



Harlem Village Academy Leadership Charter School

School Evaluation Report 2012-13

Visit Date: February 27-28, 2013

Report Issued: July 22, 2013

Charter Schools Institute
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INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report includes five components. The first section, titled School Overview, provides descriptive information about the school, including enrollment and demographic data, as well as historical information regarding the life of the school. The second section provides background information on the conduct of the evaluation visit, including the date of the visit and information about the evaluation team and puts the visit in the context of the school's current charter cycle. The third section provides the school's 2011-12 Performance Review and Summaries, which gives an analysis of the attainment of the key academic goals in the school's Accountability Plan. A fourth section entitled School Evaluation Visit presents an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit. Finally, an appendix provides the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks (the "SUNY Renewal Benchmarks").

While the Institute conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all SUNY Renewal Benchmarks near the end of a charter term, most mid-cycle evaluation visits focus on a subset of these benchmarks. These Qualitative Education Benchmarks address the academic success of the school and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization. They provide a framework for examining the quality of the educational program, focusing on teaching and learning (i.e., curriculum, instruction, and assessment), as well as organizational capacity, board oversight and governance. The SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the "Institute") uses the established criteria on a regular and ongoing basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

The report below provides benchmark conclusions and evidence to support these conclusions in order to highlight areas of concern and provide additional feedback. The Institute intends this selection of information to be an exception report, which deliberately emphasizes areas of concern. As such, limited detail and evidence about positive elements of the educational program are not an indication that the Institute does not fully recognize evidence of program effectiveness.

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

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

School Name

	Name	Date
Chartered Name	East New York Village Academy Charter School	June 25, 2002
Revised Name	Leadership Village Academy Charter School	May 24, 2005
Revised Name	Harlem Village Academy Leadership Charter School	March 24, 2009

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by the SUNY Trustees	June 25, 2002
Date Initial Charter Approved by the Board of Regents	September 13, 2002
School Opening Date	August, 2005

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades	District
2005-06 to 2007-08	315 E 113 th St New York, NY	5-7	New York City CSD 4
2008-09 to 2010-11	2351 1 st Ave New York, NY 413 East 120th Street, NY	5-8 9-10	New York City CSD 4
2010-11 to 2011-12	2351 1 st Ave New York, NY 413 East 120th Street, NY	5-8 9-11	New York City CSD 4
2012-13	2351 1 st Ave New York, NY 35 West 124 th Street, NY	K, 5-8 9-12	New York City CSD 4 New York City CSD 5

Partner Organization(s)

	Partner Name	Partner Type	Dates of Service
Partner	Harlem Village Academies, Inc.	Non-profit partner	2002 to Present

Charter Renewal History

Type of Renewal	Date
3-year Short-Term Renewal	March 20, 2007
Full-Term Renewal	January 15, 2010

Mission Statement

The mission of Harlem Village Academy Leadership Charter School is to develop students of fine character who graduate from college and make a positive contribution to society.

Key Design Elements

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A rich liberal arts curriculum based on rigorous standards of excellence; • a longer day with the time to master essential skills, reflect deeply, and fall in love with learning; • frequent, diagnostic assessment of student progress that drives continual instructional improvement; • a culture of accountability for academic achievement; • a small, safe, nurturing environment emphasizing kindness, integrity, compassion, hard work, social justice and responsibility;

School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Charter Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ¹	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades
2005-06	312	56	59	6-8	5
2006-07	416	107	114	6-9	5-6
2007-08	165	N/A	159	5-7	5-7
2008-09	212	N/A	209	5-8	5-8
2009-10	242	N/A	288	5-9	5-9
2010-11	324	N/A	341	5-10	5-10
2011-12	362	N/A	388	5-11	5-11
2012-13	401	551	577	5-12, K	5-12, K

