



Renewal Recommendation Report Explore Charter School

Report Date: January 14, 2016

Visit Date: October 26-27, 2015

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INTRODUCTION AND REPORT FORMAT

INTRODUCTION

This report is the primary means by which the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) transmits to the State University of New York Board of Trustees (the “SUNY Trustees”) its findings and recommendations regarding an education corporation’s Application for Charter Renewal, and more broadly, details the merits of an education corporation’s case for renewal. The Institute has created and issued this report pursuant to the *Policies for the Renewal of Not-For-Profit Charter School Education Corporations and Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York* (the “SUNY Renewal Policies”) (revised September 4, 2013 and available at: www.newyorkcharters.org/wp-content/uploads/SUNY-Renewal-Policies.pdf).

REPORT FORMAT

The Institute makes all renewal recommendations based on a school’s Application for Charter Renewal, evaluation visits conducted and information gathered during the charter term and a renewal evaluation visit conducted near the end of the current charter term. Additionally, the Institute has reviewed the strength and fiscal health of the not-for-profit education corporation with the authority to operate the school. Most importantly, the Institute analyzes the school’s record of academic performance and the extent to which it has met its academic Accountability Plan goals. This renewal recommendation report compiles the evidence below using the *State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks* (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”),¹ which specify in detail what a successful school should be able to demonstrate at the time of the renewal review. The Institute uses the four interconnected renewal questions below for framing benchmark statements to determine if a school has made an adequate case for renewal.

1. Is the school an academic success?
2. Is the school an effective, viable organization?
3. Is the school fiscally sound?
4. If the SUNY Trustees renew the education corporation’s authority to operate the school, are its plans for the school reasonable, feasible and achievable?

This report contains Appendices that provide additional statistical and organizationally related information including a largely statistical school overview, copies of any school district comments on the Application for Charter Renewal, the SUNY Fiscal Dashboard information for the school, and, if applicable, its education corporation, additional information about the education corporation and its schools, and additional evidence on student achievement of those schools.

¹ Version 5.0, May 2012, available at: www.newyorkcharters.org/wp-content/uploads/SUNY-Renewal-Benchmarks.pdf.

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Additional information about the SUNY renewal process and an overview of the requirements for renewal under the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (as amended, the “Act”) are available on the Institute’s website at: www.newyorkcharters.org/operate/existing-schools/renewal/.

RENEWAL RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION: **SHORT-TERM RENEWAL**

The Institute recommends that the SUNY Trustees approve the Application for Charter Renewal of Explore Charter School and renew Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn’s authority to operate the school for a period of three years with authority to provide instruction to students in Kindergarten through 8th grade in such configuration as set forth in its Application for Charter Renewal, with a projected total enrollment of 540 students.

To earn an Initial Short-Term Renewal², a school must either:

- (a) have compiled a mixed or limited record of educational achievement in meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals, but have in place and in operation at the time of the renewal inspection visit (i) an academic program of sufficient strength and effectiveness, as assessed using the Qualitative Education Benchmarks,³ which will likely result in the school’s being able to meet or come close to meeting those goals with the additional time that renewal would permit, and (ii) a governing board and organizational structures both in the charter school and its education corporation that have demonstrated the capacity to meet the school’s academic Accountability Plan goals and to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound fashion; or
- (b) have compiled an overall record of meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals but, at the time of the renewal inspection visit, has in place an educational program that, as assessed using the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, is inadequate in multiple and material respects.⁴

REQUIRED FINDINGS

In addition to making a recommendation based on a determination of whether the school has met the SUNY Trustees’ specific renewal criteria, the Institute makes the following findings required by the Act:

² This is Explore’s first renewal as a SUNY authorized school, therefore, the SUNY Trustees will consider the school’s renewal pursuant to the SUNY Renewal Policies on initial renewal outcomes. See SUNY Renewal Policies (pp. 12-13).

³ The Qualitative Education Benchmarks are a subset of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks.

⁴ SUNY Renewal Policies (pp. 12-13).

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- the school, as described in the Application for Charter Renewal meets the requirements of the Act and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations;
- the education corporation can demonstrate the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner in the next charter term; and,
- given the programs it will offer, its structure and its purpose, approving the school to operate for another three years is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act.⁵

As required by Education Law § 2851(4)(e), a school must include in its renewal application information regarding the efforts it has, and will, put in place to meet or exceed SUNY's enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, English language learners ("ELLs"), and students who are eligible applicants for the federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch ("FRPL") program. SUNY⁶ and the New York State Board of Regents (the "Board of Regents") finalized the methodology for setting targets in October 2012, and the Institute communicated specific targets for each school, where applicable, in July 2013. Since that time, new schools receive targets during their first year of operation.

Explore Charter School's ("Explore's") overall recruitment strategy focuses on families in the immediate neighborhood of the school (school's zip code and surrounding areas) in order to best serve the school's geographic community. Given the demographic of the school's neighborhood, Explore naturally recruits a large portion of students who qualify for FRPL (over 75% of the school's current student population qualifies for FRPL).

In an effort to attract and enroll more ELLs, Explore Charter School created a set-aside lottery preference for ELLs. The set-aside preference seeks to fill at least nine of the available 60 Kindergarten seats (15%) with ELLs, in order to match or exceed the school district's ELL population (currently about 9%).

Although Explore is not currently accountable for targets, the school used the following strategies to enroll and retain students and will continue to use these strategies to meet future targets.

- **Family Information Sessions.** Information sessions were offered at different days and times during the week to increase availability to potential families and included specific information about services for students with disabilities. Fliers and informational materials were available in English and Spanish, and applications were available in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole.
- **Direct Mailing Campaign.** In partnership with Vanguard Direct, Explore engaged in a direct mailing campaign to encourage Kindergarten enrollment by informing families in the

⁵ See New York Education Law § 2852(2).

⁶ SUNY Trustees' Charter Schools Committee resolution dated October 2, 2012.

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immediate community about Explore as a choice for their student and providing them with information about the school and an application.

- **Community Organizations, Daycare and Pre-Kindergarten Program Outreach.** During the Kindergarten recruitment season, Explore staff members researched and contacted community organizations, daycare and pre-Kindergarten programs in the neighborhood to inform program staff about the school enrollment process, in some cases visiting such programs and presenting information to families. In particular, one head-start program with a very high population of non-English speaking families allowed Explore staff members to host an information session in English and Spanish for families, which yielded many ELL applications.
- **Parent Referral Campaign.** Explore leveraged its current families to spread the word to other families about the school enrollment process. In particular, the school's leadership reached out to families of ELL students and asked for help engaging other ELL families in the enrollment process.
- **Website, Social Media, and Language Accessibility.** Explore leveraged its website and Facebook page to spread the word about its recruitment efforts. The website offered information about family information sessions, the enrollment process, services provided to students with disabilities, and its set-aside lottery preference for ELLs. Applications were available online in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole; and informational fliers and mailings were available in English and Spanish.
- **Retaining Students with Disabilities.** Explore provides robust support services for students who have a disability or require additional academic support. The school employs seven learning specialists, a social worker and a school counselor. These staff members provide services and support for students who need it, as well as maintain communication with families to apprise them of student progress and how families can work with students at home.

Please refer to Appendix A for more details about the school's future targets including a comparison of how it would have performed if it currently had targets.

CONSIDERATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMENTS

In accordance with the Act, the Institute notified the district in which the charter school is located regarding the school's Application for Charter Renewal. The full text of any written comments received appears in Appendix C, which also includes a summary of any public comments. As of the date of this report, the Institute has received no district comments in response.

Explore Charter School

BACKGROUND

Explore's received its original charter on June 12, 2001 and the school opened its doors in the fall of 2002. Since then, Explore's charter has been renewed twice; the school's original authorizer approved an initial full term renewal in 2006 and renewed the school again for a subsequent full term in 2011. The SUNY Trustees granted approval for Explore to merge into Explore Excel Charter School, a SUNY-authorized education corporation, effective July 1, 2015. As previously stated, this is Explore's first renewal as a SUNY authorized charter school and, as such, the SUNY Trustees will consider the school's renewal pursuant to the SUNY Renewal Policies on initial renewal outcomes.

The mission of Explore is:

To provide students with the academic skills and critical-thinking abilities they need to succeed in a college-preparatory high school.

Explore co-locates with Parkside Preparatory Academy, a middle school, in a New York City Department of Education ("NYCDOE") building at 655 Parkside Ave, Brooklyn in Community School District ("CSD") 17. In the current school year, Explore serves 517 students in Kindergarten through 8th grade.

Explore is one of six schools within a merged education corporation. The merger of two schools originally authorized by the New York City Schools Chancellor ("NYC Chancellor") and schools authorized by the SUNY Trustees, which was approved by SUNY on June 4, 2014 and effective July 1, 2015, resulted in the formation of one education corporation with authority to operate six schools. Explore and Explore Empower Charter School, both originally authorized by the NYC Chancellor, merged into the SUNY authorized Explore Excel Charter School as did Explore Exceed Charter School and two other charter schools authorized by SUNY that are not yet opened. Those schools are scheduled to open in fall 2018 and 2019 subject to approval of additional planning years by the Charter Schools Committee. At that time, Explore Excel Charter School was renamed Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn (the "education corporation"). The Act allows authorizers to grant charter school education corporations the authority to operate more than one school under Education Law § 2853(1)(b-1).

All schools within the education corporation, including Explore, operate under the management of Explore Schools, Inc. ("Explore Schools" or the "network"), a New York not-for-profit charter management organization based in New York City. The network by contract provides the schools with academic, operational and back-office assistance. Schools utilize the network's curriculum and assessment materials, all purchased or designed by network curriculum teams. The network is also responsible for managing and evaluating the performance of each school and school leader.

Appendices E and F contain analyses of network schools including information about co-location, charter terms, enrollment and grades served, as well as academic and financial performance.

SCHOOL BACKGROUND AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Explore comes to its first SUNY renewal having generated all of its academic data under the oversight of the NYC Chancellor. Under the NYC Chancellor, the school posted mixed academic results. The school's tested 3rd through 8th graders performed higher than CSD 17 in English language arts ("ELA") every year except 2014-15 although it performed below SUNY's standard on other required measures under the ELA goal. In contrast, Explore's mathematics results are strong. During 2012-13 and 2013-14, Explore outperformed CSD 17 and the statewide average proficiency rate on the state's 3rd through 8th grade mathematics tests.

In response to ELA performance, Explore implemented a new curriculum during the 2015-16 school year that better supports students' acquisition of necessary reading and comprehension skills and requires more rigorous writing than in the past. The school also adjusted its leadership structure. Two co-principals now divide leadership responsibilities with one focusing on curriculum and instruction and the other on school operations. The education corporation board of trustees (the "board") is keenly aware of Explore's successes and the areas where it needs to improve. The board has set clear expectations for the network with regard to Explore's academic improvements and has a plan in place to monitor its progress.

Based on the Institute's review of the school's performance as posted over the past five years, a review of the Application for Charter Renewal submitted by the school, a review of academic, organizational, governance and financial documentation as well as a visit to the school, the Institute finds that the program as implemented is sufficiently strong and effective such that, given additional time, the school will meet or come close to meeting its Accountability Plan goals. For these reasons, the Institute recommends that the SUNY Trustees grant Explore an Initial Short-Term Renewal.

IS THE SCHOOL AN ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

Explore is making progress toward strengthening its academic program as its past performance came close to meeting the standard set forth under SUNY's ELA Accountability Plan goal and exceeded the standard set forth under SUNY's mathematics goal. The board identified specific strategies to increase Explore's academic achievement during the 2015-16 school year. The school is likely to become successful through consistent monitoring of the impact of these interventions and with effective support from the network.

Because of its merger into a SUNY authorized education corporation effective July 1, 2015, the school only established a SUNY Accountability Plan that defines its required ELA, mathematics, science, and No Child Left Behind Act ("NCLB") goals late in its charter term. It is the Institute's practice to work with a charter school to establish a new Accountability Plan with input from the school during the first year of operation following renewal.

For each goal in the Accountability Plan, specific outcome measures define the level of performance necessary to meet that goal. The Institute examines results for five required Accountability Plan measures to determine ELA and mathematics goal attainment. Because the Act requires charters be held "accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results"⁷ and states the educational programs at a charter school must "meet or exceed the student performance standards adopted by the board of regents"⁸ for other public schools, SUNY's required accountability measures rest on performance as measured by state wide assessments. Historically, SUNY's required measures include measures that present schools':

- absolute performance, i.e., what percentage of students score at a certain proficiency on state exams?;
- comparative performance, i.e., how did the school do as compared to schools in the district and schools that serve similar populations of economically disadvantaged students?; and,
- growth performance, i.e., how much did the school grow student performance as compared to the growth of similarly situated students?

The Institute analyzes every measure included in the school's Accountability Plan to determine its level of academic success including the extent to which the school has established and maintained a record of high performance throughout the charter term. Since 2009, the Institute has examined but consistently de-emphasized the two absolute measures under each goal in elementary and middle schools' Accountability Plans because of changes to the state's assessment system. The analysis of elementary and middle school performance continues to focus primarily on the two comparative measures and the growth measure while also considering the two required absolute measures and any additional evidence the school presents using additional measures identified in its Accountability Plan. The Institute identifies the required measures (absolute proficiency,

⁷ Education Law § 2850(2)(f).

⁸ Education Law § 2854(1)(d).

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absolute Annual Measurable Objective attainment,⁹ comparison to local district, comparison to demographically similar schools, and student growth) in the Performance Summaries appearing in Appendix B.

SUNY Accountability Plans also include science and NCLB goals. Please note that for schools located in New York City, the Institute uses the CSD as the local school district.

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1A:

Has the school met or come close to meeting its Academic Accountability Plan Goals?

The school's pattern of student achievement as assessed by the measures required of every SUNY authorized charter school demonstrate a sufficient record of performance in ELA and strong performance in mathematics over the past five years.

The Institute analyzes all measures under the school's ELA and mathematics goals while emphasizing the school's comparative performance and growth to determine goal attainment. The Institute calculates a comparative effect size to measure the performance of Explore relative to all public schools statewide that serve the same grade levels and that enroll students who are similarly economically disadvantaged. It is important to note that this measure is a comparison measure and therefore any changes in New York's assessment system do not compromise its validity or reliability. Further, the school's performance on the measure is not relative to the test, but relative to the strength of Explore's demonstrated student learning compared to other schools' demonstrated student learning.

The Institute uses the state's growth percentile analysis as a measure of Explore's comparative year-to-year growth in student performance on the state's ELA and mathematics exams. The measure compares a school's growth in assessment scores to the growth in assessment scores of the subset of students throughout the state who performed identically on previous years' assessments. According to this measure, median growth statewide is at the 50th percentile. This means that to signal the school's ability to help students make one year's worth of growth in one year's time the expected percentile performance is 50. To signal a school is increasing students' performance above the peers of its students (in terms of students state-wide who scored previously at the same level), the school must post a percentile performance that exceeds 50. A percentile performance below 50 indicates that students are losing ground relative to their peers who scored similarly during prior years.

Based on an analysis of Explore's performance on SUNY's required ELA measures, the school outperformed the district during four of the past five years but fell short of SUNY's required benchmarks on other measures. During 2012-13 and 2013-14, after the state's transition to a new testing system, the school slightly outpaced the district's percentage of students scoring at or above proficiency on the state's ELA exam. During 2014-15, the district bested the school's ELA performance by four percentage points. The school performed higher than expected to a small degree in ELA during 2012-13 and 2013-14 in comparison to schools serving similar concentrations

⁹ The state did not calculate an AMO for 2012-13. As such, the Institute will only report on the 2013-14 and 2014-15 results.

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of economically disadvantaged students but fell to performing lower than expected during 2014-15. The school's mean student score growth in ELA exceeded the state median only once during the past five years in 2011-12. Given this record of performance, SUNY would deem that the school met its ELA goal in 2011-12 and came close to meeting its goals during 2010-11, 2012-13 and 2013-14.

Explore's performance against SUNY's required mathematics measures is generally strong. From 2010-11 through 2013-14, Explore posted performance that exceeded the targets for SUNY's required comparative and growth measures. Although the school only exceeded SUNY's target for absolute performance in 2011-12, its percentage of student proficient on the state's mathematics exam exceeded the statewide average during each of those years. In 2014-15, Explore's mathematics performance declined. Although the school continued to outperform the district by 17 percentage points, its comparative effect size and mean growth percentile fell below SUNY's required targets. Although SUNY would deem Explore to have met the standard for meeting its mathematics goal during every year prior to 2014-15, Explore would not have met its goal in mathematics during 2014-15.

Explore's science performance follows a pattern similar to that of ELA and mathematics. The school's performance from 2010-11 to 2012-13 was strong as it outperformed the district and exceeded the Institute's performance benchmark of 75 percent proficiency. The school continued to outperform the district in 2013-14, although it posted scores narrowly missing the absolute target. During 2014-15, however, the school's science performance declined further below the absolute benchmark and below that of the district.

Explore is in good standing with the state's NCLB accountability system: it has not been identified as a focus school.

Although not tied to separate goals under the school's formal Accountability Plan, academic outcome data about the school's students receiving special education services and ELLs are presented below for informational purposes.

		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Enrollment (N) Receiving Mandated Academic Services		(76)	(81)	(78)
Results	Tested on State Exams (N)	(58)	(57)	(50)
	School Percent Proficient on ELA Exam	6.9	1.8	0
	Percent Proficient Statewide	5.0	5.2	5.8

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		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
ELL Enrollment (N)		(16)	(22)	(32)
Results	Tested on NYSESLAT ¹⁰ Exam (N)	(14)	(15)	(20)
	School Percent 'Commanding' or Making Progress ¹¹ on NYSESLAT	35.7	20.0	15.0

¹⁰ New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test, a standardized state exam.

¹¹ Defined as moving up at least one level of proficiency. As of 2014-15, student scores can fall into five categories/proficiency levels: Entering (formerly Beginning); Emerging (formerly Low Intermediate); Transitioning (formerly Intermediate); Expanding (formerly Advanced); and, Commanding (formerly Proficient).

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DESCRIPTION

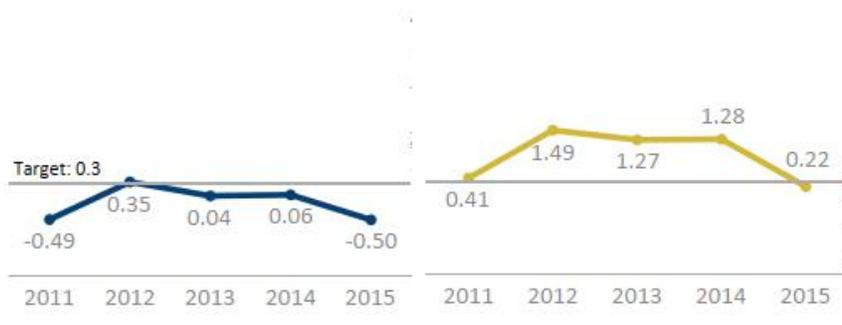
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

MATHEMATICS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

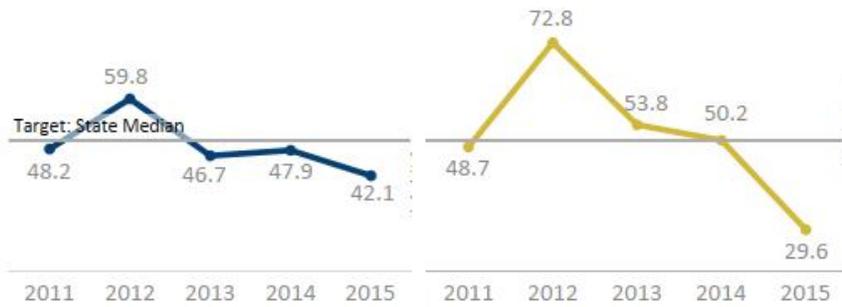
Comparative Measure: District Comparison. Each year, the percentage of students at Explore in at least their second year performing at or above proficiency in **ELA** and **mathematics** will be greater than that of students in the same tested grades in **CSD 17**.



