



Brighter Choice Middle Charter School for Boys

School Evaluation Report 2012-13

Visit Date: February 13-14, 2013

Report Issued: July 8, 2013

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INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report includes four components. The first section, titled School Overview, provides descriptive information about the school, including enrollment and demographic data, as well as historical information regarding the life of the school. The second section provides background information on the conduct of the evaluation visit, including the date of the visit and information about the evaluation team and puts the visit in the context of the school's current charter cycle. The third section provides the school's 2010-11 Performance Review and Summaries, which gives an analysis of the attainment of the key academic goals in the school's Accountability Plan. Finally, a fourth section entitled School Evaluation Visit presents overall benchmark conclusions (in italics) and an analysis of evidence collected for each of the respective benchmarks. Following these sections, the report includes an appendix containing the Qualitative Educational Benchmarks (a component of the Renewal Benchmarks) used during the visit

The Qualitative Educational Benchmarks address the academic success of the school, focusing on teaching and learning (i.e., curriculum, instruction, and assessment), and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization, including board oversight and organizational capacity. The Institute uses the established criteria on a regular and ongoing basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

The report below provides more detailed conclusions, and evidence to support these conclusions, for some benchmarks in order to highlight areas of concern and provide additional feedback. In contrast to the format of reports issued in previous years and in an effort to issue reports in a timelier manner, the Institute now approaches the presentation as an exception report and deliberately emphasizes areas of concern. As such, limited detail and evidence about positive aspects of the program are not an indication that the Institute does not fully recognize evidence of program effectiveness.

Because of the inherent complexity of a school organization, this School Evaluation Report does not contain a single rating or comprehensive indicator that would specify at a glance the school's prospects for renewal. It does, however, summarize the various strengths of the school and note areas in need of improvement based on the Qualitative Educational Benchmarks.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	September 15, 2009
Date Initial Charter Approved by: Board of Regents	January 12, 2010
School Opening Date	September 7, 2010

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades	District
2010-11	116 North Lake Avenue, Albany, NY	5	Albany
2011-12 to Present	395 Elk Street, Albany, NY	5-7	Albany

Partner Organizations

	Partner Name	Partner Type	Dates of Service
Current Partner	Brighter Choice Foundation	Nonprofit Foundation ¹	2010-11 to Present

Current Mission Statement

The mission of the Brighter Choice Charter Middle School for Boys is to prepare boys for high school and college success while attending to the unique developmental needs of middle school scholars.

Current Key Design Elements

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiating instruction to meet the wide ranging learning needs of its entire scholar body and offering flexible learning spaces that compliment and encourage varied instructional methods.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasizing scholar choices with BCMSB's unique <i>iChoose: Citizenship, Integrity, Perseverance, & Scholarship</i> character campaign.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilizing data from all aspects of its operation to inform decision making and improve scholar performance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committing to technology use and integration into the school's academic program and culture.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing each scholar an adult advisor and small-group seminar to support the positive social and emotional development of boys.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offering individualized counseling and guidance throughout the high school placement process.

School Characteristics²

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment	Actual Grades
2010-11	54	45	5
2011-12	112	106	5-6
2012-13	168	162 ³	5-7

¹ Brighter Choice Foundation provides school with assistance in facility design, construction, and financing, as well as advocacy and other support. Though they are not a charter management organization, they do collect a per-pupil fee for service.

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

³ Source: 1st Quarter Financial Statement, January 2013.

Student Demographics⁴

	2010-11		2011-12	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of School District Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of School District Enrollment
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0	0	0
Black or African American	86	59	98	55
Hispanic	12	12	2	14
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	2	7	0	7
White	0	21	0	21
Multiracial	0	1	0	2
Special Populations				
Students with Disabilities ⁵	N/A	N/A	4 ⁶	15 ⁷
English Language Learners	0	6	1	7
Free/Reduced Lunch				
Eligible for Free Lunch	62	52	78	60
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	16	8	13	7

Current Board of Trustees⁸

Board Member Name	Position/Committees
Chris Bender	Chair
Lucia Fisher	Vice Chair
Joanne McElroy-Moore	Trustee
Martha J. Snyder	Secretary
Nilsa Vellezza	Trustee

⁴ Source: 2010-11 School Report Cards, New York State Education Department.

⁵ Source: District-level Students with Disabilities enrollment data are not available for 2010-11. SED released these district data for the first time in spring 2012.

⁶ Based on the state's Empirical Analysis of Enrollment Targets

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Source: Institute board records.

