

# THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*FIRST YEAR SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT  
GENESEE COMMUNITY CHARTER  
SCHOOL- FLOUR CITY CAMPUS  
VISIT DATE: MAY 26, 2023  
REPORT DATE: JULY 17, 2023*

*SUNY Charter Schools Institute*

*H. Carl McCall SUNY Building*

*353 Broadway*

*Albany, NY 12246*

*518.445.4250*

*[www.newyorkcharters.org](http://www.newyorkcharters.org)*



**Charter Schools Institute**  
The State University of New York

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## INTRODUCTION

### INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the SUNY Charter Schools Institute’s (the “Institute’s”) observations and findings from its May 26, 2023 first year school evaluation visit to the Genesee Community Charter School – Flour City Campus (“Genesee Flour City”). Genesee Flour City is a replication of the New York State Regents authorized Genesee Community Charter School – River Campus (“Genesee River Campus”). Genesee Flour City has a memorandum of agreement with the Genesee River Campus education corporation to provide a shared services team for services such as executive management, curriculum development, and other academic and operational functions.

### REPORT FORMAT

Throughout the charter term, the Institute may conduct a number of formal evaluative visits including in the first year of operation. Each formal evaluative visit produces a written report based on data gathered during these visits. These reports form the foundation of qualitative data on the charter’s effectiveness.

At the conclusion of the charter term, the Institute provides the State University of New York Board of Trustees (the “SUNY Trustees”) a renewal recommendation based on its evaluation of the academic, organizational, legal, and fiscal aspects of the charter’s program using the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks (see attachment), which incorporates the school’s attainment of its Accountability Plan goals and evidence of the quality of the charter’s educational program gathered in its formal evaluative visits. For first year evaluation visits, the Institute focuses on specific qualitative benchmarks that provide a fixed standard for determining the quality of the academic program as the charter progresses toward renewal.





## CHARTER BACKGROUND

# GENESEE COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL - FLOUR CITY CAMPUS

1100 South Goodman Street, Rochester, New York | Grades: K-2 | Rochester City Schools District

The SUNY Trustees approved the original charter for Genesee Flour City on June 15, 2021. The charter opened in Fall 2022, serving 90 students in Kindergarten – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.



### MISSION

*The Genesee Community Charter School provides a rich educational experience that values intellectual rigor, respect for diversity, and community responsibility. Our local history-based and globally-connected program immerses our diverse population of children in investigation and discovery, extensively using the cultural and natural resources of our community. We nurture children’s natural abilities to be reflective questioners, articulate communicators, critical thinkers, and skilled problem solvers, enabling them to reach exemplary standards. The Genesee Community Charter School does not discriminate on the basis of race/ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, disability, veteran status, or age in the administration of any of its employment, educational programs, admissions policies, recreational, and other school-administered programs.*

### CURRENT CHARTER

Serves: Kindergarten – 2<sup>nd</sup>  
 Chartered Enrollment: 90  
 Charter Expiration: July 31, 2027

### ANTICIPATED 2026-27

Grades Served: Kindergarten – 6<sup>th</sup>  
 Chartered Enrollment: 210

### KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

EL Education;	+	Diverse student population;	+
Curriculum framework;	+	Relationship with Rochester Museum and Science Center;	+
Arts integration;	+	Professional development; and,	+
Culture and character development;	+	Family participation and involvement.	+

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In its first year of operation, Genesee Flour City has strong systems to deliver high quality professional development and coaching as well as structures that support effective curriculum planning and instruction. Instructional leaders provide ongoing professional development and coaching and most lessons are purposeful and have a focus on creating a culture of high achievement. Despite a delayed start to the school year due to significant facility challenges, the school has strong organizational capacity that enables instructional staff members to focus on teaching and learning. With clear plans to develop teachers' mathematics instructional skills and continue to prioritize English language arts ("ELA") instruction through the EL Education ("EL") curriculum, the charter is likely to meet or exceed its accountability plan goals.

Pursuant to the Institute's inspection of Genesee Flour City at the above address on September 12, 2022, and documentation provided to or inspected by the Institute at that visit and prior/post thereto, the Institute determined that Genesee Community Charter School – Flour City Campus (the "education corporation") had completed substantially all of the Prior Actions required of it as defined in the Charter Agreement between the education corporation and the SUNY Trustees (the "Charter Agreement") for the operation of the school. Therefore, per Section 3.1 of the Charter Agreement, the Institute permitted the education corporation to provide instruction at the school to students in accordance with the plan provided in the Charter Agreement.

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

### QUALITATIVE BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

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

For first year visits, the Institute focuses on academic program benchmarks to establish a baseline measure of the quality of the school's systems and procedures, which heavily affect the progress that a school is able to demonstrate in meeting its Accountability Plan goals during the charter term. The Institute expects a school to have moved from the beginning of implementation and the promise of future growth to full and effective implementation of a quality program by the time the school comes to renewal.