Comparative Measure: Effect Size. Each year, Explore will exceed its predicted level of performance by an Effect Size of 0.3 or above in **ELA** and **mathematics** according to a regression analysis controlling for economically disadvantaged students among all public schools in New York State.



Comparative Growth Measure: Mean Growth Percentile. Each year, Explore's unadjusted mean growth percentile for all students in grades 4-8 will be above the state's unadjusted median growth percentile in **ELA** and **mathematics**.



SCIENCE

Science: Comparative Measure. Each year, the percentage of students at Explore in at least their second year performing at or above proficiency in **science** will exceed that of students in the same tested grades in the district.



The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,¹² 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 describe the elements an effective school must have in place at the time of renewal.¹³

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1B:

Does the school have an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning?

Explore has an assessment system that generates actionable data for teachers and leaders, and is developing systems to provide teachers the opportunity to use student outcomes to improve instruction. However, Explore has yet to solidify a valid and reliable process for scoring assessments.

- Explore regularly administers a variety of assessments that align to the school’s curriculum and state standards. In literacy, the school administers the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessments (“F&P”), on-demand writing assessments, Core Knowledge Language Arts Assessments, and Power Reading unit assessments the network develops. In mathematics, the network provides common unit assessments and interim assessments at the conclusion of each quarter that the school administers. Teachers supplement these common assessments with exit tickets, student conferences, and other informal assessments. The breadth of these assessments generates sufficient data for teachers to monitor student progress and adjust instruction to meet student needs as necessary.
- At the time of the renewal visit, Explore had yet to solidify a valid and reliable process for evaluating students on internal assessments. For most written response questions, teachers use a rubric from the respective commercial curricula or the network. The school is working to ensure that teachers apply rubrics consistently across students, that teachers evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of student work score consistently and apply consistent final scores. During some professional development, teachers do have access to sample graded writing but leaders must strengthen their follow up to ensure student work is consistently scored.
- The school has a system to effectively analyze assessment results, share results with teachers, and identify necessary instructional changes. Following each quarter, teachers attend “data days” as a network where they analyze F&P data to determine student placement in the school’s Leveled Literacy Intervention (“LLI”) and guided reading groups. Outside of this strategic grouping based on student need, the school does not have other formal procedures for using literacy data systematically to plan instruction. In contrast, teams of mathematics teachers use network protocols during “data days” to analyze interim assessment data and create formal action plans. Teachers collectively develop a

¹² An extensive body of research identifying and confirming the correlates of effective schools exists dating back four decades. Selected sources include: www.mes.org/correlates.html;

scholar.harvard.edu/files/fryer/files/dobbie_fryer_revision_final.pdf; and, gao.gov/assets/80/77488.pdf.

¹³ Additional details regarding the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, including greater specificity as to what the Institute looks for at each school that may demonstrate attainment of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, is available at: www.newyorkcharters.org/suny-renewal-benchmarks/.

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calendar of modifications to the curriculum that includes full re-teaching, quick-fixes, or targeted interventions based on standards or questions that address student misunderstandings.

- Mathematics teachers develop action plans using assessment analyses and instructional leaders are establishing systems to evaluate whether teachers are implementing the plans they create during “data days.” Teachers have direct access to student performance information through the school’s data management system, but do not regularly view student assessment results during the course of the academic term. Some teachers report using data from in class quizzes and exit tickets (short assessments to gauge student learning at the end of a lesson) to develop targeted interventions and adjust grouping strategies; however, teachers support each other only informally on how to best use this specific information to adjust their instruction effectively in the absence of professional development or guidance from the school’s leadership.
- Instructional leaders use observations and student performance data to develop specific teacher development goals that focus on growth. The school’s next step is to expand that focus to include consistent school-wide expectations for performance across all classrooms. In addition, school leaders’ decisions on what professional development supports are needed should expand in a future charter term to include professional development targeted at strengthening school culture in combination with increased but also are expanding to use the progress teachers and the school are making in setting a culture conducive to high quality learning in combination with actual analysis of what students know and are able to do.
- In alignment with the school-wide priority of parent involvement, Explore provides parents with information on student progress and growth. During parent teacher conferences, the school distributes documents informing parents about their child’s reading level, class grades, and other test scores. The school sends report cards to parents at the end of each of its five academic terms and sends progress reports at the middle of each term. At the time of the renewal visit, teachers had begun conducting training sessions during parent conference nights on how parents can access and interpret data in the school’s online data management system.

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1C:

Does the school’s curriculum support teachers in their instructional planning?

In response to academic performance the school identified as not in alignment with its mission, Explore strengthened its ELA curriculum and supporting documents that teachers use for instructional planning. The network and school provide substantial professional development to assist teachers in delivering the new curriculum effectively.

- In response to low student performance and high rates of teacher attrition, the school began utilizing a combination of commercial and network-developed curricula aligned to the New York State performance standards this school year. The school uses Core Knowledge, Expeditionary Learning, Power Reading, and the Teacher’s College writing program as the basis of its literacy curricular framework. Data from these curricula indicate, when implemented using strong instructional practices, low income students

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increase academic performance. In mathematics, Explore mainly uses TERC Investigations in conjunction with curriculum materials developed by teachers across the network during previous years.

- Network content area specialists, in collaboration with experienced teachers from Explore, supplement and modify the anchor curricula to meet the needs of students and the teaching staff. The network provides pacing guides, scope and sequence documents, unit plans, lesson outlines, and other scaffolding documents for teachers to use when planning instruction. Teachers have access to shared drives that contain supporting materials for all commercial and supplemental curricula. Based on these documents, teachers know what to teach and when to teach it.
- The network provides three weeks of summer pre-service professional development to teachers that features a focus on improving their capacity to deliver high quality instruction. During each academic term, teachers attend network trainings where they develop content knowledge for effectively delivering specific pieces of the curriculum. The school also delivers regular professional development where teachers practice strategies and tools to execute the curriculum successfully.
- Explore instructional leaders have opportunities to support teachers in making curricular modifications through weekly coaching sessions and in professional learning communities (“PLCs”). However, given the resources Explore devotes to behavior management and culture, teachers have not yet had adequate PLC or coaching time with a specific focus on curricular implementation. Further, the school does not have a formal procedure for evaluating teachers’ lesson plans. Instructional leaders do provide feedback on lesson plans and curricular modifications at teachers’ request or if leaders recognize lesson planning as an area of weakness for a specific teacher.

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1D:

Is high quality instruction evident throughout the school?

Adequate instruction is evident in most Explore classrooms with some pockets of high quality pedagogical practice. As shown in the chart below, during the renewal visit, Institute team members conducted 48 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all renewal visits.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION: NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS

		GRADE								Total
		K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
CONTENT AREA	ELA	1	1	4			2	3	3	14
	Math			2		2	3	3	2	12
	Writing		1		3	3	1	2		10
	Science				1	2	1		1	5
	Soc Stu						2	3		5
	Specials								2	2
	Total	1	2	6	4	7	9	11	8	48

- Teachers generally deliver purposeful lessons with clear objectives that align to the school's curriculum (37 of 48 classrooms observed). Most teachers communicate learning objectives to students for each lesson, with some teachers requiring students to record lesson objectives in their notebooks or explain lesson objectives in their own words. Students build on previous skills and knowledge in their lessons, evidenced through the use of opening activities and specific note-taking strategies across multiple lessons in order to activate and engage prior knowledge. Most co-teachers have clear roles within classrooms and leverage these roles to support student learning.
- Less than half of Explore's teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding (21 of 48 classrooms observed). While teachers often perform some type of check for understanding during lessons, most checks are factual or cursory in nature; few checks for understanding require interpretation or conceptual understanding. Some teachers check for understanding only with individual students, missing key opportunities to check for understanding across the entire class. Teachers routinely focus on completing activities without effectively assessing whether or not the students are making sufficient progress toward the lesson's learning objectives. The few teachers who are highly effective at monitoring and responding to student understanding consistently circulate throughout the classroom with purpose, use multiple questioning techniques across the entire class of students, and adjust instruction in the moment as appropriate to support student mastery of the material. For instance, after circulating and conferencing with students to monitor written work, a mathematics teacher identified a common misconception and reviewed a few problems to address student misunderstandings.
- Few teachers challenge students with opportunities to develop depth of understanding, higher-order thinking and problem solving skills (12 of 48 classrooms observed). While many lessons include opportunities for higher-order thinking skills, interpretation, and application of course content, most teachers do not take advantage of these opportunities, focusing exclusively on factual recall and rote skills. Teachers often reduce the level of rigor or answer the question themselves when students show misunderstandings. Similarly, few teachers challenge their students to defend or elaborate on their answers. Observed teachers also provide few meaningful opportunities for students to interact with

their peers, delivering mostly teacher-focused lessons that often inhibit the investigation of complex and open-ended problems.

- Slightly more than half of teachers establish and maintain a classroom environment with a consistent focus on academic achievement (26 of 48 classrooms observed). Most lessons create a focus primarily on task completion and secondarily on academic success. Despite communicating a sense of urgency for learning, many teachers are unable to redirect student misbehavior effectively despite the significant number of school-wide norms. Teachers with strong behavior management skills regularly maintain appropriate pacing, minimize transition times during lessons, and use materials effectively.

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1E:

Does the school have strong instructional leadership?

Explore is developing strong instructional leadership. The school's newly appointed co-principals are clear about instructional priorities, which align with those of the network. The school's co-principals employ a thoughtful approach to teacher coaching and differentiate teacher support based on instructional ability. Despite this approach, teachers are not aware of their progress toward meeting professional development goals and report their evaluations do not include an analysis of how student achievement is growing or clear indications of progress toward their individual teacher improvement goals.

- Explore's instructional leadership sets high expectations for teacher performance and student success. For instance, leaders aim for 80 percent of students performing on or above grade level as measured by the F & P reading assessment.
- The instructional leadership is adequate to support teachers in meeting school-wide benchmarks. Unlike previous years in the charter term, Explore's co-principals, two academic deans, and student services coordinator now coach and develop teachers' abilities to consistently deliver strong instruction. The school no longer has a math coordinator position and the literacy coordinator position was vacant at the time of the renewal visit. In response to these changes, the school now uses a coaching system that differentiates supports for more struggling teachers.
- Explore's academic deans collaborate with teachers to set individual professional development goals that aim to improve teacher instructional practice throughout the year. For example, during the first term of the school year, most teachers' goals centered on effectively managing behavior in classrooms. Leaders' analysis of assessment results led them to identify literacy instruction as the priority for teacher development during the second term.
- As part of the coaching system, leaders visit classrooms between one and four times a week, depending on teacher experience and need. Coaches compile notes about observations in a tracker that they use to monitor teacher practice over time. After observations, instructional leaders focus their feedback on established teacher goals and general pedagogical practice.
- The school provides adequate time for teachers to collaborate and plan. Teachers meet three times a week in PLCs to co-plan for different content areas. They receive feedback

on lessons and instructional strategies from instructional leaders and colleagues and practice effective ways to deliver lesson content. Explore provides teachers additional common planning time after school to debrief lessons and to adjust instruction for the following day.

- The network provides professional development that aligns with the school's instructional priorities. The school engages teachers in weekly PLCs and provides the opportunity for teachers to practice and receive feedback on instructional techniques. The network also provides some professional development concerning network-wide initiatives including the implementation of new curricula across network schools. Teachers feel that leaders support them because the content of sessions is germane to their teaching. Teachers indicate that the network can improve the quality of professional development sessions by differentiating content based on teacher experience level.
- Instructional leaders conduct evaluations of teacher performance annually; however, some teachers report being unaware of evaluation criteria and do not know which instructional leader is responsible for conducting their evaluation. Teacher evaluations contain language about the school's quality control inputs but no analysis of student outcomes or teacher performance with regard to meeting performance goals.

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1F:

Does the school meet the educational needs of at-risk students?

The school meets the educational needs of some of its at-risk students. At the time of the renewal visit, the school's child study team ("CST") and learning specialists had begun to provide services for students with disabilities and meet with general education teachers to review the contents of students' mandated Individualized Education Programs ("IEPs"). Following the renewal visit, wherein the Institute indicated the school did not have in place a wholly compliant ELL program, Explore provided clear plans for implementing a compliant ELL program. The Institute will monitor its implementation going forward.

- The school has yet to precisely define procedures for identifying at-risk students. The school does not have specific thresholds or defined attributes for identifying students struggling academically or students with disabilities and teachers note they do not know, nor did the school provide training on, how to identify these students. At the time of the renewal visit, the CST had met and developed supports for struggling students in 6th through 8th grade but had yet to meet about Kindergarten through 5th grade students. The CST process includes the student's teachers, the learning specialist, and the director of student support services who create learning goals for students and create an action plan to implement those strategies. Despite gaps in identification procedures, teachers are aware of students' IEP goals if they are already identified as having a learning disability. The director of support services and learning specialists meet with teachers at the beginning of the year to discuss their students' IEPs.
- In its 8th week of instruction, the school was just beginning to institute a CST process to address student academic needs. During the first term of the 2015-16 school year, no students received academic support through the CST (though nine students received CST

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

support during the term for behavioral issues). Although learning specialists provided ad hoc academic support to some students, at the time of the visit, no students were receiving support from learning specialists in 5th, 6th and 8th grades for mathematics, and only one student was receiving support from a learning specialist in 7th grade mathematics.

- The school has taken some steps to monitor the efficacy of CST interventions through observations of student behavior changes in classrooms and, where appropriate, through scores on classroom tests and other assessments. Teachers report the CST did not appropriately monitor the progress of at-risk students during the 2014-15 school year, in addition to teachers not being able to implement some of the interventions the CST developed that year.
- The school does not provide adequate training and professional development to identify at-risk students and to help teachers meet students' needs. Though there was a single training provided in 2014-15 specific to meeting the needs of at-risk students, at the time of the visit there had been no trainings provided on the CST process and how to identify students for the CST. The school does provide opportunities for coordination between classroom teachers and at-risk program staff, with learning specialists attending the weekly PLC meetings and participating as members of grade level teams.
- The school uses the New York State Identification Test for ELLs ("NYSITELL") to identify ELLs. The school does not yet have strong intervention programs to meet the needs of its 20 ELLs, with the learning specialist serving 43% of the school's ELLs for general academic interventions not specific to their language acquisition needs. As noted earlier, after a discussion regarding deficiencies in the school's ELL program during the renewal visit, Explore provided the Institute information on the steps it quickly took to remedy these areas. The Institute finds the steps Explore has taken and will continue to implement as sufficient and will monitor the school to ensure it continues to provide a compliant ELL program in a future charter term.

IS THE SCHOOL AN EFFECTIVE, VIABLE ORGANIZATION?

Explore is an effective and viable organization that has in place the key design elements identified in its charter. The Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn board of trustees meets regularly and ensures the school substantially complies with applicable law and regulations. However, the board has not worked effectively to oversee the school's academic progress. Additional detail on the school's organizational effectiveness is outlined below.

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2A:

Is the school faithful to its mission and does it implement the key design elements included in its charter?

Explore is faithful to its mission and key design elements. These can be found in the School Background section at the beginning of the report and Appendix A, respectively. As identified under the academic section, and the information that follows in this section, the school is continuing to refine its implementation of the school design and, with additional time, is likely to make progress in meeting its Accountability Plan goals.

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2B:

Are parents/guardians and students satisfied with the school?

To report on parent satisfaction with the school's program, the Institute used survey data as well as data gathered from a focus group of parents representing a cross section of students.

Parent Survey Data. The 80% participation rate and parent responses to NYCDOE's 2014-2015 NYC School Survey indicate satisfaction with Explore. NYCDOE distributes the survey to families each year to compile data about school culture, instruction, and systems for improvement. The survey response rate is high enough that it is useful in framing the results as representative of the school community.

Parent Focus Group. The Institute asks all schools facing renewal to convene a representative set of parents for a focus group discussion. A representative set includes parents of students in attendance at the school for multiple years, parents new to the school, parents of students receiving general education services, parents of students with special needs and parents of ELLs. The 17 parents in attendance at the focus group indicated strong loyalty to and satisfaction with the school. The parents agreed that Explore is a safer and higher quality option than other schools in the area. They were particularly pleased that the school uses multiple modes of communication to keep parents consistently informed about student behavioral and academic performance. Despite this praise, parents expressed unanimous concern about the rate of teacher attrition at the school and implored the school and the network to address this issue.

Persistence in Enrollment. An additional indicator of parent satisfaction is persistence in enrollment. In 2014-15, 91.5% of Explore's students returned from the previous year, which was the lowest of the charter term. Student persistence data from previous years of the charter term

ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

is available in Appendix A. The Institute derived the statistical information on persistence in enrollment from its database. No comparative data from NYCDOE or the New York State Education Department (“NYSED”) is available to the Institute to provide either district wide or CSD context. As such, the information presented is for information purposes but does not allow for comparative analysis

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2C:

Does the school’s organization work effectively to deliver the educational program?

The school’s organization effectively supports the delivery of the educational program.

- Explore establishes an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, policies and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program. The school has numerous academic and behavioral support personnel including instructional leaders previously mentioned, three deans who focus on student discipline, a culture coordinator responsible for coaching teachers on classroom management, a director of operations and a student support services coordinator that allow for effective implementation of the program.
- The organizational structure is developing clear lines of accountability with increasingly defined roles and responsibilities although some teachers continue to be unaware of which instructional leader conducts their formal evaluations.
- The school has student discipline systems in place. For every infraction, there is a list of possible consequences the network provides. There is a color chart system in place for Kindergarten through 2nd grade and a point system in place for 3rd through 8th grade. In comparing trimester 1 in 2014-15 to 2015-16, suspensions have decreased; in-school suspensions were 5 in 2014-15 and 0 in 2015-16, and out-of-school suspensions were 8 in 2014-15 and 4 in 2015-16. The school links the reduction in suspensions to more consistent school wide application of the merits and demerits system despite some remaining inconsistency in the application of the discipline system across classrooms.
- Explore maintains adequate student enrollment. At the time of the renewal visit the school enrolled 517 students with a chartered enrollment of 540. There is a significant waitlist of over 3,500 students.
- Showing recent improvements, teacher turnover has historically been high throughout the charter term. In the 2013-14 school year, teacher attrition was 55% and in 2014-15 and 2015-16 attrition was 22%. The school and Network have taken the following steps to attempt to reduce teacher turnover: increasing teacher pay to be more comparable to the local school district; providing a significant amount of training to teachers on classroom management practices; increasing the number of coaches from four in 2014-15 to six in 2015-16; instituting a more thorough teacher recruitment process that includes a demo lesson with all teacher candidates; and, creating a “Fun Committee” to create off-site team building opportunities for teachers.
- The school experienced two years in which there was no principal, though during that time there were two academic deans that were effectively acting principals. One of those academic deans is currently one of the two co-principals, a structure the Institute noted

above has improved the quality and frequency of supports for improving classroom instruction.

- Explore's technology resources are not supporting the school in meeting academic goals. Teachers report that many of the digital overhead projectors do not function correctly, hindering their ability to leverage tools to streamline and strengthen instructional planning and delivery. Teachers also report that students have little access to digital learning hardware and software.
- Explore regularly monitors and evaluates its programs and makes changes if necessary. For example, in evaluating suspension data from last year, the school determined that about 80% of student suspensions occurred because of infractions during transitions. Thus this school year, one of the school's primary foci is on culture and specifically on improving student transitions in-class and out-of-class. Additionally, the school and network are conducting the specific aforementioned measures to address teacher attrition.