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2010-11 to 2011-12	Darryl Williams, Principal
2012-13 to Present	Darryl Williams, Director of Schools Derick Brown, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2010-11	First-Year Visit	Institute	March 17, 2011
2012-13	Routine Visit	Institute	February 14, 2013

CONDUCT OF THE SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

Specifications

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Members	Title
February 13-14, 2013	Sean Fitzsimons	Director of School Applications
	Jeff Wasbes	Director of Performance and Systems

Context of the Visit

Charter Cycle	
Charter Period	3 rd Year of the First Charter Period
Accountability Period ⁹	3 rd Year of the Current Four Year Accountability Period
Impending Renewal Visit	Fall 2014

⁹ Because the Institute makes a renewal decision in the last year of a Charter Period, the Accountability Period ends in the next to last year of the Charter Period. For initial renewals, the Accountability Period is the first four years of the Charter Period. For subsequent renewals, the Accountability Period includes the last year of the previous Charter Period through the next to last year of the current Charter Period.

2011-12 School Performance Review

Performance Evaluation

In 2011-12, the second year of Brighter Choice Middle School for Boys' ("BC Boys") four-year Accountability Period, the school is meeting its English language arts ("ELA") and math goals. It is also meeting its NCLB goals. The school does not yet have results for science.

ELA

Based on results of the five measures in its Accountability Plan, BC Boys has met its ELA goal, in the first year that all five measures were applicable. In 2011-12, 92.5 percent of students scored proficient, exceeding the absolute target. The school met the Annual Measurable Objective ("AMO") set by the state and far outperformed the Albany City Schools by over 25 percentage points. In comparison to demographically similar schools, BC Boys met the target, performing better than expected, showing improvement from the previous year when it performed worse than expected. The school met its cohort growth goal, with its 6th graders showing significant growth.

Math

Based on results of the five measures in its Accountability Plan, BC Boys also met its math goal, in the first year that all five measures were applicable. Ninety-eight percent of students scored proficient, exceeding the absolute target of 75 percent proficiency. The school met the state's AMO and outperformed the Albany City Schools by nearly 30 percentage points. The school continued to perform better than expected in comparison to demographically similar students, though performance on this measure declined from 2010-11. The school did not meet its year-to-year cohort growth target, showing a slight decline in performance from the previous year.

NCLB

The school met its NCLB goal for the second year in a row.

Science

In 2011-12, the school did not yet enroll students in the 8th grade when the state administers its science exam.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: English Language Arts
Brighter Choice Charter Middle School For Boys



	2009-10			MET	2010-11			MET	2011-12			MET						
	Grades Served:				Grades Served: 5				Grades Served: 5-6									
	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 or above a Level 3 on the New York State exam.	3	(0)	(0)		3	(0)	(0)		3	(0)	(0)							
	4	(0)	(0)		4	(0)	(0)		4	(0)	(0)							
	5	(0)	(0)		5	84.8 (46)	(0)		5	79.2 (48)	80.0 (5)							
	6	(0)	(0)		6	(0)	(0)		6	96.2 (52)	94.3 (35)							
	7	(0)	(0)		7	(0)	(0)		7	(0)	(0)							
	8	(0)	(0)		8	(0)	(0)		8	(0)	(0)							
	All	(0)	(0)	--	All	84.8 (46)	(0)	NA	All	88.0 (100)	92.5 (40)	YES						
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	Grades	PI	AMO	--	Grades	PI	AMO	YES	Grades	PI	AMO	YES						
					5	135	122		5-6	144	135							
COMPARATIVE MEASURES	Comparison: Albany City Schools				Comparison: Albany City Schools				Comparison: Albany City Schools									
3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	Grades	School	District	--	Grades	School	District	NA	Grades	School	District	YES						
					6	65.7	40.1		6	65.7	40.1							
4. Each year the school will exceed its predicted percent of students at or above Level 3 on the state exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3) based on its Free Lunch (FL) rate.	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	--	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	NO	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES			
						62.0	43.5	45.5	-0.12		67.3	50.0	44.3	0.37				
GROWTH MEASURE	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result		Gr	N	Base	Target	Result		Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	
5. The year-to-year school-wide cohort of students will meet the target of reducing by one-sixth the difference between the previous year's baseline and 75 percent performing at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam. An asterisk indicates grade-level cohort met target.	3	0				--	3					NA	3					YES
	4	0					4	0					4					
	5	0					5	0					5	5	0.0	12.5	20.0 *	
	6	0					6	0					6	35	51.4	55.4	65.7 *	
	7	0					7	0					7					
	8	0					8	0					8					
	All	0					All	0					All	40	45.0	50.0	60.0	

TACSThe Institute uses SED's "time adjusted cut scores", or "TACS", for evaluating the designated measures in the respective years. Although a lower standard than that used before 2009-10, TACS provide continuity with the standard used in previous years. Data Sources: SED data; school data workbooks; the Institute's student test database.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: Mathematics
Brighter Choice Charter Middle School for Boys



