

# THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*FIRST YEAR SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT  
VERTEX ACADEMY JOINT HIGH  
SCHOOL PROGRAM*

*VISIT DATE: APRIL 19, 2023*

*REPORT DATE: JUNE 23, 2023*

*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 April 19, 2023 first year school evaluation visit to the Vertex Academy Joint High School Program (“Vertex”), a joint high school program between Brilla College Preparatory Charter Schools (“Brilla Prep Schools”) and Public Prep Charter School Academies (“Public Prep Schools”). The two education corporations partner with Vertex Partnership Academies, Inc., a New York not-for-profit charter management organization to manage the operational and academic aspects of the program.

### REPORT FORMAT

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

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





## CHARTER BACKGROUND

# VERTEX ACADEMY JOINT HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM

1160 Beach Avenue, Bronx NY 10472 | Grades: 9 | NYC Community School District 8

The SUNY Trustees approved the joint high school program, Vertex, between Brilla College Preparatory Charter Schools and Public Prep Charter School Academies in December 2021. The program opened in fall 2022.

### “ MISSION

*The mission of Vertex Partnership Academies is for all students to be candidates for the International Baccalaureate Diploma or the International Baccalaureate Career Certificate. As a school community we want to develop the ability to use our minds well so that, through our thoughts and actions, we make the world a better place.*

### CURRENT YEAR

Serves: 9<sup>th</sup> grade  
 Chartered Enrollment:  
 125

### ANTICIPATED 2026-27

Grades Served: 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>  
 Chartered Enrollment:  
 941

### KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

Professional community of practice;+	+	Challenging curriculum;-	-
Teacher leaders;	+	Focus and coherence;	+
Collaborative leadership;	+	Allocation of resources;	+
Professional development system;	+	Incentives;	+
Evidence-based practice;	+	Collaboration on design;	+
Tools and strategies;	+	Community engagement	+

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vertex is an innovatively designed high school program serving as an expansion of Brilla Prep Schools and Public Prep Academies. The program is designed to offer three International Baccalaureate (“IB”) programs, IB Middle Years Programme (“MYP”), IB Diploma Programme, and IB Career-related Programme, which is uniquely the only SUNY-authorized charter to offer the three IB programs. The program is currently working through the IB accreditation process and is an active candidate.

Leaders work in the first year to address any gaps entering students have accumulated from interrupted instruction due to COVID-19. These supports include using a universal screener to identify skill gaps and implementing an intervention block in the daily schedule. However, the intervention block does not consistently implement effective remediation and support strategies for students.

Leaders recognize the program’s main challenge this year is enrollment. Leaders report the newness of the program and negative attention resulting from a highly publicized lawsuit, which ultimately was dismissed, contributed to low enrollment. Fewer than 30 students, which was less than expected, matriculated from the two education corporations and further contributed to the low census. Vertex leaders are working to build better relationships with the 8<sup>th</sup> grade programs to support recruiting more students from the education corporations. For 2023-24, the Vertex program leaders increased recruitment efforts and leveraged Vertex’s presence in the community to build a substantial waitlist for the upcoming year.

Pursuant to the Institute’s inspection of Vertex at the above address on August 9, 2022, and documentation provided to or inspected by the Institute at that visit and prior/post thereto, the Institute determined that Vertex had completed substantially all of the Prior Actions required of it as defined in the Charter agreement between the education corporations and the SUNY Trustees (the “Charter Revisions”) for the operation of the program. Therefore, the Institute permitted the education corporations to open the high school program.

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

### QUALITATIVE BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

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

For first year visits, the Institute focuses on academic program benchmarks to establish a baseline measure of the quality of the program's systems and procedures, which heavily affect the progress that the program is able to demonstrate in meeting its Accountability Plan goals during the charter term. The Institute expects the program 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 program comes to renewal.

