

THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT
**EUGENIO MARÍA DE HOSTOS
CHARTER SCHOOL**

VISIT DATE: APRIL 23–24, 2024
REPORT DATE: JULY 11, 2024

SUNY Charter Schools Institute

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Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

CONTENTS

1

Introduction

2

Charter Background

3

Executive Summary

4

Academic Performance

9

Benchmark Summary

Appendices

A: Charter Overview

B: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks



INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit to Eugenio María de Hostos Charter School (“EMHCS”) on April 23 – 24, 2024. While the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) near the end of a charter term, most mid-cycle charter school evaluation visits focus on a subset of these benchmarks addressing the academic success of the charter and the effectiveness and viability of the charter school organization. It provides a framework for examining the quality of the educational program, focusing on teaching and learning (e.g., curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and services for at-risk students), as well as leadership, organizational capacity, and board oversight. The Institute uses the established criteria on a regular basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

Appendix A to the report contains a Charter Overview with descriptive and historical information about the school, as well as background information on the conduct of the visit. Together this information puts the visit in the context of the school’s current charter cycle. Appendix B provides the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks.

This report serves as a summary of the school’s program based on a subset of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks. The Institute intends this selection of information to be an exception report in order to highlight areas of concern. As such, limited detail about positive elements of the educational program does not indicate the Institute does not recognize the program’s overall effectiveness.





CHARTER BACKGROUND

EUGENIO MARÍA DE HOSTOS CHARTER SCHOOL

27 Zimbrich Street, Rochester, NY | Grades: K-6 | Rochester City School District
1069 Joseph Avenue, Rochester, NY | Grades: 7-8 | Rochester City School District
343 State Street, Bldg. 10, 5th Floor, Rochester NY | Grades: 9-12 | Rochester City School District

The State University of New York Board of Trustees (the “SUNY Trustees”) approved the original charter for EMHCS on January 25, 2000. The school opened in fall 2000, serving 120 students in Kindergarten – 2nd grade.

“ MISSION

It is the mission of the Eugenio María de Hostos Charter School to create a safe and nurturing community of learners where students earn the Seal of Biliteracy (English and Spanish), learn to advocate for social justice, and are prepared to enjoy and access what the world has to offer.

CURRENT CHARTER

Serves: Kindergarten – 12th
Chartered Enrollment:
1,072
Charter Expiration:
June 30, 2025

KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

Engaging curriculum linked to real world experiences;	+
Bilingual program;	+
Safety nets;	+
Personal attention to all students;	+
Skilled teachers;	+
Strong leaders;	+
Safe environment;	+
Family and community involvement; and,	+
User friendly data.	+

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During this charter term, the board of trustees invested significant time and resources into strengthening and stabilizing key leaders and rebuilding relationships with families. To accomplish these goals, EMHCS conducted a national search to appoint its current chief executive officer (“CEO”) in 2021 and re-established EMHCS’s commitment to its EL curriculum, formerly Expeditionary Learning, and Spanish language programming through curricular, staffing, and scheduling adjustments that collectively increase fidelity to these components. The new leadership team introduced a restorative approach to student discipline, which produced a significant reduction in both in-school and out-of-school suspensions across grade levels this school year. Stakeholders credit the shift to restorative practices with improving schoolwide culture.

Over this charter term, EMHCS consistently met its high school graduation rate goal. While performance on the New York State English language arts (“ELA”) and mathematics exams for students in 3rd – 8th grade exceeded that of the district, that margin declined since the 2018-19 school year. In response, EMHCS leadership implements a strategic plan with action steps and measurable goals to improve student achievement. EMHCS’s programs consist of an elementary program, serving Kindergarten – 6th grade, a middle school program, serving 7th and 8th grade, and a high school program, serving 9th – 12th grade.

Leaders and staff members focused on three instructional priorities consistently for the last three years: cognitive engagement, rigorous tasks, and increasing student to student discourse. During the evaluation visit, the Institute observed some evidence of aligned practices in classrooms, but it is not clear staff members across EMHCS’s programs possess a common understanding of what constitutes pedagogical mastery in each priority area. While there are some examples of highly effective classrooms across grade spans, most teachers have not yet demonstrated the ability to consistently challenge and engage all students during lessons, and the current levels of staffing and systems in place to provide coaching and professional development are insufficient to accelerate their progress.

Teacher shortages, competition from local districts, and subsequent ongoing staff member turnover pose a challenge for EMHCS. In response, the board committed additional resources to provide financial assistance to a variety of strategies to develop and support the school’s teacher and leader pipeline including providing assistance for teachers pursuing certification, supporting paraprofessionals becoming teachers, and assigning mentors to new teachers.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

2022-23 CHARTER PERFORMANCE REVIEW

At the beginning of the Accountability Period,¹ the school developed and adopted an Accountability Plan that set academic goals in the key subjects of English language arts (“ELA”) and mathematics. For each goal in the Accountability Plan, specific outcome measures define the level of performance necessary to meet that goal. Throughout the charter term, the Institute examines results for five required Accountability Plan measures on an annual basis and provides an Accountability Dossier to each school detailing the school’s progress toward meeting its Accountability Plan goals. Because the Act requires charters be held “accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results”² and states the educational programs at a charter school must “meet or exceed the student performance standards adopted by the board of regents”³ for other public schools, SUNY’s required accountability measures rest on performance as measured by statewide assessments. More information about the required Accountability Plan measures can be found on the [Institute’s website](#).