	2009-10 Grades Served:			MET	2010-11 Grades Served: 5			MET	2011-12 Grades Served: 5-6			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 or above a Level 3 on the New York State exam.	3	(0)	(0)		3	(0)	(0)		3	(0)	(0)							
	4	(0)	(0)		4	(0)	(0)		4	(0)	(0)							
	5	(0)	(0)		5	100.0 (46)	(0)		5	91.7 (48)	100.0 (5)							
	6	(0)	(0)		6	(0)	(0)		6	92.3 (52)	97.1 (35)							
	7	(0)	(0)		7	(0)	(0)		7	(0)	(0)							
	8	(0)	(0)		8	(0)	(0)		8	(0)	(0)							
	All	(0)	(0)	--	All	100.0 (46)	(0)	NA	All	92.0 (100)	97.5 (40)	YES						
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	Grades	PI	AMO	--	Grades	PI	AMO	YES	Grades	PI	AMO	YES						
					5	174	137		5-6	168	148							
COMPARATIVE MEASURES																		
3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	Comparison: Albany City Schools				Comparison: Albany City Schools				Comparison: Albany City Schools									
	Grades	School	District	--	Grades	School	District	NA	Grades	School	District	YES						
					NA		40.0		6	80.0	50.7							
4. Each year the school will exceed its predicted level of students at or above Level 3 on the State exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3) based on its Free Lunch (FL) rate.	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	--	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES			
						62.0	73.9	58.6	0.83		67.3	70.0	55.8	0.69				
GROWTH MEASURE																		
5. The year-to-year school-wide cohort of students will meet the target of reducing by one-sixth the difference between the previous year's baseline and 75 percent performing at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam. An asterisk indicates grade-level cohort met target.	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	--	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	NA	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	NO
	3						3						3					
	4						4						4					
	5						5						5	5	20.0	29.2	60.0	*
	6						6						6	35	85.7	85.8	80.0	
	7						7						7					
	8						8						8					
	All						All						All	40	77.5	77.6	77.5	

TACSThe Institute uses SED's "time adjusted cut scores", or "TACS", for evaluating the designated measures in the respective years. Although a lower standard than that used before 2009-10, TACS provide continuity with the standard used in previous years. Data Sources: SED data; school data workbooks; the Institute's student test database.

SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

Benchmark Conclusions and Evidence

1. B Use of Assessment

The school has an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning.

- The school administers Terra Nova assessments, STAR reading and math assessments, interim assessments (“IAs”) and the New York state exams to all students. Instructional leaders use the results of the Terra Nova exams to group students and to determine student growth over the course of the school year. The Academic Intervention Services (“AIS”) team administers the STAR reading and math assessments to monitor the progress of students receiving special interventions.
- The school administers the IAs three times during the year. A consultant designs the assessments with input from the director of school quality, an instructional leadership position that oversees the assessment program at Brighter Choice Charter Elementary Schools for Girls and Boys and the Brighter Choice Middle Schools for Girls and Boys. The assessment coordinator ensures that the IAs align with state performance standards and with the school’s curriculum.
- This year, teachers and instructional leaders have started to use assessments to drive the level of instructional quality at the school. School staff analyzes future assessment content and question types during the school’s rigor readiness sessions, in order to establish the expected level of instructional rigor teachers need to reach to adequately prepare students for success on state assessments. School leaders monitor instruction and use IA data to evaluate teacher effectiveness and to identify topics for professional development.
- Teachers engage in a reliable process for scoring exams. Writing teachers and instructional leaders use the state’s Common Core writing rubric, exchanging papers to ensure inter-rater reliability. Instructional leaders and teachers analyze IA data during data analysis sessions identifying topics for re-teaching and selecting students for small group instruction. They also use the analysis to adjust classroom instruction and to modify the curriculum scope and sequence.
- The director of school quality compares recently administered IA results to those from the previous year in order to determine student growth and instructional effectiveness. While this comparison is important for tracking progress, the shift to the Common Core complicates the analysis by making it difficult to determine if recent changes to the assessment and analysis are valid representations of the revised performance standards.

1. C Curriculum

BC Boys’ curriculum supports teachers in their instructional planning.

- The school uses the state standards reflecting the Common Core State Standards to provide a fixed, underlying structure for curriculum development and to ensure alignment across grades.
- Teachers use commercial curriculum resources that were vetted by school leaders to ensure alignment to state standards and identified areas where the commercial curricula are not sufficiently strong. The school uses the enVision program for math, Treasures in 5th grade and Holt-McDougal for 6th and 7th grade ELA, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Write Source for 5-8 writing, Pearson Interactive Science for science, as well as novels for ELA, writing and social studies.
- The school has a process for selecting, developing and reviewing scope and sequences and commercial curricula. Based on the commercial curricula and the state standards, instructional leaders and teachers from BC Boys and its sister school, Brighter Choice Middle School for Girls (“BC Girls”), develop common scope and sequence documents during the summer and modify the documents throughout the year based on student achievement on IAs. The scope and sequence documents set pacing, provide instructional topics and skill foci and identify supplemental texts. Teachers regularly refer to these documents to inform lesson plan development.
- At the time of the visit, leaders had informally started to discuss curricular options for the 8th grade, which will be a new grade at the school next year, but have not taken any formal steps toward developing curriculum.
- Teachers ensure purposeful and focused lessons by developing daily lesson plans using standard content templates. The templates require teachers to identify targeted lesson aims, outline plans for direct instruction, model concepts, practice these concepts with the class and engage students in independent practice (known in the school as the “I, We, You Model”). All planned lessons must include “tool kits”, which provide lesson specific cues, such as critical problem solving techniques. The tool kits are designed to serve as models for students to aide them in accessing material.