### ASSESSMENT

Vertex is establishing an assessment system that will create the conditions to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning. The program administers a regular suite of assessments throughout the year that provides teachers and leaders with the necessary information to understand student performance. These include Accuplacer for English language arts ("ELA") and mathematics, which serve as a diagnostic at the beginning of the program year and to understand growth in reading, writing, and mathematics at the end of the program year. For classes that result in a Regents exam, the program conducts mock Regents exams to monitor student progress toward proficiency. In each course, teachers create assessments based on a set of rubrics from the IB programme. Leaders work closely with each teacher to ensure that assessments are rigorous and align to IB Programme and New York State standards. Leaders plan to review the effectiveness of the school's current diagnostic testing systems to ensure the assessments provide the most robust data to understand any gaps in learning students enter Vertex with.

Teachers and leaders frequently monitor student performance via the IB Programme rubrics. Leaders also utilize student achievement data to create small ability-based group for the program's "What I Need" ("WIN") block, which serves as an opportunity for students to receive tutoring and support in specific content areas. Leaders recognize the need to improve its assessment program and will continue to provide training to improve the overall quality of the program's assessment systems.

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

Vertex is building a curricular program that will support teachers with instructional planning. The program provides teachers with IB Programme texts and materials to support in designing an effective curricular program. Teachers are responsible for designing unit plans, assessment tasks, and daily lesson plans. The leadership team works closely with each teacher. The principal provides general pedagogical feedback, and the IB coordinator provides feedback for planning and content-specific, IB Programme aligned feedback. Based on the provided materials and support from leaders, teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. The entire curricular program is driven by the IB Programme's rigorous rubric system, and teachers design learning experiences to align with the specific IB Programme tenants. Teachers appreciate the learning and development around the IB Programme tenants, and leaders recognize the need to continue development on teacher skills to build in a more rigorous curriculum to better align with IB standards. Vertex leaders have the opportunity to better differentiate the high school program experience based on students' academic history. For example, all students, regardless of Regents attainment, took 9<sup>th</sup> grade level algebra 1, science, and history, which could lead to duplicative credit.

### PEDAGOGY

Vertex is developing effective teaching strategies across classrooms, and leaders recognize a need to improve the rigor of lessons. Across classrooms, teachers establish warm, welcoming environments, and are working to establish a broader high school experience by creating student groups and other traditional high school activities. Teachers deliver purposeful lessons aligned to the IB Programme's curricula. Teachers consistently circulate classrooms to confer with individual students and provide specific feedback on independent work. In integrated co-teaching ("ICT") classrooms, the special education teacher provides supports to students including sometimes pulling small groups of students. Lessons do not consistently engage students in rigorous, higher-order thinking questions and activities. Students have few opportunities to engage in peer to peer work or meaningful discussions. Lessons focus on teachers delivering content and asking one to two students for responses. The school recognizes a need to increase these specific areas to better align with IB Programme expectations. One exception is ELA, as the teacher brings tenured experience working with IB programs. The Institute observed students answering higher level questions related to a text, then engaging with partners to discuss individual responses.

### INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Leaders at Vertex are defining instructional leadership across the program as they continue to deepen their understanding of how to manage the launch of a new program effectively. At Vertex, both the principal and IB coordinator serve as co-instructional leaders in that the IB coordinator is responsible for helping teachers develop the programwide IB curricula and assessments while the principal provides guidance and support designed to help teachers improve instructional practice. Teachers clearly understand the differences between the roles and responsibilities of the IB coordinator and the principal, and teachers effectively leverage the co-leadership structure to get the help and support needed to improve teaching and learning for students.

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

Leaders make adjustments to the academic program as they gain understanding of student learning needs. For example, the program reduced the 90-minute instructional block to 70 minutes to strengthen student learning and engagement. Using the time recouped from the longer block, leaders established a WIN block designed to provide students with customized instructional support at the end of the day. Leaders at Vertex train teachers how to build criterion-referenced based rubrics to evaluate student work and monitor progress toward grade level proficiency as well as developed a database where teachers upload assessments and information about student performance.

