



Renewal Recommendation Report Amber Charter School

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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 a school’s Application for Charter Renewal, and more broadly, details the merits of a school’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: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/wp-content/uploads/SUNY-Renewal-Policies.pdf>).

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: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/operate/existing-schools/renewal/>.

SCHOOL BACKGROUND AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AMBER CHARTER SCHOOL

BACKGROUND

Amber Charter School (“Amber”) opened in 2000 with support from a community-based organization, the Community Association of Progressive Dominicans, Inc. (“ACDP”). The school serves 496 students in grades K-5. The Executive Director of the ACDP serves on the board of the not-for-profit Amber charter school education corporation¹ (the “board”) as does the head of the Amber collective bargaining unit. The school was one of the first Latino-led charter school in the state. The school is now in its 15th year of operation and provides a high quality educational experience for elementary school students in East Harlem, New York. Consistent with the vision of its founders, the school provides Spanish language instruction to all students beginning in Kindergarten. Amber’s mission is as follows:

Our mission is to provide our students an academically rigorous and well-rounded education, along with strong character development, that will enable them to prosper in top middle schools and beyond.

The “Amber Way,” which focuses on five core character traits of achievement, community, responsibility, honesty, and respect, provides the foundation for the school’s culture. The school infuses focus on the Amber Way in classroom lessons, service projects and professional development. A teacher retention rate of over 90 percent throughout the charter term provides an illustration of the school’s success in building a strong sense of community and results in a depth of institutional knowledge and expertise across the school’s faculty. Amber maintains a collective bargaining agreement with the United Federation of Teachers, which is a substantially pared down version of the larger New York City contract and known as the “thin contract,” and has become a model for other charter schools.

In June 2014, the SUNY Trustees granted the Amber education corporation authority to operate a second school, Amber Charter School II (“Amber II”), which is scheduled to open in September 2015 and replicate the existing Amber program. Amber is located in a private facility at 220 East 106th Street in the East Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan within New York City Community School District (“CSD”) 4.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In its 3rd charter term, Amber has demonstrated continued academic success and has met its Accountability Plan goals. With a full complement of data, the school has posted strong results each year, outperforming its district of location in English language arts (“ELA”) and by a significant margin in mathematics. The school has exceeded its predicted percentage of students scoring proficient on state exams by a meaningful degree in ELA and a large degree in mathematics. It also demonstrates consistently robust student growth percentile scores.

¹ Legally, charter schools in New York are not-for-profit education corporations. Throughout this report, the Institute uses both “education corporation” and “charter school” to indicate the same legal entity.

SCHOOL BACKGROUND AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The school's program, as analyzed using the SUNY Charter Renewal Benchmarks,² is strong and effective. Amber has strong instructional leaders who prioritize supporting teachers in delivering high quality instruction and developing rigorous curricular materials to enable students to meet the challenges of current state assessments and to prosper in middle school, high school and college. Over the course of this charter term, the school has devoted considerable resources to revising its curricula to align with more rigorous state performance standards. Amber has also strengthened its assessment and data collection systems and now utilizes data to inform all instructional decisions.

The education corporation board effectively supports the school in implementing a high quality educational program. With consistently strong instructional leadership, Amber is a well-functioning, fiscally sound organization that is likely to continue to be successful in its next charter term. For these reasons, the Institute recommends that the SUNY Trustees renew the education corporation's authority to operate the school for an additional period of five years.

NOTEWORTHY

Amber invests considerable resources toward building a high performing teaching team capable of meeting the full range of students' needs. Teachers benefit from participation in the school-wide professional development program and ongoing, individualized coaching based on both student learning goals and professional learning goals. Additionally, the school deploys grade level chairs to provide mentoring and peer leadership support. These activities contribute to Amber's success in retaining effective teachers.

² The *State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks*, (version 5.0, the "SUNY Renewal Benchmarks"), available at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/wp-content/uploads/SUNY-Renewal-Benchmarks.pdf>.

RENEWAL RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION: FULL-TERM RENEWAL

The Institute recommends that the SUNY Trustees approve the Application for Charter Renewal of Amber Charter School and renew the education corporation's authority to operate the school for a period of five years with authority to provide instruction to students in Kindergarten through 5th grade in such configuration as set forth in its Application for Charter Renewal, with a projected total enrollment of 520 students.

To earn a Subsequent Full-Term Renewal, a school must demonstrate that it has met or come close to meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals.³

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:

- 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 school's next term of authority to operate; and,
- Given the programs it will offer, its structure and its purpose, granting the education corporation the authority to operate the school for another five years is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act.⁴

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. SUNY⁵ and the Board of Regents finalized the methodology for setting targets in October 2012, and the Institute communicated specific targets for each school in July 2013.

Given the date the school was originally chartered, it does not have statutory targets. However, in accordance with the Act, the Institute, acting on behalf of the SUNY Trustees, considered the school's plans for meeting its future enrollment and retention targets during the next charter term prior to recommending the renewal application for approval. The Institute found the plans to meet or exceed the targets, and the plans to educate students with disabilities, ELLs and FRPL

³ SUNY Renewal Policies at page 14.

⁴ See New York Education Law § 2852(2).

⁵ SUNY Trustees' Charter Schools Committee resolution dated October 2, 2012.

RENEWAL RECOMMENDATION

students, satisfactory. The Institute also found the school to be making good faith efforts to attract and retain such students in accordance with the Act, and notes the school's high pass rates on ELL exit examinations.

CONSIDERATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMENTS

In accordance with the Act, the Institute notified the school district in which the charter school is located regarding the school's Application for Charter Renewal. As of the date of this report, the Institute has received no district comments in response.

RENEWAL RECOMMENDATION

REPORT FORMAT

The Institute makes the foregoing renewal recommendation based on the 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 SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, 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, what are the education corporation's plans for the school for the next term of authority to operate the school, and are they reasonable, feasible and achievable?

The report's Appendix provides a 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 and additional evidence on student achievement contained in the School Performance Summaries.

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

IS THE SCHOOL AN ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

Amber is an academic success given its record of meeting its key Accountability Plan goals. The school implements a high-quality instructional program that improves student outcomes and equips teachers with the skills and competencies to support all learners.

At the beginning of the Accountability Period,⁶ the school developed and adopted an Accountability Plan that set academic goals in the key subjects of ELA and mathematics. 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 well did the school do in catching students up – and then keeping them up to grade level proficiency?

Every SUNY authorized charter school has the opportunity to propose additional measures of success when crafting its Accountability Plan. Amber did not propose or include any additional measures of success in the Accountability Plan it adopted.

Because of testing changes made by the state, the Institute has since 2009 consistently de-emphasized the two absolute measures under each goal in schools’ Accountability Plans. The Institute continues to focus primarily on the two comparative measures and the growth measure while also considering any additional evidence the school presents using additional measures identified in its Accountability Plan. Institute identifies the required measures (absolute proficiency, absolute Annual Measurable Objective attainment,⁹ comparison to local district,

⁶ Because the SUNY Trustees make a renewal decision before student achievement results for the final year of a charter term become available, the Accountability Period ends with the school year prior to the final year of the charter term. For a school in a subsequent charter term, the Accountability Period covers the last year of the previous charter term through the second to last year of the charter term under review.