Student Demographics²

	2009-10		2010-11		2011-12	
	School Enrollment (in percents)	NYC CSD 4 Enrollment (in percents)	School Enrollment (in percents)	NYC CSD 4 Enrollment (in percents)	School Enrollment (in percents)	NYC CSD 4 Enrollment (in percents)
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	1	0	0	0	1
Black or African American	74	30	73	29	68	28
Hispanic	24	62	25	62	31	62
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0	5	0	6	1	6
White	0	2	0	3	1	3
Multiracial	2	0	1	0	0	0
Special Populations						
Students with Disabilities ³	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	10 ⁴	19 ⁵
English Language Learners	2	13	3	13	13	12
Free/Reduced Lunch						
Eligible for Free Lunch	61	83	63	79	63	79
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	15	4	11	4	12	6

¹ Source: SUNY Charter Schools Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

² New York State Report Cards, 2011-12.

³ District-level Students with Disabilities enrollment data are not available for 2010-11. The New York State Education Department released these district data for the first time in spring 2012.

⁴ Based on the State's Empirical Analysis of Enrollment Targets.

⁵ Ibid.

Board of Trustees

Board Member Name	Position/Committees
David Zwiebel	Chair
Judith Turner Hamerschlag	Trustee
Deborah Kenny (School Executive Director)	Secretary
Andrew August	Trustee
James Thompson	Trustee
Daniel Pianko	Treasurer
Donna Wilson	Trustee

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2005-06 – Present	Deborah Kenney, Executive Director

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2005-06	First-Year Visit	Institute	April 4, 2006
2006-07	Routine Visit	Institute	April 13, 2007
2007-08	Routine Visit	External (SchoolWorks)	May 12-13, 2008
2009-10	Initial Renewal Visit	Institute	September 21-24, 2009
2012-13	Routine Visit	Institute	February 27- 28, 2013

CONDUCT OF THE SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

Specifications

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Members	Title
February 27-28, 2013	Danielle Keen	Senior Analyst
	Eileen Coppola, Ed.D	External Consultant

Context of the Visit

Charter Cycle	
Charter Term	3 rd Year of the 2 nd Charter Term
Accountability Period ⁶	4 th Year of Current Five Year Accountability Period
Anticipated Renewal Visit	Fall 2014

⁶ 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 the Charter Term. For initial renewals, the Accountability Period is the first four years of the Charter Term. For subsequent renewals, the Accountability Period includes the last year of the previous Charter Term through the next to last year of the current Charter Term.

2011-12 School Performance Review

Performance Evaluation⁷

In 2011-12, the third year of Harlem Village Academy Leadership Charter School's ("HVA Leadership's") five-year accountability period, the school is meeting its English language arts ("ELA") and math goals, as it has consistently over the course of the charter term. The school is also meeting its science and No Child Left Behind ("NCLB") goals.

ELA

Based on the results of the five measures in its Accountability Plan, HVA Leadership met its ELA goal in the most recent year and has met every measure in the goal in the last three years. Eighty-seven percent of students in at least their second year scored proficient on the New York State exam, surpassing the target of 75 percent proficiency. The school also exceeded the Annual Performance Objective ("AMO"), which is a standard set each year by the New York State Education Department ("SED") as part of its NCLB accountability system. It outperformed New York City Community School District ("CSD") 4, the district in which it is located, by nearly 20 percentage points. In comparison to demographically similar schools, HVA Leadership exceeded the target, performing better than expected to a medium degree and showing continual improvement over each of the last two years. The school also met its year-to-year target for overall growth.

Math

Based on the results of the five measures in its Accountability Plan, HVA Leadership again met its Accountability Plan goal in math. It has consistently far exceeded the absolute target, with 100 percent of students enrolled for at least two years achieving proficiency in 2011-12. The school exceeded the state's AMO and outperformed the local community school district, doing so by a margin of over 35 percentage points in the most recent year. In comparison to demographically similar schools state-wide, the school has far exceeded its target during each year of the Accountability Period. The school met its cohort growth target in each of the last three years.

Science

In 2011-12, HVA Leadership met its Accountability Plan goal in science. Eighty-six percent of students scored proficient, surpassing the target of 75 percent. The school also outperformed the local school district by roughly 35 percentage points.