While program leaders helped teachers to develop a strong conceptual understanding of the IB programs, leaders have yet to provide more targeted professional development to help teachers consistently develop high-quality curriculum and assessments as well as employ sound instructional moves to meet students' diverse learning needs.

### AT-RISK PROGRAM

Vertex is developing its at-risk programming and recognizes a need to improve consistency in its program services for students with disabilities and English language learners ("ELLs"). Vertex has a clear protocol for identifying students with disabilities and those who may need ELL services. The program works with the district Committee on Special Education ("CSE") to schedule evaluations and to ensure that the program complies with the terms of students' Individualized Education Programs ("IEPs"). Leaders use results from the Accuplacer diagnostic exam to identify which students may need intensive instructional support. Vertex uses the ICT model to provide targeted instructional support to students with IEPs. The program also uses one of the WIN blocks to provide special education teacher support services ("SETSS").

Vertex administers the Home Language Survey and the New York State Identification Test of English Language Learners ("NYSITELL") to students who are new to the New York City school system and who exhibit a need for ELL services. For ELLs, the program provides a period each day specifically designed to support with English language acquisition and uses classroom materials to design supplemental activities for reading, writing, speaking, and listening. For students who are identified as an ELL, Vertex will administer the New York State English as a Second Language Test ("NYSESLAT") at the end of the year to assess English language proficiency. At the time of the visit, program leaders did not systematically review the previous NYSESLAT results of the ELLs who are enrolled in the program.

Instructional support for students with IEPs as well as those who are ELLs is inconsistent across the program. Teachers did not provide differentiated instructional support or use researched-based strategies to ensure that all students have full access to the IB curricula. Not every teacher used the WIN block to provide individualized instructional support to students. The Institute observed that some WIN blocks did not have a plan for engaging students in meaningful learning opportunities. Both teachers and program leaders reported that the program has not participated in professional development that is designed to build their capacity to address students' significant and diverse needs as the program continues to make IB the core foundation for teaching and learning across the program.

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

### ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The current organization structure enables program leaders to make the program's mission and vision a reality. Teachers leverage the co-instructional leadership model to get specific professional support and guidance to begin implementing the IB MYP in classrooms.

Leaders and teachers have the resources and materials needed to deliver instruction and provide hands-on activities for students. Teachers would like to receive more customized professional development addressing the practical implementation of the IB Programme in addition to deepening their understanding of the conceptual framework that undergirds the program.

Program leaders use a variety of programwide data to monitor the efficacy of programwide initiatives. As leaders continue to learn more about what is needed to make IB a success at Vertex, the team recognizes that it must be more intentional about how they recruit and retain talent. For example, leaders acknowledge that teachers who either have the experience and/or a strong interest in curriculum development and implementation are better positioned to develop effective curriculum. Leaders also understand that the program needs to build the systems, protocols, and a professional culture that will help teachers become more effective at making IB a reality in the program.

As the program realized its enrollment numbers, it plans to scale back its full chartered enrollment number to approximately 400 students by the end of the initial term. This decision reflects leaders' thoughtful process and demonstrates an understanding of what is needed to support students, especially those who are performing significantly below grade level, to successfully complete an IB program. Program leaders believe that the smaller enrollment numbers will enable them to provide the individualized support that students will need to fulfill the IB graduation requirements. Leaders also note that a smaller student enrollment will help to reduce Vertex's facility costs, which will make it possible for them to invest more money in the academic program.

### BOARD OVERSIGHT & GOVERNANCE

Public Prep Schools and Brilla Prep Schools boards are establishing systems and procedures to work effectively to achieve the Vertex program's Accountability Plan goals. Each of the two boards expressed various successes and mostly challenges in the collaborative effort to provide oversight to the program and the Vertex CMO. At the time of the visit, the boards and Vertex CMO were working through improvements to communication and specific deliverables to enhance oversight through a mediation process. One example cited across the education corporation boards was a need for more communication specifically about academic data reporting. Vertex produces a comprehensive data dashboard including financial, enrollment, operational, and academic data, but both education corporation boards cited not receiving adequate academic data.

