



# **Cypress Hills Ascend Charter School**

## **2020-21 ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN PROGRESS REPORT**

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## 2020-21 ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

Jonathan Masci, Manager of Strategic Initiatives for Ascend Learning, prepared this 2020-21 Accountability Progress Report on behalf of the school's board of trustees:

| Trustee's Name        | Board Position        |                                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
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| Stephanie Mauterstock | Chair                 | Nominating, Academic, Executive |
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**Sophie Balis-Harris has served as principal since July 2021.**

## SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Cypress Hills Ascend Charter School (Cypress Hills Ascend) opened in 2018 with the goal of equipping students with the knowledge, confidence, and character to succeed in college and beyond. Cypress Hills Ascend offers a rich, rigorous inquiry-based education in a warm and supportive environment. In school year 2020-21 (SY21), Cypress Hills Ascend served students in grades K through 3. As of BEDS Day in SY21, Cypress Hills Ascend enrolled 286 students.

Cypress Hills Ascend is located in New York City Community School District 19 (CSD 19). In SY21, 73.8 percent of Cypress Hills Ascend students were eligible for free and reduced-priced lunch, 90.3 percent were black or Latino, 15.4 percent were special education students, and 22.9 percent were English language learners.

Cypress Hills Ascend operated primarily in a remote learning modality in SY21. To serve student needs in this environment, Ascend built out opportunities for differentiated instruction and reduced whole-class time to reduce students’ screen exposure. The Ascend network opened learning pods in all school buildings in January 2021. In April 2021, Cypress Hills Ascend resumed in-person learning with a subset of students. In SY22, Cypress Hills Ascend plans to offer full in-person instruction.

Ascend has provided comprehensive support to students and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since summer 2020, Ascend has provided each student with an individual device to access remote learning content. In response to heightened student need, the network increased socio-emotional supports by expanding staff capacity through training and development. The network maintained a food pantry, supplied clothing to students, and made microgrants to families experiencing homelessness or living in temporary housing.

## ENROLLMENT SUMMARY

| School Enrollment by Grade Level and School Year |    |    |    |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |       |
|--|----|----|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|-------|
| School Year                                      | K  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | Total |
| 2018-19  | 66 | 53 |    |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    | 119   |
| 2019-20  | 79 | 77 | 59 |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    | 215   |
| 2020-21  | 67 | 78 | 78 | 63 |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    | 286   |

## GOAL 1: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

### ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

#### Goal 1: English Language Arts

Cypress Hills Ascend Charter School students will meet grade-level expectations in English.

#### BACKGROUND

Cypress Hills Ascend implements the Ascend Common Core curriculum, which includes the following English Language Arts components.

Foundations, a program for phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, is used in grades K-2. The program is based on the Wilson Reading System principles, which is supported by multiple studies, including one by Massachusetts's Lynn Public Schools, of which the student population is composed of 66 percent black or Latino students. The study found that the system expedites grade-level reading improvement among elementary school students who previously struggled to achieve appropriate reading level growth.

Ascend has developed a unique writing program based loosely on the work of Lucy Calkins and The Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University's Teacher's College. Ascend's writing curriculum is genre-based and rooted in the belief that students need to write frequently. Grammar is strategically embedded in the units of study so that students learn grammar skills explicitly and then apply them immediately to the writing they do in class. The program requires teachers to provide frequent feedback to small groups of students in writing conferences while other students work independently. Ascend's writing program teaches students that writing is powerful, fun, beautiful, and purposeful.

Interactive Read Aloud sessions with students in grades K-2 occur five times per week. The class gathers on a rug while the teacher reads a carefully selected high-quality text and provides a model of fluent, expressive reading, which helps children recognize the value of reading for pleasure. Read Aloud promotes vocabulary acquisition, models the habits of a skilled reader, and supports deep discussion of texts through "turn and talks." Beginning in SY21, new Read Aloud texts were selected to provide more culturally diverse content, as well as content that pertains to social justice.

Ascend's Literature Circle program in grades 3 and 4, influenced by a similar program at Success Academy Charter Schools and Icahn Charter Schools, promotes student discussion as teachers help students mine the deepest meaning of fine children's literature and develop the habits of excellent readers, all while building skills in reading comprehension and seminar-style discussion. In Literature Circle, each student has a copy of the text, and students read sections of the text both together and independently. Students are also assigned written work as a component of this literacy block.

