



2015-16 School Evaluation Report

EXPLORE EMPOWER CHARTER SCHOOL

Visit Date: May 9-10, 2016

Report Date: June 21, 2016

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INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit on May 9-10, 2016. While the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) near the end of a charter term, most mid-cycle school evaluation visits focus on a subset of these benchmarks. This subset, the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, addresses the academic success of the school and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization. It provides a framework for examining the quality of the educational program, focusing on teaching and learning (i.e., curriculum, instruction, assessment and services for at-risk students), as well as leadership, organizational capacity and board oversight. The Institute uses the established criteria on a regular basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

Appendix A to the report contains a School Overview with descriptive information about the school, including enrollment and demographic data, as well as historical information regarding the life of the school. It also provides background information on the conduct of the visit, including information about the evaluation team and puts the visit in the context of the school’s current charter cycle. Appendix B displays the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks.

This report does not contain an overall rating or comprehensive indicator that would specify at a glance the school’s prospects for renewal. Rather, it summarizes various strengths of the school and notes areas in need of improvement based on the Qualitative Education Benchmarks. The Institute intends this selection of information to be an exception report in order to highlight areas of concern. As such, limited detail about positive elements of the educational program is not an indication that the Institute does not recognize other indicators of program effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION AND SCHOOL BACKGROUND

SCHOOL BACKGROUND

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by Regents ¹	December 2008
Date of School Opening	September 1, 2009
Date of Merger with SUNY Authorized Education Corporation	July 1, 2015

Location and 2015-16 Enrollment

Address	District	Facility	Chartered Enrollment	Grades
188 Rochester Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11213	NYC CSD 17	Co-located	540	K-8

Network Information

Explore Empower Charter School (“Explore Empower”) is one of six schools within a merged education corporation. Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn (the “education corporation”) has the authority to operate a total of six schools, including two SUNY authorized schools that have not yet opened, Explore Enrich Charter School and Explore Envision Charter School. The New York City Schools Chancellor originally authorized two of the merged schools, Explore Empower and Explore Charter School. All schools within the education corporation operate under the management of Explore Schools, Inc., (“Explore Schools” or the “network”) a New York not-for-profit charter management organization based in New York City. The network by contract provides the schools with academic, operational and back-office assistance. Schools utilize the network’s curriculum and assessment materials, all purchased or designed by network curriculum teams. The network is also responsible for managing and evaluating the performance of each school and school leader.

¹ Explore Empower was originally authorized by the New York City Schools Chancellor.

2014-15 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Over the past three years, Explore Empower posted English language arts (“ELA”) scores that did not meet the required measures in a SUNY Accountability Plan. During 2014-15, the school’s mathematics performance was insufficient to meet SUNY’s mathematics Accountability Plan goal. In contrast, Explore Empower would have met the measures in its mathematics goal during 2012-13 and 2013-14 if the school was under its previous authorizer. The school posted strong science scores in 2012-13, but fell short of the required measures the following two years. The school is in good standing under the state’s No Child Left Behind (“NCLB”) accountability system.

ELA

During the past three years, Explore Empower performed poorly against the measures in a SUNY Accountability Plan in ELA. Each year, the percentage of students enrolled in at least their second year scoring at or above proficient on the ELA exam fell below the comparison district. The school also consistently performed lower than expected in comparison to schools serving similar concentrations of economically disadvantaged students. Explore Empower’s mean student score growth in ELA did not exceed the state median over the three years. Given this record of performance, SUNY would deem that the school did not meet its ELA goal.

Mathematics

During 2012-13 and 2013-14, Explore Empower’s performance against SUNY’s required mathematics measures was strong. In 2012-13, the school outperformed the district by 16 percentage points on the state mathematics exam. The school performed higher than expected to a large degree in comparison to schools across the state enrolling similar rates of economically disadvantaged students. The same year, the school posted a mean growth percentile that exceeded SUNY’s target by 13 percentile points. During 2013-14, the school continued to outperform the district and would have met the target for SUNY’s effect size measure. In 2014-15, the district outperformed the school. Additionally, in comparison to demographically similar schools in New York State, the school performed lower than expected. Finally, Explore Empower’s mean growth score declined to 14 percentile points below SUNY’s target. Based on this analysis, the school would have met SUNY’s mathematics Accountability Plan goal for 2 out the past 3 years.

Science

During 2012-13, 100% of Explore Empower’s fourth graders enrolled in at least their second year scored at or above proficient on the state science exam, exceeding the district’s comparative rate of 82%. The following year, the school’s performance declined 43 percentage points. During 2014-15, Explore Empower posted science scores below SUNY’s absolute performance benchmark of 75% proficient. The school also underperformed the district by 16 percentage points.

NCLB

Explore Empower is in good standing under the state’s NCLB accountability system. The school was not identified on the state’s priority or focus school list for 2014-15.

2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
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ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Enrollment (N) Receiving Mandated Academic Services		(64)	(81)	(102)
Results	Tested on State Exams (N)	(30)	(56)	(72)
	School Percent Proficient on ELA Exam	3.3	3.6	5.6
	Percent Proficient Statewide	5.0	5.2	5.8

		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
ELL Enrollment (N)		(11)	(13)	(18)
Results	Tested on NYSESLAT ² Exam (N)	(10)	(10)	(13)
	School Percent 'Commanding' or Making Progress ³ on NYSESLAT	10.0	0.0	46.2

² New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test, a standardized state exam.