NCLB

The school has consistently met its NCLB goal.

⁷ HVA Leadership's charter authorizes the school to serve students in grades K, 5-8, and 9-12. 8th graders graduating from HVA Leadership may continue on to high school at Harlem Village Academy High School, which also enrolls students who attended middle school at Harlem Village Academy Charter School. Evaluation team members did not visit HVA Leadership's high school grades at the time of this evaluation visit. For information of the performance of Harlem Village Academy Charter School, please see the most recent Renewal Recommendation report for Harlem Village Academy Charter School issued on January 2, 2013: http://www.suny.edu/Board_of_Trustees/webcastdocs/TAB%204%20REPORT%20%20HVA%20Renewal%20Recommendation%20Report%20FINAL.pdf

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: English Language Arts
Harlem Village Academy Leadership Charter School



	2009-10 Grades Served: 5-8			MET	2010-11 Grades Served: 5-12			MET	2011-12 Grades Served: 5-12			MET						
	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)							
ABSOLUTE MEASURES 1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above a Level 3 on the New York State exam.	3	(0)	(0)	YES	3	(0)	(0)	YES	3	(0)	(0)	YES						
	4	(0)	(0)		4	(0)	(0)		4	(0)	(0)							
	5	72.8 (103)	25.0 (4)		5	72.9 (96)	50.0 (8)		5	81.6 (87)	80.0 (15)							
	6	83.1 (59)	79.2 (48)		6	88.1 (84)	88.1 (84)		6	85.7 (77)	84.9 (73)							
	7	100.0 (48)	100.0 (46)		7	91.1 (56)	92.9 (56)		7	97.3 (73)	97.3 (73)							
	8	74.4 (39)	74.4 (39)		8	(0)	(0)		8	76.9 (52)	76.9 (52)							
	All	80.7 (249)	83.2 (137)		All	82.6 (236)	87.8 (148)		All	85.8 (289)	86.9 (213)							
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	Grades	PI	AMO	YES	Grades	PI	AMO	YES	Grades	PI	AMO	YES						
	5-8	181	155		5-8	139	122		5-8	151	135							
COMPARATIVE MEASURES 3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	Comparison: Manhattan District 4			YES	Comparison: Manhattan District 4			YES	Comparison: Manhattan District 4			YES						
	Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District							
	6-8	56.9	32.3		6-8	56.1	30.6		6-8	56.3	37.2							
4. Each year the school will exceed its predicted percent of students at or above Level 3 on the state exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3) based on its Free Lunch (FL) rate.	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES			
	60.6	50.0	41.5	0.49		63.2	52.0	40.8	0.69		63.2	55.4	43.5	0.74				
GROWTH MEASURE 5. The year-to-year school-wide cohort of students will meet the target of reducing by one-sixth the difference between the previous year's baseline and 75 percent performing at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam. An asterisk indicates grade-level cohort met target.	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	YES	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	YES	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	
	3						3						3					
	4						4						4					
	5	4	75.0	75.1	25.0		5	8	0.0	12.5	0.0		5	15	0.0	12.5	13.3	*
	6	52	75.0	75.1	80.8		6	82	45.1	50.1	54.9		6	77	41.6	47.1	57.1	*
	7	46	89.0	89.1	100.0		7	41	53.7	57.2	68.3		7	73	56.2	59.3	58.9	
	8	39	100.0	100.1	74.0		8						8	52	67.3	68.6	63.5	
	All	158	81.0	81.1	85.0		All	131	45.0	50.0	55.7		All	217	49.8	54.0	56.2	

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

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: Mathematics
Harlem Village Academy Leadership Charter School