In 2022-23, the third year of the school’s current charter term and fourth year of the Accountability Period, EMHCS posted low achievement in ELA and mathematics at the elementary and middle school programs. In both subjects, the school only exceeded the target for one of five measures included under each goal area. The school met or came close to meeting its graduation and college preparation goals as it had in prior years. In order to make the best case for earning a subsequent renewal, the school must improve its 3rd – 8th grade performance.

In 2022-23, with only 22% of students enrolled in at least their second year scoring at or above proficient on the state’s ELA exam, EMHCS performed far below the absolute target of 75% and slightly surpassed the district’s results. The school posted an ELA effect size of -0.83 according to the Institute’s comparative performance analysis. This level of achievement fell under the target of 0.3 and indicates that the school performed lower than expected in comparison to schools across the state enrolling similar percentages of economically disadvantaged students. EMHCS also failed to meet the target for its growth measure and posted a mean growth percentile of 46, which was four points below the target. EMHCS’s low absolute achievement and low growth score indicate that the school is failing to catch students up to grade level expectations.

EMHCS also posted low mathematics achievement in 2022-23. That year, only 17% of students enrolled in at least their second year scored at or above proficient on the state’s mathematics exam. This level of performance was 58 percentage points below the absolute target of 75% and only five percentage points above the district’s low average proficiency. Among all tested students, over half scored at performance Level 1, the lowest possible level, which signifies performance far below grade level expectations. In comparison to demographically similar schools across the state, EMHCS performed lower than expected in mathematics. The school posted a mean growth percentile of 39, which was far below the target of 50. Further, the school’s students in 8th grade had a particularly low growth score and only one student scored at proficient among 61 tested students. The school must grow the learning of all students in order to make the best case for renewal.

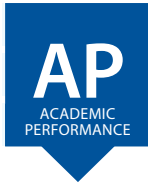
1. Because the SUNY Trustees make a renewal decision before student achievement results for the final year of a charter term become available, the Accountability Period ends with the school year prior to the final year of the charter term. In the case of initial renewal, the Accountability Period covers the first four years of the charter term.