³ Defined as moving up at least one level of proficiency. As of 2014-15, student scores can fall into five categories/proficiency levels: Entering (formerly Beginning); Emerging (formerly Low Intermediate); Transitioning (formerly Intermediate); Expanding (formerly Advanced); and, Commanding (formerly Proficient).

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

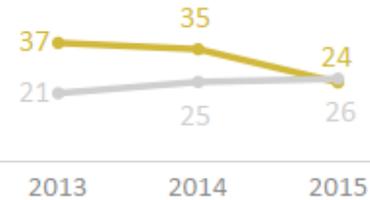
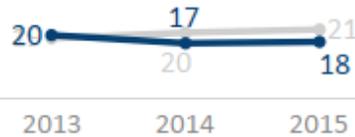
Explore Empower Charter School Charter School

REQUIRED MEASURE DESCRIPTION

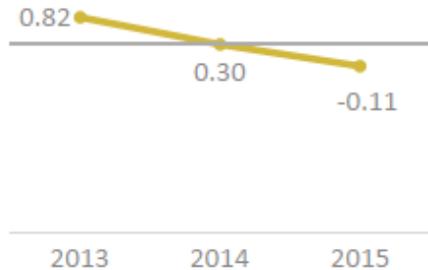
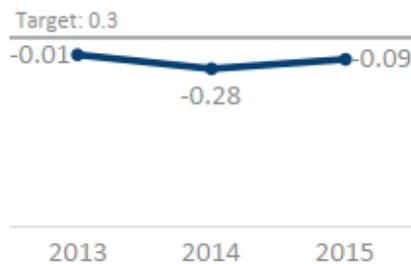
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

MATHEMATICS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

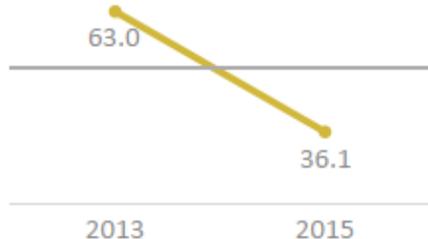
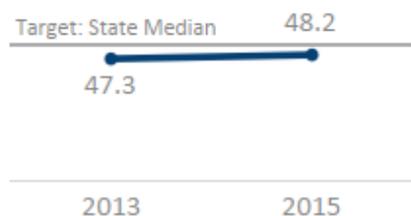
Comparative Measure: District Comparison. Each year, the percentage of students at Empower in at least their second year performing at or above proficiency in **ELA** and **mathematics** will be greater than that of students in the same tested grades in **CSD 17**.



Comparative Measure: Effect Size. Each year, 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.



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



SCIENCE ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

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



BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

QUALITATIVE EDUCATION BENCHMARKS

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,⁴ describe the elements in place at schools that are highly effective at providing students from low-income backgrounds the instruction, content, knowledge and skills necessary to produce strong academic performance. The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks describe the elements an effective school must have in place at the time of renewal.⁵

Use of Assessment Data

Explore Empower now has an assessment system that provides teachers and leaders with a sufficient amount of student outcome data to inform instruction. This year, the school using this data to generate action plans to improve student learning.

- Under the direction of the network Explore Empower regularly administers a variety of assessments that align to the school's curriculum. In literacy, the school administers the Fountas and Pinnell ("F&P") assessment, on-demand writing assessments and Power Reading assessments (for grades 3-8) the network develops. In mathematics, the network creates interim assessments the school administers at the conclusion of each term. The school also administers Core Knowledge Language Arts assessments for grades K-2 three times per year. Teachers supplement these common assessments with exit tickets, student conferences and other informal assessments.
- Teachers use data from assessments to generate student groupings. For example, based on recent interim assessment results, the school split students in grades one and two into 11 different reading groups and kindergartners into four reading groups. Additionally, at the end of term three, and as a result of performance on interim assessments, most of the middle school leveled literacy intervention ("LLI") student groupings changed.
- Explore Empower teachers grade assessments using a rubric from corresponding commercial curricula or one the network provides. The school holds norming sessions where teachers collectively analyze sample student work to determine the characteristics of high and low quality student responses.
- The school has a system to analyze assessment results, and teachers use those results to identify instructional changes. Following each term, teachers attend network-wide sessions during which they analyze F&P, on-demand writing and Power Reading assessment data to determine student placement in the school's LLI and guided reading groups. Mathematics teachers use network protocols during in-service days to analyze interim assessment data. Teachers also develop updated action plans to meet the needs of students as identified in interim assessments. Additionally, in professional learning communities ("PLCs"), teachers discuss results of end of unit assessments as well as exit ticket data to inform instructional planning and student groupings.

⁴ An extensive body of research identifying and confirming the correlates of effective schools exists dating back four decades. Selected sources include: www.mes.org/correlates.html; scholar.harvard.edu/files/fryer/files/dobbie_fryer_revision_final.pdf; and, gao.gov/assets/80/77488.pdf.