	2009-10 Grades Served: 5-9			MET	2010-11 Grades Served: 5-12			MET	2011-12 Grades Served: 5-12			MET									
	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)										
ABSOLUTE MEASURES 1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above a Level 3 on the New York State exam.	3	(0)	(0)	YES	3	(0)	(0)	YES	3	(0)	(0)	YES									
	4	(0)	(0)		4	(0)	(0)		4	(0)	(0)										
	5	90.3 (103)	100.0 (4)		5	59.4 (96)	25.0 (8)		5	96.6 (87)	100.0 (15)										
	6	100.0 (59)	100.0 (48)		6	97.7 (84)	97.6 (84)		6	100.0 (77)	100.0 (73)										
	7	100.0 (47)	100.0 (45)		7	100.0 (56)	100.0 (56)		7	100.0 (73)	100.0 (73)										
	8	100.0 (39)	100.0 (39)		8	100.0 (41)	(0)		8	100.0 (52)	100.0 (52)										
	All	96.0 (248)	100.0 (136)		All	55.1 (277)	94.6 (148)		All	99.0 (289)	100.0 (213)										
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	Grades	PI	AMO	YES	Grades	PI	AMO	YES	Grades	PI	AMO	YES									
	5-8	195	135		5-8	182	137		5-8	186	148										
COMPARATIVE MEASURES 3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	Comparison: Manhattan District 4			YES	Comparison: Manhattan District 4			YES	Comparison: Manhattan District 4			YES									
	Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District										
	6-8	97.1	60.9		6-8	94.6	46.2		6-8	87.8	51.3										
4. Each year the school will exceed its predicted level of students at or above Level 3 on the State exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3) based on its Free Lunch (FL) rate.	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES						
	60.6	86.3	52.2	1.62		63.2	55.1	53.7	1.46		63.2	86.5	55.3	1.53							
GROWTH MEASURE 5. The year-to-year school-wide cohort of students will meet the target of reducing by one-sixth the difference between the previous year's baseline and 75 percent performing at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam. An asterisk indicates grade-level cohort met target.	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	YES	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	YES	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	YES			
	3						3						3								
	4						4						4								
	5	4	75.0	100.0			5	8	0.0	12.5	25.0		*	5	15	13.3	23.6		86.7	*	
	6	48	97.9	98.0	100.0		*	6	84	82.1	82.2		97.6	*	6	77	71.4		72.0	84.4	*
	7	45	100.0	100.0	100.0		*	7	56	96.4	96.5		100.0	*	7	73	98.6		98.7	91.8	
	8	39	100.0	100.0	100.0		*	8							8	52	100.0		100.0	86.5	
	All	136	98.5	98.6	100.0			All	148	83.1	83.2		94.6		All	217	83.4		83.5	87.6	

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

SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

Benchmark Conclusions and Evidence⁸

1. B Use of Assessment Data

HVA Leadership has an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning.

- HVA Leadership middle school administers monthly Fountas and Pinnell running record assessments to track students' reading fluency and Interim Assessments ("IAs") at the end of each of five grading periods. At the elementary school, teachers also administer the Fountas and Pinnell assessments and implement the Marie Clay Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement, measuring writing vocabulary, word reading, hearing and recording sounds in words, and letter identification.
- Teachers work with grade team colleagues to create IAs, sampling and modifying questions from a variety of state exams from other states and from nationally normed standardized tests. Given that teachers pull questions from these sources, some items may not align to the New York State standards. While instructional leaders participate to a limited extent in the creation of IAs, they do not ensure the IA's validity and reliability.
- Teachers score their own assessments and record the results in Data-Driven Instructional Spreadsheets ("DIPS"). Teachers use the DIPS to track IA results, as well as students' Fountas and Pinnell reading levels.
- Teachers spend one full day at the end of each grading period analyzing data to adjust instructional plans. Using the DIPS to produce an item-analysis, teachers work with their academic director to build time into their curricula for re-teaching objectives that large groups of students did not master, reassign students to guided reading groups based on their updated running record results and identify students to pull-out during small-group instruction for re-teaching and remediation.
- The middle school has no consistent writing rubric across the school and has not provided teachers with professional development on the grading of writing. Despite this, observed student writing was generally strong, containing voice and grade appropriate conventions.
- School leaders use assessment data to make changes to the instructional program. While school leaders generally use on-going teacher and student observations in order to determine the quality of specific aspects of the academic program, they have also used data as the basis for organizational changes. For example, upon determining that many of the school's incoming 5th graders were failing to reach grade-level reading proficiency during their first year, the school began to teach two periods of literacy (reading and non-fiction) in the 5th and 6th grades and imbedding social studies and science content into non-fiction literacy instruction.
- The school regularly communicates to parents/guardians about their students' progress and growth through report cards, progress reports and regular phone calls home.