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2D:

Does the school board work effectively to achieve the school's Accountability Plan goals?

The Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn board works effectively to monitor the school's day-to-day operations in the interest of achieving the school's Accountability Plan goals. The board is responsive to organizational problems and monitors the efficacy of its solutions, adjusting strategies to increase effectiveness when appropriate.

- Board members' experience in finance, law, and project management enable the board to monitor the school's operations and fiscal health adequately. Although the board monitors student performance data for progress toward meeting academic goals, its members recognize limitations in their ability to analyze and understand academic data and issues pertaining to the school's academic program. To mitigate that problem, the board is actively seeking new members with K-12 education experience.
- The board maintains a dashboard containing information about the academic program, student attendance, and teacher retention. The information reported in the dashboard aligns with the board's clearly stated priorities: to retain and develop good teachers and school leaders and to improve the schools' curricula and curriculum resources. Discussions at monthly meetings focus on the information contained in the dashboard; however, additional information is available to the board upon request when necessary.
- The board hires and retains key personnel. Per the not-for-profit management agreement, the network is responsible for hiring and retaining key personnel including school leaders and teachers, with the board's consent. Recognizing a need to reduce the school's 35 percent overall teacher turnover rate, the board has made it a priority to work with the network to improve hiring practices and retention efforts. For example, changes to the network's teacher hiring process now require candidates to teach a model lesson. The board also restructured the teacher salary increase schedule in an effort to recruit and retain more high quality teachers.

ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

- As of this school year, the board evaluates its own performance informally through reflective conversations. Recognizing that this process is not sufficient to successfully build its capacity to oversee the school, the board plans to adopt a system for more formalized evaluation in the future.

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2E:

Does the board implement, maintain and abide by appropriate policies, systems and processes?

The board materially and substantially implements, maintains and abides by adequate and appropriate policies, systems and processes and procedures to ensure the effective governance and oversight of the school. The board demonstrates a clear understanding of its role in holding the school leadership and charter management organization accountable for both academic results and fiscal soundness.

- The board is thoughtful as to its membership finding 6-8 members is its ideal number. This has allowed a committee structure where members cycle through committees to improve understanding across areas. Functioning of committees is well established except in the area of academic accountability where the board's lack of knowledge in the area has hindered its ability to appropriately monitor. Plans for additional board members with educational experience are already underway and should assist the board in this area in the future.
- The board receives weekly articles on various topics related to education to keep informed of current trends.
- The board receives specific and extensive reports on each school's program including fiscal and academic performance.
- The board has materially complied with the terms of its by-laws and code of ethics.
- The board has identified three core initiatives for the 2015-16 school year including improving the school's curriculum, teacher retention, and leadership development.
- The board checks in with the school leader on a regular basis to ensure leadership is receiving appropriate support from Explore Schools.
- The board functions well with staff of Explore Schools and appears to have a good working relationship which includes healthy debate and accountability. Staff of Explore Schools sits on many of the board committees to ensure open communication and collaboration.

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2F:

Has the school substantially complied with applicable laws, rules and regulations, and provisions of its charter?

The education corporation generally and substantially complies with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter. The Institute noted exceptions in the following areas.

- Code of Ethics. The education corporation's code of ethics needs to be updated to comply with provisions of the New York General Municipal Law and Not-For-Profit Corporation Law. The Institute will ensure this is updated prior to the start of a new charter term.

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- ELL Program. As noted earlier, at the time of the renewal visit, the Institute identified areas necessary to improve the school's delivery of services to ELL students so that its ELL program was compliant with the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and federal regulations. The school immediately addressed the Institute's concerns by providing a compliant plan to remedy any deficiencies and implementing steps to ensure compliance. The Institute will monitor the implementation of the ELL program to help ensure compliance in a future charter term.

IS THE EDUCATION CORPORATION FISCALLY SOUND?

Based on a review of the fiscal evidence collected through the renewal review, Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn is fiscally sound as is its school, Explore. The SUNY Fiscal Dashboard for Explore is included in Appendix D as well as a dashboard for the network that the Institute constructed by combining all six of the individual schools that became Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn through a merger effective July 1, 2015. Using color coded tables and charts each chart indicates that the education corporation and school, respectively, have demonstrated fiscal soundness over the majority of the charter term.¹⁴ The discussion that follows relates mainly to the Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn education corporation because a school is not a legally distinct fiscal entity although some of the information pertains to Explore prior to the merger.

Explore and the merged education corporation have adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations. In addition to analyzing the soundness of the individual charter school, the Institute analyzed the soundness of the not-for-profit education corporation granted the authority to operate the school and finds it too is fiscally sound. Since the merger just recently took effect, the Explore fiscal dashboard reflects the financial condition over the past three years of the charter term when the school was an independent entity.

Explore Schools supported Explore, and now supports the education corporation, in the areas of academic program, fiscal management and operational support, human resources, technology and public relations under the terms of a management contract. The Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn financial model is intended to ensure that all fully enrolled schools are financially sustainable, operating each school's program solely through public funding.

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3A:

[Does the school operate pursuant to a fiscal plan in which it creates realistic budgets that it monitors and adjusts when appropriate?](#)

Working in partnership with the network, Explore has employed clear budgetary objectives and budget preparation procedures throughout the charter term.

- Explore Schools chief financial officer coordinates the development of annual and long-term budget preparation procedures with input from the school leadership staff and the board finance committee.
- The projected five-year renewal budget reflects anticipated revenues and expenses associated with steady enrollment as the school is at its full capacity with Kindergarten through grade 8 for the next renewal charter term.
- The education corporation prepares a long-term budget, which is updated on an annual basis.

¹⁴ The U.S. Department of Education has established fiscal criteria for certain ratios or information with high – medium – low categories, represented in the table as green – gray – red. The categories generally correspond to levels of fiscal risk, but must be viewed in the context of each education corporation and the general type or category of school.

FISCAL PERFORMANCE

- Explore has been located in shared NYCDOE facility space since opening in 2002. Explore is not financially responsible for rent, utilities, custodial services, maintenance or school safety services on the facility.
- The Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn merger enabled operating efficiencies and purchasing power, with expenses for Explore shared with the network of five other charters related by common management.

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3B:

Does the school maintain appropriate internal controls and procedures?

Explore and the merged education corporation, Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn, have a history of sound fiscal policies, procedures and practices and maintain appropriate internal controls.

- The Financial Policies and Procedures Manual is the guide for all internal controls and procedures at the education corporation. The manual contains fiscal policies and procedures that undergo ongoing reviews. The most recent update to the manual included federal guidelines for grant management and other recent updates included the conflict of interest policy.
- The Explore audit reports had no findings of deficiencies. With the effective merger dated July 1, 2015 the next audit report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2016 will be contained within the merged education corporation audit report.

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3C:

Does the school comply with financial reporting requirements?

Explore and the merged education corporation, Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn, have complied with financial reporting requirements.

- The Institute, NYSED and NYCDOE have received required financial reports that are on time, complete and follow generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP).
- Independent audits of annual financial statements have received unqualified opinions with no material weaknesses or instances of non-compliance observed.
- The individual education corporation and merged entity have generally filed key reports timely and accurately including: audit reports, budgets, unaudited quarterly reports of revenue, expenses and enrollment.

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3D:

Does the school maintain adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations?

Explore and the merged education corporation maintain adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations.

- The individual school and the merged education corporation fiscal dashboards in Appendices D and F both reflect fiscally strength.
- The board has established a designated reserve fund for Explore for unforeseen facility, personnel and other issues, which was \$1,000,000 as of June 30, 2015.

FISCAL PERFORMANCE

- Explore had total net assets of approximately \$2.8 million and 5.4 months of cash on hand to pay bills coming due shortly as reported in the most recent audit report.
- Explore has established a dissolution reserve fund but the amount is short of the required \$75,000 level. The education corporation will need to bring the balance to the required level for the number of schools that it operates per the renewal charter agreement, which works out to less than \$75,000 per school.

FUTURE PLANS

IF THE SUNY TRUSTEES RENEW THE EDUCATION CORPORATION'S AUTHORITY TO OPERATE THE SCHOOL, ARE ITS PLANS FOR THE SCHOOL REASONABLE, FEASIBLE AND ACHIEVABLE?

Explore has made progress toward meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals and maintains an adequate educational program. The school operates as an effective and viable organization, and the education corporation is fiscally sound. Thus, the plans to implement the educational program as proposed during the next charter term are reasonable, feasible and achievable.

The education corporation's plans for the future are to continue to operate Explore in its current configuration as set forth in the Application for Charter Renewal. The Institute finds the plans for Explore reasonable, feasible and achievable based on its renewal review with the exception that the school will be permitted to operate for only three years instead of the five requested.

Plans for the School's Structure. The education corporation has provided all of the key structural elements for a charter renewal and those elements are reasonable, feasible and achievable.

Plans for the Educational Program. The education corporation plans to implement the aforementioned changes to its program; these changes will likely enable the school to meet or come close to meeting its Accountability Plan goals in the future.

	Current Charter Term	End of Next Charter Term
Enrollment	540	540
Grade Span	K-8	K-8
Teaching Staff	50	48
Days of Instruction	179	179

Plans for Board Oversight & Governance. Board members express an interest in continuing to serve the education corporation in the next charter term and may add additional members in the future.

Fiscal & Facility Plans. Based on evidence collected through the renewal review, including a review of the 5-year financial plan, the education corporation presents a reasonable and appropriate fiscal plan for the next charter term including education corporation and school budgets that are feasible and achievable. The education corporation intends to maintain its contractual relationship with the CMO. The Institute has reviewed the proposed terms of such contract and will review and approve the final contract, and any other CMO contracts, when executed.

The school intends to provide instruction for Kindergarten through 8th grade students in its current co-located facility in Brooklyn.

FUTURE PLANS

The school's Application for Charter Renewal contains all necessary elements as required by the Act. The proposed school calendar allots an appropriate amount of instructional time to meet or exceed instructional time requirements, and taken together with other academic and key design elements, should be sufficient to allow the school to meet its proposed Accountability Plan goals. The education corporation has amended or will amend other key aspects of the renewal application -- including by-laws and code of ethics -- to comply with various provisions of the New York Education Law, Not-for-Profit Corporation Law, Public Officers Law and the General Municipal Law, as appropriate.

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Appendix A

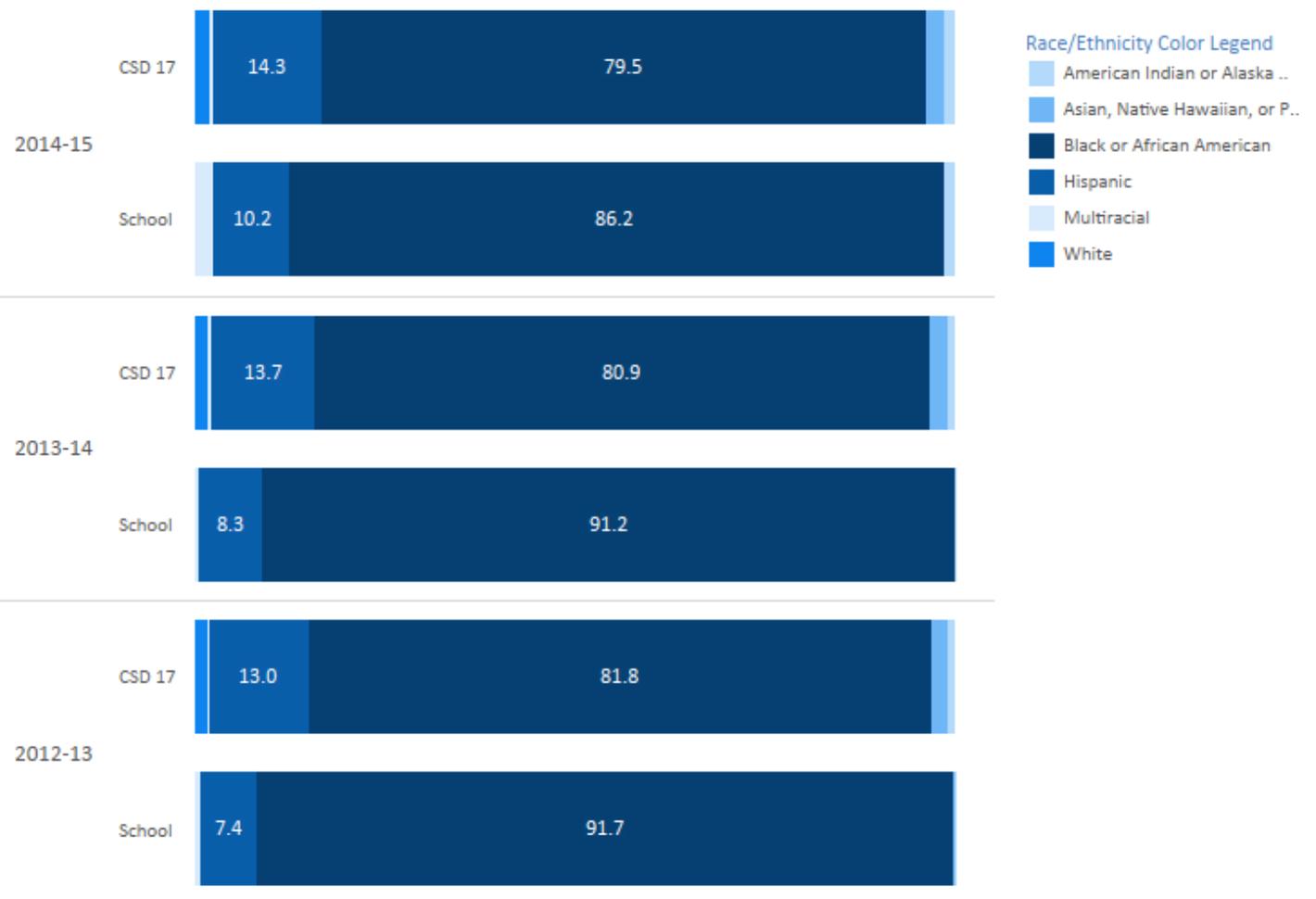
Explore School Overview

APPENDIX A: EXPLORE SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Board of Trustees¹⁵

Board Member Name	Position	Board Member Name	Position
Graeme Daykin	Chair	Hank Mannix	Vice Chair
Kim Carnegie	Trustee	Beth Cohen	Treasurer
Angelica Thomas	Trustee	Morty Ballen	Trustee
Peter Walker	Trustee		

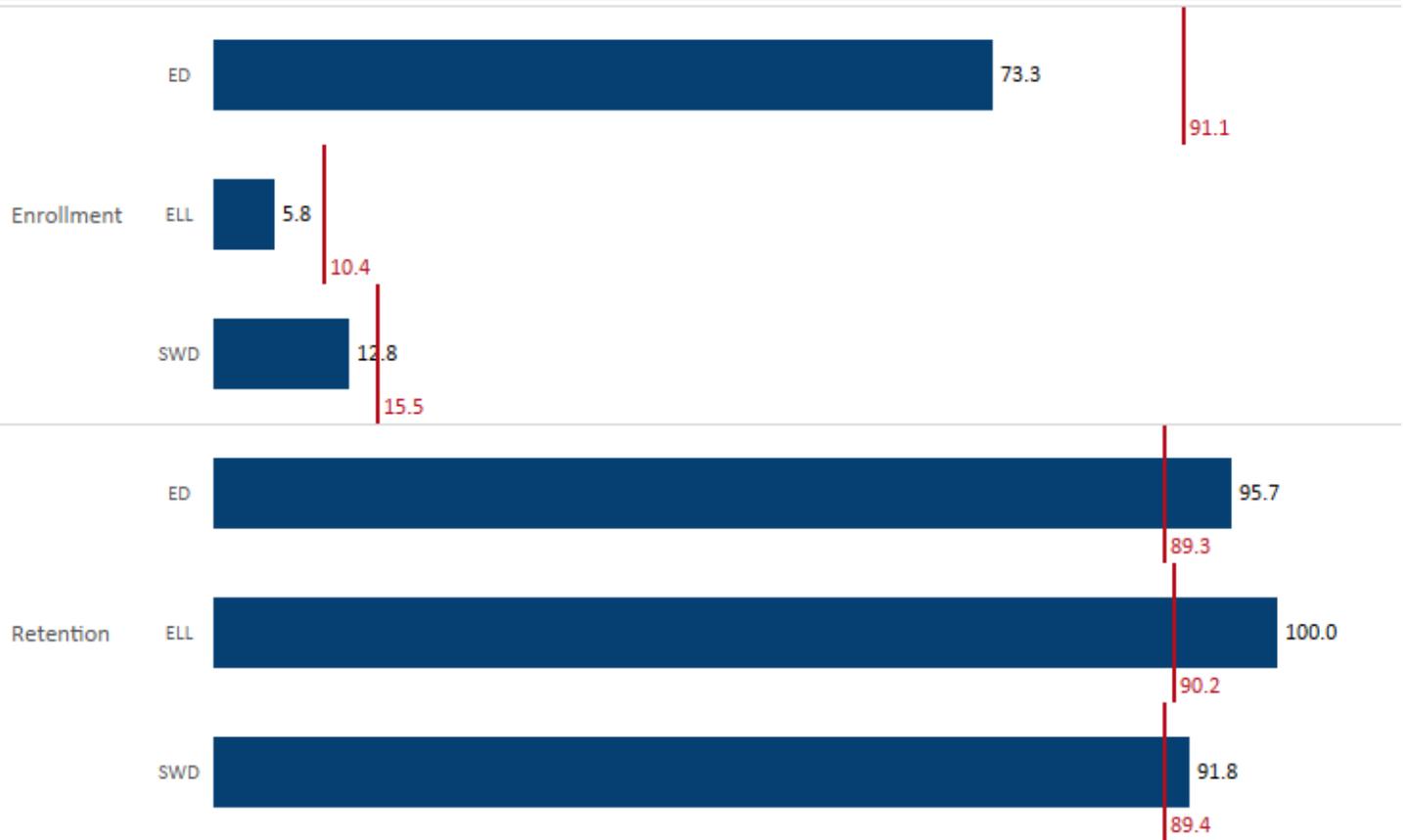
Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity



¹⁵ Source: The Institute's board records at the time of the renewal review.

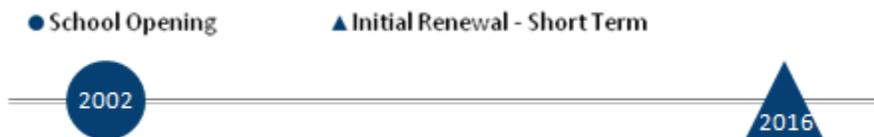
APPENDIX A: EXPLORE SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Enrollment and Retention Targets



The chart illustrates the school's **current enrollment and retention percentages** against the **enrollment and retention targets**. As required by Education Law § 2851(4)(e), a school must include in its renewal application information regarding the efforts it has, and will, put in place to meet or exceed SUNY's enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, ELL, and FRPL students. This analysis is based on the most recently available data provided by the school.