2. Education Law § 2850(2)(f).

3. Education Law § 2854(1)(d).

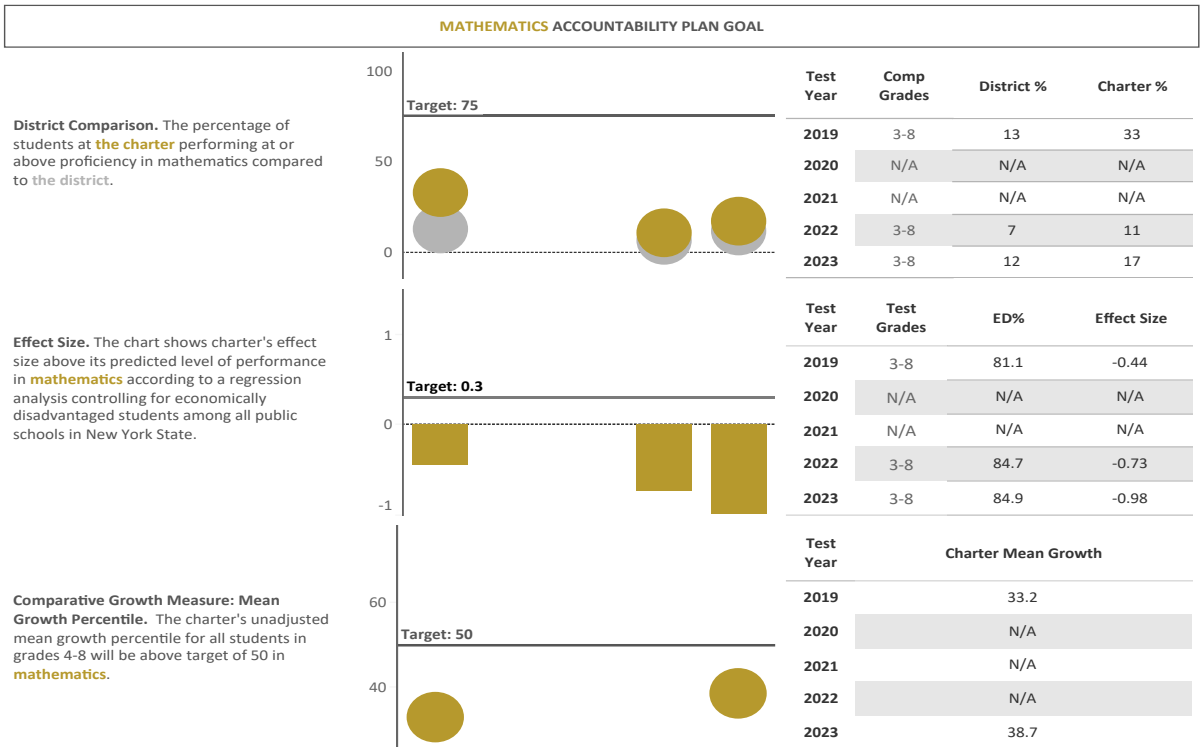
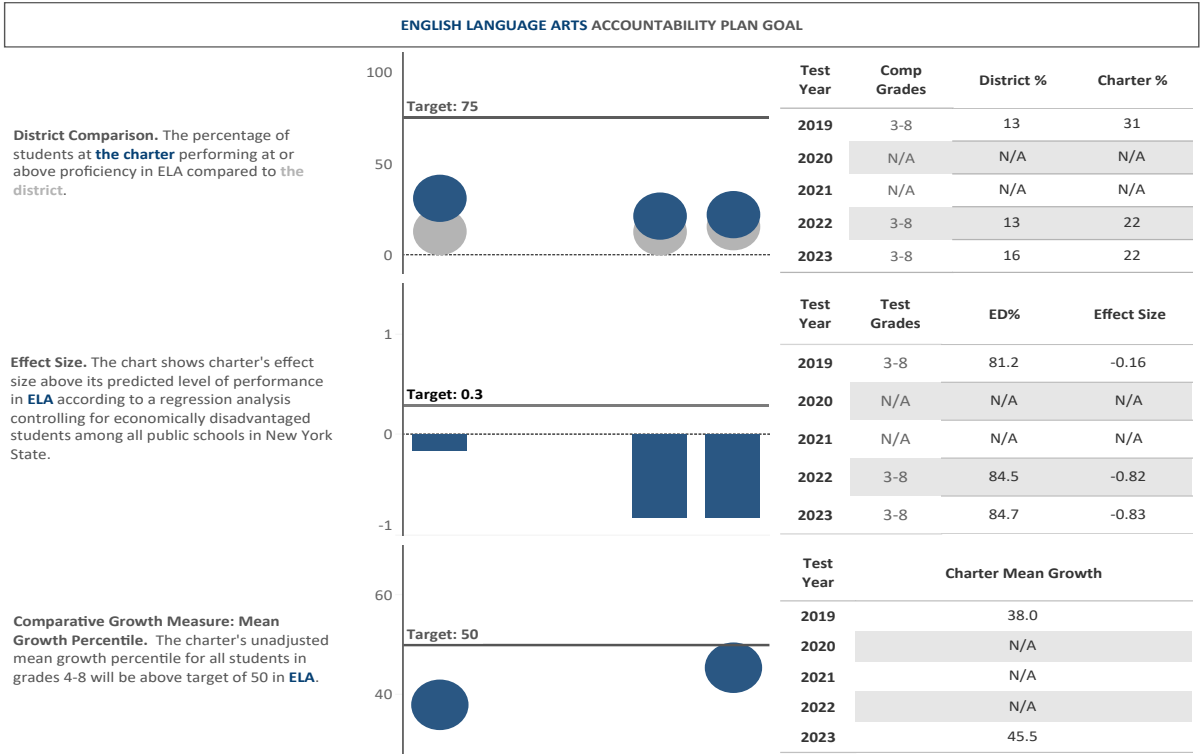
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

In 2022-23, EMHCS met its graduation goal and came close to meeting its college preparation goal. That year, 91% of its 2019 Total Cohort graduated after four years surpassing the absolute target by 16 percentage points and the most recently available district four year graduation rate by 20 percentage points. The school demonstrates college preparation for its graduates through earning the Regents diploma with advanced designation, the Regents diploma with Seal of Biliteracy, and the Regents diploma with Seal of Civic Readiness. In 2022-23, 50% of graduates in the 2019 Cohort achieved at least one of those distinctions. Fifty-seven percent of graduates matriculated into a two or four year college program in the year following graduation.



ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

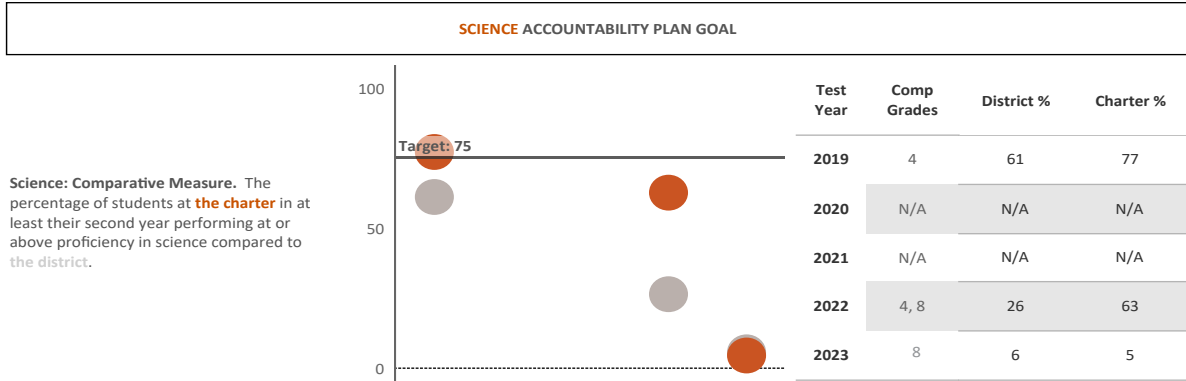
EUGENIO MARIA DE HOSTOS CHARTER SCHOOL





ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

EUGENIO MARIA DE HOSTOS CHARTER SCHOOL



TESTED PERCENTAGES*

	2019		2022		2023	
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
School Tested Number	338	343	485	469	478	469
School Tested %	94.4%	94.5%	94.9%	92.3%	94.3%	92.7%
District Tested %	90.6%	85.8%	89.9%	85.0%	89.0%	86.2%

SPECIAL POPULATIONS PERFORMANCE**

	2019	2022	2023
Students with Disabilities Tested on State Exam	30	33	30
Charter Percent Proficient on ELA Exam	13.3	3.0	0.0
District Percent Proficient	2.1	1.4	3.6
Tested on NYSESLAT Exam	142	178	150
Charter Percent 'Commanding' or Making Progress	19.0	26.4	36.0

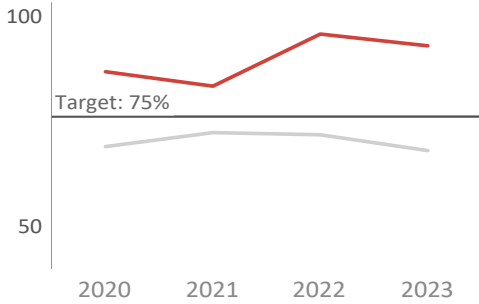
*Mathematics participation rates may reflect discrepancies from ELA participation rates due to students sitting for a Regents exam in lieu of the traditional state exam.
** The academic outcome data about the performance of students receiving special education services and English language learners ("ELLs") above is not tied to separate goals in the charter school's formal Accountability Plan. The NYSESLAT, the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test, is a standardized state exam. "Making Progress" is defined as moving up at least one level of proficiency. Student scores fall into five categories/proficiency levels: Entering; Emerging; Transitioning; Expanding; and, Commanding. In order to comply with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act regulations on reporting education outcome data, the Institute does not report assessment results for groups containing five or fewer students and indicates this with an "s".

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

EUGENIO MARIA DE HOSTOS CHARTER SCHOOL

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE

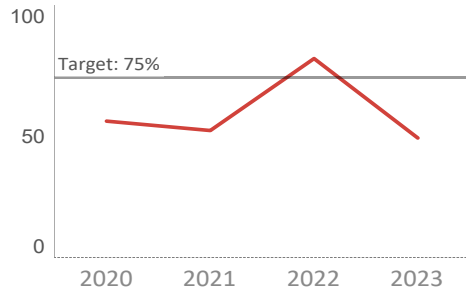
Comparative Measure: Graduation Rate. Each year, the percentage of **the charter school's students graduating** after completion of their fourth year will exceed the **District**.



	District %	Charter %
2020	68.2	85.4
2021	71.4	82.1
2022	70.9	94.0
2023	67.3	91.3

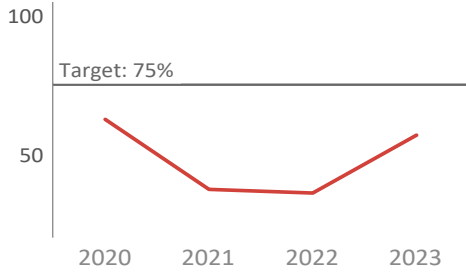
COLLEGE PREPARATION AND ATTAINMENT

College Preparation Measure: Each year, 75 percent of **graduates** will demonstrate college preparation through one or more indicators including passing an AP exam or earning an advanced diploma.



	Graduates	College Prep %
2020	35	57.0
2021	32	53.1
2022	47	83.0
2023	42	50.0

College Attainment Measure: Matriculation into College. Each year, 75 percent of **graduating students** will enroll in a college or university.



	Grad N	Matriculation %
2020	35	62.9
2021	32	37.5
2022	47	36.2
2023	42	57.1

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

QUALITATIVE BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,⁴ 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 charter school must have in place at the time of renewal.⁵

ASSESSMENT

EMHCS's assessment system does not improve instructional effectiveness. While the school uses a wide range of assessments to collect student data across grade levels and content areas, including Spanish language arts, leaders have not established robust data utilization practices to identify performance trends both at the grade level and for individual students. Leaders recognize the need to create efficient data sharing routines that allow teachers and leaders to closely review student performance trends. At the time of the visit, leaders were working to establish better data sharing systems. For example, the elementary program has clear routines and systems regarding when teachers review data, and leaders provide teachers with color-coded reports from Illuminate with information about how well students perform on interim assessments or FastBridge. Using this information and working with the data and assessment coach, teachers create action plans and small student groups to focus reteaching and remediation efforts. Despite having these practices in place at the elementary program, the school does not yet effectively use its assessment suite to inform impactful teaching and learning. At the middle school level, teachers use more limited data to inform instruction, such as only using reading levels to inform student groupings. At high performing schools, assessment practices include a timely turnaround of data with item analyses and consistent progress monitoring to understand how students are mastering standards. EMHCS also lacks a consistent practice of analyzing grade and schoolwide data to inform strategic decisions regarding professional development and the effectiveness of curricular materials.