⁷ Education Law § 2850(2)(f).

⁸ Education Law § 2854(1)(d).

⁹ While the state has recalibrated the absolute Annual Measurable Objective, the Institute will only report on the 2013-14 results, not on those for 2012-13. During 2012-13, the state revised its methodology for calculating a school’s Performance Index and the Institute did not. The Institute continues to use the same methodology in place when Amber adopted its Accountability Plan to calculate a Performance Level Index and does not expect its results to match those of the state’s Performance Index.

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

comparison to demographically similar schools, and student growth) in the Performance Summaries appearing in the Appendix at the end of the report.

The Accountability Plan also includes science and No Child Left Behind Act (“NCLB”) goals. For each goal in the Accountability Plan, specific outcome measures define the level of performance necessary to meet that goal. Please note that for schools located in New York City, the Institute uses the CSD as the local school district.

Academic Attainment.

Throughout the charter term, Amber has met its key academic Accountability Plan goals in ELA and mathematics as measured by the school’s comparative performance and its growth in performance compared to the subset of similarly performing students statewide. Amber is also meeting its science and NCLB goals.

The Institute analyzes key comparative and growth measures under the school’s ELA and mathematics goals to determine goal attainment. The Institute calculates a comparative effect size to measure the performance of Amber 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 not dependent on any changes in New York’s assessment system. As such, the measure, and the school’s performance on the measure, is not relative to the test, but relative to how much value Amber adds to student learning compared to other schools’ performance.

The growth measure provides an opportunity to see how Amber performs in catching up those students performing below grade level to performing academically at grade level or at or above “proficiency.” It also provides a look at how well a school does at keeping students who performed at or above proficiency during the previous school year proficient, or on grade level, every year. For a student who is proficient, keeping up to grade level means the student should make one year’s progress in one year’s time. For a student below grade level, in order to reach proficiency, the school must help the student grow *more* than one grade level every year in order to catch up.

The Institute uses the state’s mean growth percentiles as a measure of a school’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 last year’s 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 commensurate with the student body’s demographic peers the expected percentile performance is 50. To signal a school is catching students who were previously below grade level up to grade level proficiency, the school must post a percentile performance that exceeds 50. A percentile performance below 50 indicates that students are losing ground, not catching up or keeping up with grade level proficiencies.

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

Amber has consistently met its ELA Accountability Plan goal throughout the charter term. During 2009-10, the school posted relatively low growth in comparison to the subset of students statewide that posted the same ELA outcomes during 2008-09 falling just short of the state's median growth score of 50. The school, however, performed higher than expected in comparison to demographically similar schools throughout the state and it outperformed the average of schools in CSD 4 by 20 percentage points. For the balance of the charter term, the school performed higher than its standard on its comparative Accountability Plan measures under the ELA goal. The school also improved its performance in ELA growth throughout the charter term posting an overall improving trend in mean ELA growth percentiles.

Throughout the charter term, Amber has also consistently met its mathematics Accountability Plan goal. During 2009-10, the school fell just short of meeting the state's median mathematics growth score of 50. Amber performed higher than expected to a large degree compared to demographically similar schools statewide and outperformed CSD 4 by 29 percentage points. For the balance of the charter term, the school met every comparative and growth measure benchmark under its mathematics goal. Notably, the school's comparative and growth performance in mathematics increased during 2012-13, the first year during which the state administered mathematics assessments aligned to the Common Core. That year, the school outperformed CSD 4 by 16 percentage points, performed higher than expected to a large degree compared to demographically similar schools statewide, and posted a mean growth score of 62 – exceeding the state's median score of 50 by 12 percentile points.

Amber has met its science goal throughout the charter term. The school posted proficiency percentages on the state's 4th grade science assessment that exceeded its absolute benchmark of 75 percent each year. Notably, during 2013-14, every tested 4th grade student scored at or above proficiency. The school's proficiency on the 4th grade science exam also exceeded proficiency rate in CSD 4 throughout the charter term.

The school was in good standing and met its NCLB goal during each year in the charter term.

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

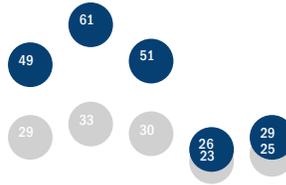
DESCRIPTION

Comparative Measure:

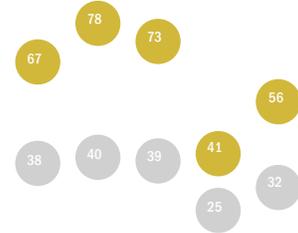
District Comparison.

Each year, the percent of students enrolled at the school 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 the **local school district**.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL



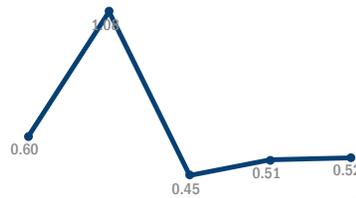
MATHEMATICS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL



Comparative Measure:

Effect Size.

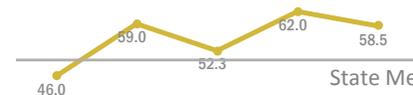
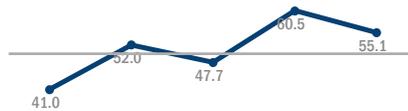
Each year, the school will exceed its predicted level of performance by an Effect Size of 0.3 or above in **ELA** and **mathematics** according to a regression analysis controlling for economically disadvantaged students among all public schools in New York State.



Performance
Standard: 0.3

Comparative Growth Measure:

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



State Median: 50

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

Instructional Leadership. Led by its executive director, Amber has maintained consistently strong instructional leadership throughout the charter term. With student achievement comprising 40 percent of teacher performance evaluations, instructional leaders hold teachers accountable for high quality instruction and student performance. The school's deliberate coaching practices, in conjunction with its effective use of teacher leaders, develop the skills and competencies of all teachers.

- The school's leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for academic achievement and character development, continually invoking Amber's five core principles of: achievement; community; responsibility; honesty; and, respect.
- In addition to the executive director for all charters operated by the education corporation, a principal, an assistant principal and two staff developers comprise a well-coordinated instructional leadership team. Additionally, grade level chairs play a central role in mentoring teachers, analyzing assessment data and adjusting instructional plans. The instructional leaders meet weekly to discuss assessment results, share information from classroom observations and plan professional development activities.
- Amber provides teachers with sustained and systemic coaching of instructional planning and pedagogical practice. At the start of each year, leaders work with teachers to create individual professional development plans, which include professional learning goals and student learning goals. Leaders monitor teachers' progress toward meeting these goals throughout the year with frequent informal classroom observations and three formal review meetings.
- School leaders use a structured process to evaluate teachers based on clear criteria that teachers understand well. While student achievement data related to assessments the school administers throughout the year factors into teacher performance evaluations, proficiency on state assessments does not.
- Amber's executive director holds teachers accountable for delivering high quality instruction and for propelling students to high levels of achievement. The principal implements performance improvement plans for teachers who do not meet expectations and has terminated those who failed to make adequate progress while on improvement plans.