Timeline of Charter School Renewal



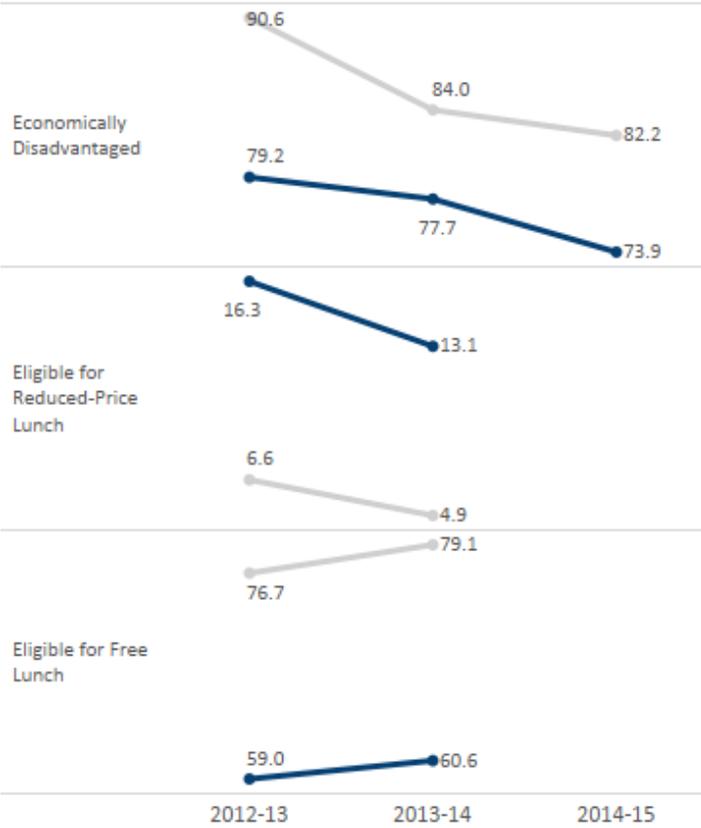
Persistence in Enrollment



Persistence in enrollment illustrates the percentage of students not scheduled to age out of the school who re-enroll from the previous year. The Institute derived the statistical information on enrollment persistence from its database. No comparative data from NYCDOE or NYSED is available to the Institute to provide either district wide or by CSD context. As such, the information presented is for information purposes but does not allow for comparative analysis.

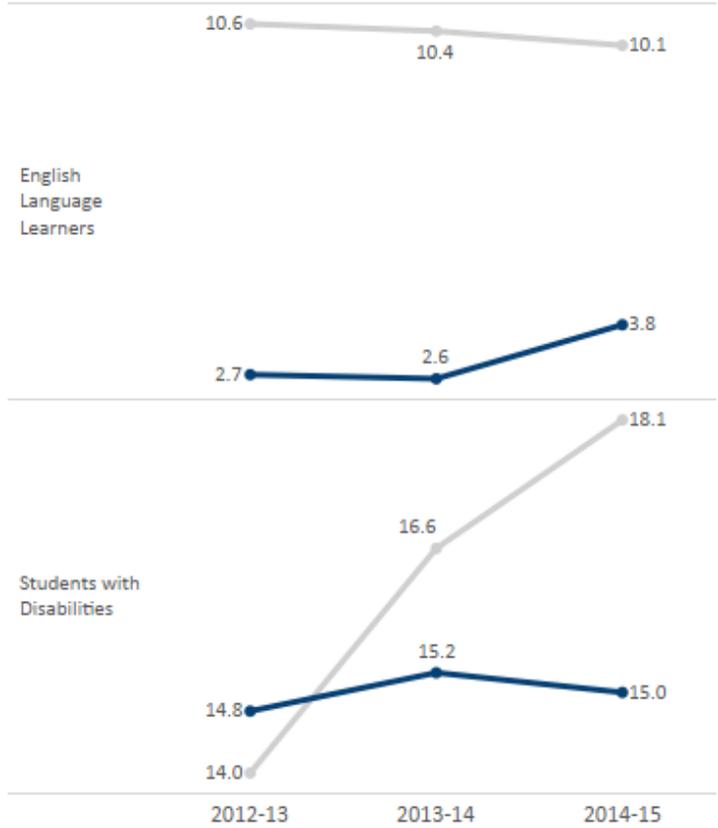
APPENDIX A: EXPLORE SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Student Demographics: Free/Reduced Lunch



The charts show the trends in enrollment in the **school** and the **district** for each subgroup over the charter term. Reduced-Price and Free Lunch data are not available for 2014-15. Economically disadvantaged includes those students eligible for Free and Reduced-Price lunch among other qualifying income assistance programs.

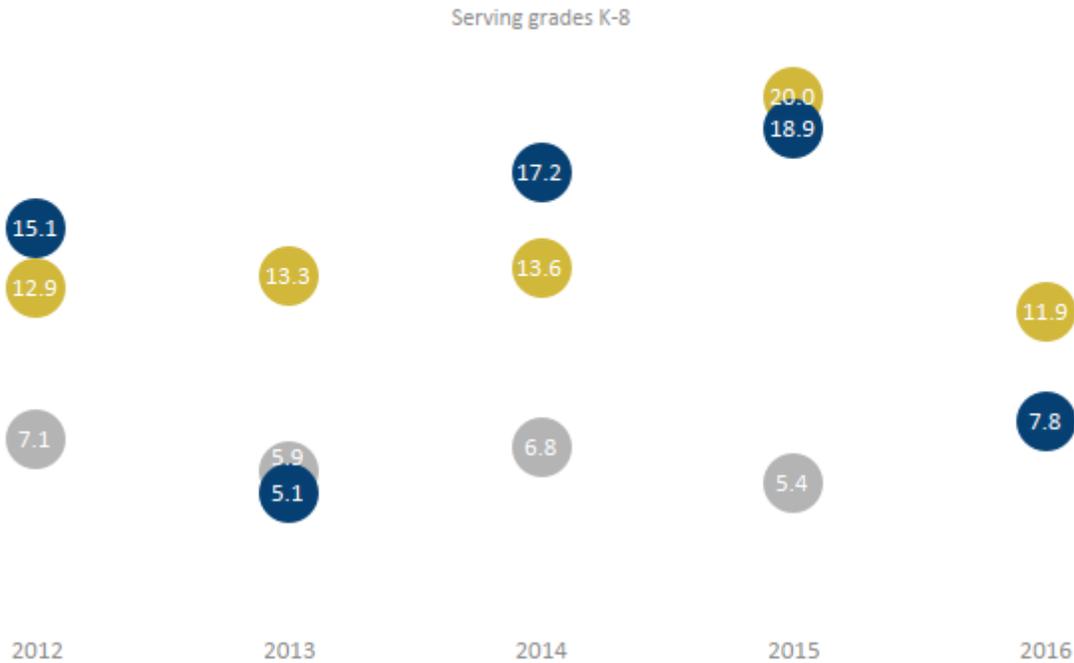
Student Demographics: Special Populations



The charts show trends in enrollment in the **school** and the **district** for each subgroup over the charter term.

APPENDIX A: EXPLORE SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Suspensions: Explore Charter School's in school suspension rate and out of school suspension rate and the district overall suspension rate.



Although Community School District ("CSD") and school suspension rates are presented on the same graph, a direct comparison between the rates is not possible for three primary reasons. Available CSD data includes Kindergarten through 12th grades and school data includes only the grades served by the school. CSD data are not available that show multiple instances of suspension of a single student, the overall number of suspensions, the durations of suspensions, or the time of year when the school administered the suspension. CSD data showing the difference between in school and out of school suspensions are not available. The percentage rate shown here is calculated using the method employed by the New York City Department of Education: the total the 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.

Expulsions: The number of students expelled from the school each year.

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
0	0	0	0	0

School Characteristics

School Year	Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ¹⁶	Actual as a Percentage of Chartered Enrollment	Proposed Grades	Actual Grades
2011-12	480	498	103%	K-8	K-8

¹⁶ Source: Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

APPENDIX A: EXPLORE SCHOOL OVERVIEW

2012-13	489	513	105%	K-8	K-8
2013-14	495	530	107%	K-8	K-8
2014-15	499	519	104%	K-8	K-8
2015-16	540	517	96%	K-8	K-8

Key Design Elements

Element	Evident?
▪ Beginning young;	+
▪ Continuing through 8 th grade;	+
▪ Longer school day and year;	+
▪ Small class size;	+
▪ Meeting the needs of at-risk students;	-
▪ Continuous research to drive improvement;	+
▪ Instructional Decision Making; and,	+
▪ Governance and Organizational Design.	+

School Leaders

School Year(s)	Name(s) and Title(s)
2010-11 to 2011-12	Tracy Rebe, Principal
2012-13	Rod Bowen, Principal
2012-13 to 2013-14	Ken Baum, Superintendent
2014-15-Present	Michal-Anne Jones, Co-Principal Kevin Mara, Co-Principal

Parent Satisfaction: Survey Results

Response Rate: 80%

Rigorous Instruction: 83%
Effective School Leadership: 73%
Supportive Environment: 78%

APPENDIX A: EXPLORE SCHOOL OVERVIEW

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Date
2015-16	Initial Renewal Visit	October 26-27, 2015

Conduct of the Renewal Visit

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Members	Title
October 26-27, 2015	Jeffrey Wasbes	Executive Deputy Director for Accountability
	Sinnjinn Bucknell	Performance and Systems Analyst
	Adam Aberman	External Consultant
	Jared Boyce	External Consultant

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Appendix B

School Performance Summaries

APPENDIX B: SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARIES

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: English Language Arts Explore Charter School



	2012-13 Grades Served: K-8			MET	2013-14 Grades Served: K-8			MET	2014-15 Grades Served: K-8			MET			
	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)				
ABSOLUTE MEASURES 1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at proficiency on the New York State exam.	3	35.0 (60)	35.6 (59)	NA	3	35.0 (60)	35.8 (53)	NA	3	16.9 (59)	17.6 (51)	NO			
	4	16.7 (60)	17.9 (56)		4	30.0 (60)	30.9 (55)		4	18.0 (61)	17.5 (57)				
	5	13.1 (61)	14.0 (57)		5	18.6 (59)	17.0 (53)		5	20.0 (60)	19.6 (56)				
	6	8.3 (60)	9.8 (51)		6	18.3 (60)	19.0 (58)		6	22.0 (50)	23.9 (48)				
	7	34.5 (55)	34.7 (49)		7	12.3 (57)	12.5 (56)		7	10.5 (57)	11.5 (52)				
	8	27.5 (40)	27.5 (40)		8	24.1 (54)	24.1 (54)		8	12.7 (55)	12.7 (55)				
	All	22.0 (336)	23.1 (312)		All	23.1 (350)	23.1 (329)		All	16.7 (342)	17.0 (317)				
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Level Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	Grades	PI	AMO	NA	Grades	PLI	AMO	NA	Grades	PLI	AMO	NO			
	3-8	92			3-8	90	89		3-8	79	97				
COMPARATIVE MEASURES 3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at proficiency will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	Comparison: Brooklyn District 17			YES	Comparison: Brooklyn District 17			YES	Comparison: Brooklyn District 17			NO			
	Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District				
	3-8	23.1	17.2		3-8	23.1	19.7		3-8	17.0	21.8				
4. Each year the school will exceed its predicted percent of students at proficiency on the state exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3) based on its percentage of Economically Disadvantaged students.	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	NO	% ED	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	NO	% ED	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	NO
	76.9	22.0	21.1	0.04		76.3	23.1	22.3	0.06		71.8	16.7	23.9	-0.50	
GROWTH MEASURE 5. Each year, the school's unadjusted mean growth percentile will meet or exceed the state's unadjusted median growth percentile.	Grades	School	State	NO	Grades	School	State	NO	Grades	School	State	NO			
	4	35.4			4	40.6			4	40.8					
	5	35.1			5	43.2			5	40.9					
	6	56.2			6	62.4			6	40.4					
	7	57.85			7	51.6			7	49.2					
	8	50.4			8	41.6			8	38.9					
	All	46.7	50.0		All	47.9	50.0		All	42.1	50.0				

APPENDIX B: SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARIES

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: Mathematics

Explore Charter School



	2012-13 Grades Served: K-8			MET	2013-14 Grades Served: K-8			MET	2014-15 Grades Served: K-8			MET			
	Grades	All Students	2+ Years Students		Grades	All Students	2+ Years Students		Grades	All Students	2+ Years Students				
		% (N)	% (N)			% (N)	% (N)			% (N)					
ABSOLUTE MEASURES 1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at proficiency on the New York State exam.	3	65.0 (60)	66.1 (59)	NA	3	56.7 (60)	50.0 (2)	NA	3	28.8 (59)	31.4 (51)	NO			
	4	61.7 (60)	62.5 (56)		4	58.3 (60)	60.0 (55)		4	29.5 (61)	29.8 (57)				
	5	41.0 (61)	43.9 (57)		5	62.7 (59)	64.2 (53)		5	50.0 (60)	48.2 (56)				
	6	25.0 (60)	29.4 (51)		6	66.7 (60)	69.0 (58)		6	18.4 (49)	20.0 (45)				
	7	43.6 (55)	44.9 (49)		7	36.8 (57)	37.5 (56)		7	56.1 (57)	57.7 (52)				
	8	20.0 (40)	20.0 (40)		8	33.3 (54)	33.3 (54)		8	17.6 (51)	17.6 (51)				
	All	44.0 (336)	46.2 (312)		All	52.9 (350)	52.9 (278)		All	34.1 (337)	34.6 (312)				
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Level Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	Grades	PI	AMO	NA	Grades	PLI	AMO	NA	Grades	PLI	AMO	YES			
	3-8	132			3-8	136	86		3-8	107	94				
COMPARATIVE MEASURES 3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at proficiency will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	Comparison: Brooklyn District 17			YES	Comparison: Brooklyn District 17			YES	Comparison: Brooklyn District 17			YES			
	Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District				
	3-8	46.2	17.4		3-8	52.9	20.6		3-8	34.6	23.6				
4. Each year the school will exceed its predicted percent of students at proficiency on the State exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3) based on its percentage of Economically Disadvantaged students.	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES	% ED	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES	% ED	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	NO
	76.9	44.0	22.1	1.27		76.3	52.9	27.7	1.28		71.6	34.1	30.5	0.22	
GROWTH MEASURE 5. Each year, the school's unadjusted mean growth percentile will meet or exceed the state's unadjusted median growth percentile.	Grades	School	State	YES	Grades	School	State	YES	Grades	School	State	NO			
	4	43.1			4	39.8			4	22.3					
	5	62.7			5	52.5			5	37.9					
	6	53.1			6	62.1			6	12.3					
	7	60.4			7	56.8			7	49.3					
	8	49.1			8	39.5			8	22.7					
	All	53.8	50.0		All	50.2	50.0		All	29.6	50.0				

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Appendix C

District Comments

The Institute has received no district or public comments.

Appendix D

Explore Fiscal Dashboard

APPENDIX D: EXPLORE FISCAL DASHBOARD



Explore Charter School

SCHOOL INFORMATION					
Opened 2002-03(Transfer from NYSED to SUNY 2015-16)					
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
BALANCE SHEET					
Assets					
Current Assets					
Cash and Cash Equivalents - GRAPH 1	-	-	1,753,784	2,164,315	3,260,095
Grants and Contracts Receivable	-	-	86,858	143,867	145,037
Accounts Receivable	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaid Expenses	-	-	-	65,425	18,268
Contributions and Other Receivables	-	-	-	-	-
Total Current Assets - GRAPH 1	-	-	1,840,642	2,373,607	3,423,400
Property, Building and Equipment, net	-	-	278,909	217,099	168,172
Other Assets	-	-	70,092	70,174	70,244
Total Assets - GRAPH 1	-	-	2,189,643	2,660,880	3,661,816
Liabilities and Net Assets					
Current Liabilities					
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	-	-	129,931	158,498	151,345
Accrued Payroll and Benefits	-	-	688,132	660,564	621,587
Deferred Revenue	-	-	-	-	-
Current Maturities of Long-Term Debt	-	-	-	-	-
Short Term Debt - Bonds, Notes Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	8,978	2,898	3,710
Total Current Liabilities - GRAPH 1	-	-	827,041	821,960	776,642
L-T Debt and Notes Payable, net current maturities	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities - GRAPH 1	-	-	827,041	821,960	776,642
Net Assets					
Unrestricted	-	-	462,602	838,920	1,885,174
Temporarily restricted	-	-	900,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Total Net Assets	-	-	1,362,602	1,838,920	2,885,174
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	-	-	2,189,643	2,660,880	3,661,816
ACTIVITIES					
Operating Revenue					
Resident Student Enrollment	-	-	7,000,000	7,144,501	7,189,252
Students with Disabilities	-	-	272,273	521,066	692,822
Grants and Contracts					
State and local	-	-	39,841	61,951	47,493
Federal - Title and IDEA	-	-	400,000	339,739	312,802
Federal - Other	-	-	58,475	87,673	95,900
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Food Service/Child Nutrition Program	-	-	-	-	-
Total Operating Revenue	-	-	7,770,589	8,154,930	8,338,269
Expenses					
Regular Education	-	-	4,973,700	5,534,711	5,112,194
SPED	-	-	1,319,837	908,133	1,033,430
Regular Education & SPED (combined)	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Program Services	-	-	6,293,537	6,442,844	6,145,624
Management and General	-	-	1,345,879	1,257,207	1,164,896
Fundraising	-	-	-	-	-
Total Expenses - GRAPHS 2, 3 & 4	-	-	7,639,416	7,700,051	7,310,520
Surplus / (Deficit) From School Operations	-	-	131,173	454,879	1,027,749
Support and Other Revenue					
Contributions	-	-	1,464	755	1,108
Fundraising	-	-	10,556	19,707	16,630
Miscellaneous Income	-	-	1,741	977	767
Net assets released from restriction	-	-	-	-	-
Total Support and Other Revenue	-	-	13,861	21,439	18,505
Total Unrestricted Revenue	-	-	7,784,450	8,176,369	8,356,774
Total Temporarily Restricted Revenue	-	-	-	-	-
Total Revenue - GRAPHS 2 & 3	-	-	7,784,450	8,176,369	8,356,774
Change in Net Assets	-	-	145,034	476,318	1,046,254
Net Assets - Beginning of Year - GRAPH 2	-	-	1,217,568	1,362,602	1,838,920
Prior Year Adjustment(s)	-	-	-	-	-
Net Assets - End of Year - GRAPH 2	-	-	1,362,602	1,838,920	2,885,174

APPENDIX D: EXPLORE FISCAL DASHBOARD



Explore Charter School

SCHOOL INFORMATION - (Continued)

Functional Expense Breakdown

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Personnel Service					
Administrative Staff Personnel	-	-	1,313,407	1,316,983	1,270,233
Instructional Personnel	-	-	3,235,925	3,244,735	3,092,338
Non-Instructional Personnel	-	-	-	-	-
Personnel Services (Combined)	-	-	-	-	-
Total Salaries and Staff	-	-	4,549,332	4,561,718	4,362,571
Fringe Benefits & Payroll Taxes	-	-	1,098,002	1,108,903	984,928
Retirement	-	-	-	-	-
Management Company Fees	-	-	799,651	821,618	862,710
Building and Land Rent / Lease	-	-	1	1	1
Staff Development	-	-	-	64,717	93,140
Professional Fees, Consultant & Purchased Services	-	-	265,003	358,207	263,014
Marketing / Recruitment	-	-	30,745	34,884	37,050
Student Supplies, Materials & Services	-	-	286,074	230,793	213,631
Depreciation	-	-	131,131	119,357	105,572
Other	-	-	479,477	399,853	387,903
Total Expenses	-	-	7,639,416	7,700,051	7,310,520

SCHOOL ANALYSIS

ENROLLMENT

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Chartered Enroll	-	-	489	495	499
Revised Enroll	-	-	-	-	-
Actual Enroll - GRAPH 4	-	-	513	530	519
Chartered Grades	-	-	K-8	K-8	K-8
Revised Grades	-	-	-	-	-

Primary School District: New York City

Per Pupil Funding (Weighted Avg of All Districts)	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Increase over prior year	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	1.8%

PER STUDENT BREAKDOWN

Revenue

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term
Operating	-	-	15,147	15,387	16,066	15,533
Other Revenue and Support	-	-	27	40	36	34
TOTAL - GRAPH 3	-	-	15,174	15,427	16,102	15,568

