

THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*FIRST YEAR SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT
NURSES MIDDLE COLLEGE CHARTER
HIGH SCHOOL – CAPITAL REGION
VISIT DATE: JANUARY 31, 2024
REPORT DATE: APRIL 5, 2024*

SUNY Charter Schools Institute

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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 January 31, 2024 first year school evaluation visit to the Nurses Middle College Charter High School – Capital Region (“Nurses MC – CR”).

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

NURSES MIDDLE COLLEGE CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL - CAPITAL REGION

199 Washington Ave, Rensselaer, NY 12144 | Grades: 9 | Rensselaer City School District*

The SUNY Trustees approved the original charter for Nurses MC – CR on October 7, 2021. The school opened in fall 2023. The school is chartered to serve 130 students in 9th grade in its first year, but opened with an actual enrollment of 64 students in 9th grade.

Nurses MC – CR replicates the program in place at Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College Charter High School (“RINI”), a charter high school located in Providence, Rhode Island, that prepares students for careers in nursing and related health sciences. Nurses MC – CR and RINI contract with the charter management organization (“CMO”) Nurses Middle College Network of Schools (“Nurses MC;” the “CMO;” or, the “network”), a Rhode Island-based non-profit organization, which supports the schools with curriculum, instructional leadership, operations, human resources, and financial services. To enact the school’s mission, the proposal outlined plans to deliver a college preparatory curriculum focused on healthcare and nursing bolstered by opportunities for students to earn college credits through dual enrollment with local universities, as well as applied learning opportunities through partnerships such as internships and mentorships with local healthcare organizations.

“ MISSION

The mission of the Nurses Middle College Charter High School – Capital Region is to prepare a diverse group of students to become the highly educated and professional nursing workforce of the future.

CURRENT CHARTER

Serves: 9th grade
Chartered Enrollment:
130
Charter Expiration:
July 31, 2028

ANTICIPATED 2027-28

Grades Served: 9th – 12th
Chartered Enrollment:
360**

* Chartered to Operate in Albany City School District, Temporarily Approved to Operate in Rensselaer City School District through July 31, 2025.

** Nurses MC – CR has requested an enrollment revision to decrease their chartered enrollment from 500 to 360, which is pending approval as of the date of this report.



CHARTER BACKGROUND

KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

Nursing college and career preparation;	-
Applied learning; and,	-
Personal development.	+

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nurses MC – CR, in its first year of operation, is working to establish systems to support its mission and effective teaching and learning. The school experienced significant turnover in both leaders and teachers over the first half of the year, which resulted in a school and classroom culture that was not conducive to academic achievement. Following the departure of the founding school leader and director of teaching and learning, the board hired a new executive director, director of teaching and learning, and dean of students, with the primary initial goal of establishing systems and structures to support a strong culture and school environment. As a result of the new leadership team’s efforts, Nurses MC – CR’s classrooms demonstrated safe and focused environments at the time of the Institute’s visit. Leaders recognize that having reset the school culture and climate, it is now an urgent priority to establish effective systems to use assessment results and instructional leadership supports to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Nurses MC- CR has also struggled with low student enrollment, inconsistent student attendance rates, and facilities. Nurses MC – CR is chartered to operate in the Albany City School District, but is operating under a charter revision that allows it to temporarily locate in a facility in the Rensselaer City School District through July 31, 2025. An incubation or permanent facility in the Albany City School District must be identified and prepared to open by that date. At the time of the Institute’s visit, the school met only 49% of its chartered enrollment. While the school has thus far been able to navigate the low enrollment financially, it must work diligently to raise enrollment to ensure future sustainability and preserve its ability to deliver the school’s mission and vision. The school identified challenges to enrollment and is working to implement improved systems for its current recruitment season. Nurses MC – CR also recognizes that daily student attendance rates need significant improvement to ensure students are consistently present and able to learn. The dean of students is targeting students with persistent absences and working with students and families to develop improvement plans. The school’s board and leaders recognize that the issues of student enrollment, attendance, and facilities are critical challenges that are interrelated and require urgent action if the school is to set up for long-term sustainability.