In the Shared Text component, implemented in grades 2-8 and modeled after a similar close reading program at Success Academy Charter Schools, the teacher leads students to understand and then write about the deeper meaning of a short, complex text. Students then answer Common Core-style comprehension questions. Texts fall into a range of genres including fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. Due to the difficulties of adapting this model to a remote environment, this component

was temporarily removed from the middle school curriculum during the pandemic; it will resume in SY22. Middle school students on or above grade level will receive Shared Text instruction for 30 minutes per day, four days per week during targeted intervention blocks; students below grade level will receive Guided Reading instruction (described below) during these blocks.

Guided Reading is taught in small groups of students who are on the same reading level, as determined by the Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) Benchmark Assessment System. Teachers serve as skilled facilitators, providing explicit teaching and support for reading increasingly challenging texts. These texts are at students' instructional reading level and students read the whole text. In Guided Reading, teaching is responsive to individual student strengths and needs. Each Guided Reading session addresses skill gaps identified through the previous session, whether in the area of decoding, fluency, or comprehension. Data collected from the F&P Benchmark Assessment is used to inform instruction for each Guided Reading lesson.

Ascend has created a powerful culture of response to instructional data (RTI) to support and enhance learning, and will continue to develop and employ a variety of assessments to measure progress towards mastering standards. In addition to New York State exams administered each spring, teachers use benchmark and mock assessments, unit tests, F&P assessments, and other measures of student performance during the course of the year. The Illuminate Data and Assessment (DnA) system allows staff to monitor progress and assess student comprehension, and supports data-driven teacher training and evaluation through access to instant feedback. Teachers and leaders consistently review student work and achievement data and trends, resulting in effective planning for upcoming lessons and timely and purposeful feedback to students.

All Ascend schools participate in Teacher Planning and Development (TPD), a network-wide program aimed at improving teaching and learning and creating a platform for teacher collaboration. Through unit studies, planning and assessment studies, lesson debriefs, teach-backs, and data meetings, TPD meetings represent a critical piece of a professional development program that also includes pre-service training, full professional development days, after-school sessions, and ongoing coaching and modeling.

Ascend schools operated primarily in a remote learning modality in SY21. To accommodate students in this environment, Ascend built out opportunities for differentiated instruction and reduced whole-class time to reduce students' screen exposure. The Ascend network opened learning pods in all school buildings in January 2021. In April 2021, Ascend schools resumed in-person learning with a subset of students. In SY22, Ascend plans to offer full in-person instruction at all schools.

### METHOD

For several years, Ascend has administered internally-developed benchmark exams, modeled off of the NYS exams in ELA, to students in grades 3-8. Benchmark exam results are administered three times per year and meant to indicate the level of student proficiency and mastery. These exams begin with a "baseline" assessment early in the year. This testing structure allows teachers and school leaders to understand student progress throughout the year. Ascend can use scores from these benchmark exams to project, historically with high accuracy, students' level of success on the state ELA exam. In the absence of reliable state exam results in SY21, Ascend has used performance

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on these benchmarks and the resulting state test projections as primary measures of student achievement and growth.

Ascend also internal curriculum-based assessments and F&P Benchmark Assessments to understand student ELA achievement in grades K-4. Ascend also uses internal curriculum-based assessments and F&P Benchmark Assessments to assess student achievement and growth in ELA. The assessment metric reported is the percentage of students receiving an average assessment score of 65 or greater. Achieving a score of 65 on the assessment does not necessarily equate to passing, since participation is also factored into the grading; however, this score cutoff is a primary indicator of academic achievement in ELA. Our internal F&P goal is that at least 85% of kindergarten students will be at or above their target reading level by the end of the year; for grades 1-4, our goal is to increase the percentage of students at or above the target level by at least 10 percentage points from baseline to round 4.

During 2020-21, the school(s) primarily used the following exam to assess student growth and achievement in ELA: Internally developed

### RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Because Cypress Hills Ascend did not serve any testing grades prior to SY21, primary growth and gap-closing measures cannot be assessed.