Curriculum and Assessment. Amber has a robust system to gather and use assessment data in order to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning. The school continues to implement a clearly defined curriculum across all grades.

- Amber regularly administers a variety of valid and reliable assessments including standardized Terra Nova exams, benchmark assessments three times per year and weekly curriculum-based tests aligned to the school's curriculum and state standards. To monitor each student's progress throughout the year, the school also regularly measures students' reading comprehension as well as fluency and accuracy skills.
- Amber's instructional leaders and data and assessment manager provide oversight and support teachers in the scoring of assessments through professional development

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

activities and the use of grade-level rubrics to score writing assignments. The data and assessment manager creates weekly reports for each classroom teacher, providing on-going and in-depth analyses of student performance by standard and question type after each assessment. Teachers and instructional leaders also receive comparative analyses of performance between classes.

- Teachers scan all assessment data directly into the school's data management system, INFORM, which is immediately accessible to all teachers and school leaders. School leaders share student performance data with the board's education committee several times per year.
- Teachers use assessment results to adjust and improve instruction to meet the identified needs of students. Teachers use weekly data reports to identify concepts for re-teaching, assign students to reading groups, differentiate material, inform tutors of focus skills and identify students in need of targeted intervention.
- Amber's school leaders use assessment results to evaluate teacher effectiveness, inform professional development activities and develop targeted coaching strategies for teachers whose students underperform. Student achievement also plays a significant role in summative evaluations of teachers' performance.
- Amber communicates each student's progress and growth throughout the year by sending home graded weekly and chapter classroom tests for parent/guardian review, as well as holding parent-teacher conferences and distributing formal report cards three times per year.
- The school utilizes commercial curricula with scope and sequence frameworks aligned to the New York State performance standards. The school regularly contracts with external curriculum consultants to guide teachers in comprehensive and effective delivery and implementation.
- In addition to the framework, instructional leaders and grade level teams collaborate on creating pacing calendars for each subject area 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.
- School leaders and grade level teams meet regularly over the course of the school year to review, revise and supplement curriculum documents based on student performance data and teachers' recommendations.
- Grade level teams work collaboratively to plan purposeful and focused lessons for each subject area. Biweekly, teachers upload all lesson plans to a shared drive for review by school leaders before implementation. School leaders provide written feedback on lessons as necessary and monitor lesson delivery during classroom observations.

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

Pedagogy. High quality instruction is evident throughout Amber’s classrooms. As shown in the chart below, during the renewal visit, Institute team members conducted 12 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all school renewal visits.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION METHODOLOGY: NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS

		GRADE						
		K	1	2	3	4	5	Total
CONTENT AREA	ELA				2	1	3	6
	Math		1		1	1	2	5
	Writing							
	Science					1		1
	Soc Stu							
	Specials							
Total			1		3	3	5	12

- Amber teachers deliver purposeful lessons with clear objectives that align to the school’s curriculum and prepare students to meet state performance standards (10 out of 12 observations). Lesson activities support learning goals, and teachers present concepts in clear, age-appropriate terms.
- Most teachers effectively employ a variety of techniques to check for student understanding during and at the end of lessons (9 out of 12 observations). Teachers circulate around classrooms to monitor students’ written work and to assess understanding based on student exchanges in pair and/or group discussions. With heterogeneous grouping of students, some teachers empower students who have mastered presented concepts to support their peers in reaching lesson objectives.
- Most teachers include higher-order questions and activities that could potentially develop depth of understanding and problem-solving skills in lesson plans (7 out of 12 observations). However, some teachers fail to challenge students by not allowing enough time for students to digest questions before answering themselves and thus minimize the potential benefit of higher-order questioning. Peer-to-peer interactions are frequent and center on learning activities that require students to think critically and apply presented concepts to real-life situations.
- Teachers instill in students an urgency for learning that ensures a consistent focus on academic achievement (11 out of 12 observations). Clear routines and teachers’ appropriate pacing minimize transitions and maximize learning time. Classroom “hero walls” reinforce behavioral expectations.

At-Risk Students. Amber adequately addresses the educational needs of academically struggling students, students with disabilities and ELLs through a variety of programmatic supports.

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- Amber uses benchmark and state test results that indicate below-grade level proficiency, in addition to teacher referrals, to identify students for targeted intervention. If a student does not demonstrate adequate academic progress with additional interventions in place, the school's child study team (comprised of the special education staff, reading specialist, counselor, two general education teachers and the student's parent or guardian) convenes to make a referral for a special education evaluation.
- The school requires parents or guardians to complete the Home Language Identification Survey during the new entrant registration process and administers the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL) to determine need for English language support as necessary.
- A special education coordinator, special education teacher support services ("SETSS") provider, Title One reading specialist and two certified English to Speakers of Other Languages ("ESOL") teachers provide support for Amber's 19 students with disabilities receiving academic services, 21 ELLs enrolled and students at-risk of academic failure.
- Through combinations of push-in and pull-out reading support and subject-area tutoring during the school day, extended day academic support twice weekly, mandatory after school tutoring for struggling students, and Saturday Academy programming, Amber generally has adequate intervention programs to address the needs of its at-risk students. In some cases, capacity and scheduling constraints inhibit students' access to additional remediation or prevent an increase in frequency and level of support.
- Special education and ESOL teachers take primary responsibility for tracking students' progress towards meeting Individualized Education Program goals and English language proficiency; they formally meet with classroom teachers at the end of each trimester to review individual student data longitudinally and to adjust interventions as necessary. After each quarterly assessment cycle, the school's data and assessment manager disaggregates school-wide data to compare performance of students with disabilities and ELLs to the performance of general education students and distributes these reports to school leaders, classroom teachers and at-risk staff to inform instruction.
- School leaders provide classroom teachers with a comprehensive overview of Amber's special education and ESOL programs during pre-service training, and provide specific professional development activities throughout the school year to help teachers effectively implement strategies in their classrooms to support students with academic and language acquisition needs.
- The school continues to provide limited, scheduled, on-going opportunities for coordination between classroom teachers, at-risk program staff and tutors; teachers rely on frequent informal meetings to discuss student progress, suggest interventions to target specific skill deficits and align instructional approaches and plans.