### ASSESSMENT

Genesee Flour City has an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning. The school implements a comprehensive suite of assessments including beginning of year diagnostic, mid-year formative, and end of year summative assessments for ELA and mathematics. Teachers also administer regular assessments from the curricular programs that include exit tickets, unit tests, and writing assessments. The suite of assessments provides shared services personnel, school leaders, and teachers with a comprehensive understanding of student performance. These data provide stakeholders with a clear view of students' progress toward mastery of grade level standards in both ELA and mathematics. On a regular basis, teachers work with leaders to analyze student performance and use the data to create adaptive instructional groups for skills in mathematics and ELA. Teachers regularly review student performance within groups and adjust the composition of small groups to ensure that students receive instruction at targeted levels.

Leaders monitor student performance results closely to plan adjustments to instruction and refer students to the school's Response to Intervention ("RTI") process for additional support. Leaders review the data and work closely with teachers to ensure that students who are not making progress receive interventions to support reaching grade level standards. The school also uses i-Ready to monitor student progress and gives students individualized learning paths to complete at various times during the school day.

### CURRICULUM

Genesee Flour City's curriculum supports teachers with instructional planning. The school has a curricular framework aligned to state standards, consistent with the programming implemented at Genesee River Campus. For mathematics, the school uses Illustrative Mathematics and EL for ELA. The shared services team and school leaders provide teachers with clear supporting tools. Genesee River Campus originally developed many of the materials now used at Genesee Flour City, allowing Genesee Flour City to implement

1. An extensive body of research, including a [report from Harvard](#) and a [report from the United States General Accounting Office](#), identifying and confirming the correlates of effective schools exists dating back four decades.

2. Additional details regarding the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks are available on the [Institute's website](#).

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

materials that have contributed to high levels of success in building students' understanding in both ELA and mathematics at Genesee River Campus. The school's pacing guides extend each unit by a few weeks to allow more time for reteaching and remediation work and to ensure students are meeting reading benchmarks. Based on the documents, teachers know what to teach and when to teach it.

Genesee Flour City has a clear process to review its ELA curriculum through an annual implementation review in collaboration with EL consultants. In consultation with EL, the school establishes a strategic implementation plan for the charter term, and regularly reviews progress toward established goals.

### PEDAGOGY

Genesee Flour City demonstrates high quality teaching and learning across the school in its first year of operation. Teachers deliver purposeful lessons and use a small group structure to deliver most content at students' specific learning levels. In mathematics, teachers deliver lessons in skills groups and provide whole group instruction to introduce grade level concepts. Classrooms have at least two teachers in every room, and both teachers have clear roles and responsibilities to support teaching and learning. Due to the small group nature of learning, teachers consistently check for student understanding and use a variety of methods during whole group lessons.

Teachers include opportunities in lessons to challenge students with questions that develop higher-order thinking skills. In book club groups, teachers ask detailed comprehension questions that extend students' thinking about a text. In mathematics, teachers ask questions that help build students' conceptual understanding. Teachers establish warm, welcoming environments. Given the timing of the visit, the Institute observed the school's weekly schoolwide assembly where students showed off aspects of expeditions and other important culture building activities for the whole school, demonstrating strong routines and procedures that contribute to a positive school culture.

### INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Genesee Flour City provides staff members with high quality, effective professional development, and ongoing coaching and feedback. Professional development is responsive to student data and teacher needs. The school has instructional leaders with expertise in a variety of areas, such as literacy, student culture, and at-risk students, who support teachers in delivering effective instruction. For example, the literacy coordinator meets with all teachers at least once per week and provides coaching on literacy instruction and reading groups. Teachers collaborate with the literacy coordinator to analyze student data and tailor instruction to student needs. Genesee Flour City also benefits from the consistent support of an EL coordinator who is on site regularly to observe instruction, provide feedback and support, and deliver professional development that supports teachers in effectively implementing the EL curriculum. The charter has a comprehensive professional development program closely aligned with its mission and key design elements, and topics range from supporting students' social-emotional learning to analyzing assessment data and unpacking curricular documents. In addition to weekly professional development meetings, the school provides teachers with

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

three days of pre-service training before school begins. Genesee Flour City’s professional development plans were delayed at the beginning of the school year due to facility issues. However, teachers still had the opportunity to work with instructional leaders and one another to develop lesson plans and curricular guiding documents. Teachers have regular meeting times during the week to plan instruction and analyze assessment data. Instructional leaders attend meetings and provide support as needed. Instructional leaders also observe teachers regularly and provide consistent feedback aligned with the charter’s academic and cultural priorities. These effective instructional leadership supports positively impact the quality of teaching and learning and teacher development.

### AT-RISK PROGRAM

Genesee Flour City has systems and structures in place to meet the needs of at-risk students including students struggling academically, students with disabilities, and English language learners (“ELLs”). At the beginning, middle, and end of the school year the charter administers the i-Ready assessment as well as the EL Foundational Skills assessment to evaluate student progress in ELA. Students also take a mathematics screener to assess number sense skills. Teachers use the results from these assessments to determine the need for tiered academic interventions and assign students to need-based groups. ELA and mathematics instruction takes place in differentiated small groups that enable teachers to provide targeted support to individual students and daily instruction for tier 3 students takes place in groups of two students or less. Teachers monitor the progress of students through curricular-based assessments administered every two to four weeks, which enable teachers to adjust groupings based on individual student needs on a timely basis. Students with disabilities receive mandated services according to their Individualized Education Programs (“IEPs”). Teachers are in regular communication with service providers from the district to ensure general classroom instruction aligns with services for students with disabilities. In addition to mandated services, students with disabilities receive support through Genesee Flour City’s tiered academic intervention program.