⁸ See footnote 7.

1. C Curriculum

HVA Leadership’s collaborative curriculum development process supports teachers in their instructional planning.

- Teachers in each grade create their own scope and sequence documents in collaboration with colleagues and their academic director, using the New York State standards as their framework. Each grade and subject team uses their own approach and leaders communicate few clear expectations. The school recently begun to provide time for teachers to discuss vertical alignment.
- In the summer of 2012, each grade team overhauled their curriculum to ensure alignment with the Common Core⁹. At the time of the visit, the school had not yet completed this overhaul and teachers did not have a scope and sequence for the last quarter of the year. An external consultant was working to assist teachers in creating curricula for the final marking period.
- The quality of teacher-created curricula varies across the school. In some grades and subjects, curriculum documents are robust and cohesive, including measurable objectives and lesson materials. In others, scope and sequence documents lack detail and center on activity-driven lesson objectives, such as “Students will be able to read aloud Casey at Bat” or “Students will be able to write how-to books on subjects they are experts in.”
- Teachers school-wide report that they value the autonomy they have in creating curriculum; however, in the middle school grades teachers report that the demands of continual long-term curriculum planning interfere with their ability to plan and execute high quality daily lessons.
- Teachers in all grades plan focused and purposeful lessons based on the scope and sequence documents that they have created.

1. D Pedagogy

Instruction at HVA Leadership is generally rigorous and focused on higher-order thinking skills.

- Teachers deliver purposeful lessons based on essential questions and clear objectives aligned to the school’s curriculum. Most teachers have strong content knowledge in the subjects that they teach. While all lessons are purposeful and focused, in some cases, the some teachers have trouble with pacing — spending too much time on one topic — leading students to become disengaged.

⁹ The Common Core State Standards initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. They developed, in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts, a clear and consistent framework to prepare students for college training and the workforce. New York State adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2011 and began assessing student achievement toward meeting the standards in 2012.

- Teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding. For example, teachers cold-call on students by pulling names from a jar and asking students to call on each other; they also circulate around the room in order to check student work.
- Across the school, there is a general focus on including opportunities to challenge students with questions and activities that develop higher-order thinking. For example, in reading class, teachers push students to analyze text for clues on why an author includes various pieces of information and how it should affect the reader. In non-fiction class, students analyze lines from an historical play for clues as to a character's state of mind, and then interpretively read text aloud to classmates. In science classes, students predict the outcomes of unfamiliar experiments, using past knowledge to forecast how elements will react.
- Teachers utilize a variety of techniques to maximize learning time during direct instruction. Teachers have routines for directing students to settle in, pay attention and pack up. Teachers consistently provide clear directions to students and are prepared with materials.
- Low-level misbehavior was observed in a minority of classrooms throughout the school. When students behave inappropriately they receive demerits and teachers use scanners and a bar code system that track demerits school-wide, holding students accountable across classrooms. Some teachers fail to implement this system, ignoring minor misbehaviors.

1. E Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership at HVA Leadership provides minimal supervision of teachers.

