

THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*FIRST YEAR SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT
SOUTH SHORE CHARTER SCHOOL
VISIT DATE: FEBRUARY 8, 2024
REPORT DATE: MAY 15, 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 February 8, 2024 first year school evaluation visit to the South Shore Charter School (“South Shore”).

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

SOUTH SHORE CHARTER SCHOOL

25 Church St, Ronkonkoma, NY | Grades: K-1 | Sachem Central School District

The SUNY Trustees approved the original charter for South Shore on October 7, 2021. The school opened in fall 2023, serving 150 students in Kindergarten and 1st grade.

“ MISSION

The mission of South Shore Charter School is to cultivate in our students the tenacity, integrity, and curiosity needed to become innovative and socially responsible leaders, ready to face and solve the ever-changing challenges facing our society.

CURRENT CHARTER

Serves: Kindergarten – 1st
Chartered Enrollment:
150
Charter Expiration:
July 31, 2028

ANTICIPATED 2027-28

Grades Served:
Kindergarten – 5th
Chartered Enrollment:
450

KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

Resilience focused character education;	+
Inquiry based learning;	+
Extended learning time;	+
Increased English language arts (“ELA”) and mathematics instructional minutes;	+
Academic and social emotional intervention services; and,	+
Social and emotional learning.	+

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

South Shore delayed its opening by a year and launched its first year 2023-24 with a strong and effective program in place. During its planning year of 2022-23, leaders secured a suitable temporary space while its permanent space is being built. Leaders also worked across various communities to develop support for its school. South Shore prioritized establishing a strong foundation for an effective academic program along with fostering important relationships within their community of students, families, teachers, and staff members. The school established a strong start to its charter term with effective and meaningful instructional leadership and a clear structure for its curricular and assessment systems. Teachers meet regularly to intellectually prepare for lessons with support from leaders and leaders established an effective, data driven culture.

Pursuant to the Institute's preopening inspection of South Shore on August 28, 2023 (and documentation provided to or inspected by the Institute at that visit and prior/post thereto), the Institute determined South Shore completed substantially all of the Preopening requirements defined in the Charter Agreement between the education corporation and the SUNY Trustees (the "Charter Agreement"). Therefore, the Institute permitted the school to open for instruction 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

South Shore is establishing an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning. The school regularly administers a comprehensive suite of valid and reliable assessments aligned to state standards. For English language arts ("ELA"), South Shore administers Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System ("F&P"), FUNdations assessments, in-house created interim assessments ("IAs"), and frequent formative assessments. For mathematics, the school administers counting jar assessments for number sense, unit assessments, and in-house created IAs. The school also administers the NWEA MAP ("MAP") as a nationally normed assessment three times a year. South Shore administers weekly ELA and mathematics quizzes. Teachers use the resulting data to recognize and close early learning gaps and leaders have built effective practices to support teachers in using those data to plan and revise lessons in response to student needs. Early in its first year of operation, South Shore leaders have built a strong data driven culture through consistent delivery of assessments, clear presentation and access to results, and effective processes for teachers to adjust instruction. Leaders provide professional development to norm teachers' scoring on the assessments systems to ensure alignment and consistency across classrooms.

During weekly data meetings, leaders meet with teachers to review the previous week's quiz results. Leaders use an effective protocol for teachers to analyze student strengths, areas for improvement, and misconceptions to then turn attention to planning how to pivot instruction in the coming week. Leaders conduct lesson observations consistently to monitor implementation of teaching strategies and provide teachers with constructive feedback regularly. Leaders also meet with teacher teams to follow up with specific areas to grow and strengthen in each classroom.

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

South Shore's curricular programs support teachers with instructional planning and provide a stable programmatic foundation in its first year. The school uses Savvas MyView, FUNdations phonics, and Literacy Footprints for its ELA programs, and, for mathematics, the school uses Envision and Cognitively Guided Instruction. Leaders provide teachers with curricular maps, pacing calendars, unit plans, and scripted lessons. The school purposefully chose programs with scripted lessons to allow more time for teachers to focus on internalizing lessons and planning differentiation. Leaders require teachers to annotate the scripted plans with strategies to address specific misconceptions and differentiation strategies. Teachers also plan purposeful lessons through South Shore's effective intellectual preparation framework, where leaders work with teachers to internalize content and understand where students may struggle. With these supports and curricular tools in place, teachers know what to teach and when to teach it.