Vertex

# Ax

APPENDICES

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**PUBLIC PREP CHARTER SCHOOL ACADEMIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES<sup>1</sup>**

CHAIR	TRUSTEES
Boykin Curry IV	Samuel Greene
	Tamara Zachery
VICE CHAIR	Paul Vermylen
Nicole Green	Juan Mejia
SECRETARY	Khairah Klein
Laura Weil	

**BRILLA COLLEGE PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOLS BOARD OF TRUSTEES<sup>1</sup>**

CHAIR	TRUSTEES
Eric Eckholdt	James Jones
TREASURER	Mary O’Grady
Charles Bozian	Stephanie Saroki de García
SECRETARY	Brother Brian Carty FSC
Richard Ramirez	Elena Sada
	Darla Romfo
	David Ingles

**VERTEX ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM BOARD OF TRUSTEES<sup>1</sup>**

CHAIR
David Sweeny
VICE CHAIR
Sarah Hawkins

**CHARTER LEADERS**

PRINCIPAL
Joyanet Mangual, Principal
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Ian Rowe, Executive Director

**CHARTER CHARACTERISTICS**

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT <sup>2</sup>	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	GRADES SERVED
2022-23	125	102	82%	9

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

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



## CHARTER SCHOOL VISIT HISTORY

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
2022-23	First Year Visit	April 19, 2023

## CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF REVIEW	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
April 19, 2023	Andrew Kile	Managing Director of School Evaluation
	Kathryn Connell-Espinosa	Interim Executive Director
	Aretha Miller	External Consultant

## CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

CHARTER TERM	ACCOUNTABILITY PERIOD	ANTICIPATED RENEWAL VISIT
Initial	First Year of a Four Year Accountability Period	Fall 2026



### VERSION 5.0, MAY 2012

### INTRODUCTION

The State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks<sup>1</sup> (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) serve two primary functions at renewal:

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

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

Precisely how the Institute uses the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, during both the renewal process and throughout the charter period, is explained in greater detail in the Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University of New York (the “SUNY Renewal Practices”), available on the Institute’s website at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/renewal/>. Responses to frequently asked questions about the Institute’s use of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks appear below:

- The Institute does not have a point system for recommending renewal. A school cannot simply tally up the number of positive benchmark statements in order to determine the Institute’s recommendation
  - Some benchmarks are weighed more heavily than others. In particular, the Institute gives the greatest weight to how well the school has met its academic Accountability Plan goals.

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



- Despite the fact that the Accountability Plan comprises only a single benchmark, a school’s performance on that benchmark is critical. In fact, it is so important that while the Institute may recommend non-renewal for fiscal and organizational failures (if sufficiently serious), excellence in these areas will not excuse poor academic performance.
- The Institute does not use every benchmark during every kind of renewal review, and how the benchmarks are used differs depending on a school’s circumstances. For example, the Qualitative Education Benchmarks (Benchmarks 1B-1F, 2C and 2D) are given far less weight in making a renewal decision on schools that the Institute has previously renewed. Similarly, less weight is accorded to these benchmarks during an initial renewal review where a school has consistently met its academic Accountability Plan goals.
  - The Institute also may not consider every indicator subsumed under a benchmark when determining if a school has met that benchmark, given the school’s stage of development or its previous track record.
- Aside from Benchmark 1A on academic Accountability Plan goals (which is singular in its importance), no school should fear that a failure to meet every element of every benchmark means that it is not in a position to make a case for renewal. To the contrary, the Institute has yet to see a school that performs perfectly in every respect. The Institute appreciates that the benchmarks set a very high standard collectively. While the Institute certainly hopes and expects that schools aim high, it is understood that a school’s reach will necessarily exceed its grasp in at least some aspects.