1. D Pedagogy

Adequate instruction is evident throughout the school.

- Teachers plan purposeful lessons as subject area teams, ensuring vertical alignment across grades. Lesson plans include purposeful classroom activities aligned to clearly communicated learning objectives.
- Teachers regularly use questioning techniques as well as exit tickets and consistently circulate around classrooms during independent work to check for student understanding.
- Most teachers exhibit a sense of urgency in their teaching and maximize learning time. The pacing of lessons is usually appropriate. Teachers implement the standardized, school-wide “I-we-you” instructional framework with fidelity, which helps to ensure that transitions within lessons are efficient.
- In a limited number of classes, teachers ineffectively pace instruction. For example, not all teachers leave sufficient time at the end of their lessons to administer planned exit tickets.
- Teachers effectively implement a standardized approach to classroom management based on a commonly used “taxonomy” of teaching techniques to ensure that students are on-

task. For example, teachers have a set vocabulary to re-direct students and use cold-calling to make sure that all students participate in the lesson.

- Observers witnessed mostly foundational instruction with few opportunities for students to engage in higher-order thinking. Most teacher questions did not move beyond asking students to recall factual information. Teachers missed opportunities that could have resulted in higher order thinking by doing most of the work for students. For example, many teachers used Venn diagrams to encourage students to compare and contrast information, but walked the students through the activity without allowing the students to take risks and work independently.

1. E Instructional Leadership

BC Boys has very strong instructional leadership.

- The school's instructional leadership consists of a principal, a director of schools and a director of instructional quality. The directors split their time between the four Brighter Choice Schools. The principal primarily focuses on classroom instruction; the director of instructional quality supports teachers in math and ELA; and the director of schools spends the majority of his time observing teachers and supporting the principal in guiding the teachers.
- These leaders observe teachers multiple times throughout the week, and provide teachers with feedback through scheduled meetings and during weekly professional development. They use an "Instructional Excellence Walk-Through Form" to standardize feedback and expectations and a more informal "Observation Note taking and Feedback Preparation Template" to track teacher performance during quick informal classroom walk-throughs. Instructional leaders track individual teacher progress through an "observation tracker", which includes brief summaries of all observations for each teacher, his/her instructional goals and growth targets, and also evaluates the teacher's progress in meeting these goals.
- Teachers have regular opportunities to plan curriculum and instruction in grade teams and content area departments. Teachers have daily grade level common planning and share a common office space. Teachers meet with their counterparts from BC Girls on a weekly basis to engage in common planning and during Friday weekly professional development.
- School leaders plan and implement professional development based on state assessment results from the previous year, network-level IAs and teacher observations. Teachers participate in an extensive two-week summer professional development that covers multiple topics including curriculum and lesson development, a taxonomy of effective teaching practices, school culture and discipline, and serving students at-risk of academic failure through Response to Intervention ("RtI") training and professional development on understand and implementing individualized educational programs ("IEP") accommodations.
- Professional development continues with weekly Friday half-day professional development where school leaders facilitate sessions on specific topics, including following up on summer professional development based on observed need, data analysis sessions and meetings to increase the rigor of instruction.

- The director of schools' primary purpose is to support the principal's instructional leadership through weekly planning meetings, co-observations of teachers and ongoing review of school-level professional development. He also holds monthly "skill practice sessions" where teachers can simulate implementing teacher taxonomy techniques.
- This year, the school has begun to implement a clear and rigorous teacher evaluation process including mid- and end- of-year teacher evaluations using the "Brighter Choice Instructional Excellence Rubric," which places a large emphasis on quality instruction. The school's instructional leaders, with assistance from the network director of schools, conduct the evaluations.

1. F At-Risk Students

BC Boys meets the educational needs of most at-risk students.