Expenses

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term
Program Services	-	-	12,268	12,156	11,841	12,089
Management and General, Fundraising	-	-	2,624	2,372	2,245	2,413
TOTAL - GRAPH 3	-	-	14,892	14,528	14,086	14,502
% of Program Services	0.0%	0.0%	82.4%	83.7%	84.1%	83.4%
% of Management and Other	0.0%	0.0%	17.6%	16.3%	15.9%	16.6%
% of Revenue Exceeding Expenses - GRAPH 5	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	6.2%	14.3%	7.3%

Student to Faculty Ratio

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Student to Faculty Ratio	-	-	9.5	9.8	9.6

Faculty to Admin Ratio

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Faculty to Admin Ratio	-	-	3.0	3.0	3.0

Financial Responsibility Composite Scores - GRAPH 6

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term
Score	0.0	0.0	2.5	2.6	3.0	2.7
Fiscally Strong 1.5 - 3.0 / Fiscally Adequate 1.0 - 1.4 / Fiscally Needs Monitoring < 1.0	N/A	N/A	Fiscally Strong	Fiscally Strong	Fiscally Strong	Fiscally Strong

Working Capital - GRAPH 7

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term
Net Working Capital	0	0	1,013,601	1,551,647	2,646,758	1,737,335
As % of Unrestricted Revenue	0.0%	0.0%	13.0%	19.0%	31.7%	21.2%
Working Capital (Current) Ratio Score	0.0	0.0	2.2	2.9	4.4	3.2
Risk (Low ≥ 3.0 / Medium 1.4 - 2.9 / High < 1.4)	N/A	N/A	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
Rating (Excellent ≥ 3.0 / Good 1.4 - 2.9 / Poor < 1.4)	N/A	N/A	Good	Good	Excellent	Excellent

Quick (Acid Test) Ratio

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term
Score	0.0	0.0	2.2	2.8	4.4	3.1
Risk (Low ≥ 2.5 / Medium 1.0 - 2.4 / High < 1.0)	N/A	N/A	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW	LOW
Rating (Excellent ≥ 2.5 / Good 1.0 - 2.4 / Poor < 1.0)	N/A	N/A	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent

Debt to Asset Ratio - GRAPH 7

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term
Score	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.3
Risk (Low < 0.50 / Medium 0.51 - .95 / High > 1.0)	N/A	N/A	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW
Rating (Excellent < 0.50 / Good 0.51 - .95 / Poor > 1.0)	N/A	N/A	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent

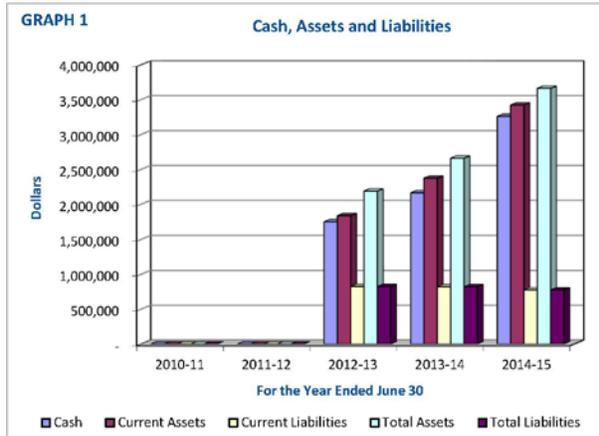
Months of Cash - GRAPH 8

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term
Score	0.0	0.0	2.8	3.4	5.4	3.8
Risk (Low > 3 mo. / Medium 1 - 3 mo. / High < 1 mo.)	N/A	N/A	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW	LOW
Rating (Excellent > 3 mo. / Good 1 - 3 mo. / Poor < 1 mo.)	N/A	N/A	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent

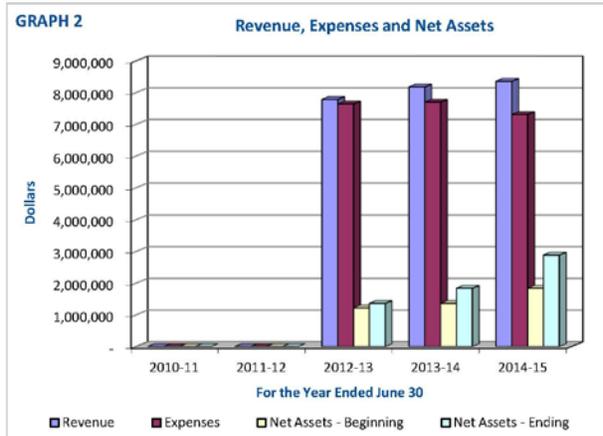
APPENDIX D: EXPLORE FISCAL DASHBOARD



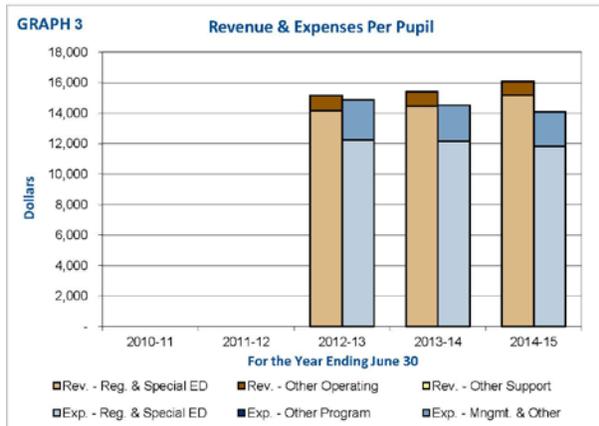
Explore Charter School



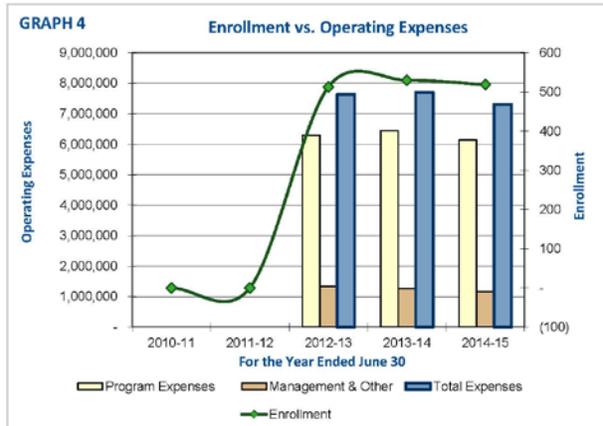
This chart illustrates the relationship between assets and liabilities and to what extent cash reserves makes up current assets. Ideally for each subset, subsets 2 thru 4, (i.e. current assets vs. current liabilities), the column on the left is taller than the immediate column on the right; and, generally speaking, the bigger that gap, the better.



This chart illustrates total revenue and expenses each year and the relationship those subsets have on the increase/decrease of net assets on a year-to-year basis. Ideally subset 1, revenue, will be taller than subset 2, expenses, and as a result subset 3, net assets - beginning, will increase each year building a more fiscally viable school.



This chart illustrates the breakdown of revenue and expenses on a per pupil basis. Caution should be exercised in making school-by-school comparisons since schools serving different missions or student populations are likely to have substantially different educational cost bases. Comparisons with similar schools with similar dynamics are most valid.



This chart illustrates to what extent the school's operating expenses have followed its student enrollment pattern. A baseline assumption that this data tests is that operating expenses increase with each additional student served. This chart also compares and contrasts growth trends of both, giving insight into what a reasonable expectation might be in terms of economies of scale.

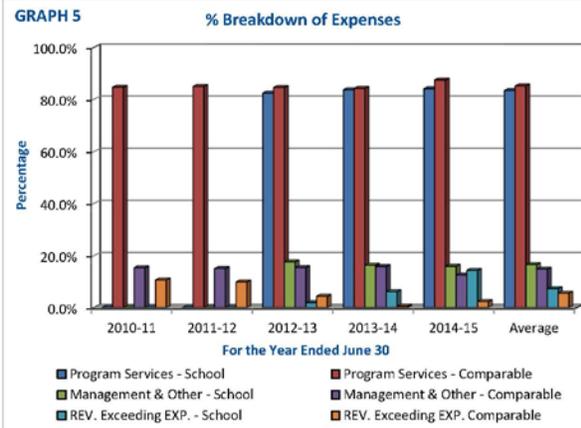
APPENDIX D: EXPLORE FISCAL DASHBOARD



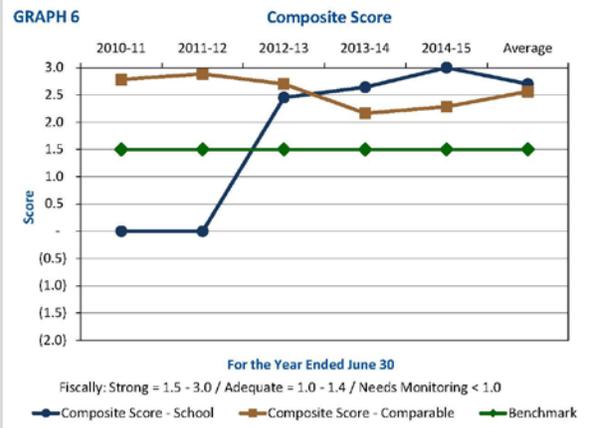
Explore Charter School

Comparable School, Region or Network: New York City & Long Island Schools

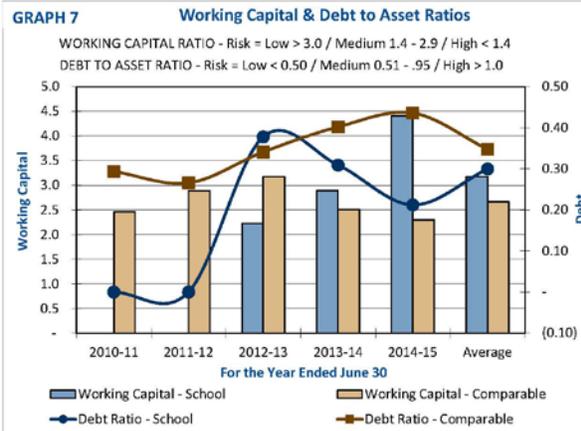
* Average = Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term



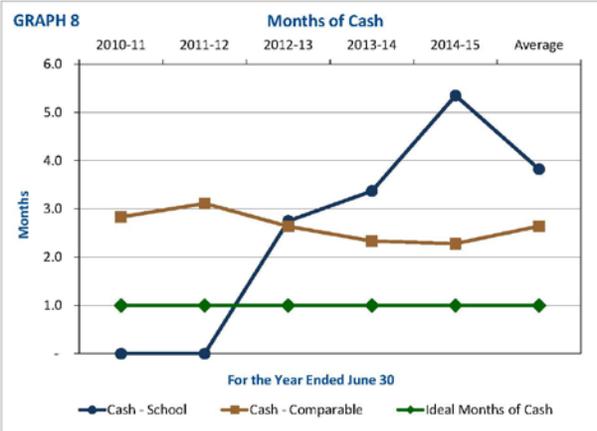
This chart illustrates the percentage expense breakdown between program services and management & others as well as the percentage of revenues exceeding expenses. Ideally the percentage expense for program services will far exceed that of the management & other expense. The percentage of revenues exceeding expenses should not be negative. Similar caution, as mentioned on GRAPH 3, should be used in comparing schools.



This chart illustrates a school's composite score based on the methodology developed by the United States Department of Education (USDOE) to determine whether private not-for-profit colleges and universities are financially strong enough to participate in federal loan programs. These scores can be valid for observing the fiscal trends of a particular school and used as a tool to compare the results of different schools.



This chart illustrates Working Capital and Debt to Asset Ratios. The Working Capital ratio indicates if a school has enough short-term assets to cover its immediate liabilities/short term debt. The Debt to Asset ratio indicates what proportion of debt a school has relative to its assets. The measure gives an idea to the leverage of the school along with the potential risks the school faces in terms of its debt-load.



This chart illustrates how many months of cash the school has in reserves. This metric is to measure solvency – the school's ability to pay debts and claims as they come due. This gives some idea of how long a school could continue its ongoing operating costs without tapping into some other, non-cash form of financing in the event that revenues were to cease flowing to the school.

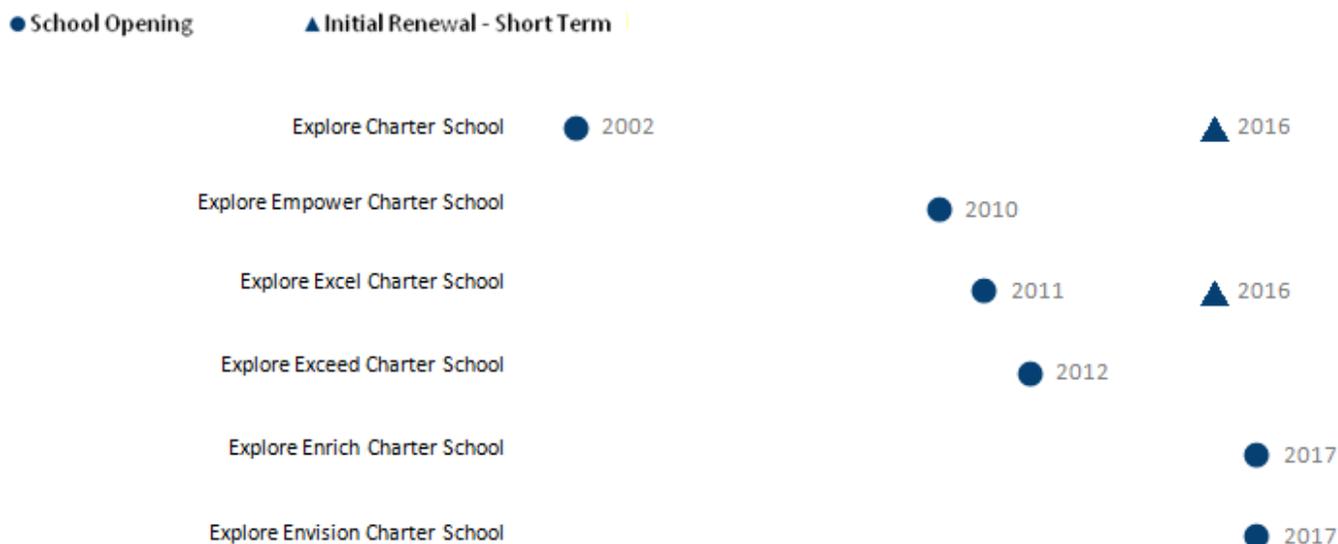
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Appendix E

Education Corporation Overview

APPENDIX E: EDUCATION CORPORATION OVERVIEW

Education Corporation Timeline of Charter Renewal



EDUCATION CORPORATION SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

School	Local District	Co-located?	Enrollment	Grade Span
Explore Charter School	CSD 17	Yes	540	K-8
Explore Empower Charter School	CSD 17	Yes	540	K-8
Explore Enrich Charter School	CSD 17	Not Open	Not Open	Not Open
Explore Envision Charter School	CSD 19	Not Open	Not Open	Not Open
Explore Exceed Charter School	CSD 17	Yes	430	K-6
Explore Excel Charter School	CSD 18	Yes	490	K-7

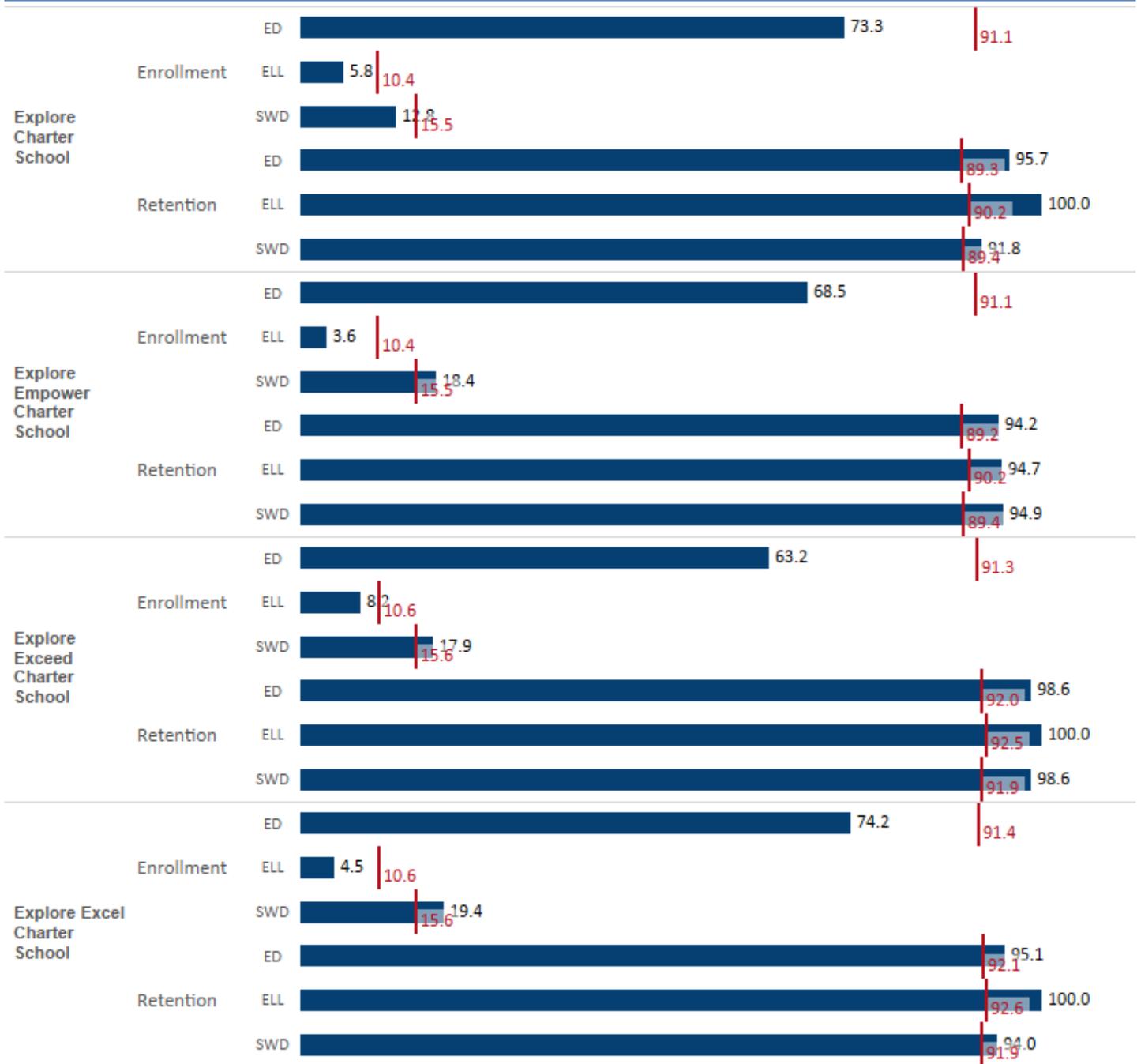
Persistence in Enrollment



Persistence in enrollment illustrates the percentage of students not scheduled to age out of the school who re-enroll from the previous year. The Institute derived the statistical information on enrollment persistence from its database. No comparative data from NYCDOE or NYSED is available to the Institute to provide either district wide or by CSD context. As such, the information presented is for information purposes but does not allow for comparative analysis.