CURRICULUM

EMHCS has some elements in place of a curricular program that supports teachers with instructional planning with the elementary program having solid curricular systems in place. For ELA, EMHCS implements EL across Kindergarten – 8th grade, and began a pilot of CommonLit in 6th grade this year. Some teachers supplement EL with other resources approved by leaders. The school uses Fountas and Pinnell materials on an ad hoc, rather than systematic, basis to supplement EL for phonics instruction in Kindergarten – 2nd grade. The school shifted to Illustrative Math for mathematics during the current school year for Kindergarten – 8th grade. The programs provide a wide variety of resources for teachers to access, and the school provides training on both EL and Illustrative Math. The school provided training during the previous school year for teachers to preview the new mathematics curriculum and visited other schools that use the same program. During grade team meetings,

4. 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.

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

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

teachers unpack units and lessons with coaches. With many of the programs in place, and especially at the elementary program, teachers plan purposeful lessons. While elementary teachers reported consistent support and coaching with the curricular programs, middle school teachers report less support in regard to lesson plan feedback and general oversight of the implementation of the curricular programs.

EMHCS has specific programs to support its dual language program with dedicated times in schedules at all levels for Spanish language arts (“SLA”). The school has a bilingual coordinator at each program who supports teams with planning and organizing the SLA programs. Since the last renewal, EMHCS leadership implements a more aligned and consistent model for its dual language program.

The high school program does not have as effective systems in place to monitor its curricular programs. In high school, curriculum development is decentralized and loosely based on CommonLit. Content-specific teachers at the high school level create their own curriculum, with some taking personal initiative to attend to vertical and horizontal alignment across classes and grade levels. Some of the materials contained inconsistencies in standards alignment within lessons and did not articulate the necessary student skills for each unit or lesson. Teachers must submit lesson plans for instructional leaders’ and coaches’ review prior to delivery, but there is no consistent feedback loop that provides meaningful suggestions in a timely manner to support teaching and learning.

PEDAGOGY

High quality instruction is evident in some EMHCS classrooms. Across the school’s three campuses, teachers generally plan and deliver purposeful lessons and communicate learning targets to students in age-appropriate terms. In accordance with the school’s stated instructional priorities, most teachers include regular opportunities for students to engage in peer-to-peer discourse.

Some teachers utilize an array of methods to check for student understanding, including circulating around classrooms to monitor progress, conferencing with students to provide individualized feedback, and observing small group collaborations, though few teachers made perceptible adjustments to instruction based on this data. In many classrooms, teachers appear focused on completing the lesson rather than assessing student understanding of the objective.

With a few notable exceptions, teachers across the school do not consistently challenge students to struggle productively with assigned learning tasks or exercise higher order thinking skills through discussion. Teachers often provide students with answers or overly scaffolded materials. While an emphasis on increasing rigorous tasks is another current EMHCS priority, there is limited evidence of a shared understanding amongst staff members of how to meet that expectation.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

Teachers generally exercise effective management techniques, and students appear well-acquainted and comfortable with classroom expectations, such as allowable volume levels and procedures for bathroom passes. During the visit, student behavior did not outwardly disrupt lessons. Some teachers used timers and other tools to optimize instructional time; however, in other classrooms the slow pace of lessons resulted in students being quietly off task after completing written work.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

The EMHCS instructional leadership team is establishing increased expectations for teacher performance in content knowledge and pedagogical skills. This includes implementing a substantially redesigned evaluation process and set of tools, establishing consistent lesson plan design, and increasing the alignment of professional development linked to classroom observations. This effort to raise expectations is bolstered by the leadership's strong and consistent belief in what students, families, and the local community bring to the educational setting. The instructional leadership is currently ineffective to support the development of teaching staff, due, in part, to the turnover of staff members, outstanding vacancies, and insufficient investment to mitigate assigning instructional leadership and support staff to classroom duties. The school's draft strategic plan does not currently include instructional leadership development as an explicit component.

The school's current coaching and reporting structures for key leadership positions do not build systems that allow for leaders to identify blind spots and allow for a common, shared view of the instructional reality at all levels. This limits the capacity for collaborative problem solving, co-creation of improvement strategies, and consistent monitoring and feedback loops. Instructional leaders provide opportunities and guidance for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction through common planning times, dedicated instructional coaches, the school's partnership with EL education, and common lesson plan tools. These opportunities and guidance vary widely across grade levels and content areas with respect to effectiveness, fidelity of use, and the establishment of coherence across the Kindergarten – 12th grade program, due, in part, to inconsistent or unclear expectations, a lack of prioritization and monitoring, as well as insufficient adaptations when circumstances change.