- The school has a clear procedure for identifying and monitoring academically struggling students and, if necessary, recommending students for referral to special education services. At the beginning of the year, teachers review students' state assessment and Terra Nova exam results, to identify students who may require intervention. Teachers also administer Teachers' College Reading Records and STAR reading exams to assess student literacy levels, and the STAR math exam to benchmark student math results and measure student progress throughout the year.
- The school administers the home language survey to all newly enrolled students and a certified English-as-a-second-language ("ESL") teacher reviews the results to determine if a student needs to take the Language Assessment Battery – Revised ("Lab-R") assessment.
- The school addresses the needs of most academically struggling students with a hierarchy of interventions. Students receive 45 minutes of daily morning leveled-reading instruction in which teachers develop lessons that address the various needs of the students in their classrooms. Teachers identify students who are struggling on assessments for interventions consisting of small group tutoring with general education teachers during morning sessions. Students who do not demonstrate academic growth through this intervention receive even smaller group instruction with an AIS teacher. At the time of the visit, these groups consisted of as many as five students per group, compared to the school's stated intent to provide one-on-one Tier 3 tutoring, and some students were not receiving Tier 3 services because of an AIS teacher long-term absence.
- The school regularly employs two or more special education teachers, and has a partnership with SUNY Albany to provide intern certified special education teachers to assist in providing services to the school's nine identified special education students. The school offers a resource room setting, and both direct and indirect consultant teaching. This year, the four Brighter Choice schools also share a special education coordinator who assists with IEP reviews, corresponding with parents and coordination with the district Committee of Special Education ("CSE"), as well as evaluating special education staff.
- The four schools also jointly employ an English-as-a-second-language ("ESL") teacher to provide tutoring for ELLs during the school day and who works with teachers to adjust

lessons and materials to serve the needs of the ELLs. At the time of the visit, the school had one ELL.

- General education teachers, as well as specialists, utilize effective strategies to support students within the general education program. At-risk staff participate in Friday professional development and also join teachers during common planning time to discuss strategies and help teachers modify materials. At-risk staff who push into classrooms actively redirect students and provide clarification to students where necessary.
- The school monitors the progress of students at-risk of academic failure through the multiple assessments listed above. The AIS team tracks the achievement of all students receiving intervention services (as well as baseline data for all students), and use this information to determine if students are making adequate progress. Teachers do not regularly consult this information; however, the AIS team informs teachers of student growth and needs based on the data. The school administers the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (“NYSESSLAT”) test to measure student English proficiency and growth and to determine when ELLs no longer need to receive services.
- Special education staff provide teachers with information about students’ IEPs at the beginning of the year and regularly consult with teachers about students’ progress towards meeting these goals. The school provides professional development during the summer on understanding accommodations on students’ IEPs and on providing intervention services.

2. C Organizational Capacity

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

- This year, the leadership structure operates to support the four Brighter Choice schools, including the Brighter Choice Charter Schools for Boys and Girls and BC Boys and Girls middle schools. The director of schools supports all instructional leaders and school staff in accomplishing the schools’ mission. The director of school quality monitors the four schools’ assessment system and quantitative data. The director of finance and operations oversees business operations for the schools. This arrangement enables school-level leaders to monitor instruction and pedagogy exclusively. School level instructional leaders report that they clearly understand their roles and feel supported.
- The director of schools meets with the director of finance and operations, the principal and the director of instructional quality quarterly to review the school’s program and ensure its effectiveness. Instructional leaders implement programmatic changes during summer professional development sessions.
- The organizational structure of the school is clear with the school principal and key network staff reporting to the director of schools, while school level leaders report to the school principal.
- Classrooms are well stocked with curriculum resources, materials and instructional technology.
- Teachers clearly articulate a well-defined school-wide discipline policy. Displays throughout the school track students’ performance on its school-wide behavior management system. The visit team did not observe any instances of the application of the discipline system.

- The school retains quality staff. The school invited every teacher back this year and added new teachers to support their expansion to the 7th grade. Two new teachers left the school early in the year. The school filled the open positions with teaching fellows who had received training on the school's teaching taxonomy, instructional framework and discipline system thus mitigating disruption.
- The school maintains adequate enrollment and has a waitlist of 22 students.
- The school is not yet accountable for enrollment and retention targets and does not yet have adequate procedures to monitor its progress toward meeting them.

2. D Board Oversight

BC Boy's Board effectively carries out school governance.

- Board members have expertise in law, business, education and child welfare, as well as charter school policy, practice and governance. While board members have sufficient knowledge necessary to monitor the school's finances, the board is actively seeking to add a member with strong financial skills.
- The board holds monthly meetings, with the board's one permanent committee, the Budget and Governance Committee, meeting more frequently to address any concerns that may arise concerning the school.
- Board members monitor the health of the school through a dashboard presented by the director of schools that contains information about the school's academic performance on standardized tests, attendance, suspension rates, personnel issues and school finances. Board members have set high, but realistic expectations for the school including eventually exceeding the statewide proficiency rate on state assessments.
- The board evaluates the director of schools based on 12 metrics and goals.
- The board participates in professional development on effective governance and school monitoring practices held by national experts. This program also assists the board in monitoring its own performance and seeking to make changes and improvements when necessary. The board members created the joint Governance and Finance Committee as a result for their participation in the program.



State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

Version 5.0, May 2012

Introduction

The State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks¹⁰ (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) serve two primary functions at renewal:

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

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks are organized into four inter-connected renewal questions that each school must answer when submitting a renewal application. The benchmarks further reflect the interwoven nature of schools from an academic, organizational, fiscal and/or legal perspective.

