

# THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT*  
**NEW VISIONS AIM CHARTER  
HIGH SCHOOL I**

*VISIT DATE: MARCH 25 - 26, 2019*  
*REPORT DATE: MAY 16, 2019*

*SUNY Charter Schools Institute*

*SUNY Plaza*

*353 Broadway*

*Albany, NY 12246*

*518.445.4250*

*[www.newyorkcharters.org](http://www.newyorkcharters.org)*



**Charter Schools Institute**  
The State University of New York

A collection of colorful pencils and paper clips on a dark grey background. The pencils are arranged in a fan shape, with colors including green, blue, red, pink, orange, yellow, green, orange, blue, purple, and brown. There are several paper clips in various colors (orange, green, pink, blue, black) scattered around the pencils.

# CONTENTS

**2**

Introduction & School Background

**5**

Academic Performance

**8**

Benchmark Analysis

## Appendices

A: School Overview

B: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

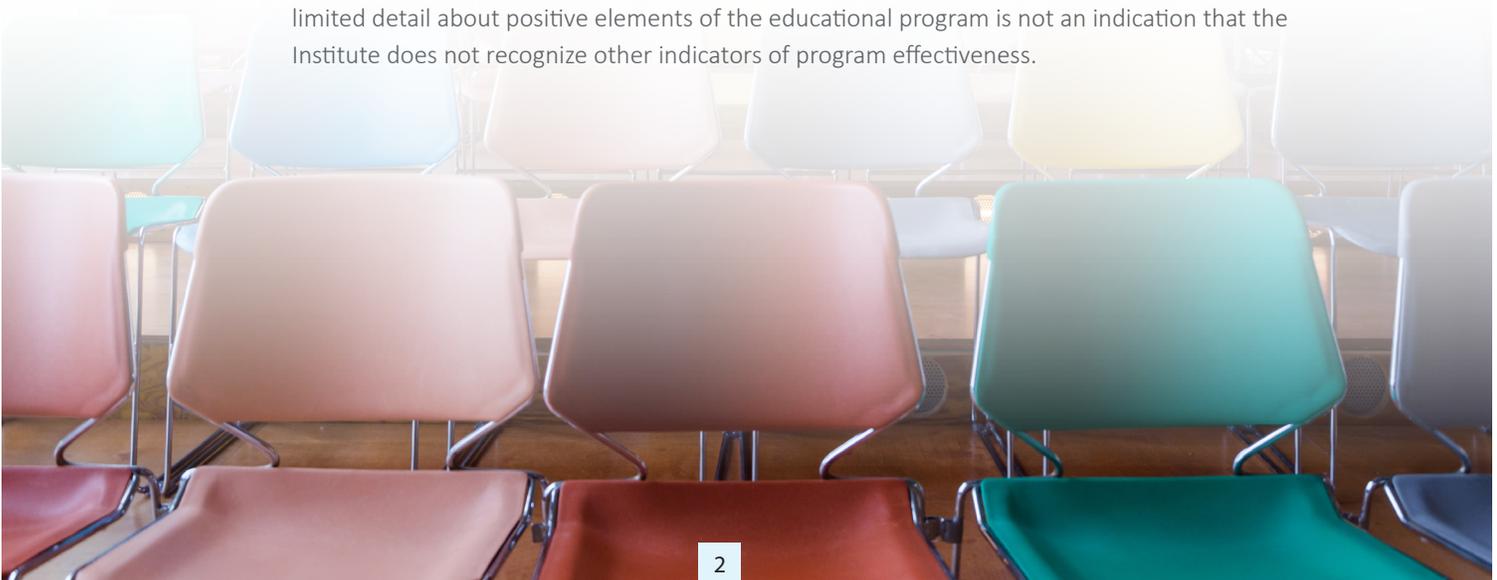
# INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

## INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit on March 25-26, 2019 to New Visions AIM Charter High School I (“AIM I”). 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 (e.g., 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 performance summary that contains the school’s performance on the required measures under its English language arts (“ELA”) and mathematics goals. Appendix C 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 serves as a summary of the school’s program 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.