- Despite a large instructional leadership team, teachers receive minimal supervision. Because the school has a large number of returning staff and only hires teachers with at least two years of experience, the school has produced a strong record of student achievement with minimal coaching and evaluation.
- In addition to the principal, the middle school employs three academic directors, who perform minimal coaching and assist teachers in curriculum planning while maintaining a full teaching load, and three consultants who work closely with teachers. The elementary school has a principal, academic director and dean, all of whom support instruction and behavior-norming within classrooms.
- Teachers cannot articulate specific expectations for their roles. Instead, they report looking to other staff members to model expectations for professionalism and instruction at the school. Leaders report that they do not explicitly lay out expectations for teachers, but rather that they lead by example and that, in the past, teachers either assimilated to the norms set by other teachers or chose to leave the school voluntarily.
- HVA Leadership does not have a system for providing sustained feedback to teachers. Teachers who share a classroom with academic directors receive more frequent feedback, as their proximity makes it convenient to observe areas for growth; however, other teachers report receiving infrequent feedback from the academic directors.
- Instructional leaders provide regular opportunities and guidance for teachers to plan curricula, including four weeks of professional development during the summer and daily planning time during the first month of school. In addition, teachers participate in weekly

content-area and grade-team meetings throughout the year.

- The school has chosen not to carry out formal evaluations, but rather reports basing the continuation of employment on on-going, informal performance evaluations. Leaders report that the absence of formal evaluations fosters a successful and positive culture of continual learning. Given the limited observation and feedback cycles, it is unclear if teachers clearly understand the criteria in place for being deemed successful in their roles.

1. F At-Risk Students

HVA Leadership meets the educational needs of at-risk students.

- The school uses clear procedures for identifying at-risk students. Before new students begin the school year, school staff visit students' homes to orient families to the school's policies; they administer the home language survey at this time to determine if students are candidates for English language learner ("ELL") classification. During the academic year, teachers use running records and general classroom observations to identify students in need of academic intervention. If teachers observe that students fail to make progress despite extensive intervention services, there is a clear pre-referral process for determining if students should be referred for special education evaluation.
- HVA Leadership has adequate intervention programs to meet the needs of at-risk students. School leaders have folded several periods of intervention into the regular school day. For example, all students receive a daily period on leveled guided-reading, and a period of small group instruction during which teachers can pull students to re-teach objectives or provide extra support. In addition, the school provides mandatory after-school tutoring for students that test far below grade-level on Fountas and Pinnell diagnostic tests administered at the time students enroll.
- The school employs one special education coordinator who oversees services provided to all students at both the elementary and middle schools. Two special education teachers provide Special Education Teacher Support Services ("SETSS services") to the middle school's 29 students with Individualized Education Programs ("IEPs") mandating academic services; the elementary school provides special education services to its eight students with academic IEPs through both a Collaborative Team Teaching model and SETSS.
- The school has a program for serving the 20 ELLs it enrolls. Teachers closely monitor their progress on assessments and during daily observation, informing the skills they will work on during SETTS interventions, in-class guided reading and after-school tutoring.
- Data shows that the school's program is effective in closing the achievement gap between at-risk students and their peers. Students with IEPs in every grade on average showed more growth on running records over the course of the school year than did their general education counterparts. In addition, 55 percent showed proficiency on the state math exam. Despite these encouraging results, however, only 11 percent reached proficiency on the state ELA exam.
- Teachers are aware of their students' progress toward meeting IEP goals. The special education coordinator provides all teachers with summaries and copies of their students'

IEPs and discusses appropriate implementation strategies with them at the beginning of the school year. While general education teachers closely monitor their students' progress through data review and daily observations, they receive limited professional development on strategies to support at-risk students within the general education classroom.

- Though teachers report that they informally collaborate with the special education providers that serve their students, the school does not provide formal opportunities for coordination between classroom teachers and at-risk program staff.

2. C Organizational Capacity

HVA Leadership's organization effectively supports the delivery of the educational program.