⁵ Additional details regarding the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, including greater specificity as to what the Institute looks for at each school that may demonstrate attainment of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, is available at: www.newyorkcharters.org/suny-renewal-benchmarks/.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- Assessment results partly inform professional development and coaching strategies but are not the primary determinants. For instance, though some teachers and instructional leaders discuss some assessment information during PLCs, the focus of trainings the school provides and some PLCs is on gaining content knowledge in the new ELA curriculum.
- Explore Empower regularly provides parents with information on student progress and growth. In addition to parent-teacher conferences, the school sends report cards to parents at the end of each of its five academic terms. The school also provides parents information about student performance on the interim assessments during conferences.

Curriculum

In response to the school's low academic performance, particularly with regard to ELA, the network implemented wide-spread changes to the curriculum across all Explore schools. Due in part to these changes and additional instructional supports at Explore Empower, the school now has curricula and supporting documents that support teachers in their instructional planning, though elements of the curriculum program continue to be in transition.

- Under the direction of the network, Explore schools are implementing a three year turnaround plan to address low academic performance. As part of the plan the network is assessing the strength of the curriculum and is making changes to much of the schools' program. As a result, Explore Empower now uses Core Knowledge for grades K-2 and Expeditionary Learning for grades 3-8 in the interest of generating better ELA results and aligning more closely with Common Core State Standards. The school currently uses TERC Investigations for grades K-5 and Impact for grades 6-8 in mathematics. The network determined that the central mathematics curricula are not fully aligned with Common Core standards thus teachers work with leaders to supplement math curricula with resources such as Context for Learning and Engage NY. Correlating with the network's hiring of a new mathematics director, the school expects to transition to a new mathematics curriculum for grades 6-8 next school year, as well as an updated version of the K-5 mathematics curriculum, that are more fully aligned with the Common Core State Standards.
- The network is responsible for curriculum selection and supports the development of these materials. A team that includes the network's chief academic officer and network's director of literacy or mathematics as well as some school-based instructional leaders makes decisions regarding which curricula to use. The network provides pacing guides, scope and sequence documents, unit plans, lesson outlines and other scaffolding documents for teachers to use when planning instruction. Teachers have access to network-wide shared drives that contain lesson plans across subjects and grade levels. Based on these documents, teachers know what to teach and when to teach it.
- Explore Empower's instructional leaders use coaching sessions and time during PLC meetings to support teachers in making curricular modifications and in building content area knowledge. However, teachers do not receive consistent formal feedback on every lesson plan in each subject. The amount of feedback teachers receive depends on their direct coach and the instructional leader responsible for reviewing that particular lesson plan based on content or grade level.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

Pedagogy

Low quality instruction is evident across the school. Teachers do not promote academic rigor and do not use effective classroom management techniques in order to drive student learning. As shown in the chart below, during the visit, Institute team members conducted 24 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all school evaluation visits.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

		Grade								Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Content Area	ELA	3	1	2	1	1		1	2	11
	Math			1	2	2	1			6
	Science		1			1		1		3
	Other		1		1				2	4
	Total	3	3	3	4	4	1	2	4	24

- Although teachers deliver lessons with clear objectives that align to the school’s curriculum (21 out of 24 classrooms observed). Co-teachers often do not have clear roles in classrooms with regard to academics; rather than being involved in instructing students, the role of many co-teachers is to monitor student behavior.
- Some teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding (12 out of 24 classrooms observed). Teachers that effectively check for understanding use whole group techniques and individual conferencing. However, many teachers do not assess the mastery of particular concepts during the course of lessons and thus cannot gauge when it is necessary to adjust their instruction throughout. Some teachers only check for understanding with individual students, missing key opportunities to check for understanding across the entire class.
- Few 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 (3 out of 24 classrooms observed). Instruction is typically teacher-centered and focuses on acquisition of facts or knowledge rather than exploring open-ended questions or applying learning to real-world or complex problems. Observed teachers also provide few meaningful opportunities for students to interact with their peers.
- A slight majority of teachers maintain classrooms with a consistent focus on academic achievement (13 out of 24 classrooms observed). A significant number of teachers do not have effective classroom management techniques and routines to facilitate learning. Despite teacher attempts to redirect the multitude of low-level misbehaviors, many students do not comply with teachers’ directives. Teachers regularly allow students to opt out of learning, including behaviors such as sleeping and unauthorized movement, as exhibited during one classroom observation during which a teacher spent only two of fifteen minutes on instruction due to pervasive management issues.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

Instructional Leadership

Despite codified teacher support systems, the implementation of coaching and feedback systems by the instructional leadership is not adequate to develop the pedagogical competencies of teachers. However, instructional leaders are clear about school-wide priorities, which align to those of the network.