AT-RISK PROGRAM

The school employs qualified and experienced staff to support students with disabilities, English language learners ("ELLs"), and students struggling academically, with at least one ELL teacher vacancy at the time of the visit. Procedures for identifying students with disabilities and ELLs are in place, while the procedures for identifying struggling students to receive targeted support is inconsistent. Staff report that intervention services for struggling students vary across grade spans, with some students receiving tutoring support or participating in Saturday School. The school plans to offer a full day summer school program this year, which will provide additional remediation opportunities.

Elementary and middle grade students receive some small group instruction during the extended literacy and mathematics blocks, and middle grade students receive a 40-minute intervention block described as small group instruction, as well as independent use of CommonLit curriculum for literacy and ALEKS for mathematics, however this remained inconsistent across classrooms at the time of the visit.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

Leaders have not yet put in place processes to ensure general education teachers consistently engage in communication and collaboration with at-risk program staff, and there is limited monitoring of teacher lesson plans to ensure adequate adaptations and accommodations, with only some staff reporting support in these areas. Special education staff do not have protected time to meet across the Kindergarten – 12th grade program, limiting opportunities for shared communication, coordination, and knowledge-sharing. The school provides very limited, inconsistent professional development focused on identifying at-risk students and helping teachers to meet their specific needs. School leaders set goals to increase the engagement between general education teachers and special education and ELL teachers, as well as a goal to increase the ongoing monitoring of student progress to measure the efficacy of in-class small group instruction.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

EMHCS has made significant progress in stabilizing its leadership team and is working to refine systems to more effectively deliver the educational program. The CEO built a new leadership and management structure with team members working across Kindergarten – 12th grade. The director of academics and related services supports each of the school's three principals. The director of operations and student services supports the school's operational needs like facilities and bussing. The CEO supervises the three principals and the human resources and finance teams. Staff members know who to go to for what with clearly defined roles and responsibilities across leadership teams. Each program site implements a clear student discipline system based on restorative justice practices. With support for teachers implementing a more restorative approach to discipline, suspensions are significantly lower at the time of the visit than the same time in the previous school year.

The school works to retain staff members, and is well aware of the competitive environment for teachers in the Rochester area. To support with teacher retention, the school implements a monetary bonus system tied to student results. However, some staff members were unclear if the system applied to them and if they would be eligible for a monetary bonus. The school will also implement a stipend for grade/content lead positions next school year to help build pathways for teacher leaders. The school meets its chartered enrollment and monitors its progress toward enrollment and retention targets for subgroups of students.

BOARD OVERSIGHT & GOVERNANCE

The EMHCS board of trustees is working to drive progress toward meeting the school's Accountability Plan goals. During its fourth charter term, the board engaged in a national search for a new executive leader and supported the school through significant staffing transitions. With three founders still at the helm, the board's stable membership possesses deep institutional knowledge, ties to local organizations, and professional skillsets ranging from Kindergarten – 12th grade and higher education, community development, business administration, human resources, financial planning, non-profit management, accounting, and marketing. The board roster includes three parent trustees, each of whom maintain a strong feedback loop between the board, the school's parent association, and various stakeholder groups across Rochester. The nominating committee is currently interviewing potential trustees with legal expertise and will be consulting a skills matrix to inform future recruitment as a succession planning strategy.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

Board members receive and analyze an array of schoolwide and disaggregated data via monthly dashboards and principal reports that include enrollment, assessment, disciplinary, budgetary, and staff member retention data, as well as presentations showcasing student projects and artifacts. Toward the end of the school's current charter term, the board is focused on improvement and tracking progress against newly established academic, financial, and organizational performance goals and metrics. With these systems in place, the board demonstrates improvement in its governance and oversight skills since the school's most recent renewal.

The board self-evaluates its strengths and weaknesses each year and trustees participate in quarterly retreats to home in on emergent issues. Looking forward, the board articulates an ongoing commitment to retaining the school's effective staff members, strengthening academic outcomes, maintaining in-house talent development pipelines, and enhancing supports for EMHCS high school students to optimize their college and career prospects.