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Enrollment (N) Receiving Mandated Academic Services	(13)	(16)	(22)
RESULTS			
Tested on State Exams (N)	(13)	(16)	(22)
Percent Proficient on ELA Exam	23.1	0	13.6
Percent Proficient Statewide	15.2	5.0	5.2

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
ELL Enrollment (N)	(17)	(22)	(27)
RESULTS			
Tested on NYSESLAT ¹⁰ Exam (N)	(N/A)	(6)	(23)
Percent 'Proficient' or Making Progress ¹¹ on NYSESLAT	N/A	66.7	60.9

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. Student scores fall into four categories/proficiency levels: Beginning; Intermediate; Advanced; and, Proficient.

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

IS THE SCHOOL AN EFFECTIVE, VIABLE ORGANIZATION?

Amber is an effective and viable organization. The education corporation board carries out its oversight responsibilities with a clear focus on student achievement and holds school leaders accountable for student achievement results. The school organization effectively supports the delivery of the educational program. During the current charter term, the board, with certain minor exceptions has been in general and substantial compliance with the terms of its charter, by-laws, applicable state and federal law, rules and regulations.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Board Oversight. Amber's board continues to work effectively to achieve the school's mission and accountability plan goals.

- Board members possess a breadth of skills and experience including legal, finance and education, and have put in place effective structures and procedures to govern the school and oversee management of day-to-day operations. The board has both teacher and parent representatives with full voting responsibilities to communicate staff and parental concerns to its members.
- Through quarterly data reports from the executive director, the board competently oversees the school's future as an academically successful, financially viable and legally compliant organization.
- The board successfully transitioned leadership from its founding board chair to a board member who continues to provide strong and steady governance oversight, establishes clear priorities and long-range goals and regularly tracks progress towards meeting them.
- The board successfully recruits, hires and retains key personnel, and provides them with sufficient resources and professional development to effectively fulfill their roles.
- While the board regularly evaluates the school's principal using a comprehensive range of criteria, in addition to an analysis of student performance results, the board does not formally evaluate its own performance beyond an annual board retreat and interpersonal discussions about each member's effectiveness.
- The board communicates with the school community primarily through regular public board meetings. The board chair also attends at least one parent-teacher organization meeting per year, and many board members work closely with community based organizations that provide on-going outreach opportunities.

Organizational Capacity. Amber's organization effectively supports the delivery of the educational program.

- The school has maintained an effective administrative structure focused on students' academic success, with clearly established systems and distinct lines of accountability that allow the school to carry out its academic program. Amber's instructional leadership team

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

focuses on developing teachers’ skills and maximizing the curriculum while facilities and human resources staff manage the school’s day- to-day operations.

- Amber has a clear student discipline system in place that is consistently applied at the administrative level. The school maintains a culture of learning and scholarship through clear communication of student expectations and school values. As a result, students throughout the school are consistently on-task and engaged in their work with little need for redirection.
- Amber has retained 94 percent of its staff over the charter term. Current teachers average four years experience at Amber with significant prior teaching experience. The school ascribes this robust retention to its comprehensive support system of coaching, mentoring, professional development and rich resources along with appreciation for the “Amber Way.”
- The school has allocated sufficient resources to support the achievement of its goals. For example, Amber recently invested in new ELA and mathematics curricula seeking to raise the level of academic rigor across grades and better align instruction with performance standards. The school has also contracted with several curriculum consultants to support teachers’ implementation of the new programs.
- Amber has maintained adequate student enrollment over the charter term. The school reported a waitlist of 532 students at the time of the renewal visit.
- Amber’s director of community outreach monitors the school’s progress towards meeting enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, ELLs and FRPL eligible students. The school adjusts recruitment efforts accordingly.

FAITHFULNESS TO CHARTER & PARENT SATISFACTION

As part of their initial applications and their Applications for Charter Renewal, schools identify the Key Design Elements that reflect their mission and distinguish the schools. The table below reflects the intended Key Design Elements and indicates for each if the school is implementing the element as included in the school’s charter.

Key Design Elements	Evident?
90 minutes of literacy instruction per day;	+
90 minutes of mathematics instruction per day;	+
90 minutes of science instruction per week;	+
90 minutes of social studies instruction per week;	+
Spanish as a Foreign Language instruction;	+
Enrichment opportunities in art, music, physical education and technology;	+
School Culture: The Amber Way teaches the following character traits: Achievement, Community, Responsibility, Honestly and Respect; and,	+
Community Service.	+

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

Parent Satisfaction. The Institute compiled the following data from the New York City Department of Education’s (“NYCDOE’s”) 2013-2014 NYC School Survey. NYCDOE distributes the survey to families each year to collect data about school culture, instruction, and systems for improvement. Results from the 2013-2014 survey indicate parents/guardians and students are very satisfied with the school. The high response rate is useful in framing the results as representative of the school community.

2013-14
Response Rate: 99%
Instructional Core: 96%
Systems for Improvement: 96%
School Culture: 95%

Persistence in Enrollment. The Institute derived the following statistical information from its database. No comparative data from the local school district or the New York State Education Department (“NYSED”) is available to the Institute to provide either district wide or by CSD context. As such, the information is presented for information purposes but does not allow for comparative analysis.

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Percent of Eligible Students Returning From Previous Year	88.2	90.2	88.6

COMPLIANCE

Governance. In material respects, the education corporation has implemented and abided by adequate and appropriate systems, processes, policies and procedures to ensure the effective governance and oversight of the school. The board demonstrates a thorough understanding of its role in holding the school leadership accountable for both academic results and fiscal soundness.

- The board has materially complied with the terms of its by-laws and code of ethics.
- The board successfully sought to replicate its program in 2014 by creating Amber II to open in fall 2015.
- The board has a functioning committee structure with education, executive, finance, development, facilities and membership committees meeting regularly and reporting back to the full board on a regular basis.
- The committee structure allowed the board to go through with plans to replicate its program demonstrating clear channels of planning.

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

Legal Requirements. The education corporation has generally and substantially complied with applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.

- **Complaints.** The Institute has received no formal complaints regarding the school and few informal complaints.

The Institute noted exceptions to the school's compliance in the following areas:

- **Admissions Policy.** The education corporation submitted a flawed admissions policy that had been previously corrected by the Institute when the education corporation replicated its program. The replication overlapped with the submission of some of the renewal documents, and, therefore, the corrected version may not have yet been available for the renewal review. The Institute will ensure the education corporation uses the correct version during the new charter term.
- **Section 504.** The education corporation has attempted to implement the 504 Policy of the NYCDOE as a way to be in compliance with section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504"), which pertains to students with disabilities that are not generally learning disabilities covered by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. For Section 504 purposes, a charter school is a separate local educational agency from the school district of location, and must adopt its own, in-house process. The Institute will require the school to update and adopt a new policy and procedures prior to the commencement of a new charter term.
- **Violations.** The Institute did not issue any violation letters to the school during its charter term, nor did the Institute or the Charter Schools Committee place the school on corrective action or probation.

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

IS THE EDUCATION CORPORATION FISCALLY SOUND?