- Explore Empower’s instructional leaders establish clear expectations for teacher performance and student achievement. With a network-wide focus on literacy, leaders set ambitious goals such as expecting at least 70% of students to perform at or above grade level as measured by the F&P reading assessment.
- Explore Empower has systems in place to communicate school goals. The school’s instructional leadership team, now consisting of a principal, two academic directors and an academic coordinator is adequate in size to support the teaching staff and meet regularly with teachers to set goals, analyze student data and track student progress toward meeting expectations. Leaders also conduct informal classroom observations throughout the week and provide actionable, in-the-moment or quick follow-up feedback using observational data.
- The acuteness of support leaders provide is insufficient to meet the needs of the schools’ most struggling teachers, as evidenced by the visit team’s observations of instruction in classroom. Leaders provide coaching to teachers in weekly whole-staff meetings and through informal observations. A member of the leadership team also coaches each teacher using an individualized teacher development plan (“TDP”). Student achievement and observational data determines a teacher’s coaching focus and whether the focus changes throughout the year. This plan also determines each teachers instructional goals, the supports they will receive to help them meet those goals and how often teachers and leaders will meet to track progress.
- Explore Empower schedules sufficient opportunities for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction across grade levels. Grade levels at the lower school and content departments at the upper school meet two to three times a week, once in meetings to discuss housekeeping and operations, and additionally in PLC meetings. PLCs provide teachers with the opportunity to dive into instructional content, data analysis and to discuss ways of improving lesson implementation across grades. The time allotted for these meetings is adequate; however, as teachers with different levels of professional strength sometimes lead PLCs, leader support lacks the consistency and intensity needed to develop the high needs of the teaching staff, particularly with regard to lesson delivery and classroom management.
- The network is largely responsible for the design of the professional development program of the school beginning with its three week, pre-service summer training that includes curriculum, at-risk support and school culture sessions. The school leadership team has the ability to adjust or supplement the network’s professional development schedule using observational and student data in order to support the specific needs of teachers. Teachers also have the opportunity to provide input on the effectiveness of professional development activities after sessions.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- While the school has a comprehensive professional development calendar and scope of activities, instructional leaders have not put in place consistent and functional systems to ensure the professional development program interrelates with classroom practice. For example, leaders do not consistently implement a process following professional development where they might identify a specific skill teachers learn in a session, inform teachers of expectations on incorporating that skill into lesson plans and circle back to observe if teachers effectively incorporate the skill during lesson implementation.
- Instructional leaders conduct evaluations of teachers annually using a network protocol. Teachers report that they are aware of evaluation criteria, in addition to their identified strengths and weaknesses. Evaluations do not currently factor in student achievement; however the school is considering how it can include this measure in the future.

At-Risk Students

Explore Empower has adequate intervention systems in place to meet the needs of its students with disabilities and students who are struggling academically. The school does not have legally compliant and educationally sound supports to meet the needs of English language learners (“ELLs”).

- Explore Empower uses clear procedures for identifying at-risk students. The school uses its child study team (“CST”), consisting of general education teachers, counselors, deans of students and learning support specialists, as the primary vehicle for identifying students with disabilities and students who are struggling academically. The school convenes CST meetings at the request of a teacher or staff member using a student’s performance data. The CST team creates academic support plans and behavior support plans that they monitor, evaluate and revisit across terms. CSTs refer students for special education evaluation if students do not respond to the academic and/or behavioral supports. The school identifies ELLs using the Home Language Identification Survey and the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners.
- Explore Empower serves its students with disabilities through integrated co-teaching classrooms (“ICT”) and special education teacher support services (“SETSS”). There is at least one ICT classroom in each grade of the lower school. The upper school employs three subject-specific ICT teachers in math, reading, and writing who provide services in their respective content areas across grades 6-8. Three learning specialists provide SETSS to the students who require this service. Learning specialists and ICT teachers conduct formal reviews at least once per term (five times per academic year) to ensure that students are receiving required services and are making adequate progress toward their goals.
- Explore Empower uses a response to intervention (“RTI”) framework to provide interventions and supports to students who are struggling academically. Tier 1 instruction consists of general education teacher supports that are appropriate for the significant majority of the students in a classroom. Students receive tier 2 interventions, such as teacher-created resources, re-teaching and small group pull-outs, if they are not meeting performance standards. Tier 3 interventions generally focus on individual students in the school’s aforementioned CST process. School staff reviews the effectiveness of the interventions and supports for academically struggling students at least once per term.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- Explore Empower lacks a legally complaint program for meeting the needs of its ELL students. The student services coordinator is certified by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (“TESOL”) and oversees the needs of the school's ELL students. However, ELLs receive language supports available to all students, including LLI instruction, instead of specific supports to meet language acquisition gaps. Some ELLs receive pull-out services in some form, however it is unclear whether or not the staff administering these services has language acquisition training or received targeted professional development from someone who does.
- At the beginning of the school year the student services coordinator provides all teachers with rosters consisting of their students who have Individualized Education Programs (“IEPs”) and ELL designations, their required services and accommodations, their IEP goals and their language proficiency goals. Teachers participate in multiple meetings per year with at-risk program staff regarding each of their students with IEPs.
- The school and network provide sufficient professional development during the summer pre-service and during the year on strategies for supporting at-risk students, reading and writing IEPs and other administrative and instructional content specifically related to at-risk student populations and their needs. The school also provides regular opportunities for instructional and curricular collaboration between at-risk program staff and general education teachers. Teachers participate in several PLC meetings each week that allow for ICT teachers and learning specialists to work with general education teachers on issues relating to curriculum and instruction.

Organizational Capacity

The school's organization is building the capacity to effectively support the delivery of the educational program.