In this fifth edition of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, the Institute has made some revisions to the Qualitative Educational Benchmarks, namely those benchmarks used for ongoing school evaluation visits, to streamline the collection of evidence. For example, the Institute has incorporated Student Order and Discipline into Pedagogy, and Professional Development into Instructional Leadership. The Institute has rewritten some of the overarching benchmark statements to capture the most salient aspects of school effectiveness, organizational viability, legal compliance, and fiscal soundness. Some of the bulleted indicators within benchmarks have been recast or eliminated. Finally, the Institute has added some indicators to align the benchmarks with changes in the Charter Schools Act (e.g., provisions in meeting enrollment and retention targets when assigned and abiding by the General Municipal Law).

It is important that the entire school community understand the renewal process. All members of a school’s leadership team and board should carefully review both the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks and the SUNY Renewal Practices. Note that a renewal overview document for parents, teacher and community members is also available on the Institute’s website at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/renewal/>. Please do not hesitate to contact the Institute with any questions.



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

**1A – ACADEMIC ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOALS**

**OVER THE ACCOUNTABILITY PERIOD, THE SCHOOL HAS MET OR COME CLOSE TO MEETING ITS ACADEMIC ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOALS.**

*The Institute determines the extent to which the school has met the Accountability Plan goals in the following areas:*

- English language arts;
- mathematics;
- science;
- social studies (high school only);
- NCLB;
- high school graduation and college preparation (if applicable); and
- optional academic goals included by the school.

**1B – USE OF ASSESSMENT DATA**

**THE SCHOOL HAS AN ASSESSMENT SYSTEM THAT IMPROVES INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT LEARNING.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- the school regularly administers valid and reliable assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum and state performance standards;
- the school has a valid and reliable process for scoring and analyzing assessments;
- the school makes assessment data accessible to teachers, school leaders and board members;
- teachers use assessment results to meet students’ needs by adjusting classroom instruction, grouping students and/or identifying students for special intervention;
- school leaders use assessment results to evaluate teacher effectiveness and to develop professional development and coaching strategies; and
- the school regularly communicates to parents/guardians about their students’ progress and growth.

**1C – CURRICULUM**

**THE SCHOOL’S CURRICULUM SUPPORTS TEACHERS IN THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- the school has a curriculum framework with student performance expectations that provides a fixed, underlying structure, aligned to state standards and across grades;

- in addition to the framework, the school has supporting tools (i.e., curriculum maps or scope and sequence documents) that provide a bridge between the curriculum framework and lesson plans;
- teachers know what to teach and when to teach it based on these documents;
- the school has a process for selecting, developing and reviewing its curriculum documents and its resources for delivering the curriculum; and
- teachers plan purposeful and focused lessons.

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## **1D – PEDAGOGY**

### **HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION IS EVIDENT THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- teachers deliver purposeful lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school’s curriculum;
- teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding;
- teachers include opportunities in their lessons to challenge students with questions and activities that develop depth of understanding and higher-order thinking and problem solving skills;
- teachers maximize learning time (e.g., appropriate pacing, on-task student behavior, clear lesson focus and clear directions to students); transitions are efficient; and
- teachers have effective classroom management techniques and routines that create a consistent focus on academic achievement.

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## **1E – INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP**

### **THE SCHOOL HAS STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- the school’s leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance (in content knowledge and pedagogical skills) and in which teachers believe that all students can succeed;
- the instructional leadership is adequate to support the development of the teaching staff;
- instructional leaders provide sustained, systemic and effective coaching and supervision that improves teachers’ instructional effectiveness;
- instructional leaders provide opportunities and guidance for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction within and across grade levels;
- instructional leaders implement a comprehensive professional development program that develops the competencies and skills of all teachers;
- professional development activities are interrelated with classroom practice;
- instructional leaders regularly conduct teacher evaluations with clear criteria that accurately identify teachers’ strengths and weaknesses; and
- instructional leaders hold teachers accountable for quality instruction and student achievement.