EMHCS

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APPENDICES

PAGES Ax 1-16

CO^A
CHARTER
OVERVIEW

PAGE Ax 1

SB^B
SUNY RENEWAL
BENCHMARKS

PAGE Ax 5



EUGENIO MARIA DE HOSTOS CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES¹

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VICE CHAIR

Eugenio Marlin

SECRETARY

Angelica Perez-Delgado

TRUSTEES

- Rosemary Johnson
- Dr. Marcia DeJesus-Rueff
- Gloria Noemi Soldevila Ramos
- Ryan E. Carter
- Miguel A. Melendez Jr.
- Dr. Miriam Vazquez
- Caroline Rodriguez

CHARTER CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT ²	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	GRADES SERVED
2019-20	936	888	95%	K – 12
2020-21	960	941	98%	K – 12
2021-22	1,016	962	95%	K – 12
2022-23	1,072	959	89%	K – 12
2023-24	1,072	994	93%	K – 12

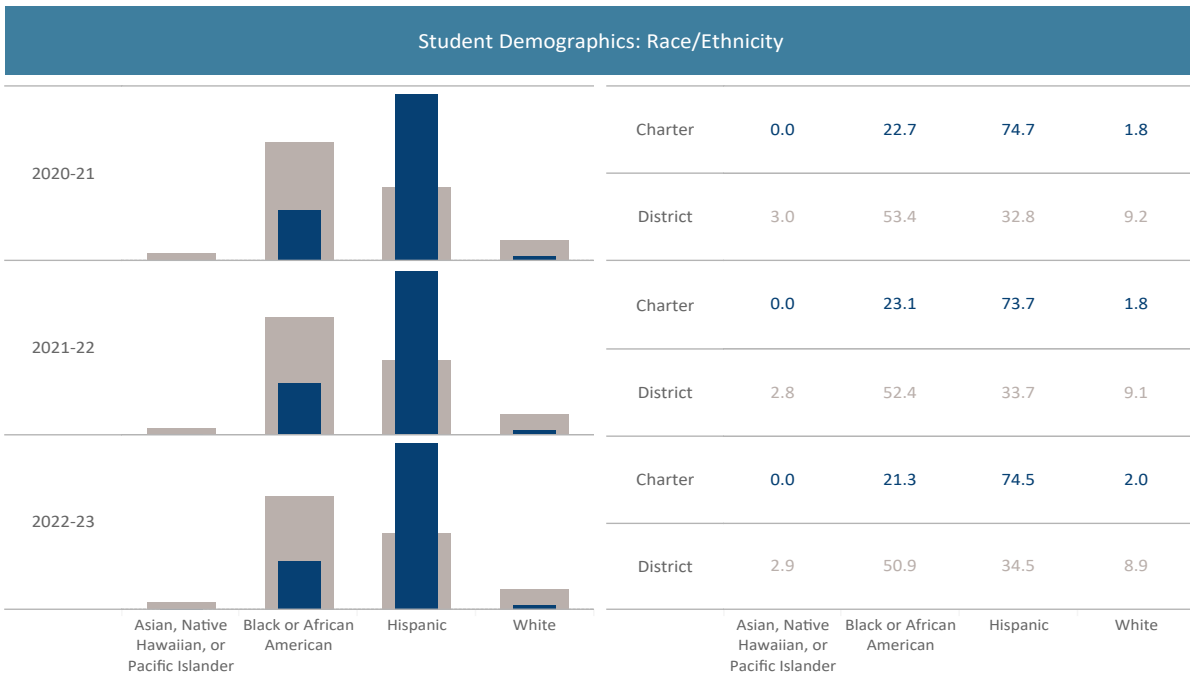
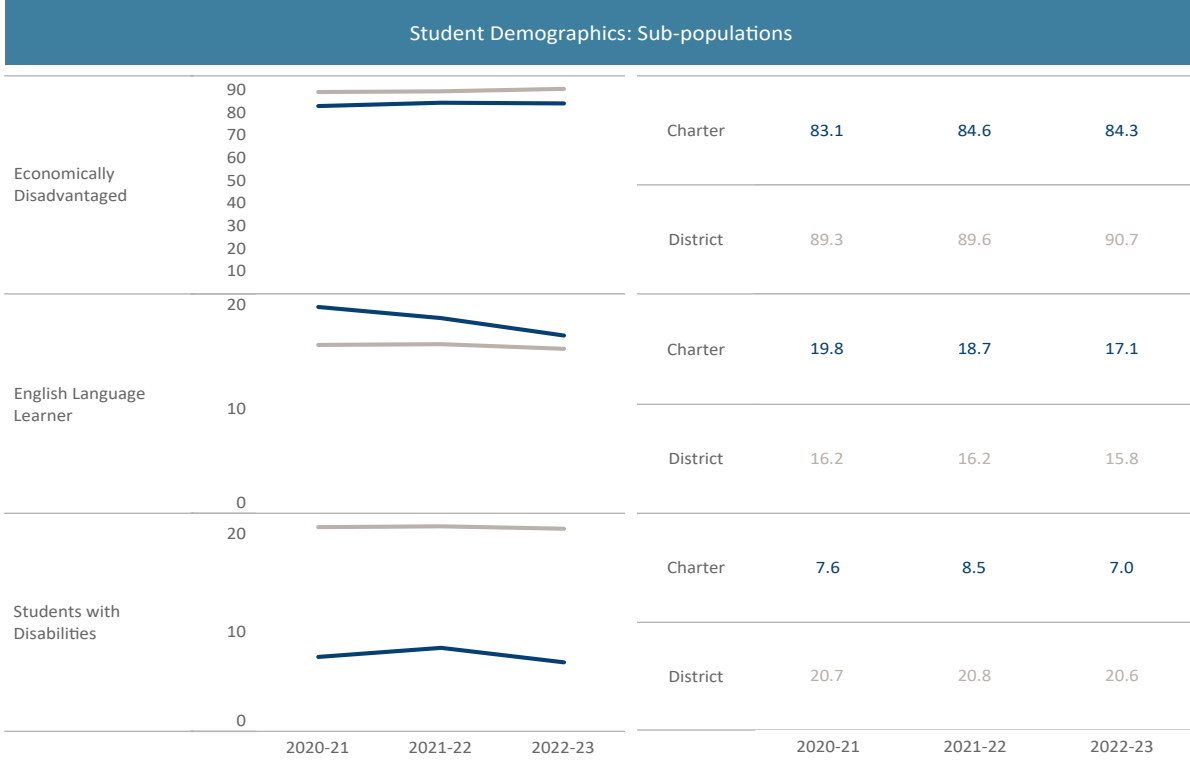
1. Source: The Institute’s board records at the time of the visit.