2020-21 Ascend State Test Projections

| Measure  | Subgroup                               | Target | Tested | Results | Met? |
|--|--|--------|--------|---------|------|
| <b>Absolute Measure:</b> 75 percent of all tested students who are enrolled in at least their second year will be projected to perform at or above proficiency on the state’s English language arts exam for grades 3-8. | Students in at least their second year | 75%    | 56     | 36%     | No   |

#### *Curriculum Assessments*

*Percentage of students receiving average assessment scores of 65 or greater*

| Overall | K   | 1   | 2   | 3   |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 41%     | 39% | 42% | 42% | 39% |

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*Change in percentage of students receiving average assessment scores of 65 or greater from SY19 to SY 21 (change in percentage points)*

|                | <b>Overall</b> | <b>K</b> | <b>1</b> |
|----------------|----------------|----------|----------|
| <b>2020-21</b> | 41%            | 39%      | 42%      |
| <b>2018-19</b> | 66%            | 68%      | 64%      |
| <b>Change</b>  | -25 pp         | -29 pp   | -22 pp   |

*Percentage of students receiving average assessment scores of 65 or greater, by IEP status*

| <b>IEP Status</b>            | <b>Overall</b> | <b>K</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> |
|------------------------------|----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>Students with IEPs</b>    | 18%            | 43%      | 18%      | 7%       | 17%      |
| <b>Students without IEPs</b> | 45%            | 38%      | 46%      | 50%      | 45%      |

### **F&P**

*Percentage of students at or above target F&P instructional level*

| <b>Benchmark</b> | <b>K</b>          | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> |
|------------------|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>Baseline</b>  | 100% <sup>1</sup> | 27%      | 20%      | 14%      |
| <b>2</b>         | 19%               | 25%      | 21%      | 20%      |
| <b>3</b>         | 16%               | 22%      | 22%      | 15%      |
| <b>4</b>         | 19%               | 22%      | 18%      | 13%      |

Cypress Hills Ascend saw a decrease in ELA performance during the period of remote instruction, and Ascend is committed to reversing the effects of this unfinished learning. We have developed a comprehensive strategy for SY22 that will ensure our educational program serves students and families as they recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Resuming in-person instruction for all students, as well as providing additional small-group instruction, implementing tutoring, and focusing on differentiation will aid students in recovering academically and socio-emotionally. This strategy is described in detail in the “Action Plan” section below.

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<sup>1</sup> All kindergarten students start at an F&P baseline of at or above target.

### ADDITIONAL CONTEXT AND EVIDENCE

As Cypress Hills Ascend served grades K-1 only in SY19, comparison benchmark data is not available. Ascend is confident in the consistent administration of assessments through its remote learning platforms in SY21. In SY22, Ascend's strategy to address unfinished learning and support our students in recovering from the pandemic (described in the "Action Plan" section below) will empower our students to achieve a high level of academic performance.

### SUMMARY OF THE ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GOAL

Cypress Hills Ascend fell short of its ELA goal in SY21. In SY22, Ascend will address this unfinished learning with a network-wide strategy that will ensure our educational program supports our students' academic and socio-emotional needs as our communities recover from the pandemic and the period of remote instruction.

### ACTION PLAN

The Ascend network's plans to address unfinished learning will provide our students with the support they need to excel in ELA. In SY22, one of the Ascend network's four strategic imperatives is to hone our student learning model to close the academic and social learning gap created by COVID-19 and integrate technology into our instructional model. To close the academic gaps we have seen in ELA, Ascend will implement three evidence-based strategies, which it will continue to adapt throughout the coming year.

1. *Increasing small-group instructional time.* Ascend has added more opportunities for small-group instruction across lower school grades. We will also hire additional special education teachers across the network; school leaders can utilize these staff members to create more small-group instruction opportunities for students in special education.
2. *Establishing a tutoring program.* A new tutoring program will serve 10-15% of each school's enrollment. This program will supplement existing Ascend small-group instruction, and the network will determine whether to continue the tutoring program in SY23 and beyond based on the program's effectiveness in SY22. Ascend is designing this program around evidence-based principles, with frequent instruction (three sessions per week), limited group sizes, and regular assessment and data analysis. School leadership will have discretion over scheduling and location to most effectively operationalize the program at their schools.
3. *Repacing the curriculum.* The curriculum pacing and sequencing has been adjusted to ensure students receive targeted instruction on prerequisite content immediately before it's needed for grade-level content, and to embed more opportunities for differentiation.