¹⁰ Research on public school reform, known as the effective schools movement, has embraced the premise that, given certain organizing and cultural characteristics, schools can teach all children the intended curriculum and hold them to high academic standards. Over the decades, the accumulated research into effective schools has yielded a set of common characteristics that all effective schools share. These characteristics are so consistently prevalent among successful schools that they have come to be known as the *Correlates of Effective Schools*. The Renewal Benchmarks adapt and elaborate on these correlates.

-Revised May 2012-

For example, the Institute could reasonably place many of the academic benchmarks under the heading of organizational effectiveness. More generally, some redundancy exists because the Institute looks at the same issue from different perspectives.

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

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

In this fifth edition of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, the Institute has made some revisions to the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, namely those benchmarks used for ongoing school evaluation visits, to streamline the collection of evidence. For example, the Institute has incorporated Student Order and Discipline into Pedagogy, and Professional Development into Instructional Leadership.

The Institute has rewritten some of the overarching benchmark statements to capture the most salient aspects of school effectiveness, organizational viability, legal compliance, and fiscal soundness. Some of the bulleted indicators within benchmarks have been recast or eliminated. Finally, the Institute has added some indicators to align the benchmarks with changes in the Charter Schools Act (e.g., provisions in meeting enrollment and retention targets when assigned and abiding by the General Municipal Law).

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

State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p style="text-align: center;">SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1A</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Academic Accountability Plan Goals</p>	<p>Over the Accountability Period, the school has met or come close to meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals.</p> <p>The Institute determines the extent to which the school has met the Accountability Plan goals in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English language arts; • mathematics; • science; • social studies (high school only); • NCLB; • high school graduation and college preparation (if applicable); and • optional academic goals included by the school.

<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1B</p> <p>Use of Assessment Data</p>	<p>The school has an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school regularly administers valid and reliable assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum and state performance standards; • the school has a valid and reliable process for scoring and analyzing assessments; • the school makes assessment data accessible to teachers, school leaders and board members; • teachers use assessment results to meet students’ needs by adjusting classroom instruction, grouping students and/or identifying students for special intervention; • school leaders use assessment results to evaluate teacher effectiveness and to develop professional development and coaching strategies; and • the school regularly communicates to parents/guardians about their students’ progress and growth.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1C</p> <p>Curriculum</p>	<p>The school’s curriculum supports teachers in their instructional planning.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has a curriculum framework with student performance expectations that provides a fixed, underlying structure, aligned to state standards and across grades; • in addition to the framework, the school has supporting tools (i.e., curriculum maps or scope and sequence documents) that provide a bridge between the curriculum framework and lesson plans; • teachers know what to teach and when to teach it based on these documents; • the school has a process for selecting, developing and reviewing its curriculum documents and its resources for delivering the curriculum; and • teachers plan purposeful and focused lessons.

<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1D</p> <p>Pedagogy</p>	<p>High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers deliver purposeful lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school’s curriculum; • teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding; • teachers include opportunities in their lessons to challenge students with questions and activities that develop depth of understanding and higher-order thinking and problem solving skills; • teachers maximize learning time (e.g., appropriate pacing, on-task student behavior, clear lesson focus and clear directions to students); transitions are efficient; and • teachers have effective classroom management techniques and routines that create a consistent focus on academic achievement.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1E</p> <p>Instructional Leadership</p>	<p>The school has strong instructional leadership.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school’s leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance (in content knowledge and pedagogical skills) and in which teachers believe that all students can succeed; • the instructional leadership is adequate to support the development of the teaching staff; • instructional leaders provide sustained, systemic and effective coaching and supervision that improves teachers’ instructional effectiveness; • instructional leaders provide opportunities and guidance for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction within and across grade levels; • instructional leaders implement a comprehensive professional development program that develops the competencies and skills of all teachers; • professional development activities are interrelated with classroom practice; • instructional leaders regularly conduct teacher evaluations with clear criteria that accurately identify teachers’ strengths and weaknesses; and • instructional leaders hold teachers accountable for quality instruction and student achievement.

<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1F</p> <p>At-Risk Students</p>	<p>The school meets the educational needs of at-risk students.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school uses clear procedures for identifying at-risk students including students with disabilities, English language learners and those struggling academically; • the school has adequate intervention programs to meet the needs of at-risk students; • general education teachers, as well as specialists, utilize effective strategies to support students within the general education program; • the school adequately monitors the progress and success of at-risk students; • teachers are aware of their students’ progress toward meeting IEP goals, achieving English proficiency or school-based goals for struggling students; • the school provides adequate training and professional development to identify at-risk students and to help teachers meet students' needs; and • the school provides opportunities for coordination between classroom teachers and at-risk program staff including the school nurse, if applicable.
<p>Renewal Question 2</p> <p>Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?</p>	
<p><u>Evidence Category</u></p>	<p><u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u></p>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2A</p> <p>Mission & Key Design Elements</p>	<p>The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school faithfully follows its mission; and • the school has implemented its key design elements.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2B</p> <p>Parents & Students</p>	<p>Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school regularly communicates each child's academic performance results to families; • families are satisfied with the school; and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents keep their children enrolled year-to-year.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2C</p> <p>Organizational Capacity</p>	<p>The school organization effectively supports the delivery of the educational program.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has established an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, policies and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program; • the organizational structure establishes distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities; • the school has a clear student discipline system in place at the administrative level that is consistently applied; • the school retains quality staff; • the school has allocated sufficient resources to support the achievement of goals; • the school maintains adequate student enrollment; • the school has procedures in place to monitor its progress toward meeting enrollment and retention targets for special education students, ELLs and students who qualify for free and reduced price lunch, and adjusts its recruitment efforts accordingly; and • the school regularly monitors and evaluates the school’s programs and makes changes if necessary.