Based on evidence collected through the renewal review, Amber is fiscally sound. The education corporation has successfully managed cash flow and has adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations. The education corporation engages in effective budgeting practices and routinely conducts monitoring of revenues and expenses, making appropriate adjustments when necessary. The SUNY Fiscal Dashboard, a multi-year financial data and analysis for SUNY authorized charter school appears below in the Appendix.

Budgeting and Long-Range Planning. Amber has demonstrated capable budgeting and long range planning throughout the charter term. The finance committee of the board works closely with Amber's head of school/principal, chief financial officer and accounting staff in both developing the annual budget and monitoring the actual-to-budget on a monthly basis.

- Amber's development of annual budgets includes input and analysis from the school's leadership team, the chief financial officer and the board finance committee.
- Amber also develops and maintains a five year projected budget that it updates every year based on actual and forecasted enrollment, staffing, revenues and expenditures.
- Amber prepares monthly financial reports that include a current balance sheet, operating income or loss, a budget-versus-actual-expenditure report, and personnel expenditure projections. The chief financial officer reviews these reports with the chair of the finance committee on a monthly basis to ensure fiscal compliance and responsibility. The finance committee and school leaders subsequently review and analyze these reports prior to presentation to the full board for its consideration.
- The education corporation received approval for a second charter in spring 2014 to open Amber II in 2015; a review of the five year projected budget reflects a well-reasoned, conservative and economically feasible plan for both schools to operate. As Amber II has not yet operated, the Amber school's SUNY Fiscal Dashboard entry currently covers the education corporation as well and is not separately displayed.

Internal Controls. The education corporation has generally established and maintained appropriate fiscal policies, procedures and controls with only one minor exception noted below. Written policies address key issues including financial reporting, revenues, procurement, expenditures, payroll, banking, capital assets, and record retention.

- Amber has accurately recorded and appropriately documented transactions in accordance with established policies. These policies are comprehensive and updated on an as needed basis.
- Amber ensures that key staff members receive appropriate professional development in operations and financial management.
- Amber's most recent audit reports of internal controls related to financial reporting and compliance with laws, regulations and grants, disclosed no material weaknesses. However,

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

in the 2010-11 annual audit report, independent auditor testing identified two instance of non-compliance with federal award requirements under the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program in which two application forms used to determine the level of benefits that a student is eligible to receive were misplaced. Amber implemented procedures to provide reasonable assurance that application documentation will be properly maintained. Subsequent audit reports reflect no compliance issues.

Financial Reporting. Amber has complied with financial reporting requirements by providing the SUNY Trustees and NYSED with required financial reports that are generally on time, complete and follow generally accepted accounting principles (“GAAP”).

- Amber presents its annual financial statements in accordance with GAAP and the independent audits of those statements have received unqualified opinions.
- Amber has generally filed key reports timely and accurately including: audit reports, budgets, cash-flow statements, un-audited reports of revenues, expenses and enrollment, and grant expenditure reports.

Financial Condition. Amber maintains adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations, and has demonstrated consistently strong financial responsibility composite scores.

- Amber has posted fiscally strong composite-score ratings on the SUNY Fiscal Dashboard indicating a consistent level of fiscal stability over the charter contract term.¹²
- Amber has total net assets of approximately \$4 million and maintains over five months of cash on hand to pay its short term liabilities; which reflects a low risk and reinforces the strong fiscal stability of the education corporation.
- Amber has relied primarily on recurring operating revenues along with strategic short-term debt and long-term debt arrangements.
- Amber has maintained cash flow and short-term debt arrangements sufficient to cover all short term expenses other than balloon payments attributable to maturing balloon payments on long-term debt. The long-term debt, attributable to facilities acquisition, was refinanced in September 2011 to manage a balloon payment of \$2.1M and to consolidate obligations of another obligation of \$240k.
- The board takes an active role in supplementing revenues for the school by pursuing available grant funds for significant projects and through recurring fundraising activities.
- The board is diligent about conscientiously pacing expenditures such as facilities maintenance and improvement projects.
- The board has adopted a policy to authorize the creation of an operating reserve fund of \$250k to ensure the stability of Amber’s mission. As of the 2013-14 audited financial statements and the board meeting minutes to date, the reserve had not yet been funded.

¹² The composite score assists in measuring the financial health of an education corporation using a blended score that measures the school’s performances on key financial indicators. The blended score offsets financial strengths against areas where there may be financial weaknesses.

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- In September 2014, the board approved transferring 85% of its current account balance to the newly created Amber Schools Foundation, Inc., which will assist in funding start-up costs at Amber II.
- Since Amber’s last charter renewal in 2010, SUNY authorized charter agreements have changed to include a required \$75,000 Dissolution Reserve Fund for the purpose of covering legal and administrative costs associated with the closure/dissolution of a school. Seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000) per school for each of the first two (2) schools operated by the education corporation to be funded, at a minimum, by reserving twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) per year per school during the first three (3) years of the charter term. The fund must be held separately and identifiable in financial statements and the notes to the financials as the Dissolution Reserve Fund. Amber should have sufficient funds to meet this requirement.

The SUNY Fiscal Dashboard, provided in the Appendix, presents color coded tables and charts indicating that Amber has demonstrated fiscal soundness over the course of its charter term.¹³

¹³ 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.

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

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

To the extent that Amber has met its academic Accountability Plan goals, operates as an effective and viable organization and the education corporation is fiscally sound, the plans to implement the educational program as proposed during the next charter term are reasonable, feasible and achievable.

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.

MISSION FOR THE NEXT CHARTER TERM

Our mission is to provide our students an academically rigorous and well-rounded education, along with strong character development, that will enable them to prosper in top middle schools and beyond.

Plans for the Educational Program. Amber plans to continue to implement the same core elements of the educational program that have enabled it to meet its key academic Accountability Plan goals in the current charter term. The education corporation intends to open a replication of the school's model, Amber II, in September 2015.

	Current Charter Term	End of Next Charter Term
Enrollment	425	520
Grade Span	K-5	K-5
Teaching Staff	26	29
Days of Instruction	180	180

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

Fiscal & Facility Plans. Amber plans to continue to provide instruction in its current private facility. The school recently started a renovation project that will add a commercial kitchen to the building's footprint.

RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

The education corporation's Application for Charter Renewal for Amber contains all necessary elements as required by the Act for the education corporation to renew its authority to operate the school. The proposed school calendar allots an appropriate amount of instructional time and exceeds 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 bylaws 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.

APPENDIX: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide our students an academically rigorous and well-rounded education, along with strong character development, that will enable them to prosper in top middle schools and beyond.