The network is also prioritizing students' mental health and wellbeing. Ascend has hired two to three additional clinicians to serve as "floaters," supporting schools that exhibit an increase in mental health needs. Each school will have an additional culture associate, who will support student culture, community, behavior, and socio-emotional needs in both proactive and reactive ways. Ascend is also investing in the DESSA tool, a screener for schools to identify social emotional learning supports for all students.

In SY22, Ascend plans for full in-person instruction. Schools will ensure consistency in data reporting by administering benchmark and curricular assessments comparable to those administered in SY21 and previous years. In the event that schools must return to remote instruction, Ascend staff will leverage their experience with remote instruction in SY21 and the above strategies to address unfinished learning to ensure students are engaging consistently in remote assessments.

## GOAL 2: MATHEMATICS

### ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE MATHEMATICS

#### Goal 2: Mathematics

Cypress Hills Ascend Charter School students will meet grade-level expectations in math.

#### BACKGROUND

Cypress Hills Ascend implements the Ascend Common Core curriculum. The curriculum includes the following mathematics components, which feature Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI).

In grades K-4, our math program is built on the Launch, Explore, Discuss (LED) model, an inquiry-driven lesson structure that leads students to learn by questioning and discovering. In this approach, students build enduring conceptual understanding and problem-solving skills by progressing through three stages of learning: concrete (using manipulatives), pictorial (using visual representations and models), and abstract (using equations).

In Number Stories, also deployed in grades K-4 and founded on the tenets of CGI, students spend an entire period studying a single, Common Core-style story-problem that they might encounter in the real world. Students construct their own solutions, defend their thinking, and compare their approaches. The routines that open each Number Stories lesson (approximately 10 minutes per day) also reinforce fluency; students practice math routines to build automaticity in computation.

In math in grades K-8, semi-weekly quizzes assess current content as well as a pre-selected, previously explored (spiraled) standard to constantly appraise knowledge gaps on major cluster standards. Teacher teams study these data points weekly and use them to plan for Response to Data (RTD) instructional periods.

Ascend has created a powerful culture of response to instructional data (RTI) to support and enhance learning, and will continue to develop and employ a variety of assessments to measure progress towards mastering standards. In addition to New York State exams administered each spring, teachers use benchmark and mock assessments, unit tests, F&P assessments, and other measures of student performance during the course of the year. The Illuminate Data and Assessment (DnA) system allows staff to monitor progress and assess student comprehension, and supports data-driven teacher training and evaluation through access to instant feedback. Teachers and leaders consistently review student work and achievement data and trends, resulting in effective planning for upcoming lessons and timely and purposeful feedback to students.

All Ascend schools participate in Teacher Planning and Development (TPD), a network-wide program aimed at improving teaching and learning and creating a platform for teacher collaboration. Through unit studies, planning and assessment studies, lesson debriefs, teach-backs, and data meetings, TPD meetings represent a critical piece of a professional development program that also includes pre-service training, full professional development days, after-school sessions, and ongoing coaching and modeling.

Ascend schools operated primarily in a remote learning modality in SY21. To accommodate students in this environment, Ascend built out opportunities for differentiated instruction and reduced whole-class time to reduce students' screen exposure. The Ascend network opened learning pods in all school buildings in January 2021. In April 2021, Ascend schools resumed in-person learning with a subset of students. In SY22, Ascend plans to offer full in-person instruction at all schools.

### METHOD

For several years, Ascend has administered internally-developed benchmark exams, modeled off of the NYS exams in math, to students in grades 3-8. Benchmark exam results are administered three times per year and meant to indicate the level of student proficiency and mastery. These exams begin with a "baseline" assessment early in the year. This testing structure allows teachers and school leaders to understand student progress throughout the year. Ascend can use scores from these benchmark exams to project, historically with high accuracy, students' level of success on the state math exam. In the absence of reliable state exam results in SY21, Ascend has used performance on these benchmarks and the resulting state test projections as primary measures of student achievement and growth.

Ascend also uses internal curriculum-based assessments to assess student achievement and growth in math.

