

May 7, 2021

MEMORANDUM

To: SUNY Authorized Charter School Board Chairs and School Leaders

From: Jeff Wasbes, Executive Deputy Director for Accountability, SUNY Charter Schools Institute

Subject: Academic Data Collection, Reporting, and Analysis for 2020-21

The New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (as amended, the “Act”) requires each charter school in New York to report annually its progress toward meeting its academic goals. For SUNY authorized charter schools, the State University of New York Board of Trustees (the “SUNY Trustees”) set forth a set of prescribed goals and measures in an Accountability Plan. Each year, the SUNY Trustees require schools to report their progress toward meeting the goals along with evidence of success in meeting any unique program goals in an Accountability Plan Progress Report (“APPR”). In addition, the SUNY Charter Agreement requires schools to report any data required to corroborate information presented in the Progress Report. These are the primary tools the Institute and SUNY charter schools use to understand schools’ progress toward meeting or coming close to meeting Accountability Plan goals each year. This memo discusses the Institute’s plan for data collection, reporting, and analysis for 2020-21 so schools can meet the requirements of the Act and the charter agreement. Should a shift in the operating environment require changes to this guidance, we will adapt while acting with the best interest of students and schools in mind and, to the extent we can, with consistency.

Academic Data Collection, Reporting, and Analysis for 2020-21

This year, the Institute will ask each SUNY authorized charter school to

- collect school and grade level academic performance information from nationally normed or internal assessments;
- report school and grade level academic performance information using the annual Accountability Plan Progress Report; and,
- report student level academic achievement data from nationally normed or internal assessments using templates provided by the Institute.

The Institute developed a framework for analyzing assessment data from various nationally normed assessments that it will apply to these data. The framework provides the Institute and SUNY authorized charter schools a common tool for analyzing and interpreting achievement data notwithstanding the measures currently set forth in school Accountability Plans.

Schools serving high school grades will continue to report achievement as measured by SAT, ACT, AP, and IB assessments along with graduation rates, available college readiness data, and to the extent it is available, college matriculation and persistence data sourced from the National Clearinghouse and internal databases.

Discussion

The Institute defines four components of information that, should it be that measures used in the past are not available, will provide the foundation of building and demonstrating evidence of a school's success. Those four components are:

1. Growth, achievement, and gap-closing data as measured by nationally normed or internally developed, rigorous assessments and evidence of success in subsequent educational settings.
2. Evidence of success in addressing learning loss provided by achievement and growth data, as well as other sources.
3. Student and family supports during COVID-19 closures.
4. Credible mission aligned measures – what the Institute calls “Active Ingredients” for schools who chose to participate.

In 2019-20, with instruction completely disrupted by the outbreak of COVID-19, the New York State Board of Regents cancelled the state's administration of English language arts (“ELA”), mathematics, and science assessments for 3rd - 8th grade students and all Regents exams and with it, the primary data source for measuring academic progress and achievement set forth in Accountability Plans. N.Y. Education Law subdivision 2854(1)(b) requires charter schools to meet the same student assessment requirements as other public schools. So while schools urgently responded to the extended facility closure and myriad challenges in the constantly shifting operating environment, the Institute asked SUNY authorized charter schools to report any assessment data schools had available at the end of the 2019-20 school year to meet the requirements of the Act.

The New York State Education Department (“NYSED”) allowed for significant flexibility about when and how schools administered assessments for students in grades 3-8 and Regents exams during 2020-21. The flexibility aligns to guidance from the United State Education Department (“USDE”). In this context, we anticipate the data resulting from this year's assessments may provide little value in establishing a baseline from which we can interpret future scores. Although we may consider state assessment and Regents exam scores in tandem with other measures, the Institute is shifting to rely on objective measures of student achievement that are not the state assessments or Regents exams as the primary quantitative information source for evaluating academic achievement. Those measures can include nationally normed, standardized assessments or rigorous, internally developed assessments that are benchmarked against state standards. Using objective measures other than state assessments provides necessary consistency in performance measurement and clarity for interpreting achievement and growth.

Regardless, understandable concerns remain about the efficacy and reliability of nationally normed assessment results. The Institute has consistently encouraged schools to report additional evidence in the APPR to provide context to achievement scores that assists the Institute's interpretation of a school's results. This year, providing such context is especially important. The Institute will provide space in the APPR template for schools to discuss concerns about the reliability and efficacy of assessment data and will consider this context when analyzing the results.

Data Collection

This year, we will ask schools to collect and report student, grade, and school level data and information from nationally normed, standardized or internally developed assessments. We recognize the burden required to make this shift and look forward to working with you to make the lift as light as possible while still meeting the requirements of the Act. The Institute is ready to collect and analyze data from those assessments schools already administer and use for educational program evaluation and improvement. We also hope to manage the data collection and reporting in a way that articulates with existing data systems to every extent possible.

This year's data collection and reporting will serve as a baseline for next year. We anticipate learning a great deal about the technical mechanics of collecting and analyzing data from a variety of assessments and data systems. Looking ahead to 2021-22, the Institute will apply that learning and be more prescriptive about the data and information we will need to analyze and the way in which we will want schools to report it. This year, we look forward to working together to identify the challenges and solutions that will make this process run smoothly for, as we anticipate, the next three years. Data reporting in 2021 also gives schools the opportunity to identify which data to use for the next several years that will help build consistency in reporting school academic achievement and growth as we build toward a new normal of post-pandemic data reporting and analysis.