<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2D</p> <p>Board Oversight</p>	<p>The school board works effectively to achieve the school’s Accountability Plan goals.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • board members possess adequate skills and have put in place structures and procedures with which to govern the school and oversee management of day-to-day operations in order to ensure the school’s future as an academically successful, financially healthy and legally compliant organization; • the board requests and receives sufficient information to provide rigorous oversight of the school’s program and finances; • it establishes clear priorities, objectives and long-range goals, (including Accountability Plan, fiscal, facilities and fundraising), and has in place benchmarks for tracking progress as well as a process for their regular review and revision; • the board successfully recruits, hires and retains key personnel, and provides them with sufficient resources to function effectively; • the board regularly evaluates its own performance and that of the school leaders and the management company (if applicable), holding them accountable for student achievement; and • the board effectively communicates with the school community including school leadership, staff, parents/guardians and students.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2E</p> <p>Governance</p>	<p>The board implements, maintains and abides by appropriate policies, systems and processes.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the board effectively communicates with its partner or management organizations as well as key contractors such as back-office service providers and ensures that it receives value in exchange for contracts and relationships it enters into and effectively monitors such relationships; • the board takes effective action when there are organizational, leadership, management, facilities or fiscal deficiencies; or where the management or partner organization fails to meet expectations; to correct those deficiencies and puts in place benchmarks for determining if the partner organization corrects them in a timely fashion; • the board regularly reviews and updates board and school policies as needed and has in place an orientation process for new

	<p>members;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the board effectively recruits and selects new members in order to maintain adequate skill sets and expertise for effective governance and structural continuity; • the board implements a comprehensive and strict conflict of interest policy (and/or code of ethics)—consistent with that set forth in the charter and with the General Municipal Law—and consistently abides by them throughout the term of the charter; • the board generally avoids conflicts of interest; where not possible, the board manages those conflicts in a clear and transparent manner; • the board implements a process for dealing with complaints consistent with that set forth in the charter, makes the complaint policy clear to all stakeholders, and follows the policy including acting on complaints in a timely fashion; • the board abides by its by-laws including, but not limited to, provisions regarding trustee election and the removal and filling of vacancies; and • the board holds all meetings in accordance with the Open Meetings Law and records minutes for all meetings including executive sessions and, as appropriate, committee meetings.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2F</p> <p>Legal Requirements</p>	<p>The school substantially complies with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school compiles a record of substantial compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations including, but not limited to, submitting items to the Institute in a timely manner, and meeting teacher certification (including NCLB highly qualified status) and background check requirements, FOIL and Open Meetings Law; • the school substantially complies with the terms of its charter and applicable laws, rules and regulations; • the school abides by the terms of its monitoring plan; • the school implements effective systems and controls to ensure that it meets legal and charter requirements; • the school has an active and ongoing relationship with in-house or independent legal counsel who reviews and makes recommendations on relevant policies, documents, transactions and incidents and who also handles other legal matters as needed;