During 2020-21, the school(s) primarily used the following exam to assess student growth and achievement in mathematics: **Internally developed**

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### RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Because Cypress Hills Ascend did not serve any testing grades prior to SY21, primary growth and gap-closing measures cannot be assessed.

| 2020-21 Ascend State Test Projections   |  |        |        |         |      |
|---|--|--------|--------|---------|------|
| Measure   | Subgroup                               | Target | Tested | Results | Met? |
| <b>Absolute Measure:</b> 75 percent of all tested students who are enrolled in at least their second year will be projected to perform at or above proficiency on the state's math exam for grades 3-8. | Students in at least their second year | 75%    | 55     | 55%     | No   |

*Percentage of students receiving average assessment scores of 65 or greater*

| Overall | K   | 1   | 2   | 3   |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 60%     | 63% | 74% | 61% | 38% |

*Change in percentage of students receiving average assessment scores of 65 or greater from SY19 to SY 21 (change in percentage points)*

|                | Overall | K     | 1     |
|----------------|---------|-------|-------|
| <b>2020-21</b> | 60%     | 63%   | 74%   |
| <b>2018-19</b> | 73%     | 68%   | 79%   |
| <b>Change</b>  | -13 pp  | -5 pp | -5 pp |

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*Percentage of students receiving average assessment scores of 65 or greater, by IEP status*

| <b>IEP Status</b>            | <b>Overall</b> | <b>K</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> |
|------------------------------|----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>Students with IEPs</b>    | 49%            | 71%      | 73%      | 46%      | 17%      |
| <b>Students without IEPs</b> | 62%            | 62%      | 74%      | 63%      | 43%      |

Cypress Hills Ascend saw a decrease in math performance during the period of remote instruction, and Ascend is committed to reversing the effects of this unfinished learning. We have developed a comprehensive strategy for SY22 that will ensure our educational program serves students and families as they recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Resuming in-person instruction for all students, as well as providing additional small-group instruction, implementing tutoring, and focusing on differentiation will aid students in recovering academically and socio-emotionally. This strategy is described in detail in the “Action Plan” section below.

### ADDITIONAL CONTEXT AND EVIDENCE

As Cypress Hills Ascend served grades K-1 only in SY19, comparison benchmark data is not available. Ascend is confident in the consistent administration of assessments through its remote learning platforms in SY21. In SY22, Ascend’s strategy to address unfinished learning and support our students in recovering from the pandemic (described in the “Action Plan” section below) will empower our students to achieve a high level of academic performance.

### SUMMARY OF THE ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE MATHEMATICS GOAL

Cypress Hills Ascend did not meet its overall math goal in SY21. In SY22, Ascend will address this unfinished learning with a network-wide strategy that will ensure our educational program supports our students’ academic and socio-emotional needs as our communities recover from the pandemic and the period of remote instruction.

### ACTION PLAN

The Ascend network’s plans to address unfinished learning in the coming school year will provide our students with the support they need to excel in math. In SY22, one of the Ascend network’s four strategic imperatives is to hone our student learning model to close the academic and social learning gap created by COVID-19 and integrate technology into our instructional model. To close the academic gaps we have seen in math, Ascend will implement three evidence-based strategies, which it will continue to adapt throughout the coming year.

1. *Increasing small-group instructional time.* Ascend has added more opportunities for small-group instruction across lower school grades. We will also hire additional special education teachers across the network; school leaders can utilize these staff members to create more small-group instruction opportunities for students in special education.
2. *Establishing a tutoring program.* A new tutoring program will serve 10-15% of each school's enrollment. This program will supplement existing Ascend small-group instruction, and the network will determine whether to continue the tutoring program in SY23 and beyond based on the program's effectiveness in SY22. Ascend is designing this program around evidence-based principles, with frequent instruction (three sessions per week), limited group sizes, and regular assessment and data analysis. School leadership will have discretion over scheduling and location to most effectively operationalize the program at their schools.
3. *Repacing the curriculum.* The curriculum pacing and sequencing has been adjusted to ensure students receive targeted instruction on prerequisite content immediately before it's needed for grade-level content, and to embed more opportunities for differentiation.

The network is also prioritizing students' mental health and wellbeing. Ascend has hired two to three additional clinicians to serve as "floaters," supporting schools that exhibit an increase in mental health needs. Each school will have an additional culture associate, who will support student culture, community, behavior, and socio-emotional needs in both proactive and reactive ways. Ascend is also investing in the DESSA tool, a screener for schools to identify social emotional learning supports for all students.