- After several years of poor academic results across Explore schools, the network recently implemented a three year turnaround plan to address curriculum gaps, staff attrition and leader effectiveness. As part of the plan, during the 2014-15 school year Explore Empower replaced its principal, the third since its opening, with a new leader that has several years experience working at the school. After this replacement, the school and network put a heavier emphasis on strengthening the leadership team as whole, hiring new staff and re-evaluating academic and culture goals, in order to close gaps in the academic program.
- Explore Empower establishes an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, policies and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program. In addition to support from network staff, the school has a leadership team consisting of instructional and operational staff to manage all aspects of the school.
- The school’s organizational structure has clear lines of accountability, with increasingly defined roles and responsibilities across the organization. The school’s leadership encourages a culture of “teaming” and shared responsibility, while also maintaining individual performance expectations.
- The school has a discipline system in place that the director of school culture monitors for effectiveness and consistency through biweekly discipline data updates, discipline data reviews each term and weekly meetings with the deans of culture. The new principal

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

created the director of school culture role in response to previous high rates of student suspensions and an ineffective discipline system. In comparing the 2015-16 academic year to date to the previous academic year, there are only 23 in-school suspensions at the time of the visit compared to 79 in-school suspensions last year (decrease of 71%) and 96 out-of-school suspensions at the time of the visit compared to 218 out-of-school suspensions last year (decrease of 56%). The school links the reduction in suspensions with its new approach to discipline, which focuses on increased relationship building with students and clear behavioral expectations associated with clear rewards and consequences.

- Explore Empower maintains adequate student enrollment. At the time of the visit, the school reported an enrollment of 495 students and a waitlist of 1,415 students. The school actively backfills across grades.
- Teacher turnover is a significant issue for Explore Empower with 30% of teachers leaving the school between the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years. In response, the school and network lengthened the summer pre-service to provide more training and culture-building to support the onboarding of a significant number of new teachers. Explore Empower's leadership team is engaging in several activities to reduce teacher turnover including implementing professional development support and one-on-one mentoring with greater fidelity than in the past and providing more leadership opportunities to teachers who demonstrate instructional effectiveness and commitment to the school.
- As Explore Empower has had four principals since its opening, the network and school recognize leader turnover as a weakness. The new principal invests heavily in aligning the school's leadership team to ensure consistent priorities and messaging across stakeholders. The leadership team as a whole places a high emphasis on developing its instructional and non-instructional staff. Teacher surveys indicate a positive response to the new principal's and leadership team's efforts, specifically in the areas of school culture, cohesiveness, teaming and opportunities for growth and development.
- The school's is reorganizing its resources in the interest of meeting its academic goals. Explore Empower's operations team and leadership team regularly review teachers' and students' needs and work to deliver resources in support of the school's academic goals. Specific resources Explore Empower provides includes: classroom libraries with high-interest grade-appropriate books, iPads at lower grades with literacy-focused software and several carts of Chromebooks.
- As part of the network's three year plan, Explore Empower and network staff have put in place a framework to monitor and evaluate the school's programs and makes changes as necessary. As this framework is fairly new, its effectiveness remains unclear.

Board Oversight

The Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn board is developing its ability to provide effective oversight to Explore Empower. While the board corresponds regularly with the network on the performance of the school, it does not have systems in place to evaluate the strength of the network's support of the academic program, particularly as the school struggles with staff retention and meeting academic targets.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- Board members' experience in finance, law and non-profit work enables the board to monitor the operations and fiscal state of the school. While the board monitors the academic performance of the school, it lacks strong K-12 education experience and depends largely on the network to understand student performance data and inform any decisions made to adjust the school's program.
- As part of the network's three year plan, the board now receives sufficient dashboards at each board meeting containing academic, school culture, attendance, retention and financial data. While the board is not responsible for implementing the network's plan, it approved the plan and works collaboratively with the network to determine what information it receives in these dashboards and from network leaders. The information the board requests aligns with stated priorities including increasing ELA performance using F & P assessments as a benchmark, as well as tracking progress toward a 90% retention goal for school leaders.
- The board identifies staff retention as one of its main priorities, although the network is responsible for hiring key personnel and tracking retention. Although the board wants to retain as many staff members as possible and is currently on track to retain 80% of its school leaders for the next school year, it recognizes the need to replace underperforming leaders and teachers. For example, identifying gaps in the previous leader's ability to support the academic program, the network hired a new school leader from within the Explore Empower community. The board was fully aware of this transition and expresses confidence that the new principal will be able to drive increased academic performance amongst students, as evidenced by increased scores on F & P reading assessments during the 2015-16 school year. In response to high teacher attrition, the board continues to work with the network to review hiring policies and introduce teacher incentives, such as increasing teacher pay, enabling its ability to retain and attract high quality instructors.
- Despite board members' regular contact with the network, the board has no formal or systematic process to evaluate the network's support of the school, nor does it have a systematic and effective procedure to evaluate its own performance. The network is responsible for evaluating the performance of the principal, although the board is aware of the content of leader evaluations.
- The board does not adequately communicate with the school community. As the board mainly confers with the network, it does not interact with school leaders, teachers or families. One board member reports that many parents do not know of the board's existence. The presence of board members at the school, which members report as rare, is also insufficient to allow for clear understandings of gaps with regard to the program on the ground. The board recognizes this as an area of improvement and reports working to increase its visibility in the future.

Appendix A

School Overview

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Mission Statement

The mission of Explore Schools is to provide students with the academic skills and critical-thinking abilities they need to succeed in a college-preparatory high school. We know that *all* children can succeed in an environment with high expectations, rigorous academics, and caring and committed adults. We are committed to serving all students, including students with special needs and English Language Learners.