PEDAGOGY

South Shore teachers deliver effective instruction across classrooms. Teachers present purposeful lessons aligned to state standards and students engage in rigorous activities with clear learning objectives. In order to gauge understanding across all students in a class, teachers use a variety of successful strategies and make in the moment adjustments to instruction as a result of these checks. Across all classrooms, students exhibit high levels of engagement and joy. Teachers maintain warm classroom environments that facilitate student voice and frequent, positive peer to peer interaction. In some cases where students were disengaged or misbehaving, teachers relied on clear routines and procedures to seamlessly mitigate any possible disruptions and maintain the classroom focus on learning. Although the Institute observed teachers providing many opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding through class discussion, teachers were inconsistent with asking higher order thinking questions to add rigor to discussions. As the school grows, leaders acknowledge the opportunity to improve teachers' already effective instruction with more successful implementation of higher order thinking activities and problem solving activities within lessons.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

South Shore's founding instructional leadership team established strong systems to support the development of teachers in its first year of operation. During the school's planning phase prior to opening, the board and executive director revised the organizational chart to hire its director of instruction in the first year to ensure teachers had additional support in the school's founding year. The principal and director of instruction share responsibilities for managing the two initial grades, which allows leaders ample time to observe, coach, and support teachers. Teachers acknowledge the effective supports provided by leaders, which include frequent observations, grade team meetings, individual coaching meetings, and direct support in classrooms during lessons. Leaders also meet consistently to review student achievement and trends from teacher observations. Leaders use this information to plan relevant professional development responsive to teacher needs and to monitor implementation of professional development content. Through each of these mechanisms, leaders are able to hold teachers accountable to high expectations to ensure students are making accelerated growth through the end of the school year.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

AT-RISK PROGRAM

South Shore is meeting the educational needs of its students struggling academically, students with disabilities, and English language learners. The school uses compliant processes to identify all three subgroups of students, and its robust assessment system implemented in its first year allows leaders and teachers to identify supports and interventions for students struggling academically. The school enrolls a large percentage of ELLs and has adapted its programming and future years structure to accommodate the higher than expected numbers. For the ELL program, an ELL teacher provides instruction using Leveled Literacy Intervention as a stand alone class, and also pushes in to classrooms to support. The school recognizes it will likely need to add more ELL teachers in future years given the enrollment. For its Response to Intervention (“RTI”) program, teachers have a clear tiered structure to determine supports for students, and an intervention teacher supports with providing small group and individualized instruction. South Shore’s special education program offers integrated co-teaching (“ICT”) classrooms, and works with families to amend individualized education programs (“IEPS”) if the IEP has services South Shore does not currently offer to ensure the student can enroll and succeed at South Shore.

The director of student services purposefully aligns professional development content with student and teacher needs. The school delivers sessions and focuses grade team meetings on differentiation strategies. Through the data analysis process, teachers structure action planning around differentiating and reteaching strategies to support subgroups of students. Due to the large ELL population, professional development has also focused on effective strategies to support language development in the classroom. South Shore recognizes a need to expand teachers’ use of various ICT models as well as a need to build consistency across classrooms with ELL language development strategies.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

South Shore has an organizational structure that supports the effective delivery of the educational program. In its first year, the school has exceeded enrollment goals, maintained sufficient staffing, and leveraged its temporary facility to provide strong academic instruction. The school is reflective about its practices, especially student recruitment strategies. Due to its aggressive canvassing, regular open houses, advertising, and social media campaign, the school meets its chartered enrollment and exceeds its enrollment targets for subpopulations. Leaders analyze application data and family surveys in order to evaluate the efficacy of various recruitment and retention methods. In anticipation of the school’s re-location, the school has made concerted efforts to inform families and pre-emptively address concerns about transportation issues.

The school builds in ample professional development sessions during the summer and first quarter of the school year to classroom management and cultural supports. As a result, consistent discipline practices and warm climates are evident across all classrooms. All teachers articulate a clear ladder of consequences for behavior and effectively use the ClassDojo platform to positively reinforce good behavior and communicate clearly with families.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

BOARD OVERSIGHT & GOVERNANCE

The South Shore board implements effective committee structures and procedures to govern the school and oversee the academic program, operations, finance, and facilities plans. Board members possess a wide range of skills and experience reflecting expertise in finance, facilities, and Kindergarten – 12th grade education. Members give careful consideration to the composition of the board and work to ensure the board includes individuals who reflect the demographics of the families South Shore serves. The executive director provides the board with ample enrollment, academic, and other data such that trustees can make informed decisions. As a result, the board speaks with nuance and detail about academic trends and establishes clear priorities that include improving the learning of all student subpopulations, in particular ELLs. The board demonstrates strong commitment to the school through its rigorous oversight which includes site visits and thorough data analysis. This oversight informs the board's long term strategic planning which accounts for multiple contingencies of possible enrollment patterns. As the school continues to grow, the board plans to improve its internal self-evaluation and increase its capacity to hold school leaders accountable for academic excellence.

South Shore

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SUNY RENEWAL
BENCHMARKS

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SOUTH SHORE CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES¹

CHAIR	TRUSTEES
Keith Brown	Michelle Haynes
TREASURER	Karlene Cowan
Adel A. Hageb	Margaret Banks
SECRETARY	Kevin Warren
Kanika Mobley	Arturo Cuchillas

CHARTER LEADERS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
<i>Dermoth Mattison (2023-24 to Present)</i>

CHARTER CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT ²	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	GRADES SERVED
2023-24	150	149	99%	K – 1

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 Visit	February 8, 2024

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF REVIEW	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
February 8, 2024	Andrew Kile	Managing Director of School Evaluation
	Sinnjinn Bucknell	Director of Performance and Systems

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.
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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.
-

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.