Pursuant to the Institute’s inspection of Nurses MC – CR at the above address on August 22, 2023, and documentation provided to or inspected by the Institute at that visit and prior/post thereto, the Institute determined that Nurses MC – CR (the “education corporation”) had completed substantially all of the Preopening requirements 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,¹ describe the elements in place at schools that are highly effective at providing students from low-income backgrounds the instruction, content, knowledge, and skills necessary to produce strong academic performance. The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, found in Appendix B, describe the elements an effective school must have in place at the time of renewal.²

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

Nurses MC – CR has an appropriate suite of student assessment tools, but the school does not yet implement systems to make assessment results accessible to teachers or to analyze and use assessment data to inform instruction. Nurses MC – CR administers the Renaissance STAR assessment as a benchmark to evaluate students' literacy skills in English language arts ("ELA") and mathematics three times per year. Students take the PSAT 8/9 to assess and demonstrate college readiness, along with end of year Regents exams in Earth Science, Algebra I, and English. The school also administers end-of-unit, midterm, and final exams from the curricula provided by the network, along with exit tickets and other informal assessments developed by teachers.

Nurses MC – CR instructional leaders do not yet have consistent systems in place to regularly review data with teachers and use the analysis to make strategic adjustments to instructional plans. For instance, the school initially planned to conduct a diagnostic STAR assessment in the fall to establish a baseline and start to analyze and act on student performance data. However, due to leadership turnover and the need to reset school culture, the school did not administer the baseline STAR exam until January. Even though leaders had access to STAR results for most students by the end of January, results were not yet formally shared with teachers, nor had any action planning taken place to make use of the data to develop new instructional plans. Given the entry point of 9th grade and the wide range in skills entering students possess, leaders must work with urgency to make more effective and proactive use of student data to meet student needs and drive improved outcomes.

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

CURRICULUM

Nurses MC – CR has a curricular framework that provides a fixed structure aligned to state standards, but does not yet have systems in place to ensure lesson plans maximize teaching time, include effective differentiation strategies, and are consistently rigorous. Nurses MC provides all curricular materials including unit plans and scope and sequence documents to ensure leaders and teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. In preparation for opening Nurses MC – CR, the network conducted a full review of curricula in place at the existing school in Rhode Island and updated all materials to align with New York state standards. The school implements the American Reading Company curriculum in ELA, Agile Minds for mathematics, and internally developed curricula for science, history, and health science, which are designed to develop foundational skills to support readiness for college and career work in health fields.

The school is starting to implement systems to support teachers with lesson planning, but lesson plans do not yet reflect standardized expectations or an effective understanding of how to maximize time in longer teaching blocks. The school's founding director of teaching and learning departed before the start of the school year. Instructional leaders from the network spent significant time at Nurses MC – CR in the fall to support teachers and provide planning guidance. Despite this support from the network, the challenges in establishing a strong school culture at the beginning of the year and turnover in teachers prevented establishment of consistent and effective curriculum implementation. The current leadership team, including the director of teaching and learning, is beginning to establish expectations for lesson planning by implementing common lesson planning templates from the network. Teachers submit lesson plans each week and receive feedback from the director of teaching and learning. Teachers often adapt or adjust lessons from the standard curricula in an attempt to address diverse student skill levels, however, the quality of differentiation plans is inconsistent across classes. Leaders and teachers recognize that the longer teaching blocks of approximately 75 minutes on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday are not yet fully effective in maximizing use of time to support student learning. Nurses MC – CR must work to identify effective practices, and support teachers to plan lessons for longer blocks that incorporate such practices.

PEDAGOGY

With significant leadership and teacher transitions over the first half of the school year, Nurses MC – CR has focused on improving classroom management techniques and routines. These efforts were evident at the time of the visit, with clear schoolwide culture systems and classroom environments in which students were focused and transitions were efficient.