Board of Trustees

Board Member Name ¹⁴	Position
David Briggs	Chair
Jessica Jimenez	Vice Chair
Ellen Kimatian Eagan	Secretary
Frank Aldridge	Treasurer
Soledad Hiciano	Trustee, Ex-Officio (ACDP executive director)
Cecilia Castro	Ex-Officio (parent)
Jenna Pantel	Trustee
John Gutierrez	Trustee
James Serafino	Trustee
Ann Weiner	Trustee
Aileen Wilson	Trustee
Manuel Morales	Trustee
Kathleen McCann	Ex-Officio (teacher)
Vasthi Acosta	Ex-Officio (executive director, non-voting)

School Characteristics

School Year	Proposed Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ¹⁵	Proposed Grades	Actual Grades
2010-11	425	419	K-5	K-5
2011-12	425	434	K-5	K-5
2012-13	425	453	K-5	K-5
2013-14	425	461	K-5	K-5
2014-15	425	496	K-5	K-5

¹⁴ Source: The Institute's board records at the time of the Renewal Review.

¹⁵ Source: The Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

APPENDIX: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Student Demographics

	2011-12		2012-13		2013-14 ¹⁶
	% of School Enrollment	% of NYC CSD 4 Enrollment	% of School Enrollment	% of NYC CSD 4 Enrollment	% of School Enrollment
Race/Ethnicity					
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	1	1	1	1
Black or African American	36	28	36	27	34
Hispanic	61	62	61	62	64
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	2	6	2	6	1
White	0	3	0	3	0
Multiracial	0	0	0	1	0
Special Populations					
Students with Disabilities	8	--	10	21	13
English Language Learners	4	12	5	12	6
Free/Reduced Lunch					
Eligible for Free Lunch	53	79	70	75	-- ¹⁷
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	8	6	8	4	--
Economically Disadvantaged	85	--	85	91	60

¹⁶ The Institute derived the 2013-14 Students with Disabilities, ELL and Economically Disadvantaged statistics from the school's October 2013 student enrollment report to NYSED (2013-14 BEDS Report). District data are not yet available. Because NYSED releases data up to a full year after the conclusion of any one school year, the data presented in this table may differ from current information reported by the school and included in this report.

¹⁷ School FRPL enrollment data for 2013-14 and district Economically Disadvantaged enrollment data are not available.

APPENDIX: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

School Leaders

School Year(s)	Name(s) and Title(s)
2008-09 to 2013-14	Vasthi Acosta, Head of School / Principal
2014-15 to Present	Vasthi Acosta, Executive Director

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2009-10	Subsequent Renewal Visit	Institute	October 1, 2009
2011-12	Evaluation Visit	Institute	November 3, 2011
2013-14	Subsequent Renewal Visit	Institute	March 17, 2014

Conduct of the Renewal Visit

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Members	Title
March 17, 2014	Natasha Howard, PhD	Managing Director of Program
	Heather Wendling	Senior Analyst
	Andrea Richards	Program Analyst

APPENDIX: FISCAL DASHBOARD



Amber Charter School

SCHOOL INFORMATION

FINANCIAL POSITION

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**

Opened 2000-01					
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Total Current Assets - GRAPH 1	1,135,476	1,701,504	2,394,345	2,872,649	3,069,820
Property, Building and Equipment, net	4,405,006	4,312,957	4,261,061	4,188,309	4,166,052
Other Assets	358,862	539,601	54,536	41,704	28,872
Total Assets - GRAPH 1	5,899,344	6,554,062	6,709,942	7,102,662	7,264,744
Total Current Liabilities - GRAPH 1	2,887,354	720,266	858,858	927,677	1,041,567
L-T Debt and Notes Payable, net current maturities	239,500	2,303,911	2,384,195	2,341,957	2,296,666
Total Liabilities - GRAPH 1	3,126,854	3,024,177	3,243,053	3,269,634	3,338,233
Total Net Assets	2,772,490	3,529,885	3,466,889	3,833,028	3,926,511
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	5,899,344	6,554,062	6,709,942	7,102,662	7,264,744
Total Operating Revenue	5,459,192	6,534,980	6,571,225	6,882,703	6,875,207
Total Expenses - GRAPHS 2, 3 & 4	5,471,751	5,917,488	6,774,790	6,656,734	6,844,642
Surplus / (Deficit) From School Operations	(12,559)	617,492	(203,565)	225,969	30,565
Total Support and Other Revenue	372,339	139,903	140,569	140,170	62,918
Total Revenue - GRAPHS 2 & 3	5,831,531	6,674,883	6,711,794	7,022,873	6,938,125
Net Assets - Beginning of Year - GRAPH 2	2,412,710	2,772,490	3,529,885	3,466,889	3,833,028
Net Assets - End of Year - GRAPH 2	2,772,490	3,529,885	3,466,889	3,833,028	3,926,511

APPENDIX: FISCAL DASHBOARD



Amber Charter School

SCHOOL INFORMATION - (Continued)

Functional Expense Breakdown

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Personnel Service					
Administrative Staff Personnel	347,344	775,625	878,288	869,954	901,488
Instructional Personnel	2,266,803	2,240,165	2,908,316	2,729,803	2,841,916
Non-instructional Personnel	516,540	258,361	280,608	294,785	213,501
Personnel Services (Combined)	-	-	-	-	-
Total Salaries and Staff	3,130,687	3,274,151	4,067,212	3,894,542	3,956,905
Fringe Benefits & Payroll Taxes	774,837	875,625	1,053,058	1,030,538	1,115,565
Retirement	-	-	-	-	-
Management Company Fees	-	-	-	-	-
Building and Land Rent / Lease	-	-	-	-	-
Staff Development	69,707	120,222	140,507	142,316	88,873
Professional Fees, Consultant & Purchased Services	313,229	354,214	281,533	318,292	330,250
Marketing / Recruitment	1,841	25	100	453	1,524
Student Supplies, Materials & Services	129,446	126,357	132,332	122,881	237,164
Depreciation	188,818	275,192	248,853	225,209	230,277
Other	863,186	891,702	851,195	922,503	884,084
Total Expenses	5,471,751	5,917,488	6,774,790	6,656,734	6,844,642

SCHOOL ANALYSIS

ENROLLMENT

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Chartered Enroll	460	425	425	425	425
Revised Enroll	425	-	-	-	-
Actual Enroll - GRAPH 4	394	419	434	453	461
Chartered Grades	K-5	K-5	K-5	K-5	K-5
Revised Grades	-	-	-	-	-

Primary School District: NYC

Per Pupil Funding (Weighted Avg of All Districts)	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
12,443	13,527	13,527	13,527	13,527	13,527
Increase over prior year	0.0%	8.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

PER STUDENT BREAKDOWN

Revenue

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term
Operating	13,856	15,597	15,141	15,194	14,914	14,940
Other Revenue and Support	945	334	324	309	136	410
TOTAL - GRAPH 3	14,801	15,931	15,465	15,503	15,050	15,350

Expenses

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term
Program Services	12,233	11,700	12,684	11,834	12,038	12,098
Management and General, Fundraising	1,655	2,423	2,926	2,860	2,810	2,535
TOTAL - GRAPH 3	13,888	14,123	15,610	14,695	14,847	14,633
% of Program Services	88.1%	82.8%	81.3%	80.5%	81.1%	82.8%
% of Management and Other	11.9%	17.2%	18.7%	19.5%	18.9%	17.2%
% of Revenue Exceeding Expenses - GRAPH 5	6.6%	12.8%	-0.9%	5.5%	1.4%	4.9%