APPENDIX E: EDUCATION CORPORATION OVERVIEW

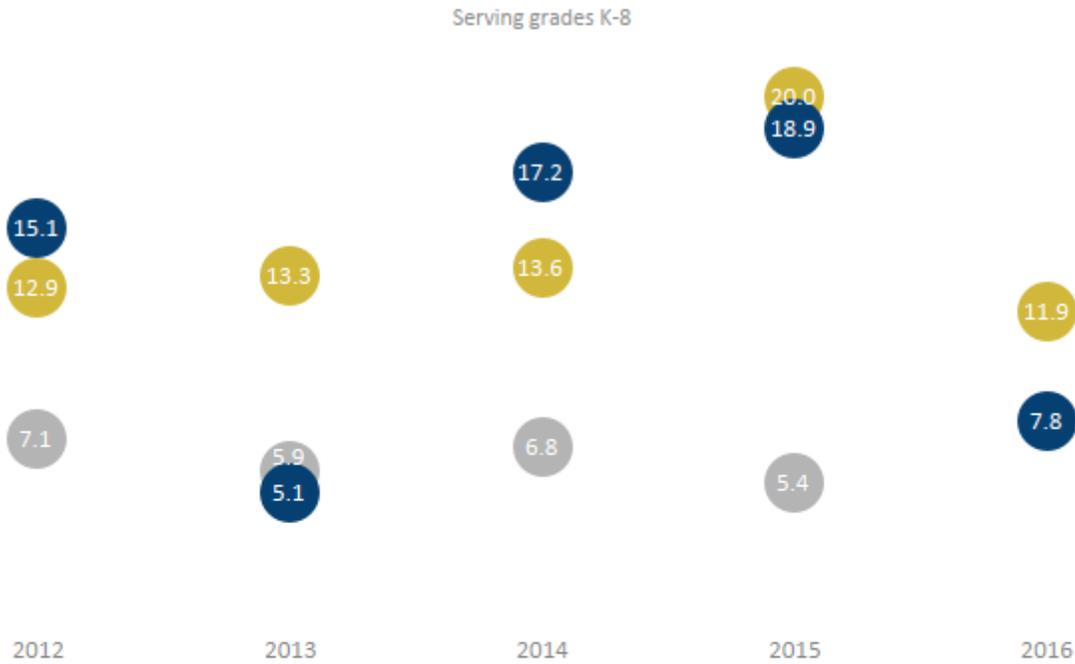
Enrollment and Retention Targets



The chart illustrates the **current enrollment and retention percentages** against the **enrollment and retention targets** for each operating school in the ed corp. As required by Education Law § 2851(4)(e), a school must include in its renewal application information regarding the efforts it has, and will, put in place to meet or exceed SUNY's enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, ELL, and FRPL students. This analysis is based on the 2015-16 enrollment and retention data supplied to the Institute by the network.

APPENDIX E: EDUCATION CORPORATION OVERVIEW

Suspensions: Explore Charter School's in school suspension rate and out of school suspension rate and the district overall suspension rate.



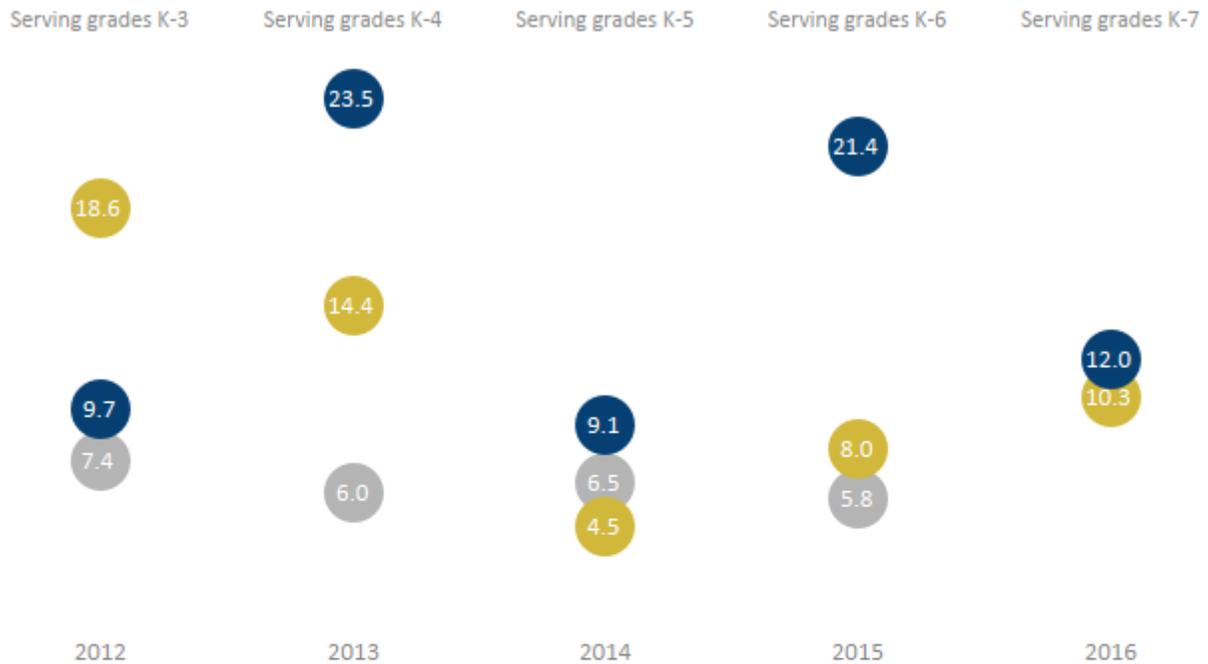
Although Community School District ("CSD") and school suspension rates are presented on the same graph, a direct comparison between the rates is not possible for three primary reasons. Available CSD data includes Kindergarten through 12th grades and school data includes only the grades served by the school. CSD data are not available that show multiple instances of suspension of a single student, the overall number of suspensions, the durations of suspensions, or the time of year when the school administered the suspension. CSD data showing the difference between in school and out of school suspensions are not available. The percentage rate shown here is calculated using the method employed by the New York City Department of Education: the total the 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.

Expulsions: The number of students expelled from the school each year.

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
0	0	0	0	0

APPENDIX E: EDUCATION CORPORATION OVERVIEW

Suspensions: Explore Excel Charter School's in school suspension rate and out of school suspension rate and the district overall suspension rate.



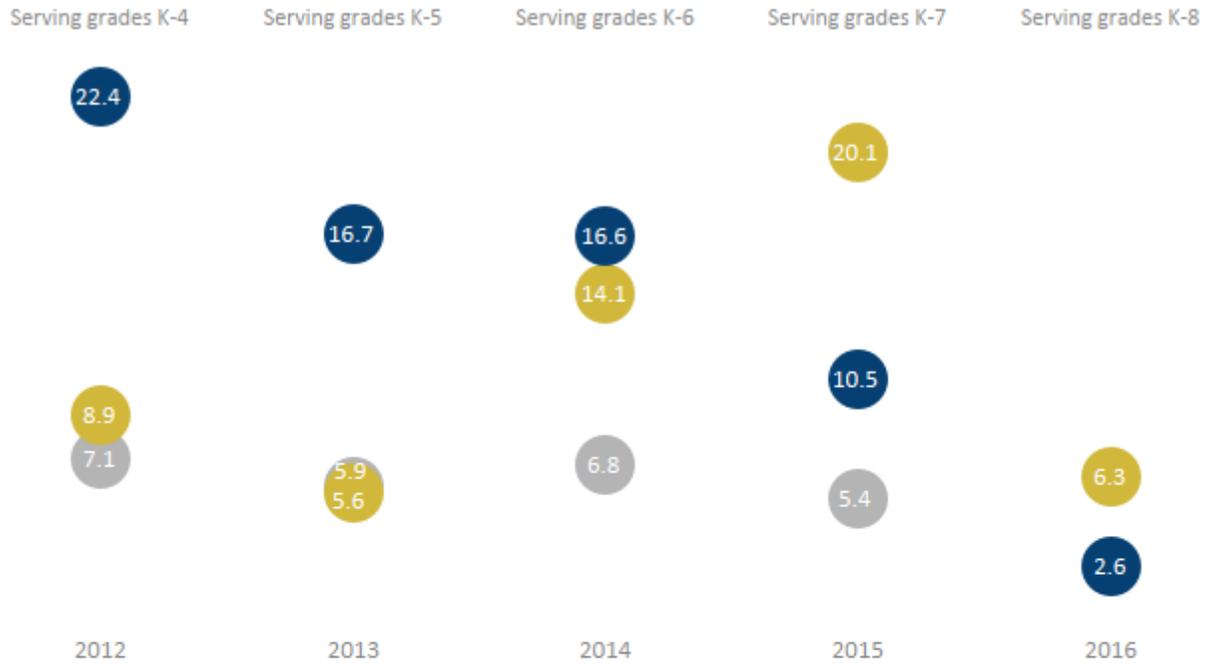
Although Community School District ("CSD") and school suspension rates are presented on the same graph, a direct comparison between the rates is not possible for three primary reasons. Available CSD data includes Kindergarten through 12th grades and school data includes only the grades served by the school. CSD data are not available that show multiple instances of suspension of a single student, the overall number of suspensions, the durations of suspensions, or the time of year when the school administered the suspension. CSD data showing the difference between in school and out of school suspensions are not available. The percentage rate shown here is calculated using the method employed by the New York City Department of Education: the total the 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.

Expulsions: The number of students expelled from the school each year.

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
0	0	0	0	0

APPENDIX E: EDUCATION CORPORATION OVERVIEW

Suspensions: Explore Empower Charter School's in school suspension rate and out of school suspension rate and the district overall suspension rate.



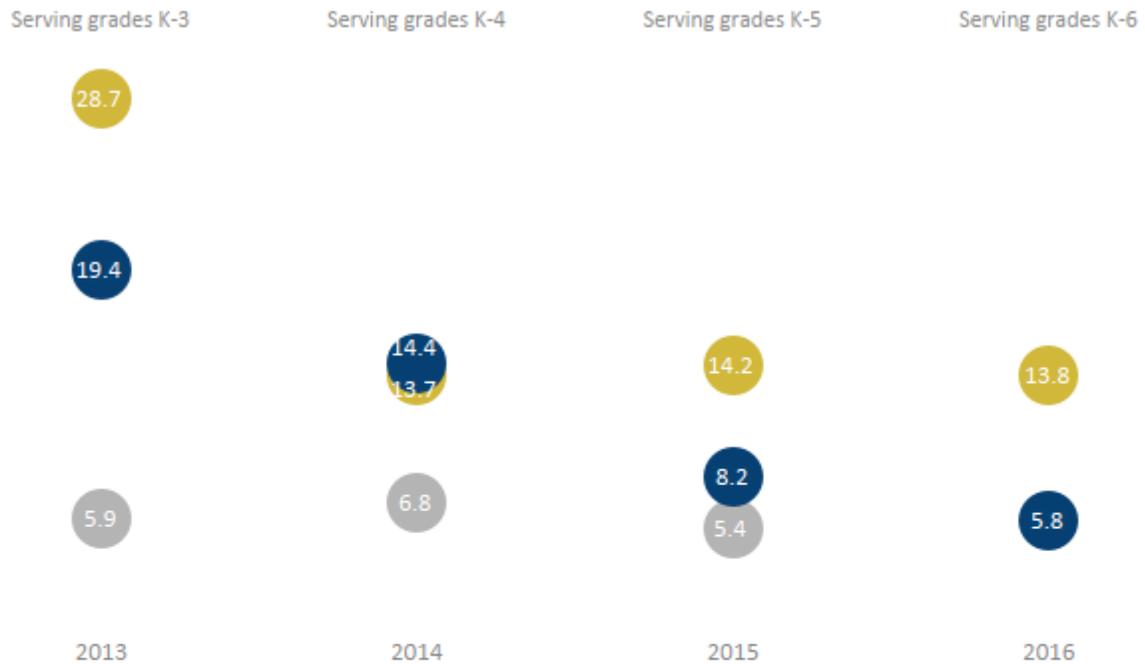
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Expulsions: The number of students expelled from the school each year.

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
0	0	0	0	0

APPENDIX E: EDUCATION CORPORATION OVERVIEW

Suspensions: Explore Exceed Charter School's in school suspension rate and out of school suspension rate and the district overall suspension rate.



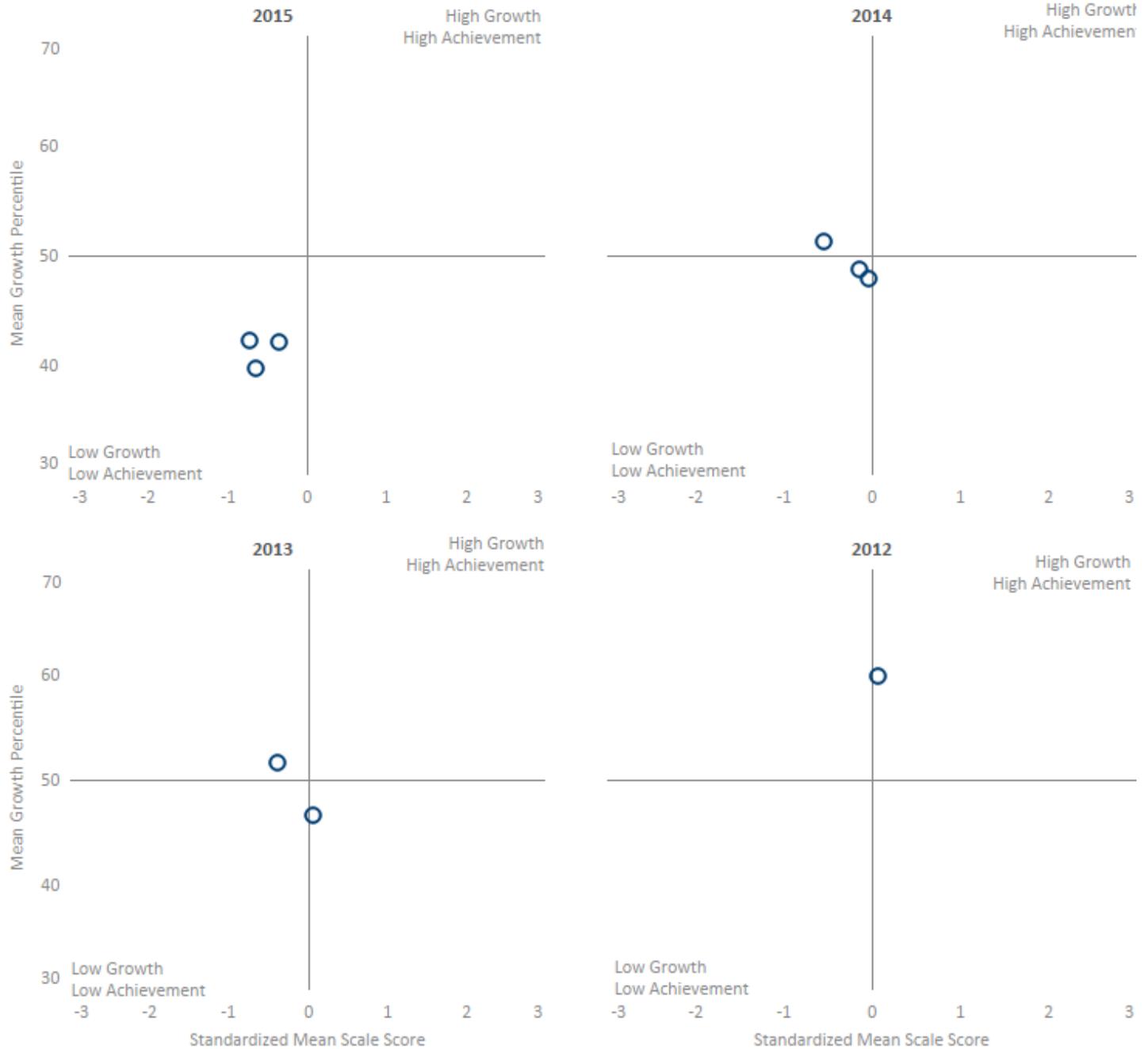
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Expulsions: The number of students expelled from the school each year.

2013	2014	2015	2016
0	0	0	0

APPENDIX E: EDUCATION CORPORATION OVERVIEW

ELA Growth and Achievement: 2011-12 through 2014-15



These charts compare a school's ability to grow student achievement with a school's absolute student performance. Schools located in the upper right hand quadrant of each chart show strong results in helping students make learning gains while at the same time helping students achieve strong absolute scores on state assessments. Schools in the lower right hand quadrant show strong absolute scores but lower growth. Because the student growth percentile uses the previous year's scale score as a baseline, it becomes more difficult for a school to maintain strong overall growth scores when students already post high absolute scores.

These charts are produced by comparing growth as measured by the state's student growth percentile to its overall achievement as measured by scale score standardized to the statewide grade level mean over each year for which data are available during the charter term. The growth axis (labeled Mean Growth Percentile) represents the statewide median growth score. The achievement axis (labeled Standardized Mean Scale Score) represents the statewide mean-centered achievement level for each grade served by each school.