In SY22, Ascend plans for full in-person instruction. Schools will ensure consistency in data reporting by administering benchmark and curricular assessments comparable to those administered in SY21 and previous years. In the event that schools must return to remote instruction, Ascend staff will leverage their experience with remote instruction in SY21 and the above strategies to address unfinished learning to ensure students are engaging consistently in remote assessments.

## GOAL 3: SCIENCE

### ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCIENCE

#### Goal 3: Science

Cypress Hills Ascend Charter School students will meet grade level expectations in Science.

#### BACKGROUND

Cypress Hills Ascend implements the Ascend Common Core curriculum, which includes the following science components.

K-8 science units are designed based on the criteria set forth in the New York State P-12 Science Standards and according to the implementation timeline. The curriculum follows a multiyear sequence that helps students develop increasingly sophisticated practices and ideas across grades K-8 and beyond, with a focus on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) Science and Engineering Practices (SEPs) and Crosscutting Concepts (CCs).

Designed to engage scholars in inquiry-based tasks that promote a deep conceptual understanding of grade-level standards, science instruction also follows the Launch, Explore, Discuss (LED) model. Data-driven planning enables teachers to tailor instruction to meet the individual needs of students. As students engage with scientific phenomena from kindergarten on, they develop agency as lifelong scientific thinkers.

To harness the power of students' curiosity about the world around them, Ascend's program provides students a range of relevant learning experiences as they engage with scientific phenomena. Examples include inquiry and investigation, evidence-based argument, and application of skills and knowledge in unit projects. Units may also include reading informational texts critically and leveraging scientific knowledge and skills to take action on issues of social justice.

Ascend has created a powerful culture of response to instructional data (RTI) to support and enhance learning, and will continue to develop and employ a variety of assessments to measure progress towards mastering standards. In addition to New York State exams administered each spring, teachers use benchmark and mock assessments, unit tests, and other measures of student performance during the course of the year. The Illuminate Data and Assessment (DnA) system allows staff to monitor progress and assess student comprehension, and supports data-driven teacher training and evaluation through access to instant feedback. Teachers and leaders consistently review student work and achievement data and trends, resulting in effective planning for upcoming lessons and timely and purposeful feedback to students.

All Ascend schools participate in Teacher Planning and Development (TPD), a network-wide program aimed at improving teaching and learning and creating a platform for teacher collaboration. Through unit studies, planning and assessment studies, lesson debriefs, teach-backs, and data meetings, TPD meetings represent a critical piece of a professional development program that also includes pre-service training, full professional development days, after-school sessions, and ongoing coaching and modeling.

Ascend schools operated primarily in a remote learning modality in SY21. The Ascend network opened learning pods in all school buildings in January 2021. In April 2021, Ascend schools resumed in-person learning with a subset of students. In SY22, Ascend plans to offer full in-person instruction at all schools.

During periods of remote instruction, the SEPs were highlighted as a way to continue to engage students in authentic science thinking and practices. In SY22, we will follow the current research, which recommends keeping the focus on grade-level content and rigor. We will leverage the NGSS progression of Disciplinary Core Ideas to help address learning gaps as needed within the context of grade-level work. An increased focus on the Next Generation Science Standards will support the goal of developing students as scientific thinkers.

### METHOD

To assess student achievement and growth in science, Ascend used the metric of course performance. Ascend science courses are aligned to New York State science standards, as well as the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), and employ rigorous instructional methods.

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### RESULTS AND EVALUATION

| Ascend Science Course Grades  |  |        |        |         |      |
|---|--|--------|--------|---------|------|
| Measure   | Subgroup                               | Target | Tested | Results | Met? |
| <b>Absolute Measure:</b> 75 percent of all students who are enrolled in at least their second year will achieve a passing science course grade in grades 3-8. | Students in at least their second year | 75%    | 54     | 43%     | No   |

*Percentage of students receiving average assessment scores of 65 or greater*

| Overall | 1   | 2   | 3   |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|
| 52%     | 70% | 41% | 41% |

*Change in percentage of students receiving average assessment scores of 65 or greater from SY19 to SY 21 (change in percentage points)*

|                | Grade 1 |
|----------------|---------|
| <b>2020-21</b> | 70%     |
| <b>2018-19</b> | 92%     |
| <b>Change</b>  | -22 pp  |