However, classes at Nurses MC – CR do not yet consistently feature purposeful lessons with regular and effective checks for understanding or opportunities for rigorous higher-order thinking. Leaders recognize that with a foundation of improved school culture, it is now critical to focus on setting clear expectations for high quality instruction and delivering supports to help teachers implement it. Across classrooms, teachers use some strategies to gauge student understanding such as circulating the room, but teachers do not consistently gather information and adjust lessons in real time in response to student performance. Despite very small class sizes, lessons include few structures for differentiation such as identifying small groups for additional support.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

While many lesson plans implement a gradual release of responsibility approach that could lead to rigorous problem solving and independent work, few lessons integrate opportunities for students to discuss, debate, and elaborate on their thinking. Rather, teachers often provide answers or direct students to the next step or question without opportunity for students to engage in cognitive lift.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Nurses MC – CR is working to develop an effective instructional leadership model that can provide consistent support to teachers. As a result of leadership transitions at the beginning of the year, the school struggled to establish functional cultural and instructional baselines and expectations. After identifying a new executive director and director of teaching and learning, the new instructional leaders focused significant effort on resetting school cultural norms and building an environment conducive to learning. At the time of the visit, school leaders had implemented clear school culture expectations and work to hold teachers and students accountable for these expectations with classroom culture implementation checklists.

Having made progress in establishing a culture conducive to learning, Nurses MC – CR leaders must urgently focus on establishing clear expectations, goals, and systematic supports for teaching and learning. While the school offers regular professional development focused on implementation of the instructional program, instructional leaders are still working to enact standardized coaching and feedback systems to support individual teacher development. For example, while instructional leaders often visit classrooms for informal observations, the school does not yet implement a standard cycle of formal observations and one-on-one feedback rooted in clear annual goals for the school as a whole and for each teacher in specific.

AT-RISK PROGRAM

Nurses MC – CR is establishing its at-risk program to meet the educational needs of students struggling academically, students with disabilities, and English language learners (“ELLs”). The school uses clear procedures to identify ELLs, but the school has not yet enrolled any ELL students. Nurses MC – CR is prepared to support ELLs by providing English language acquisition supports with a blend of push in and pull out services rooted in a sheltered instruction approach. For struggling students, the network provides systems to implement a multi-tiered system of supports (“MTSS”) process to use assessment results to identify and support struggling students as well as students who may require evaluation for special education supports. However, Nurses MC – CR has not yet implemented the MTSS process with fidelity. As a result, lessons do not include effective plans to target and support struggling students. Leaders recognize this is a critical issue and plan to implement the MTSS process consistently and systematically going forward under the oversight of the director of teaching and learning.

This year, Nurses MC – CR experienced turnover in several instructional positions, and at the time of the Institute’s visit had just filled a special education teacher vacancy. To meet the needs of the school’s two students with disabilities while the special education position was vacant, classroom teachers and the director of teaching and learning provided additional support by pushing into classes during regular instruction, and providing additional direct support to those students during the lunch period.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

After several leadership and staffing transitions at the beginning of the school year, the appointment of the permanent executive director, the director of teaching and learning, and the dean of students has laid the foundation for the further development of the organizational structure. Leaders' intended roles are clear, with the executive director establishing the charter's overall vision and direction, the director of teaching and learning leading academic objectives through the development and support of the instructional staff, and the dean of students providing support and systems to maintain the school's cultural environment. However, leaders report that the need to cover teaching duties for vacancies has limited their ability to focus on supporting teachers. As the school grows, it will need to systematize its approach to supporting staff members based on clear structures rooted in defined schoolwide and personal development goals.

Nurses MC – CR has also struggled with student enrollment and attendance in its first year. The board and leaders recognize that the school's temporary location in the Rensselaer City School District exacerbates enrollment struggles. Leaders recognize the urgent need to increase enrollment in order to ensure financial stability and are working to enact a more strategic approach to recruitment for the 2024-25 school year. The school's enrollment and family engagement specialist leads the recruitment efforts and conducts more targeted outreach to middle schools and community organizations in the capital region. The school also reports that discussions with its founding families indicated that its initial marketing did not clearly communicate the unique school model. The executive director and enrollment and family engagement specialist are working to ensure marketing and family engagement efforts more clearly emphasize Nurses MC – CR's mission to provide students with pathways toward careers in nursing and healthcare professions. The dean of students is working to increase student attendance by reaching out to families of students who are frequently absent and developing individual plans to improve attendance. These efforts notwithstanding, the board must work urgently to identify a viable facility in the Albany City School District, where the school is chartered to operate permanently.

Despite significant initial teacher turnover, the school seeks to stabilize the current instructional staff and recruit high quality staff members to support the grade span growth of the upcoming school year, and leaders have a clear plan for how the team will evolve as the program grows to serve more grades.