Genesee Flour City administers a home language survey and, based on the results of the survey, identifies students for the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (“NYSITELL”). Students identified as ELLs receive language acquisition instruction based on individual student need. The charter’s English as a new language (“ENL”) teacher pushes into daily EL blocks to provide ELLs with an additional layer of classroom support during ELA instruction. The ENL teacher attends weekly meetings with general education teachers to ensure supports for ELLs align with the broader curriculum.

### ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Genesee Flour City has an organizational structure that enables the charter to deliver the educational program effectively. Although the school’s original facility plan fell through, the shared services and school teams were able to find a new facility, renovate, and open with only a short delay. The current facility provides ample space for the charter to provide instruction aligned with its mission and key design elements. The school intends to remain in the current facility for the duration of the charter term as the facility has sufficient space to accommodate expansion. The charter’s administrative structure is clear, and there are an appropriate number of instructional and non-instructional staff members to support the delivery of an effective academic program.

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

Student attendance and tardiness sometimes create challenges for the charter and impede the ability of instructional staff members to support consistent student progress. In response, Genesee Flour City leaders prioritized developing strong relationships with families to support students with arriving at school on time each day. The charter expects to retain almost all of its current staff members and has filled the majority of positions associated with expanding an additional grade level for 2023-24. Operations leaders allocate sufficient resources, including time and materials, to support the implementation of the academic program. Genesee Flour City's student discipline system facilitates an environment of high expectations for both student behavior and academic achievement.

### BOARD OVERSIGHT & GOVERNANCE

The Genesee Flour City board works effectively to achieve the school's Accountability Plan goals. The board has full overlap with the board membership of Genesee River Campus, and so board members have extensive experience providing oversight for a charter school. Members possess the necessary skills to oversee the school's program. The Genesee River Campus board has an additional parent representative member, and Genesee Flour City will add this specific position as a board member next school year, which is in alignment with the board's current bylaws.

The board works with an effective committee structure with committees reporting out information during full board meetings. Shared services and school leaders report out specific information on finances and general leadership updates to keep the board informed of the school's finances and academic programming. The board regularly reviews data from the academic program and operational data. The board also works with leaders to set priorities and goals for each school year and regularly reviews progress toward meeting annual goals at each meeting. The Institute shared its resource center that has many resources to support boards including examples of data dashboards, which the board plans to implement in the upcoming school year.

Genesee Flour City

# Ax

APPENDICES

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## GENESEE COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL - FLOUR CITY CAMPUS BOARD OF TRUSTEES<sup>1</sup>

CHAIR	TRUSTEES
Michele Hannagan	Tasha Y. Stevens Jessica Winterhalt Wanner
VICE CHAIR	
Annemarie Wess	
TREASURER	
Kevin Sutherland	
SECRETARY	
Allison Shultes	

## CHARTER LEADERS

**SCHOOL DIRECTOR**  
*Christine A. Farrell, School Director (2022-23 to Present)*

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
*Shannon M. Hillman, Executive Director (2022-23 to Present)*

## CHARTER CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT <sup>2</sup>	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	GRADES SERVED
2022-23	90	81	90%	K-2

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

2. Source: Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)



**CHARTER SCHOOL VISIT HISTORY**

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
2022-23	First Year Visit	May 26, 2023

**CONDUCT OF THE VISIT**

DATE(S) OF REVIEW	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
May 26, 2023	Maureen Foley	External Consultant
	Andrew Kile	Managing Director of School Evaluation

**CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT**

CHARTER TERM	ACCOUNTABILITY PERIOD	ANTICIPATED RENEWAL VISIT
Initial	First Year of a Four Year Accountability Period	Fall 2027



### VERSION 5.0, MAY 2012

### INTRODUCTION

The State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks<sup>1</sup> (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: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/renewal/>. Responses to frequently asked questions about the Institute’s use of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks appear below:

- 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.

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



- 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, teacher and community members is also available on the Institute’s website at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/renewal/>. Please do not hesitate to contact the Institute with any questions.



**RENEWAL QUESTION 1**  
**IS THE SCHOOL AN ACADEMIC SUCCESS?**

**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.

**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.

**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.

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## **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.

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## **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 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.



## **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 students' needs; and
  - the school provides opportunities for coordination between classroom teachers and at-risk program staff including the school nurse, if applicable.
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**RENEWAL QUESTION 2**

**IS THE SCHOOL AN EFFECTIVE, VIABLE ORGANIZATION?**

**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.

**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.

**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.

## 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.

## 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 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.

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## **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;
- 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?**

**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.

**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;
- 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.



### **3C – FINANCIAL REPORTING**

**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.

### **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;
- 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?**

**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.

**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.



## **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.

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## **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.