*Percentage of students receiving average assessment scores of 65 or greater, by IEP status*

| IEP Status                   | Overall | 1   | 2   | 3   |
|------------------------------|---------|-----|-----|-----|
| <b>Students with IEPs</b>    | 47%     | 55% | 46% | 42% |
| <b>Students without IEPs</b> | 52%     | 72% | 38% | 40% |

Cypress Hills Ascend saw a decrease in science performance during the period of remote instruction, and Ascend is committed to reversing the effects of this unfinished learning. We have developed a comprehensive strategy for SY22 that will ensure our educational program meets the needs of students and families as they recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Resuming in-person instruction for all students, as well as providing additional small-group instruction, implementing tutoring, and focusing on differentiation will aid students in recovering academically and socio-emotionally. This strategy is described in detail in the “Action Plan” section below.

### ADDITIONAL CONTEXT AND EVIDENCE

Ascend is confident in the consistent administration of assessments through its remote learning platforms in SY21. In SY22, Ascend’s strategy to address unfinished learning and support our students in recovering from the pandemic (described in the “Action Plan” section below) will empower our students to achieve a high level of academic performance.

### SUMMARY OF THE ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCIENCE GOAL

Cypress Hills Ascend did not meet its overall science goal in SY21. In SY22, Ascend will address this unfinished learning with a network-wide strategy that will ensure our educational program supports our students’ academic and socio-emotional needs as our communities recover from the pandemic and the period of remote instruction.

### ACTION PLAN

The Ascend network’s plans to address unfinished learning in the coming school year will provide our students with the support they need to excel academically. In SY22, one of the Ascend network’s four strategic imperatives is to hone our student learning model to close the academic and social learning gap created by COVID-19 and integrate technology into our instructional model. To close academic gaps, Ascend will implement several evidence-based strategies to support student achievement in science, which it will continue to adapt throughout the coming year. First, Ascend will hire additional special education teachers across the network. The curriculum pacing and sequencing have also been adjusted to ensure students receive targeted instruction on prerequisite content immediately before it’s needed for grade-level content, and to embed more opportunities for differentiation. The network is also prioritizing students’ mental health and wellbeing, which are inexorably linked to academic performance. Ascend has hired two to three additional clinicians to serve as “floaters,” supporting schools that have exhibited an increase in mental health needs. Each school will have an additional culture associate, who will support student culture, community, behavior, and socio-emotional needs in both proactive and reactive ways. Ascend is also investing in the DESSA tool, a screener for schools to identify social emotional learning supports for all students.

In SY22, Ascend plans for full in-person instruction. Schools will ensure consistency in data reporting by administering benchmark and curricular assessments comparable to those administered in SY21 and previous years. In the event that schools must return to remote instruction, Ascend staff will

leverage their experience with remote instruction in SY21 and the network's strategies to address unfinished learning to ensure students are engaging consistently in remote assessments.

## GOAL 4: ESSA

Due to COVID-19 and the subsequent changes to the state’s testing, accountability, and federal reporting requirements, the 2020-21 school accountability statuses are the same as those assigned for the 2019-20 school year. The 2019-20 accountability statuses were based on 2018-19 exam results. Assigned accountability designations and further context can be found [here](#).

### Goal 7: Absolute Measure

Under the state’s ESSA accountability system, the school is in good standing: the state has not identified the school for comprehensive or targeted improvement.

## METHOD

Because *all* students are expected to meet the state's performance standards, the federal statute stipulates that various sub-populations and demographic categories of students among all tested students must meet the state standard in and of themselves aside from the overall school results. As New York State, like all states, is required to establish a specific system for making these determinations for its public schools, charter schools do not have latitude in establishing their own performance levels or criteria of success for meeting the ESSA accountability requirements. Each year, the state issues School Report Cards that indicate a school’s status under the state accountability system.

## RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Cypress Hills Ascend is currently in “Good Standing” status, which it has maintained since the 2019-20 school year. The school thus meets this measure.

## ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE

Cypress Hills Ascend opened in fall 2018 and thus did not have an accountability status in school year 2018-19. In 2019-20, Cypress Hills Ascend earned the ESSA status of “Good Standing.” It has thereafter maintained this status, receiving the “Good Standing” status in 2020-21.

Accountability Status by Year

| Year    | Status        |
|---------|---------------|
| 2018-19 | N/A           |
| 2019-20 | Good Standing |
| 2020-21 | Good Standing |