	<p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school manages any litigation appropriately and provides litigation papers to insurers and the Institute in a timely manner.
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Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3A</p> <p>Budgeting and Long Range Planning</p>	<p>The school operates pursuant to a long-range financial plan in which it creates realistic budgets that it monitors and adjusts when appropriate.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school has clear budgetary objectives and budget preparation procedures; board members, school management and staff contribute to the budget process, as appropriate; the school frequently compares its long-range fiscal plan to actual progress and adjusts it to meet changing conditions; the school routinely analyzes budget variances; the board addresses material variances and makes necessary revisions; and actual expenses are equal to, or less than, actual revenue with no material exceptions.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3B</p> <p>Internal Controls</p>	<p>The school maintains appropriate internal controls and procedures.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school follows a set of comprehensive written fiscal policies and procedures; the school accurately records and appropriately documents transactions in accordance with management’s direction, laws, regulations, grants and contracts; the school safeguards its assets; the school identifies/analyzes risks and takes mitigating actions; the school has controls in place to ensure that management decisions are properly carried out and monitors and assesses controls to ensure their adequacy; the school’s trustees and employees adhere to a code of ethics; the school ensures duties are appropriately segregated, or institutes compensating controls;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school ensures that employees performing financial functions are appropriately qualified and adequately trained; • the school has systems in place to provide the appropriate information needed by staff and the board to make sound financial decisions and to fulfill compliance requirements; • a staff member of the school reviews grant agreements and restrictive gifts and monitors compliance with all stated conditions; • the school prepares payroll according to appropriate state and federal regulations and school policy; • the school ensures that employees, trustees and volunteers who handle cash and investments are bonded to help assure the safeguarding of assets; and • the school takes corrective action in a timely manner to address any internal control or compliance deficiencies identified by its external auditor, the Institute, and/or the State Education Department or the Comptroller, if needed.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3C</p> <p>Financial Reporting</p>	<p>The school has complied with financial reporting requirements by providing the SUNY Trustees and the State Education Department with required financial reports that are on time, complete and follow generally accepted accounting principles.</p> <p>The following reports have generally been filed in a timely, accurate and complete manner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual financial statement audit reports including federal Single Audit report, if applicable; • annual budgets and cash flow statements; • un-audited quarterly reports of income, expenses, and enrollment; • bi-monthly enrollment reports to the district and, if applicable, to the State Education Department including proper documentation regarding the level of special education services provided to students; and • grant expenditure reports.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3D</p> <p>Financial Condition</p>	<p>The school maintains adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations. Critical financial needs of the school are not dependent on variable income (grants, donations and fundraising).</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school maintains sufficient cash on hand to pay current bills

	<p>and those that are due shortly;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school maintains adequate liquid reserves to fund expenses in the event of income loss (generally three months); • the school prepares and monitors cash flow projections; • If the school includes philanthropy in its budget, it monitors progress toward its development goals on a periodic basis; • If necessary, the school pursues district state aid intercepts with the state education department to ensure adequate per pupil funding; and • the school accumulates unrestricted net assets that are equal to or exceed two percent of the school's operating budget for the upcoming year.
	<p>Renewal Question 4 If the School’s Charter is Renewed, What are its Plans for the Term of the Next Charter Period, and are they Reasonable, Feasible and Achievable?</p>
<p><u>Evidence Category</u></p>	<p><u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u></p>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4A</p> <p>Plans for the School’s Structure</p>	<p>Key structural elements of the school, as defined in the exhibits of the Application for Charter Renewal, are reasonable, feasible and achievable.</p> <p>Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school is likely to fulfill its mission in the next charter period; • the school has an enrollment plan that can support the school program; • the school calendar and daily schedules clearly provide sufficient instructional time to meet all legal requirements, allow the school to meet its proposed Accountability Plan goals and abide by its proposed budget; • key design elements are consistent with the mission statement and are feasible given the school’s budget and staffing; • a curriculum framework for added grades aligns with the state’s performance standards; and • plans in the other required Exhibits indicate that the school’s structure is likely to support the educational program.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4B</p>	<p>The school’s plans for implementing the educational program allow it to meet its Accountability Plan goals.</p>

<p>Plans for the Educational Program</p>	<p>Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for those grades served during the last charter period, the school has plans for sustaining and (where possible) improving upon the student outcomes it has compiled during the last charter period including any adjustments or additions to the school’s educational program; • for a school that is seeking to add grades, the school is likely to meet its Accountability Plan goals and the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks at the new grade levels; and • where the school will provide secondary school instruction, it has presented a set of requirements for graduation that students are likely to meet and that are consistent with the graduation standards set by the Board of Regents.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4C</p> <p>Plans for Board Oversight and Governance</p>	<p>The school provides a reasonable, feasible and achievable plan for board oversight and governance.</p> <p>Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school trustees are likely to possess a range of experience, skills, and abilities sufficient to oversee the academic, organizational and fiscal performance of the school; • plans by the school board to orient new trustees to their roles and responsibilities, and, if appropriate, to participate in ongoing board training are likely to sustain the board’s ability to carry out its responsibilities; • if the school plans to change an association with a partner or management organization in the term of a future charter, it has provided a clear rationale for the disassociation and an outline indicating how it will manage the functions previously associated with that partnering organization; and • if the school is either moving from self-management to a management structure or vice-versa, or is changing its charter management organization/educational service provider, its plans indicate that it will be managed in an effective, sound and viable manner including appropriate oversight of the academic and fiscal performance of the school or the management organization.

<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4D</p> <p>Fiscal & Facility Plans</p>	<p>The school provides a reasonable, feasible and achievable fiscal plan including plans for an adequate facility.</p> <p>Based on the elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school’s budgets adequately support staffing, enrollment and facility projections; • fiscal plans are based on the sound use of financial resources to support academic program needs; • fiscal plans are clear, accurate, complete and based on reasonable assumptions; • information on enrollment demand provides clear evidence for the reasonableness of projected enrollment; and • facility plans are likely to meet educational program needs.
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