Student to Faculty Ratio

8.6	10.2	9.6	9.6	9.6
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Faculty to Admin Ratio

5.1	3.4	3.8	4.3	3.7
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Financial Responsibility Composite Scores - GRAPH 6

Score	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term
2.3	2.9	2.3	3.0	2.7	2.8	
Fiscally Strong 1.5 - 3.0 / Fiscally Adequate 1.0 - 1.4 / Fiscally Needs Monitoring < 1.0	Fiscally Strong					

Working Capital - GRAPH 7

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term
Net Working Capital	(1,751,878)	981,238	1,535,487	1,944,972	2,028,253	947,614
As % of Unrestricted Revenue	-30.0%	14.7%	22.9%	27.7%	29.2%	12.9%
Working Capital (Current) Ratio Score	0.4	2.4	2.8	3.1	2.9	2.3
Risk (Low ≥ 3.0 / Medium 1.4 - 2.9 / High < 1.4)	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Rating (Excellent ≥ 3.0 / Good 1.4 - 2.9 / Poor < 1.4)	Poor	Good	Good	Excellent	Good	Good

Quick (Acid Test) Ratio

Score	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term
0.4	2.4	2.8	3.1	2.9	2.3	
Risk (Low ≥ 2.5 / Medium 1.0 - 2.4 / High < 1.0)	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM
Rating (Excellent ≥ 2.5 / Good 1.0 - 2.4 / Poor < 1.0)	Poor	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good

Debt to Asset Ratio - GRAPH 7

Score	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term
0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	
Risk (Low < 0.50 / Medium 0.51 - .95 / High > 1.0)	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Rating (Excellent < 0.50 / Good 0.51 - .95 / Poor > 1.0)	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

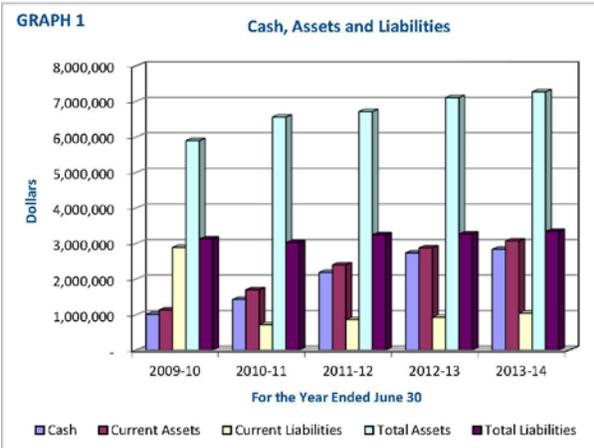
Months of Cash - GRAPH 8

Score	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term
2.2	2.9	3.9	4.9	5.0	3.8	
Risk (Low > 3 mo. / Medium 1 - 3 mo. / High < 1 mo.)	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW
Rating (Excellent > 3 mo. / Good 1 - 3 mo. / Poor < 1 mo.)	Good	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent

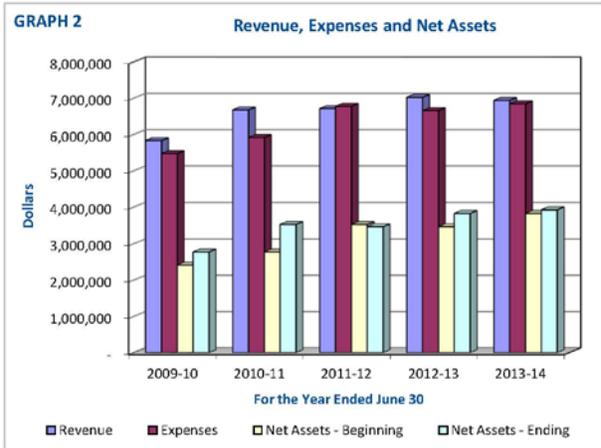
APPENDIX: FISCAL DASHBOARD



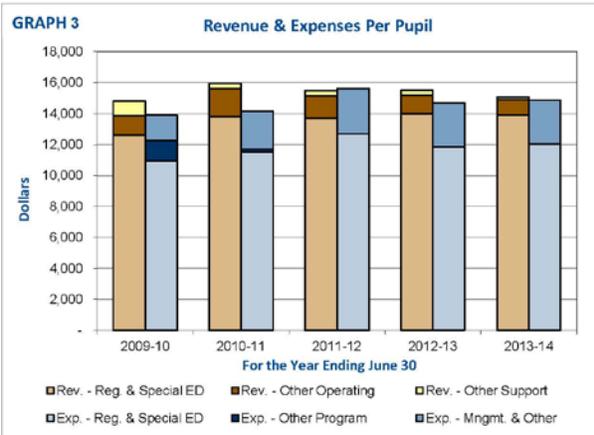
Amber Charter School



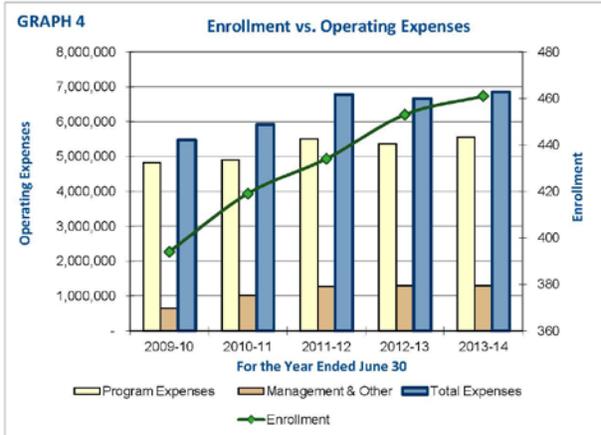
This chart illustrates the relationship between assets and liabilities and to what extent cash reserves makes up current assets. Ideally for each subset, subsets 2 thru 4, (i.e. current assets vs. current liabilities), the column on the left is taller than the immediate column on the right; and, generally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