- The school has established an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, policies and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program. At time of the time of the visit, a shared network director of operations managed operations at the school and teachers report that this support allowed them to focus completely on the delivery of instruction.
- The organizational structure establishes distinct lines of accountability. Teachers know to whom they are accountable and the roles of school leaders.
- HVA Leadership has a clear student discipline system in place at the administrative level that is consistently applied.
- The school retains quality staff; 30 percent of the school's staff members have been at the school for four or more years. Teacher retention can be attributed to a rigorous hiring process that probes for organizational fit and significant teacher autonomy.
- The school has allocated sufficient resources to support the achievement of goals. Teachers report having adequate books, technology and materials to successfully meet the objectives of their lessons.
- The school maintains adequate student enrollment with a waitlist of 98 students in Kindergarten and 78 students in 5th grade -- the only grades in which it enrolls new students.
- The school regularly monitors and evaluates the school's programs and makes changes if necessary. For example, after determining that incoming students were struggling with non-fiction texts, the school leader implemented a mandatory non-fiction block for students in the 5th and 6th grades.

State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

Version 5.0, May 2012

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

-Revised May 2012-

[schoolsRenewOverview.htm](#). Responses to frequently asked questions about the Institute’s use of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks appear below:

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

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

It is important that the entire school community understand the renewal process. All members of a

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

State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>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.

<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1C</p> <p>Curriculum</p>	<p>The school’s curriculum supports teachers in their instructional planning.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has a curriculum framework with student performance expectations that provides a fixed, underlying structure, aligned to state standards and across grades; • in addition to the framework, the school has supporting tools (i.e., curriculum maps or scope and sequence documents) that provide a bridge between the curriculum framework and lesson plans; • teachers know what to teach and when to teach it based on these documents; • the school has a process for selecting, developing and reviewing its curriculum documents and its resources for delivering the curriculum; and • teachers plan purposeful and focused lessons.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1D</p> <p>Pedagogy</p>	<p>High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers deliver purposeful lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school’s curriculum; • teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding; • teachers include opportunities in their lessons to challenge students with questions and activities that develop depth of understanding and higher-order thinking and problem solving skills; • teachers maximize learning time (e.g., appropriate pacing, on-task student behavior, clear lesson focus and clear directions to students); transitions are efficient; and • teachers have effective classroom management techniques and routines that create a consistent focus on academic achievement.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1E</p> <p>Instructional Leadership</p>	<p>The school has strong instructional leadership.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school’s leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance (in content knowledge and pedagogical skills) and in which teachers believe that all students can succeed; • the instructional leadership is adequate to support the development of the teaching staff; • instructional leaders provide sustained, systemic and effective coaching and supervision that improves teachers’ instructional effectiveness;

- instructional leaders provide opportunities and guidance for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction within and across grade levels;
- instructional leaders implement a comprehensive professional development program that develops the competencies and skills of all teachers;
- professional development activities are interrelated with classroom practice;
- instructional leaders regularly conduct teacher evaluations with clear criteria that accurately identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses; and
- instructional leaders hold teachers accountable for quality instruction and student achievement.

**SUNY Renewal
Benchmark 1F**

At-Risk Students

The school meets the educational needs of at-risk students.

The following elements are generally present:

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

Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2A</p> <p>Mission & Key Design Elements</p>	<p>The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school faithfully follows its mission; and • the school has implemented its key design elements.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2B</p> <p>Parents & Students</p>	<p>Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school regularly communicates each child's academic performance results to families; • families are satisfied with the school; and • parents keep their children enrolled year-to-year.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2C</p> <p>Organizational Capacity</p>	<p>The school organization effectively supports the delivery of the educational program.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has established an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, policies and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program; • the organizational structure establishes distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities; • the school has a clear student discipline system in place at the administrative level that is consistently applied; • the school retains quality staff; • the school has allocated sufficient resources to support the achievement of goals; • the school maintains adequate student enrollment; • the school has procedures in place to monitor its progress toward meeting enrollment and retention targets for special education students, ELLs and students who qualify for free and reduced price lunch, and adjusts its recruitment efforts accordingly; and • the school regularly monitors and evaluates the school's programs and makes changes if necessary.

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

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

<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3C</p> <p>Financial Reporting</p>	<p>conditions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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>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; • 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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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>
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4A Plans for the School's Structure	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4B Plans for the Educational Program	<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.
<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.