BOARD OVERSIGHT & GOVERNANCE

Much of the board's oversight efforts in the startup phase have been dedicated to finding a suitable incubation space, managing the departure of the initial school leader, hiring a new executive director, and focusing on resetting school culture after the initial weeks of school. Now that the leadership team is fully staffed and school culture has been established, the board must work urgently to strengthen and stabilize student enrollment, identify a permanent facility in Albany, and establish clear goals and oversight systems to support rigorous teaching and learning aligned to the school's mission.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

Members possess skills and knowledge in healthcare, business, and law, and the board is currently recruiting additional members. The board is developing a committee structure and currently has committees for finance, fundraising, facilities, recruitment, and bylaws. School-based staff members join the appropriate committees to provide specific information about the school's programs. The board does not yet have an established academic committee or members with expertise in Kindergarten – 12th grade education. As such, the board has not yet developed effective oversight systems to provide rigorous oversight in the area of academic outcomes.

School and network leaders regularly report to the board on school culture, finances, staffing, and enrollment. However, the board has not yet developed a standard report or dashboard to support systematic review of goals and outcomes. The board plans to establish a set dashboard template based on the reflection of the most useful data and information to support its oversight in the future, and is working to connect with members of established charter school boards as it works to develop these systems. The board implements a standard rubric for school leader evaluation from Nurses MC that is based on the Marzano school leadership evaluation tool. The board does not yet have an evaluation rubric for the CMO, but plans to develop one in the coming year based on models from other charter school boards.

Nurses MC – CR

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APPENDICES

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CHARTER
OVERVIEW

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SUNY RENEWAL
BENCHMARKS

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NURSES MIDDLE COLLEGE CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL - CAPITAL REGION BOARD OF TRUSTEES¹

CHAIR	TRUSTEES
Susan Birkhead	Mark M. Little
VICE CHAIR	Angela A. Antonikowski
Brenda Robinson	Maxine M. Smalling
TREASURER	Joseph B. Porter
Deborah Elliott	
SECRETARY	
Mary Therriault	

CHARTER LEADERS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
<i>Jan Zadoorian (January 2023-September 2023)</i>
<i>Dr. F. Maxine Fantroy-Ford (October 2023-Present)</i>

CHARTER CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT ²	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	GRADES SERVED
2023-24	130	64	49%	9

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
2023-24	First Year Evaluation Visit	January 31, 2024

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF REVIEW	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
January 31, 2024	Tanya Lewis-Jones	Director for New Charters
	Keegan Prue	Managing Director of School Information and Compliance

CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

CHARTER TERM	ACCOUNTABILITY PERIOD	ANTICIPATED RENEWAL VISIT
Initial	First of Four Years	Fall 2027



VERSION 5.0, MAY 2012

INTRODUCTION

The State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks¹ (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) serve two primary functions at renewal:

- They provide a framework for the Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) to gather and evaluate evidence to determine whether a school has made an adequate case for renewal. In turn, this evidence assists the Institute in deciding if it can make the required legal and other findings in order to reach a positive recommendation for renewal. For example, the various benchmarks that the Institute uses to determine whether the school has had fiscally responsible practices in place during the last charter period allow the Institute to determine with greater precision whether the school will operate in a fiscally sound manner during the next charter period, a finding that the New York Charter Schools Act requires the SUNY Trustees to make.
- At the same time that the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks provide a framework for the Institute to collect and review evidence, they also provide the school with a guide to understanding the Institute’s evaluative criteria. As the Institute uses the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks (or some sub-set of them) as the framework for conducting its ongoing school evaluation visits, school leaders should be fully aware of the content of the Benchmarks at the time of renewal.

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks are organized into four inter-connected renewal questions that each school must answer when submitting a renewal application. The benchmarks further reflect the interwoven nature of schools from an academic, organizational, fiscal and/or legal perspective. For example, the Institute could reasonably place many of the academic benchmarks under the heading of organizational effectiveness. More generally, some redundancy exists because the Institute looks at the same issue from different perspectives.

Precisely how the Institute uses the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, during both the renewal process and throughout the charter period, is explained in greater detail in the Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University of New York (the “SUNY Renewal Practices”), available on the Institute’s website at: <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.

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.

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.
-



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.
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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 ACHIEVEABLE?

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.

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.