In the run up to summer data reporting, schools should examine and, where necessary, build capacity around collecting data to report achievement and growth at grade level and within student subgroups at grade level. During summer 2020, we communicated in webinars and weekly emails that schools administer early diagnostic assessments at the start of the school year. We anticipate schools have systems in place to administer corresponding "post-tests" that align with the early assessments to determine not only student achievement at the end of the year, but also overall growth within this school year.

The Institute will ask for grade level and student level data on achievement and within year growth from the 2020-21 school year in ELA and mathematics. We will also maintain our practice of accepting other data that supports the story of student and school achievement, including data on science achievement and growth, and mission aligned measures.

In the coming weeks, the Institute will post to its website a set of APPR templates and data reporting templates for schools to use to construct data collection and reporting structures. We will include technical details of the Institute's capacity to accept different file types and provide a format for each. The templates and any further accompanying technical guidance will include directions for schools to report standardized assessment data, graduation and college readiness data, and mission aligned data. We will also include a pathway for schools to ask questions and provide feedback about how to better articulate our data systems with yours in the interest of reducing the burden of data reporting to the extent possible.

For 2020-21, report data on the exam that is nearest the top of this list in ELA, mathematics, and if available, science. If the school administers more than one assessment on this list, prioritize submitting data and information from the assessment nearest the top of the list.

- NWEA MAP
- I-ready
- STAR
- ANET
- Internally developed
- F&P
- Curriculum based

The Institute will continue its practice of considering other data that demonstrate school level achievement. A school that administers more than one assessment on the list above may report additional data beyond those from the exam nearest the top. Schools are always welcome to report additional data, especially those data supporting mission aligned measures. The Institute will collect school and grade level achievement data through the APPR along with student level data to corroborate the information presented therein, as has been the Institute's consistent practice.

Data reporting and analysis

The Institute will report back to schools its analysis of the data. Established practice includes the transmittal of a Performance Summary and, in some cases, a narrative Performance Review that provides additional analysis of each school's outcome data. Along with the Comparative Performance Report, these documents comprise the Accountability Dossier the Institute transmits to each school annually.

Each school's Accountability Plan goals and measures, data from the state assessments, and data from the Regents exams comprise the basis for the analysis presented in the Accountability Dossier. Accountability Plan measures that include data from nationally normed, standardized assessments or internal assessments are present in the Accountability Plans of some schools, but not all. Therefore, the Institute developed a set of measures that provide a common framework for analyzing data from nationally normed assessments. The measures, outlined below, include targets for absolute achievement and growth. While these measures form a framework for the analysis of school performance, they are not included in any Accountability Plans this year. We hope our development of these measures will provide schools with actionable data and a sense of school performance against an objective benchmark. We also intend to provide some consistency in the measure of schools' academic performance, to supplement state assessment data when it becomes available again as it is likely to have gaps, and to use the measures in telling the story of the development of a school along with the totality of other available, valid, and reliable evidence.

Absolute Measure. Based on the available assessment data, what percentage of students enrolled in at least their second year at the school performed at the equivalent of grade level standards?

Growth Measure. Based on available data, did students grow at the normed rate according to the beginning of year baseline score?

Gap closing measures. How does the median growth of students with disabilities, English language learners, and/or other disadvantaged student groups compare to the median score of the school's

general education students? How does the median growth of students with low initial absolute achievement compare to all students?

The Institute will develop and disseminate an APPR template and post it to the Institute’s website. Schools will use the appropriate template to report the requested information. Remember, the APPR is statutorily required reporting for each charter school in New York. By using a common frame for the analysis of data from nationally normed or internally developed assessments, the Institute endeavors to make this exercise meaningful to schools for use in program evaluation, continuous improvement efforts , and in determining progress toward meeting internal goals.

Mission Aligned Measures or “Active Ingredients”

The Institute, with support from the Walton Family Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has piloted with a few SUNY charters the opportunity to create and gather credible, countable and replicable measures that capture schools’ success at implementing strong mission aligned measures to report at renewal. The Institute will offer an opportunity for schools to opt in to a working group in the fall of 2021 in order to define measures as well as design systems for gathering data to support schools in presenting success in future years. While the Institute does not anticipate these measures, or data to support them will be finalized for schools coming to renewal in fall of 2021, we do hope to work with schools to define mission aligned measures for future charter terms. More information and some examples of school pilots are available here: [Active Ingredients](#).

Further Discussion

We continue to encourage schools to provide any academic, co-academic, and mission aligned performance data they wish the Institute to consider. The APPR purposefully provides a section for Additional Evidence under each goal area for the discussion of data from other sources or data that contributes in some way to academic achievement. We encourage every school to use these sections of the APPR to report information additional to academic measures and goals, especially during this time when administration of the state assessments is not consistent. The Institute especially encourages charter high schools with graduating seniors to report the extent to which their graduates persist through college and enroll in graduate programs.

A school’s track record of meeting or coming close to meeting its Accountability Plan goals forms the basis for renewal decisions for schools in a subsequent charter term. The SUNY Trustees also have a track record of considering all available evidence and data – including those about the qualitative program – when making high stake renewal decisions. The Institute will continue its practice of considering all available data and information when formulating a renewal decision this year and in years to come. The SUNY Trustees will continue to consider the strength of the educational program, the school’s financial health, and the strength of its board governance when formulating renewal recommendations.