APPENDIX E: EDUCATION CORPORATION OVERVIEW

Math Growth and Achievement: 2012-13 through 2014-15

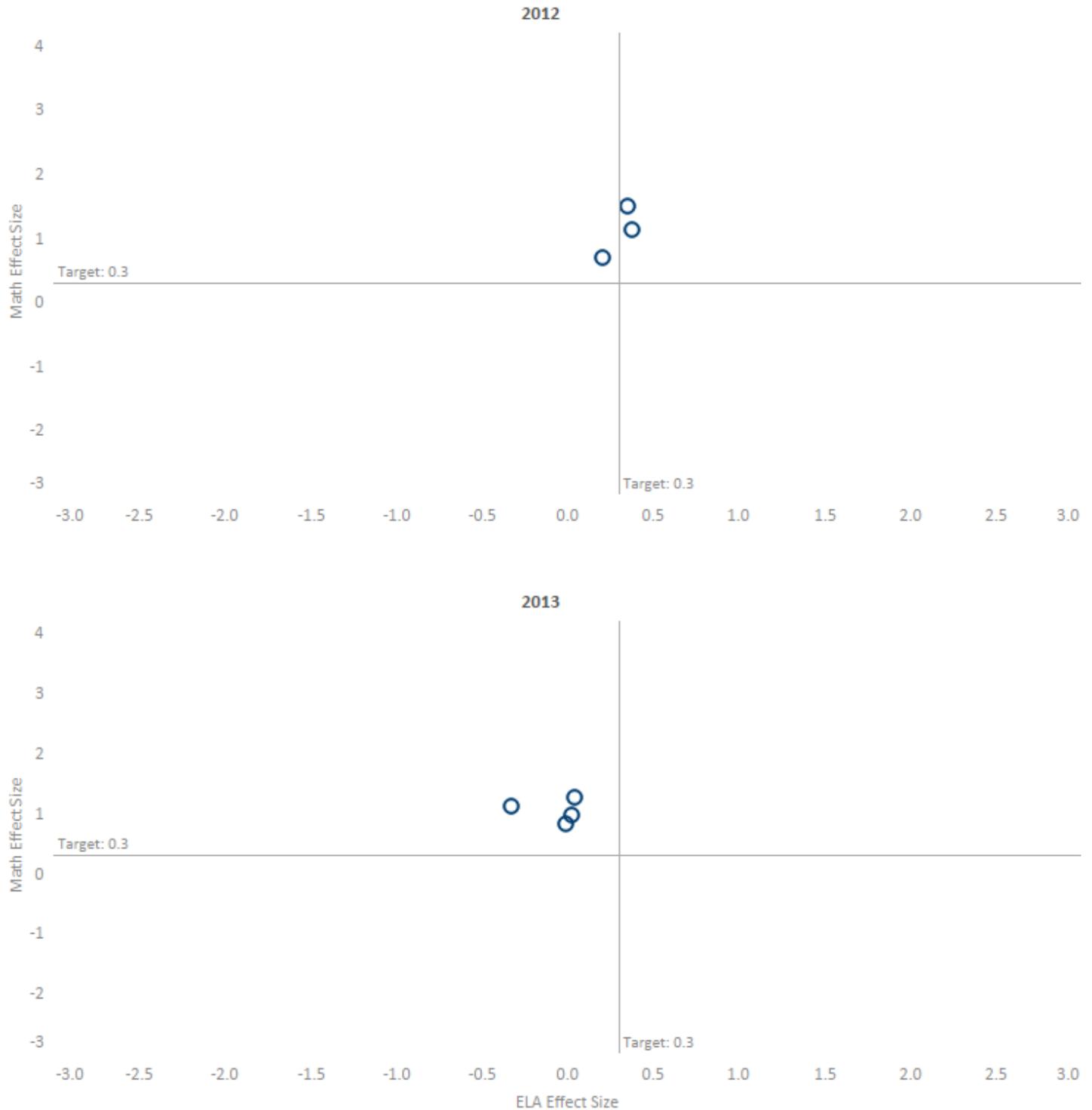


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APPENDIX E: EDUCATION CORPORATION OVERVIEW

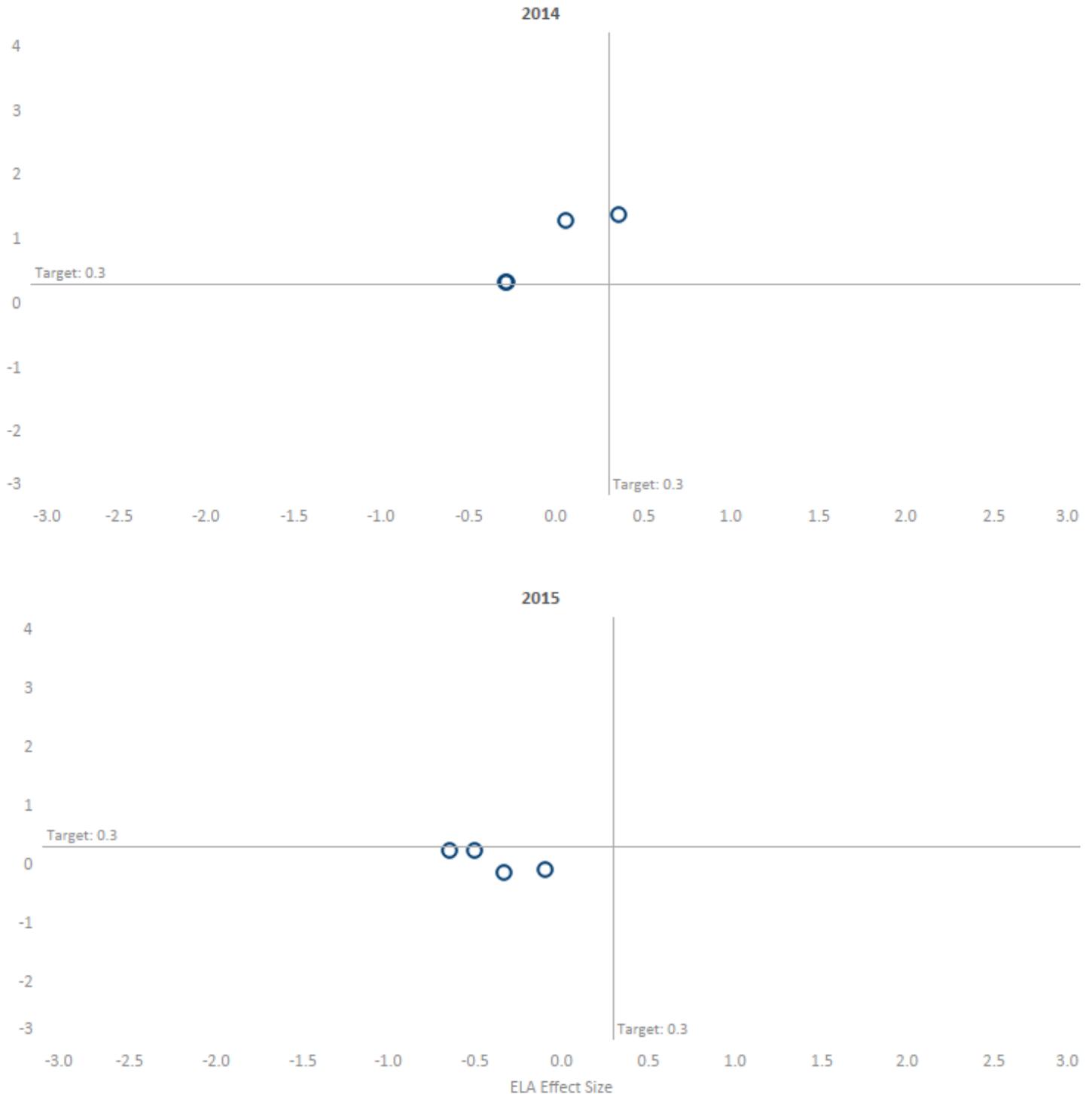
ELA and Math Effect Size Scatter Plots: 2011-12 and 2012-13



The charts compare a school's ELA and math Effect Sizes over each year for which data are available during the charter term. An effect size measures school performance in comparison to other schools statewide enrolling students with similar proportions of economic disadvantage. Schools with an ELA or math effect size that is less than 0 performed lower than expected based on the economic disadvantage statistic. Schools posting an effect size greater than 0 but less than 0.3 perform about the same as the comparison schools. Schools with an ELA or math effect size greater than 0.3 (SUNY's performance target for the measure) outperformed similar schools statewide to a meaningful degree, while schools with effect sizes greater than 0.8 perform higher than expected to a large degree.

APPENDIX E: EDUCATION CORPORATION OVERVIEW

ELA and Math Effect Size Scatter Plots: 2013-14 and 2014-15



The charts compare a school's ELA and math Effect Sizes over each year for which data are available during the charter term. An effect size measures school performance in comparison to other schools statewide enrolling students with similar proportions of economic disadvantage. Schools with an ELA or math effect size that is less than 0 performed lower than expected based on the economic disadvantage statistic. Schools posting an effect size greater than 0 but less than 0.3 perform about the same as the comparison schools. Schools with an ELA or math effect size greater than 0.3 (SUNY's performance target for the measure) outperformed similar schools statewide to a meaningful degree, while schools with effect sizes greater than 0.8 perform higher than expected to a large degree.

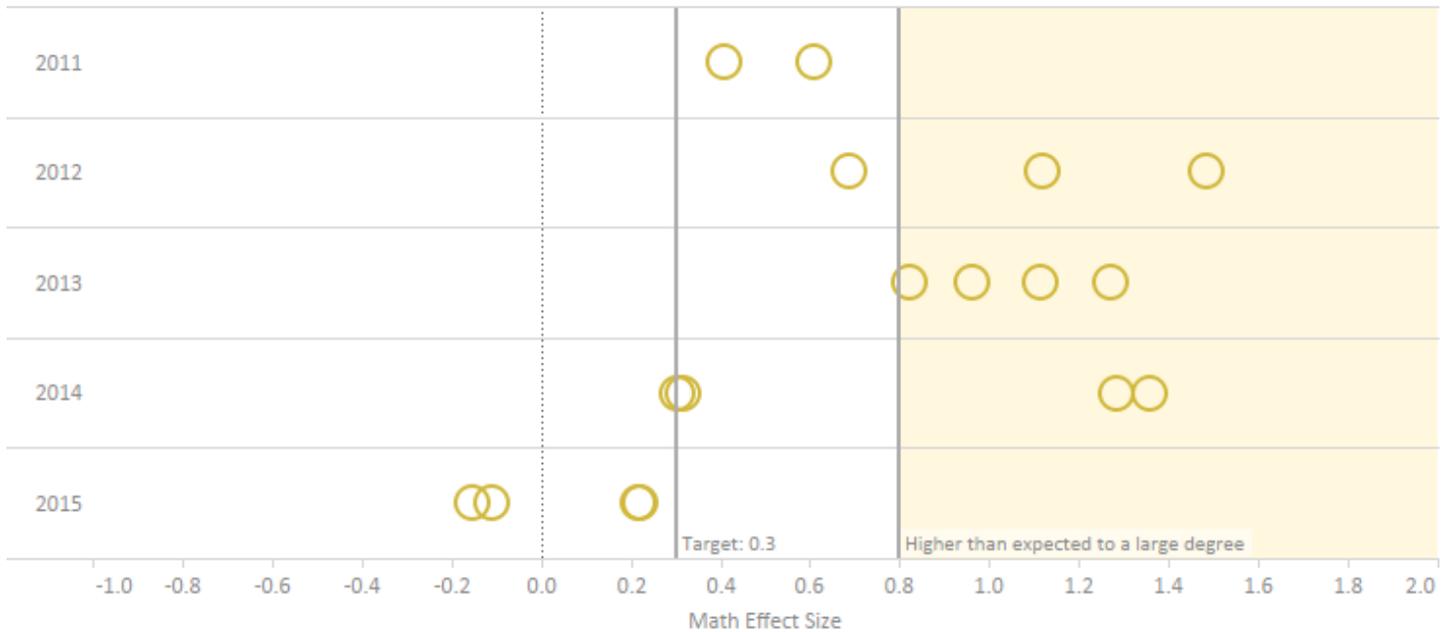
APPENDIX E: EDUCATION CORPORATION OVERVIEW

ELA and Math Effect Size Dot Plots: 2010-11 through 2014-15

ELA Effect Size by Year and School



Math Effect Size by Year and School

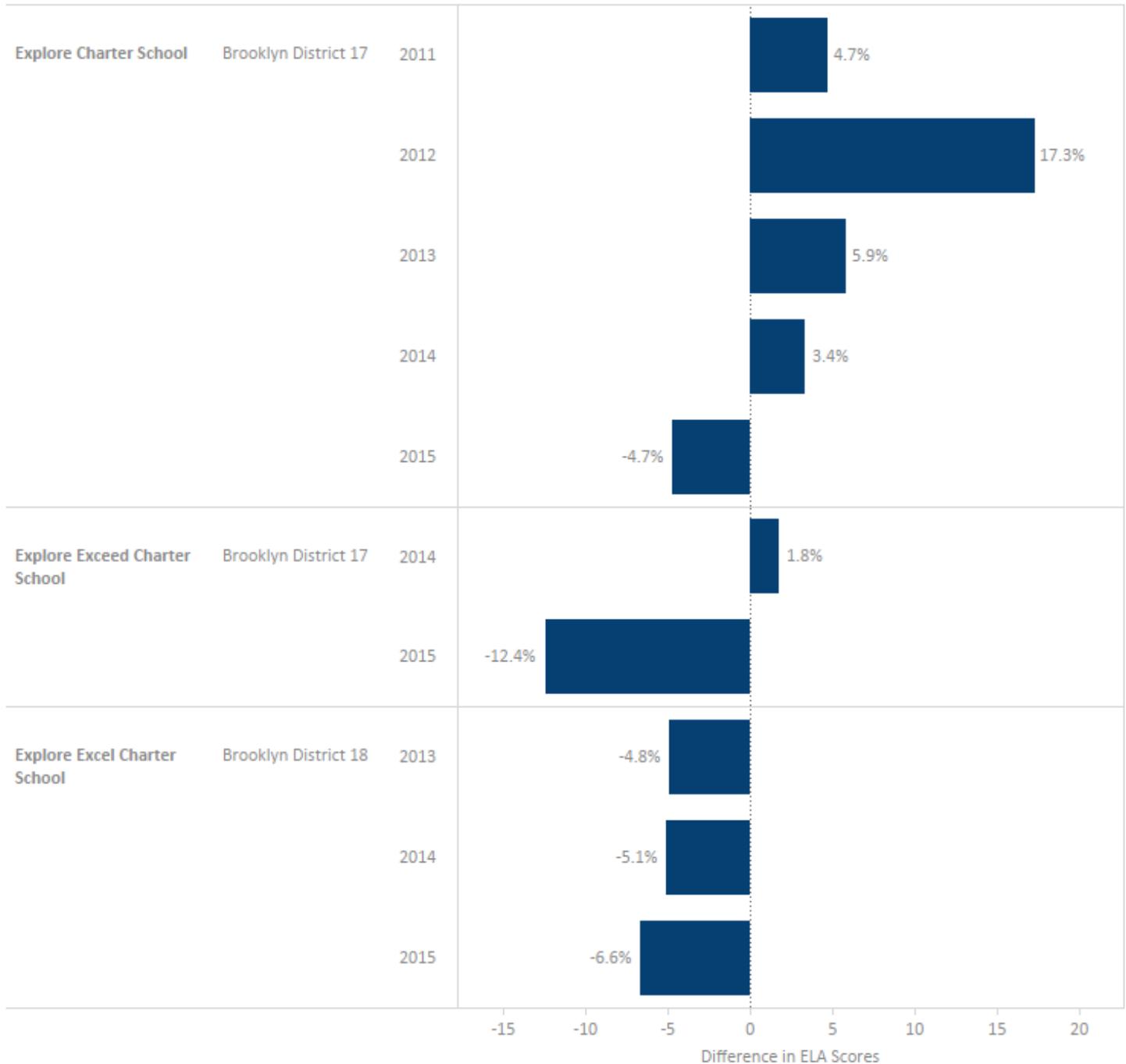


The charts illustrate the comparative Effect Size performance at each school across the ed corp by each year for which data are available throughout the charter term. Schools performing at or above 0.3 are meeting SUNY's benchmark for the measure. Schools performing at or above 0.8 are performing higher than expected to a large degree in comparison to schools enrolling similar levels of economically disadvantaged students.

APPENDIX E: EDUCATION CORPORATION OVERVIEW

Difference between schools and district scores: 2010-11 through 2014-15

Difference between ELA School and District Scores

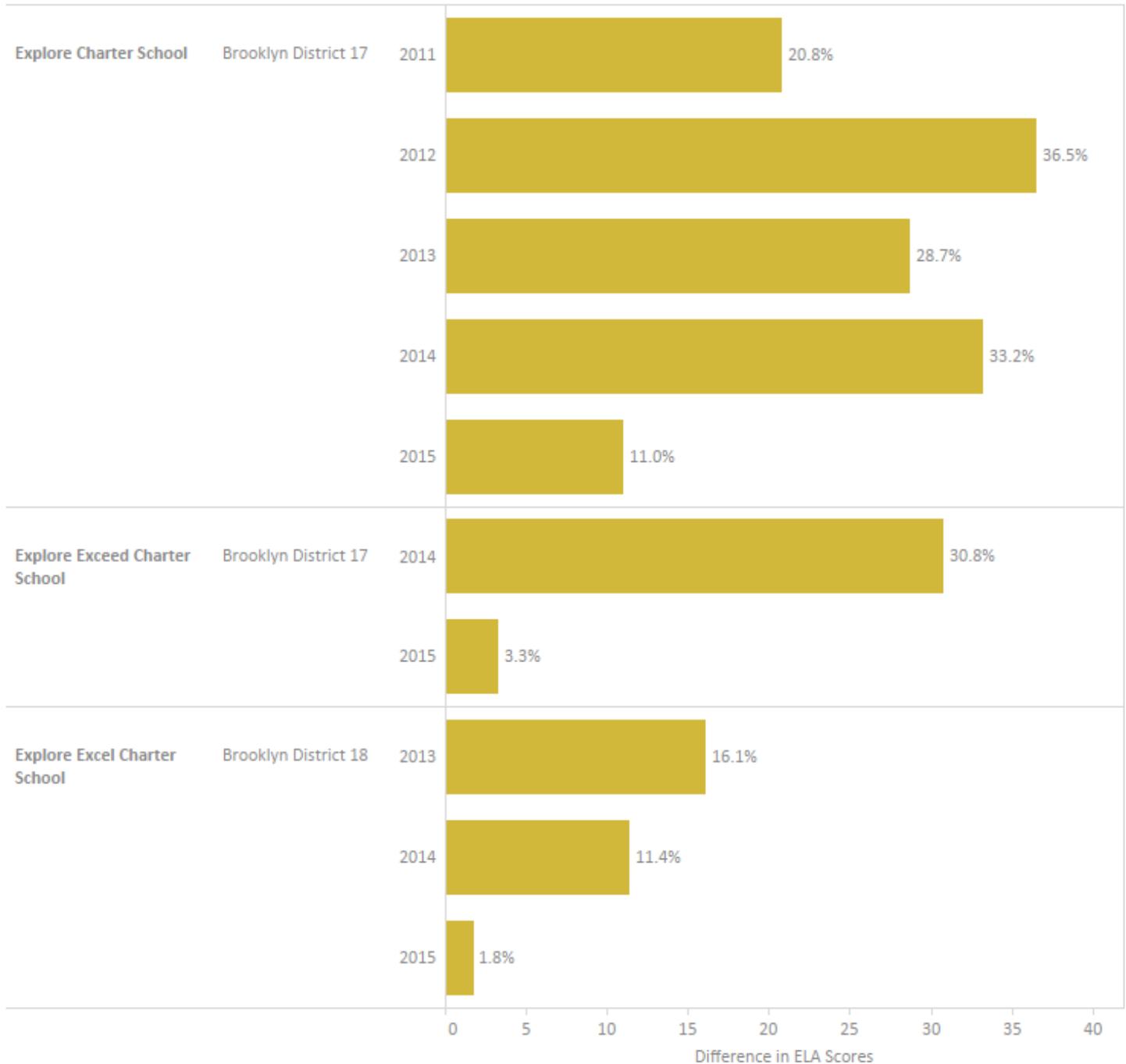


District Difference for each year broken down by school and district. These charts compare a school's performance to that of the district. Each bar represents the difference between the school's performance and the district's. A positive result (showing the bar to the right of zero) indicates the amount by which the school outscored the district. A negative result (with the bar to the left of zero) illustrates the amount by which the school performed lower than the district. A score of zero indicates that the school performed exactly even with the district. School scores reflect the achievement of students enrolled for at least two years per the schools' Accountability Plans.

APPENDIX E: EDUCATION CORPORATION OVERVIEW

Difference between schools and district scores: 2010-11 through 2014-15

Difference between Math School and District Scores



District Difference for each year broken down by school and district. These charts compare a school's performance to that of the district. Each bar represents the difference between the school's performance and the district's. A positive result (showing the bar to the right of zero) indicates the amount by which the school outscored the district. A negative result (with the bar to the left of zero) illustrates the amount by which the school performed lower than the district. A score of zero indicates that the school performed exactly even with the district. School scores reflect the achievement of students enrolled for at least two years per the schools' Accountability Plans.