## 1F – AT-RISK STUDENTS

### THE SCHOOL MEETS THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS.

*The following elements are generally present:*

- the school uses clear procedures for identifying at-risk students including students with disabilities, English language learners and those struggling academically;
  - the school has adequate intervention programs to meet the needs of at-risk students;
  - general education teachers, as well as specialists, utilize effective strategies to support students within the general education program;
  - the school adequately monitors the progress and success of at-risk students;
  - teachers are aware of their students' progress toward meeting IEP goals, achieving English proficiency or school-based goals for struggling students;
  - the school provides adequate training and professional development to identify at-risk students and to help teachers meet students' needs; and
  - the school provides opportunities for coordination between classroom teachers and at-risk program staff including the school nurse, if applicable.
-



**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 ACHIEVABLE?**

**4A – PLANS FOR THE SCHOOL'S STRUCTURE**

**KEY STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF THE SCHOOL, AS DEFINED IN THE EXHIBITS OF THE APPLICATION FOR CHARTER RENEWAL, ARE REASONABLE, FEASIBLE AND ACHIEVABLE.**

*Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:*

- the school is likely to fulfill its mission in the next charter period;
- the school has an enrollment plan that can support the school program;
- the school calendar and daily schedules clearly provide sufficient instructional time to meet all legal requirements, allow the school to meet its proposed Accountability Plan goals and abide by its proposed budget;
- key design elements are consistent with the mission statement and are feasible given the school's budget and staffing;
- a curriculum framework for added grades aligns with the state's performance standards; and
- plans in the other required Exhibits indicate that the school's structure is likely to support the educational program.

**4B – PLANS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

**THE SCHOOL'S PLANS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM ALLOW IT TO MEET ITS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOALS.**

*Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:*

- for those grades served during the last charter period, the school has plans for sustaining and (where possible) improving upon the student outcomes it has compiled during the last charter period including any adjustments or additions to the school's educational program;
- for a school that is seeking to add grades, the school is likely to meet its Accountability Plan goals and the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks at the new grade levels; and
- where the school will provide secondary school instruction, it has presented a set of requirements for graduation that students are likely to meet and that are consistent with the graduation standards set by the Board of Regents.



## **4C – PLANS FOR BOARD OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNANCE**

### **THE SCHOOL PROVIDES A REASONABLE, FEASIBLE AND ACHIEVABLE PLAN FOR BOARD OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNANCE.**

*Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:*

- school trustees are likely to possess a range of experience, skills, and abilities sufficient to oversee the academic, organizational and fiscal performance of the school;
- plans by the school board to orient new trustees to their roles and responsibilities, and, if appropriate, to participate in ongoing board training are likely to sustain the board's ability to carry out its responsibilities;
- if the school plans to change an association with a partner or management organization in the term of a future charter, it has provided a clear rationale for the disassociation and an outline indicating how it will manage the functions previously associated with that partnering organization; and
- if the school is either moving from self-management to a management structure or vice-versa, or is changing its charter management organization/educational service provider, its plans indicate that it will be managed in an effective, sound and viable manner including appropriate oversight of the academic and fiscal performance of the school or the management organization.

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## **4D – FISCAL & FACILITY PLANS**

### **THE SCHOOL PROVIDES A REASONABLE, FEASIBLE AND ACHIEVABLE FISCAL PLAN INCLUDING PLANS FOR AN ADEQUATE FACILITY.**

*Based on the elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:*

- the school's budgets adequately support staffing, enrollment and facility projections;
- fiscal plans are based on the sound use of financial resources to support academic program needs;
- fiscal plans are clear, accurate, complete and based on reasonable assumptions;
- information on enrollment demand provides clear evidence for the reasonableness of projected enrollment; and
- facility plans are likely to meet educational program needs.