Board of Trustees⁶

Board Member Name	Position	Board Member Name	Position
Graeme Daykin	Chair	Kimesha Carnegie	Trustee
Henry Mannix	Vice Chair	Morty Ballen	Trustee
Beth Cohen	Treasurer	Peter Walker	Trustee
Angelica Thomas	Trustee		
Jana Reed	Trustee		

School Characteristics

School Year	Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ⁷	Proposed Grades	Actual Grades
2011-12	300	296	K-5	K-5
2012-13	360	354	K-6	K-6
2013-14	420	411	K-7	K-7
2014-15	480	464	K-8	K-8
2015-16	540	501	K-8	K-8

Key Design Elements

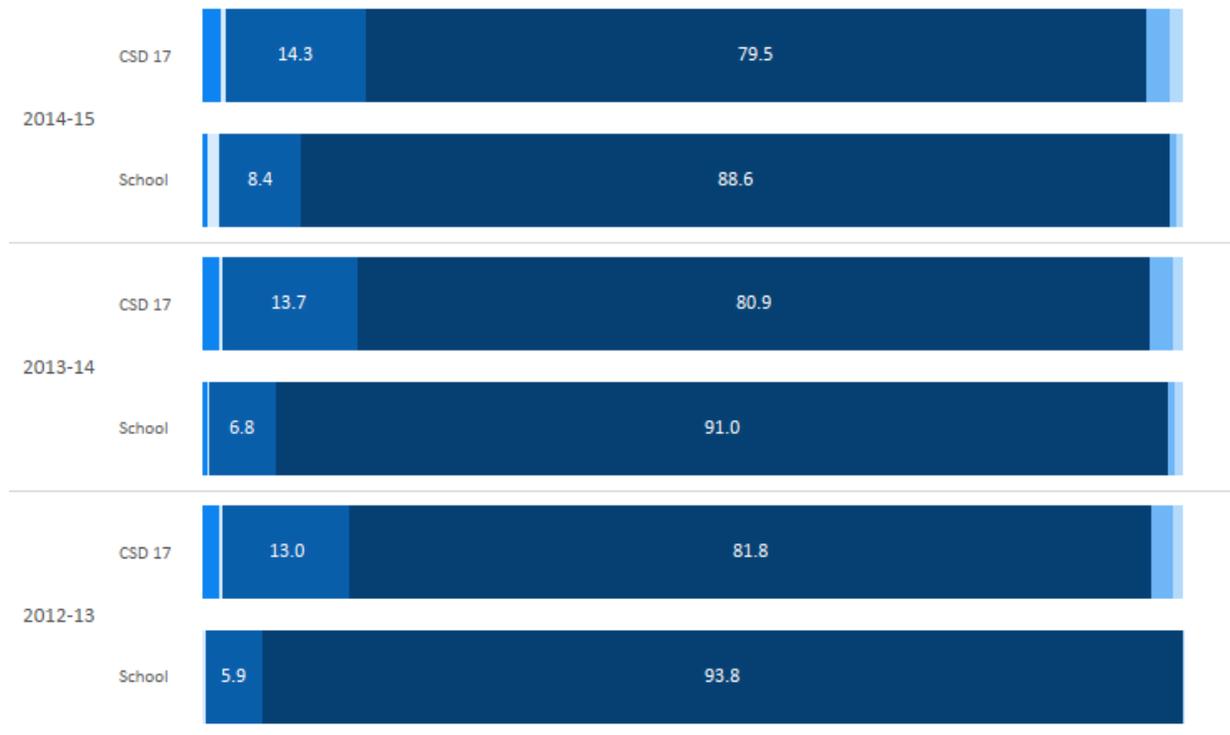
- Beginning Young;
- Continuing Through 8th Grade;
- Small Class Size;
- Meeting the Needs of At-Risk Students;
- Continuous Research to Drive Improvement;
- Instructional Decision Making; and,
- Governance and Organizational Design.

⁶ Source: The Institute's board records at the time of the visit.

⁷ Source: Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

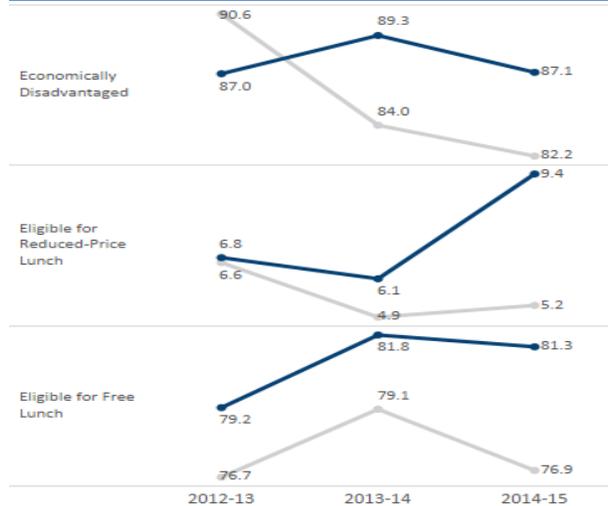
Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity