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



Eugenio Maria de Hostos Charter School

Rochester City School District

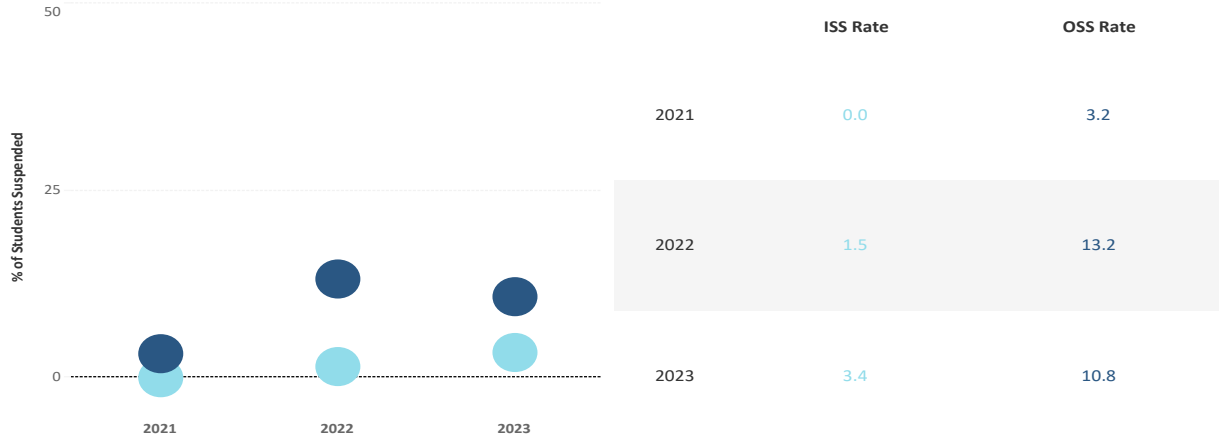


* Data reported in these charts reflect BEDS day enrollment counts as reported by the NYSED.



Eugenio Maria de Hostos Charter School

Rochester City School District



Data suitable for comparison are not available. The percentage rate shown here is calculated using the method employed by NYCDOE: the total number of students receiving an in school or out of school suspension at any time during the school year is divided by the total enrollment, then multiplied by 100.

Persistence in Enrollment: The percentage of students eligible to return from previous year who did return



Expulsions: The number of students expelled from the charter each year

	2021	2022	2023
	0	0	0

Eugenio Maria de Hostos Charter School's Enrollment and Retention Status: 2022-23

		Target	Charter
enrollment	economically disadvantaged	87.6	84.3
	English language learners	15.5	17.1
	students with disabilities	17.5	7.0
retention	economically disadvantaged	94.4	85.7
	English language learners	94.9	86.7
	students with disabilities	94.4	78.9

* Data reported in these charts reflect information reported by the education corporation and validated by the Institute.



CHARTER SCHOOL VISIT HISTORY

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
2000-01	First Year Visit	May 31, 2001
2001-02	Evaluation Visit	May 21, 2002
2002-03	Evaluation Visit	February 26 – 27, 2003
2004-05	Initial Renewal	December 4, 2004
2009-10	Subsequent Renewal	November 12, 2009
2011-12	Evaluation Visit	October 13, 2011
2013-14	Subsequent Renewal	May 13 – 14, 2014
2017-18	Evaluation Visit	March 5 – 6, 2018
2019-20	Subsequent Renewal	November 14 – 15, 2019
2023-24	Evaluation Visit	April 23 – 24, 2024

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF REVIEW	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
April 23-24, 2024	Heather Wendling	External Consultant
	Andrew Kile	Managing Director of School Evaluation
	Desree Cabrall-Njenga	School Evaluator
	David Montes de Oca	External Consultant
	Karolina Villagrana	External Consultant

CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

CHARTER TERM	ACCOUNTABILITY PERIOD	ANTICIPATED RENEWAL VISIT
Fifth	Fifth of Five Years	Fall 2024



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.



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.