Appendix F

Education Corporation Fiscal Dashboard

APPENDIX F: EDUCATION CORPORATION FISCAL DASHBOARD



Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn (Merged)

SCHOOL INFORMATION

BALANCE SHEET

Assets

Current Assets

Cash and Cash Equivalents - **GRAPH 1**
Grants and Contracts Receivable
Accounts Receivable
Prepaid Expenses
Contributions and Other Receivables

Total Current Assets - **GRAPH 1**

Property, Building and Equipment, net

Other Assets

Total Assets - **GRAPH 1**

Liabilities and Net Assets

Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses
Accrued Payroll and Benefits
Deferred Revenue
Current Maturities of Long-Term Debt
Short Term Debt - Bonds, Notes Payable
Other

Total Current Liabilities - **GRAPH 1**

L-T Debt and Notes Payable, net current maturities

Total Liabilities - **GRAPH 1**

Net Assets

Unrestricted
Temporarily restricted

Total Net Assets

Total Liabilities and Net Assets

ACTIVITIES

Operating Revenue

Resident Student Enrollment
Students with Disabilities

Grants and Contracts

State and local
Federal - Title and IDEA
Federal - Other
Other

Food Service/Child Nutrition Program

Total Operating Revenue

Expenses

Regular Education
SPED
Regular Education & SPED (combined)
Other

Total Program Services

Management and General
Fundraising

Total Expenses - **GRAPHS 2, 3 & 4**

Surplus / (Deficit) From School Operations

Support and Other Revenue

Contributions
Fundraising
Miscellaneous Income
Net assets released from restriction

Total Support and Other Revenue

Total Unrestricted Revenue

Total Temporarily Restricted Revenue

Total Revenue - **GRAPHS 2 & 3**

Change in Net Assets

Net Assets - Beginning of Year - **GRAPH 2**

Prior Year Adjustment(s)

Net Assets - End of Year - **GRAPH 2**

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Assets					
Current Assets					
Cash and Cash Equivalents - GRAPH 1	-	435,413	3,172,294	4,650,210	6,982,429
Grants and Contracts Receivable	-	452,002	646,968	458,499	373,547
Accounts Receivable	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaid Expenses	-	58,279	71,632	181,881	46,607
Contributions and Other Receivables	-	-	-	-	2,297
Total Current Assets - GRAPH 1	-	945,694	3,890,894	5,290,590	7,404,880
Property, Building and Equipment, net	-	279,733	933,466	826,994	756,898
Other Assets	-	5,002	180,132	220,325	220,545
Total Assets - GRAPH 1	-	1,230,429	5,004,492	6,337,909	8,382,323
Liabilities and Net Assets					
Current Liabilities					
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	-	215,482	311,552	431,533	548,252
Accrued Payroll and Benefits	-	278,046	1,360,207	1,493,801	1,614,387
Deferred Revenue	-	-	-	-	-
Current Maturities of Long-Term Debt	-	-	-	-	-
Short Term Debt - Bonds, Notes Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	12,860	37,455	22,889	90,124
Total Current Liabilities - GRAPH 1	-	506,388	1,709,214	1,948,223	2,252,763
L-T Debt and Notes Payable, net current maturities	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities - GRAPH 1	-	506,388	1,709,214	1,948,223	2,252,763
Net Assets					
Unrestricted	-	724,041	2,395,278	3,389,686	4,219,560
Temporarily restricted	-	-	900,000	1,000,000	1,910,000
Total Net Assets	-	724,041	3,295,278	4,389,686	6,129,560
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	-	1,230,429	5,004,492	6,337,909	8,382,323
ACTIVITIES					
Operating Revenue					
Resident Student Enrollment	-	3,145,352	14,563,077	16,071,983	10,853,617
Students with Disabilities	-	223,597	822,922	1,643,153	1,394,593
Grants and Contracts					
State and local	-	212,333	276,087	78,140	64,121
Federal - Title and IDEA	-	133,730	1,302,068	958,277	424,161
Federal - Other	-	473,795	365,226	265,986	248,019
Other	-	-	-	37,916	-
Food Service/Child Nutrition Program	-	-	-	-	-
Total Operating Revenue	-	4,188,807	17,329,380	19,055,455	12,984,511
Expenses					
Regular Education	-	3,109,842	11,295,913	12,867,804	8,308,081
SPED	-	115,365	2,159,911	2,068,595	1,997,706
Regular Education & SPED (combined)	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Program Services	-	3,225,207	13,455,824	14,936,399	10,305,787
Management and General	-	505,615	2,717,865	3,071,269	2,018,454
Fundraising	-	-	-	-	-
Total Expenses - GRAPHS 2, 3 & 4	-	3,730,822	16,173,689	18,007,668	12,324,241
Surplus / (Deficit) From School Operations	-	457,985	1,155,691	1,047,787	660,270
Support and Other Revenue					
Contributions	-	250,000	165,140	1,105	-
Fundraising	-	13,280	30,968	43,591	25,087
Miscellaneous Income	-	2,776	1,870	1,925	8,263
Net assets released from restriction	-	-	-	-	-
Total Support and Other Revenue	-	266,056	197,978	46,621	33,350
Total Unrestricted Revenue	-	4,454,863	17,527,358	19,102,076	13,017,861
Total Temporarily Restricted Revenue	-	-	-	-	-
Total Revenue - GRAPHS 2 & 3	-	4,454,863	17,527,358	19,102,076	13,017,861
Change in Net Assets	-	724,041	1,353,669	1,094,408	693,620
Net Assets - Beginning of Year - GRAPH 2	-	-	1,941,609	3,295,278	2,550,766
Prior Year Adjustment(s)	-	-	-	-	-
Net Assets - End of Year - GRAPH 2	-	724,041	3,295,278	4,389,686	3,244,386

APPENDIX F: EDUCATION CORPORATION FISCAL DASHBOARD



Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn (Merged)

SCHOOL INFORMATION - (Continued)

Functional Expense Breakdown

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Personnel Service					
Administrative Staff Personnel	-	679,734	2,537,982	3,520,127	3,479,426
Instructional Personnel	-	1,325,537	6,970,287	6,756,004	7,746,353
Non-Instructional Personnel	-	-	-	-	-
Personnel Services (Combined)	-	-	-	-	-
Total Salaries and Staff	-	2,005,271	9,508,269	10,276,131	11,225,779
Fringe Benefits & Payroll Taxes	-	414,326	2,211,079	2,543,730	2,659,822
Retirement	-	-	-	-	-
Management Company Fees	-	361,715	1,633,415	1,892,916	2,165,144
Building and Land Rent / Lease	-	-	15,572	1	1
Staff Development	-	113,759	151,532	231,915	279,985
Professional Fees, Consultant & Purchased Services	-	199,888	478,887	850,177	922,826
Marketing / Recruitment	-	60,317	123,117	104,380	87,233
Student Supplies, Materials & Services	-	307,956	771,159	673,389	789,586
Depreciation	-	34,837	283,548	383,458	394,948
Other	-	232,753	997,111	1,051,571	1,109,437
Total Expenses	-	3,730,822	16,173,689	18,007,668	19,634,761

SCHOOL ANALYSIS

ENROLLMENT	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Chartered Enroll	-	168	937	1,055	1,655
Revised Enroll	-	224	993	1,561	1,715
Actual Enroll - GRAPH 4	-	233	1,047	1,603	1,781
Chartered Grades	-	-	-	-	-
Revised Grades	-	-	-	-	-

Primary School District:

Per Pupil Funding (Weighted Avg of All Districts)	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Increase over prior year	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

PER STUDENT BREAKDOWN

Revenue	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term
Operating	-	17,978	16,553	11,887	11,969	14,597
Other Revenue and Support	-	1,142	189	29	29	347
TOTAL - GRAPH 3	-	19,120	16,742	11,916	11,999	14,944
Expenses						
Program Services	-	13,842	12,853	9,318	9,235	11,312
Management and General, Fundraising	-	2,170	2,596	1,916	1,787	2,117
TOTAL - GRAPH 3	-	16,012	15,449	11,234	11,022	13,429
% of Program Services	0.0%	86.4%	83.2%	82.9%	83.8%	84.1%
% of Management and Other	0.0%	13.6%	16.8%	17.1%	16.2%	15.9%
% of Revenue Exceeding Expenses - GRAPH 5	0.0%	19.4%	8.4%	6.1%	8.9%	11.3%

Student to Faculty Ratio

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
-	-	-	-	-

Faculty to Admin Ratio

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
-	-	-	-	-

Financial Responsibility Composite Scores - GRAPH 6

Score	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Average
Fiscally Strong 1.5 - 3.0 / Fiscally Adequate 1.0 - 1.4 / Fiscally Needs Monitoring < 1.0	0.0	2.9	2.8	2.6	2.9	2.8
	N/A	Fiscally Strong				

Working Capital - GRAPH 7

Net Working Capital	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Average
As % of Unrestricted Revenue	0	439,306	2,181,680	3,342,367	5,152,117	2,778,868
Working Capital (Current) Ratio Score	0.0%	9.9%	12.4%	17.5%	24.1%	16.0%
Risk (Low ≥ 3.0 / Medium 1.4 - 2.9 / High < 1.4)	0.0	1.9	2.3	2.7	3.3	2.5
Rating (Excellent ≥ 3.0 / Good 1.4 - 2.9 / Poor < 1.4)	N/A	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW	MEDIUM
	N/A	Good	Good	Good	Excellent	Good

Quick (Acid Test) Ratio

Score	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Average
Risk (Low ≥ 2.5 / Medium 1.0 - 2.4 / High < 1.0)	0.0	1.8	2.2	2.6	3.3	2.5
Rating (Excellent ≥ 2.5 / Good 1.0 - 2.4 / Poor < 1.0)	N/A	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW	LOW
	N/A	Good	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent

Debt to Asset Ratio - GRAPH 7

Score	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Average
Risk (Low < 0.50 / Medium 0.51 - .95 / High > 1.0)	0.0	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Rating (Excellent < 0.50 / Good 0.51 - .95 / Poor > 1.0)	N/A	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW
	N/A	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent

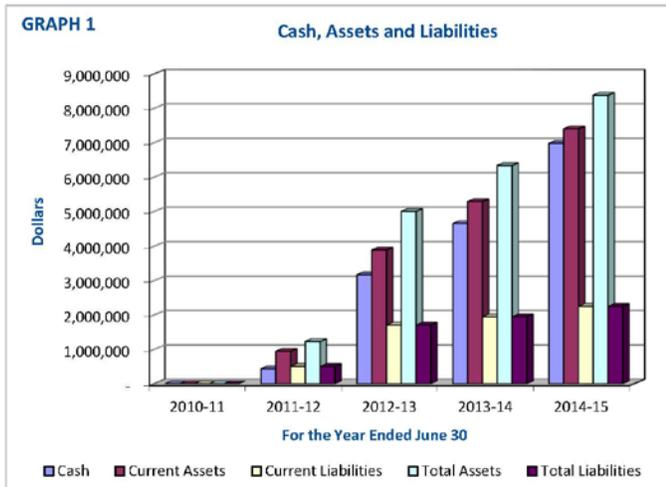
Months of Cash - GRAPH 8

Score	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Average
Risk (Low > 3 mo. / Medium 1 - 3 mo. / High < 1 mo.)	0.0	1.4	2.4	3.1	4.3	2.8
Rating (Excellent > 3 mo. / Good 1 - 3 mo. / Poor < 1 mo.)	N/A	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM
	N/A	Good	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Good

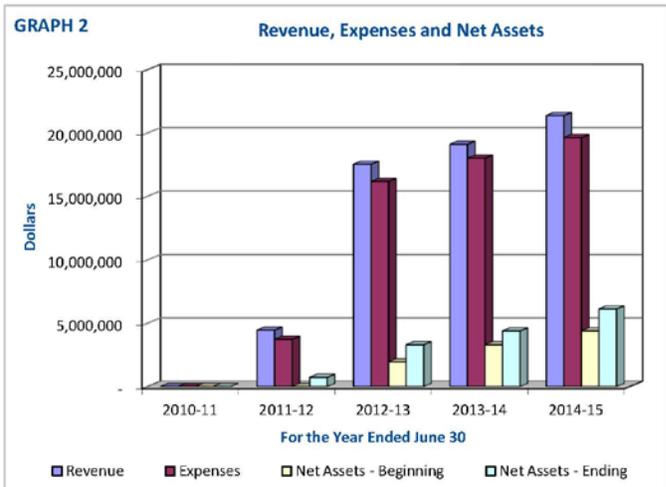
APPENDIX F: EDUCATION CORPORATION FISCAL DASHBOARD



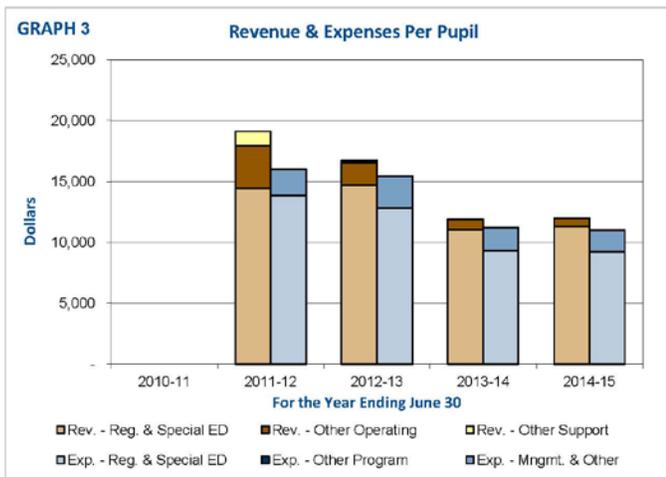
Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn (Merged)



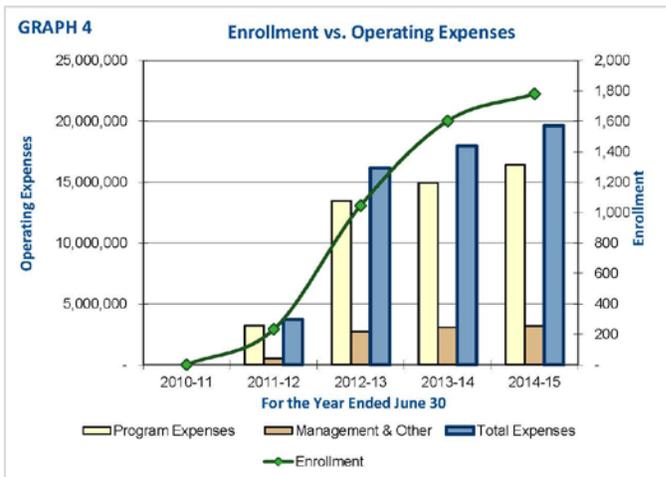
This chart illustrates the relationship between assets and liabilities and to what extent cash reserves makes up current assets. Ideally for each subset, subsets 2 thru 4, (i.e. current assets vs. current liabilities), the column on the left is taller than the immediate column on the right; and, generally speaking, the bigger that gap, the better.



This chart illustrates total revenue and expenses each year and the relationship those subsets have on the increase/decrease of net assets on a year-to-year basis. Ideally subset 1, revenue, will be taller than subset 2, expenses, and as a result subset 3, net assets - beginning, will increase each year building a more fiscally viable school.



This chart illustrates the breakdown of revenue and expenses on a per pupil basis. Caution should be exercised in making school-by-school comparisons since schools serving different missions or student populations are likely to have substantially different educational cost bases. Comparisons with similar schools with similar dynamics are most valid.



This chart illustrates to what extent the school's operating expenses have followed its student enrollment pattern. A baseline assumption that this data tests is that operating expenses increase with each additional student served. This chart also compares and contrasts growth trends of both, giving insight into what a reasonable expectation might be in terms of economies of scale.

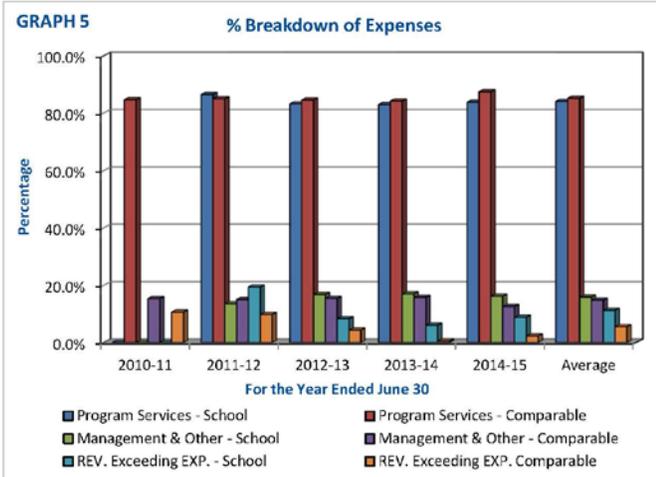
APPENDIX F: EDUCATION CORPORATION FISCAL DASHBOARD



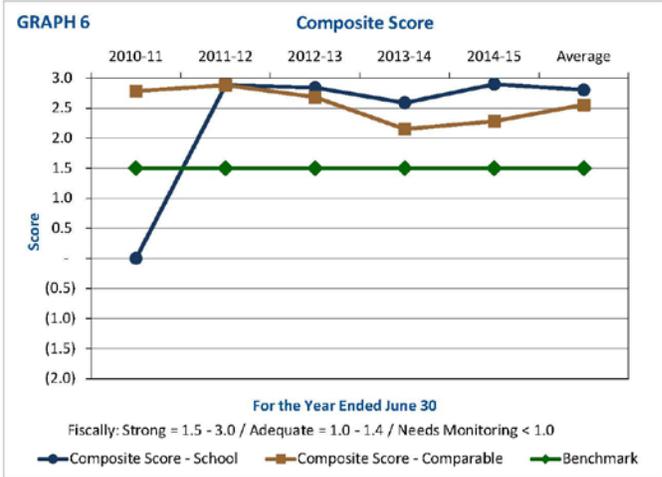
Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn (Merged)

Comparable School, Region or Network: New York City & Long Island Schools

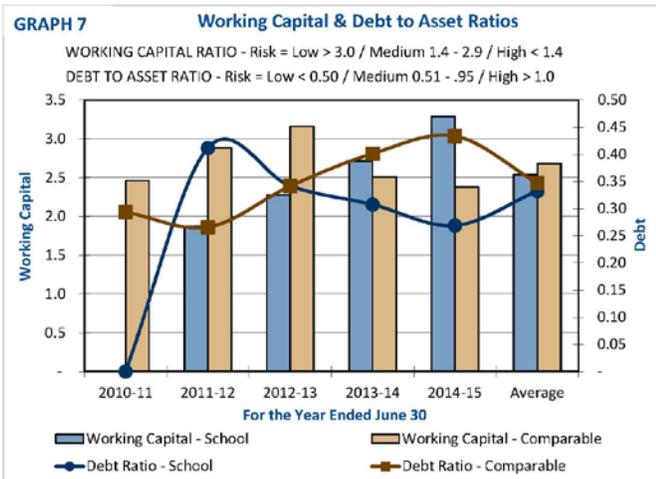
* Average = Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term



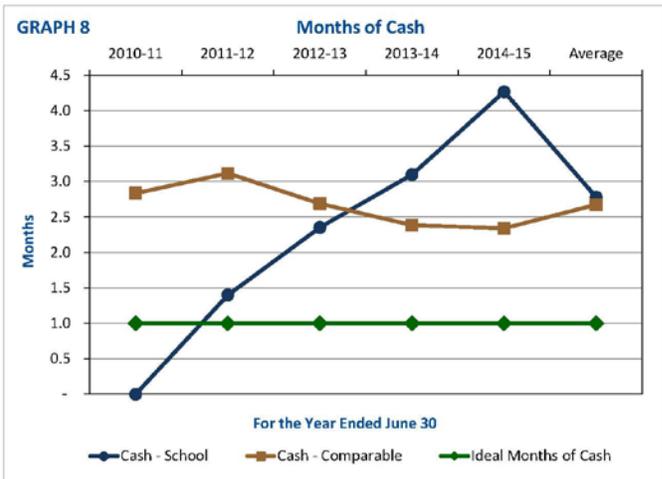
This chart illustrates the percentage expense breakdown between program services and management & others as well as the percentage of revenues exceeding expenses. Ideally the percentage expense for program services will far exceed that of the management & other expense. The percentage of revenues exceeding expenses should not be negative. Similar caution, as mentioned on GRAPH 3, should be used in comparing schools.



This chart illustrates a school's composite score based on the methodology developed by the United States Department of Education (USDOE) to determine whether private not-for-profit colleges and universities are financially strong enough to participate in federal loan programs. These scores can be valid for observing the fiscal trends of a particular school and used as a tool to compare the results of different schools.



This chart illustrates Working Capital and Debt to Asset Ratios. The Working Capital ratio indicates if a school has enough short-term assets to cover its immediate liabilities/short term debt. The Debt to Asset ratio indicates what proportion of debt a school has relative to its assets. The measure gives an idea to the leverage of the school along with the potential risks the school faces in terms of its debt-load.



This chart illustrates how many months of cash the school has in reserves. This metric is to measure solvency – the school's ability to pay debts and claims as they come due. This gives some idea of how long a school could continue its ongoing operating costs without tapping into some other, non-cash form of financing in the event that revenues were to cease flowing to the school.