2D **Board Oversight**	**The school board works effectively to achieve the school's Accountability Plan goals.** The following elements are generally present: • board members possess adequate skills and have put in place structures and procedures with which to govern the school and oversee management of day-to-day operations in order to ensure the school's future as an academically successful, financially healthy and legally compliant organization; • the board requests and receives sufficient information to provide rigorous oversight of the school's program and finances; • it establishes clear priorities, objectives and long-range goals, (including Accountability Plan, fiscal, facilities and fundraising), and has in place benchmarks for tracking progress as well as a process for their regular review and revision; • the board successfully recruits, hires and retains key personnel, and provides them with sufficient resources to function effectively; • the board regularly evaluates its own performance and that of the school leaders and the management company (if applicable), holding them accountable for student achievement; and • the board effectively communicates with the school community including school leadership, staff, parents/guardians and students.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2E **Governance**	**The board implements, maintains and abides by appropriate policies, systems and processes.** The following elements are generally present: • 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?	
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	expectations; to correct those deficiencies and puts in place benchmarks for determining if the partner organization corrects them in a timely fashion; • 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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2F **Legal Requirements**	**The school substantially complies with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.** **The following elements are generally present:** • 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;

Evidence Category	Renewal Question 2 **Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?**
	SUNY Renewal Benchmarks
	- 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?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3A **Budgeting and Long Range Planning**	**The school operates pursuant to a long-range financial plan in which it creates realistic budgets that it monitors and adjusts when appropriate.** The following elements are generally present: • 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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3B **Internal Controls**	**The school maintains appropriate internal controls and procedures.** The following elements are generally present: • the school follows a set of comprehensive written fiscal policies and procedures; • the school accurately records and appropriately documents transactions in accordance with management's direction, laws, regulations, grants and contracts; • the school safeguards its assets; • the school identifies/analyzes risks and takes mitigating actions; • the school has controls in place to ensure that management decisions are properly carried out and monitors and assesses controls to ensure their adequacy; • the school's trustees and employees adhere to a code of ethics; • the school ensures duties are appropriately segregated, or institutes compensating controls; • the school ensures that employees performing financial functions are appropriately qualified and adequately trained; • the school has systems in place to provide the appropriate information needed by staff and the board to make sound financial decisions and to fulfill compliance requirements;

	Renewal Question 3 **Is the School Fiscally Sound?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3C **Financial Reporting**	• 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. **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.** The following reports have generally been filed in a timely, accurate and complete manner: • annual financial statement audit reports including federal Single Audit report, if applicable; • annual budgets and cash flow statements; • un-audited quarterly reports of income, expenses, and enrollment; • bi-monthly enrollment reports to the district and, if applicable, to the State Education Department including proper documentation regarding the level of special education services provided to students; and • grant expenditure reports.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3D **Financial Condition**	**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).** The following elements are generally present: • 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?**	13
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**	
	- 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?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4A **Plans for the School's Structure**	**Key structural elements of the school, as defined in the exhibits of the Application for Charter Renewal, are reasonable, feasible and achievable.** Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal: • 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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4B **Plans for the Educational Program**	**The school's plans for implementing the educational program allow it to meet its Accountability Plan goals.** Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal: • for those grades served during the last charter period, the school has plans for sustaining and (where possible) improving upon the student outcomes it has compiled during the last charter period including any adjustments or additions to the school's educational program; • for a school that is seeking to add grades, the school is likely to meet its Accountability Plan goals and the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks at the new grade levels; and • where the school will provide secondary school instruction, it has presented a set of requirements for graduation that students are likely to meet and that are consistent with the graduation standards set by the Board of Regents.

	Renewal Question 4 If the School's Charter is Renewed, What are its Plans for the Term of the Next Charter Period, and are they Reasonable, Feasible and Achievable?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4C **Plans for Board Oversight and Governance**	**The school provides a reasonable, feasible and achievable plan for board oversight and governance.** Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal: • 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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4D **Fiscal & Facility Plans**	**The school provides a reasonable, feasible and achievable fiscal plan including plans for an adequate facility.** Based on the elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal: • 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.