Race/Ethnicity Color Legend

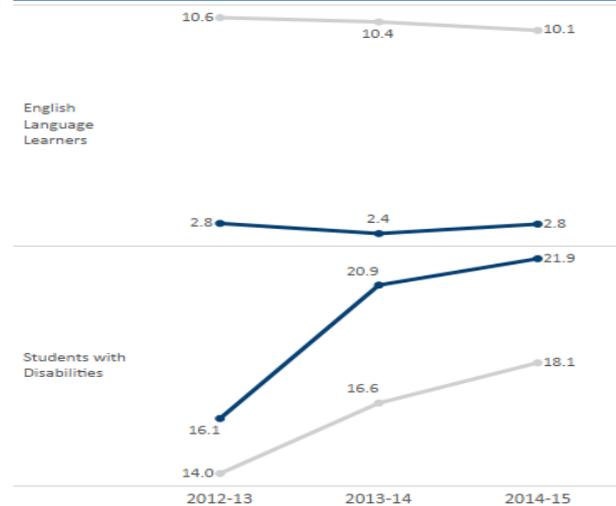
■ American Indian or Alaska Native
 ■ Asian, Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander
 ■ Black or African American
 ■ Hispanic
 ■ Multiracial
 ■ White

Student Demographics: Free/Reduced Lunch



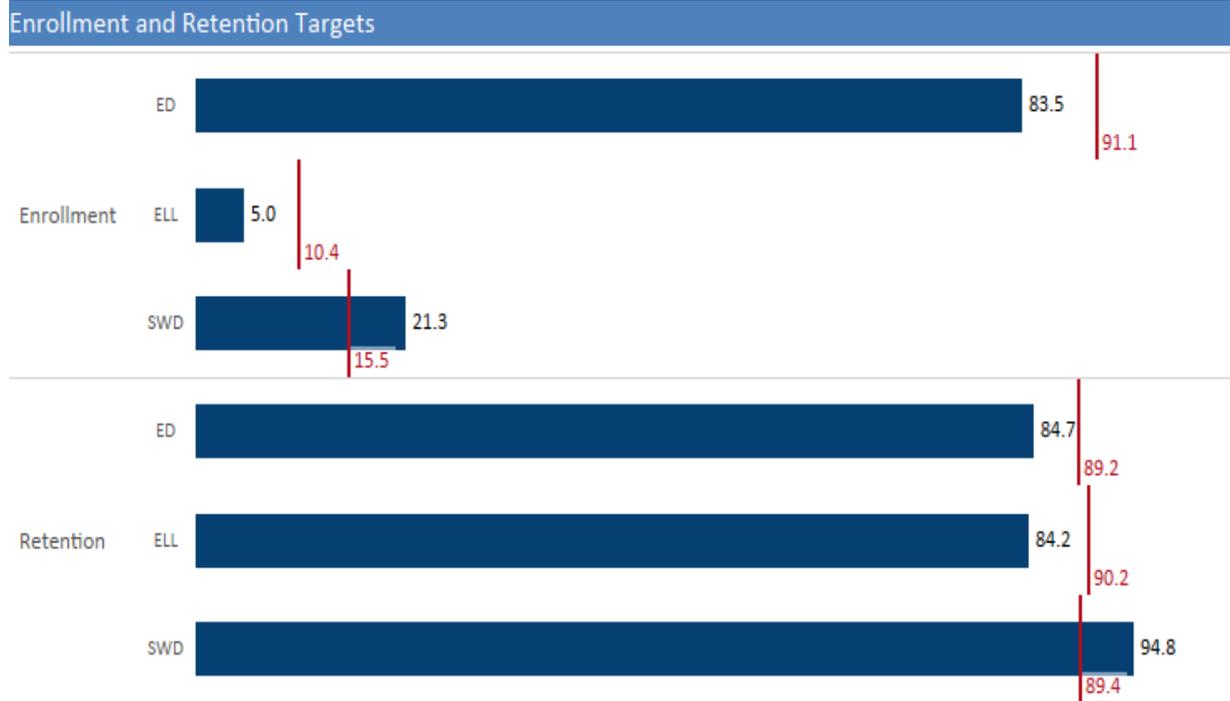
The charts show the trends in enrollment in the **school** and the **district** for each subgroup over the charter term. Reduced-Price and Free Lunch data are not available for 2014-15. Economically disadvantaged includes those students eligible for Free and Reduced-Price lunch among other qualifying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

Student Demographics: Special Populations



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

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW



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

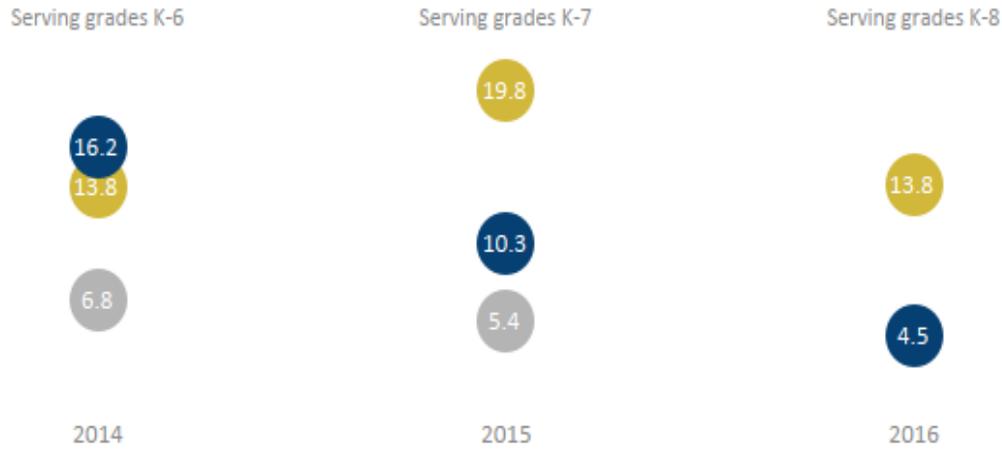


Persistence in enrollment illustrates the percentage of students not scheduled to age out of the school who re-enroll from the previous year. The Institute derived the statistical information on enrollment persistence from its database. No comparative data from NYCDOE or NYSED is available to the Institute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