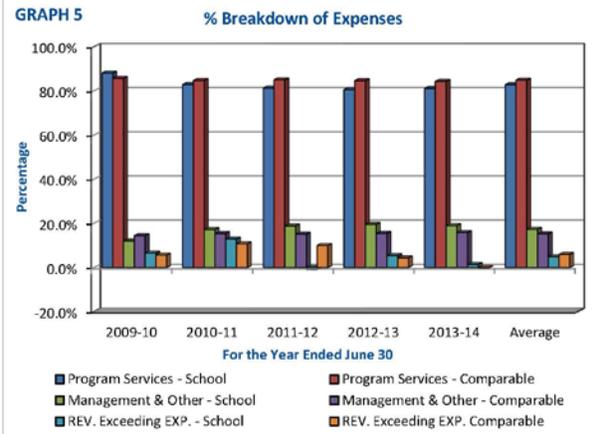
APPENDIX: FISCAL DASHBOARD



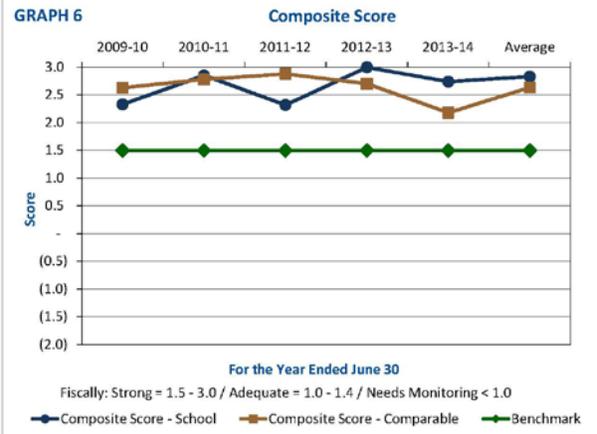
Amber Charter School

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

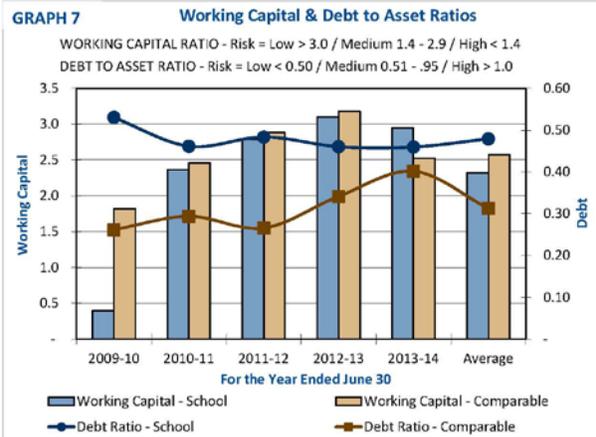
* Average = Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term



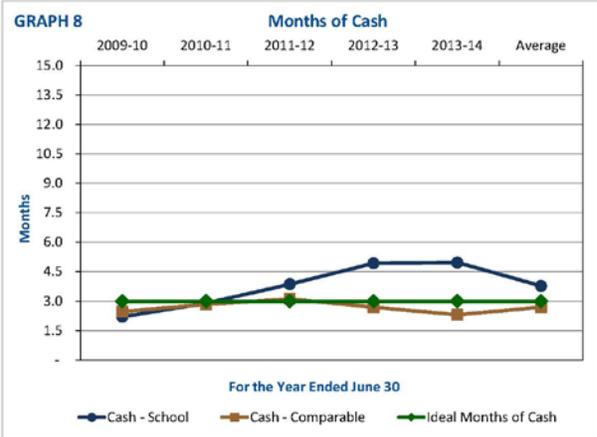
This chart illustrates the percentage expense breakdown between program services and management & others as well as the percentage of revenues exceeding expenses. Ideally the percentage expense for program services will far exceed that of the management & other expense. The percentage of revenues exceeding 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.

APPENDIX: PERFORMANCE SUMMARIES

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: English Language Arts

Amber Charter School



	2011-12			MET	2012-13			MET	2013-14			MET			
	Grades Served: K-5				Grades Served: K-5				Grades Served: K-5						
	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	38.9 (72)	39.4 (71)	NO	3	27.5 (80)	27.5 (80)	NA	3	29.9 (67)	28.8 (66)	NA			
	4	61.0 (59)	61.0 (59)		4	24.1 (58)	24.1 (58)		4	40.8 (71)	40.8 (71)				
	5	53.1 (49)	53.1 (49)		5	24.5 (49)	24.5 (49)		5	12.5 (48)	12.5 (48)				
	6	(0)	(0)		6	(0)	(0)		6	(0)	(0)				
	7	(0)	(0)		7	(0)	(0)		7	(0)	(0)				
	8	(0)	(0)		8	(0)	(0)		8	(0)	(0)				
	All	50.0 (180)	50.3 (179)		All	25.7 (187)	25.7 (187)		All	29.6 (186)	29.2 (185)				
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	YES	Grades	PLI	AMO		Grades	PI	AMO	NA			
	3-5	143	135		3-5	103			3-5	106	89				
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: Manhattan District 4			YES	Comparison: Manhattan District 4			YES	Comparison: Manhattan District 4			YES			
	Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District				
	3-5	50.3	45.8		3-5	25.7	22.5		3-5	29.2	24.6				
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.	% ED	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES	% ED	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES	% ED	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES
	75.8	50.0	43.2	0.45		85.5	25.7	19.4	0.51		82.0	29.6	22.0	0.52	
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	YES	Grades	School	State	YES			
	4				4	67.1			4	61.4					
	5				5	52.6			5	46.0					
	6				6	0.0			6	0.0					
	7				7	0.0			7	0.0					
	8				8	0.0			8	0.0					
	All	47.7	50.0		All	60.5	50.0		All	55.1	50.0				

APPENDIX: PERFORMANCE SUMMARIES

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: Mathematics

Amber Charter School



	2011-12 Grades Served: K-5			MET	2012-13 Grades Served: K-5			MET	2013-14 Grades Served: K-5			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	61.1 (72)	62.0 (71)	NO	3	40.0 (80)	40.0 (80)	NA	3	52.2 (67)	51.5 (66)	NA			
	4	81.4 (59)	81.4 (59)		4	51.7 (58)	51.7 (58)		4	71.8 (71)	71.8 (71)				
	5	77.6 (49)	77.6 (49)		5	30.6 (49)	30.6 (49)		5	37.5 (48)	37.5 (48)				
	6	(0)	(0)		6	(0)	(0)		6	(0)	(0)				
	7	(0)	(0)		7	(0)	(0)		7	(0)	(0)				
	8	(0)	(0)		8	(0)	(0)		8	(0)	(0)				
	All	72.2 (180)	72.6 (179)		All	41.2 (187)	41.2 (187)		All	55.9 (186)	55.7 (185)				
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	YES	Grades	PLI	AMO	YES	Grades	PI	AMO	NA			
	3-5	169	148		3-5	123	86		3-5	144	86				
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: Manhattan District 4			YES	Comparison: Manhattan District 4			YES	Comparison: Manhattan District 4			YES			
	Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District				
	3-5	72.6	58.9		3-5	41.2	25.3		3-5	55.7	31.9				
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.	% ED	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES	% ED	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES	% ED	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES
	75.8	72.2	53.5	0.99		85.5	41.2	22.7	1.12		82.0	55.9	30.6	1.31	
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	YES			
	4				4	67.9			4	72.1					
	5				5	55.1			5	38.6					
	6				6	0.0			6	0.0					
	7				7	0.0			7	0.0					
	8				8	0.0			8	0.0					
	All	52.3	50.0		All	62.0	50.0		All	58.5	50.0				