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

School Discipline

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



Although Community School District ("CSD") and school suspension rates are presented on the same graph, a direct comparison between the rates is not possible for three primary reasons. Available CSD data includes Kindergarten through 12th grades and school data includes only the grades served by the school. CSD data are not available that show multiple instances of suspension of a single student, the overall number of suspensions, the durations of suspensions, or the time of year when the school administered the suspension. CSD data showing the difference between in school and out of school suspensions are not available. The percentage rate shown here is calculated using the method employed by the New York City Department of Education: the total the number of students receiving an in school or out of school suspension at any time during the school year is divided by the total enrollment, then multiplied by 100.

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

2014	2015	2016
0	0	0

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

School Leaders

School Year(s)	Name(s) and Title(s)
2009-10 to 2010-11	Stephanie Clagnaz, Principal
2011-12 to 2012-13	Beth Doyle, Principal
2013-14 to 2014-15	Brian Ferreira, Principal
2015-16 to Present	Christina Cotter, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Date
2015-16	Evaluation Visit	May 9-10, 2016

Conduct of the Visit

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Member	Title
May 9-10, 2016	Aaron Campbell	Senior Analyst
	Adam Aberman	External Consultant
	Jared Boyce	External Consultant

Charter Cycle Context

Charter Term	4 th Year of Five-Year Charter Term
Accountability Period ⁸	4 th Year of Four-Year Accountability Period
Anticipated Renewal Visit	Fall 2016

⁸ Because the SUNY Trustees make a renewal decision in the last year of a charter term, the Accountability Period ends in the next to last year of that charter term. For schools in initial charter terms, the Accountability Period is the first four years that the school provides instruction. For schools in subsequent charter terms, the Accountability Period includes the last year of the previous charter term through the next to last year of the current charter term.

Appendix B

SUNY Renewal Benchmarks



State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

Version 5.0, May 2012

Introduction

The State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks¹ (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) serve two primary functions at renewal:

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

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

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

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

APPENDIX B: SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARKS

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

It is important that the entire school community understand the renewal process. All members of a school’s leadership team and board should carefully review both the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks and the SUNY Renewal Practices. Note that a renewal overview document for parents, 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>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1A</p> <p>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.

APPENDIX B: SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARKS

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1C</p> <p style="text-align: center;">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 style="text-align: center;">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 style="text-align: center;">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

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<p>pedagogical skills) and in which teachers believe that all students can succeed;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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;

APPENDIX B: SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARKS

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

APPENDIX B: SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARKS

	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2A Mission & Key Design Elements	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2B Parents & Students	<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 • parents keep their children enrolled year-to-year.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2C Organizational Capacity	<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.

	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2D Board Oversight	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2E Governance	<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

Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<p>expectations; to correct those deficiencies and puts in place benchmarks for determining if the partner organization corrects them in a timely fashion;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the board regularly reviews and updates board and school policies as needed and has in place an orientation process for new members; • the board effectively recruits and selects new members in order to maintain adequate skill sets and expertise for effective governance and structural continuity; • the board implements a comprehensive and strict conflict of interest policy (and/or code of ethics)—consistent with that set forth in the charter and with the General Municipal Law—and consistently abides by them throughout the term of the charter; • the board generally avoids conflicts of interest; where not possible, the board manages those conflicts in a clear and transparent manner; • the board implements a process for dealing with complaints consistent with that set forth in the charter, makes the complaint policy clear to all stakeholders, and follows the policy including acting on complaints in a timely fashion; • the board abides by its by-laws including, but not limited to, provisions regarding trustee election and the removal and filling of vacancies; and • the board holds all meetings in accordance with the Open Meetings Law and records minutes for all meetings including executive sessions and, as appropriate, committee meetings.
<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;

	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school substantially complies with the terms of its charter and applicable laws, rules and regulations; • the school abides by the terms of its monitoring plan; • the school implements effective systems and controls to ensure that it meets legal and charter requirements; • the school has an active and ongoing relationship with in-house or independent legal counsel who reviews and makes recommendations on relevant policies, documents, transactions and incidents and who also handles other legal matters as needed; and • the school manages any litigation appropriately and provides litigation papers to insurers and the Institute in a timely manner.

	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
<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; • 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;

APPENDIX B: SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARKS

	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 and those that are due shortly;

APPENDIX B: SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARKS

	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<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.

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?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<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>Plans for the Educational Program</p>	<p>The school’s plans for implementing the educational program allow it to meet its Accountability Plan goals.</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.

APPENDIX B: SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARKS

	<p align="center">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>
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<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.