SUNY Charter Schools Institute  
SUNY Plaza  
353 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12246

# INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

## SCHOOL BACKGROUND

The SUNY Trustees approved the charter renewal and restructuring of ROADS Charter School I (“ROADS I”) to AIM I on May 24, 2017. This restructuring allowed the education corporation to serve the same students but required the program to operate under new governance and a new educational program. ROADS I closed its doors at the end of the 2016-17 school year. AIM I began transitioning the program at the end of the 2016-17 school year and officially began operating on August 1, 2017, initially chartered to enroll 179 students in 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade during the 2017-18 school year. The school is in the second year of its first charter term and is chartered to serve up to 250 students in 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade by the end of the current charter term. The school is in co-located space at 1495 Herkimer Street, Brooklyn, NY in New York City School District (“CSD”) 23 but does not currently share the building space with another school.

The mission of AIM I is:



*New Visions AIM Charter High Schools provide youth who face the greatest obstacles to successful high school completion with the supports, experiences, and opportunities they need to graduate high school prepared for a successful transition into a post-secondary academic or work preparatory program.*

AIM I is one of 10 charter schools that partner with New Visions for Public Schools, Inc. (“New Visions” or the “network”), a New York not-for-profit corporation that serves as an educational management organization (“EMO”) for AIM I. The New York State Board of Regents (the “Board of Regents”) authorizes six of these charter schools. The SUNY Trustees authorize the remaining four charter schools: New Visions Charter High School for Humanities, New Visions Charter High School for Advanced Math and Science, New Visions AIM Charter High School II (“AIM II”), and AIM I, all of which operate as independent education corporations. New Visions also provides educational programming to a portfolio of 76 New York City Department of Education (“NYCDOE”) schools across the city, 10 of which are transfer schools that serve students who are at least 16 years old and are off track for high school graduation. By contract, the network provides the school with curriculum, assessment, instructional, operational, facilities, and back office assistance. The network is also responsible for managing and evaluating the performance of each school and school leader.

SUNY Charter Schools Institute  
SUNY Plaza  
353 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12246

# INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

By design, students who enroll at AIM I must be at least 15 years old, have completed 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and repeated a grade at least once. The school gives lottery preference to students who have been involved with the criminal justice system, the foster care system, and child protective services. After the restructuring renewal, AIM I opened in the ROADS I location to serve the students who chose to remain. The network requested to retain the ROADS I school leader as the principal for AIM I, and the Institute allowed the network to retain the principal.

In its proposal to renew and restructure the ROADS I and ROADS II educational programs, New Visions cited its record of successful partnerships with NYCDOE transfer schools in raising students' credit accumulation rate and graduation rates above that of students in non-New Visions NYCDOE transfer schools. The network also noted a need to adapt the curriculum resources, leadership coaching, and professional development support it typically employs in transfer schools in order to serve the higher need AIM I and AIM II student populations. This school year, the network formalized a partnership with Good Shepherd Services ("GSS"), a New York City community service organization that provides on-site physical, emotional, and mental health services for students. GSS is contracted to provide school based staff members who collaborate with instructional staff to recruit and enroll students, social emotional supports including crisis intervention, attendance outreach and support, professional development to staff, establish work and post-secondary program partnerships, and improve school culture.

Although New Visions is committed to serving the school's students, it has only partially implemented the changes it outlined in its proposal to renew and restructure ROADS I and ROADS II. AIM I lacks defined post-secondary pathways with strong systems to track and support alumni. While the school provides instructional programming based on students' credit attainment, instruction at AIM I continues to lack the intensity and personalization necessary to meet the specialized needs of the student population. Overall, the network's current services to the school have not yet resulted in an educational program that enables high levels of student attendance, Regents passing rates, and credit accumulation that result in students' post-secondary success.

Because AIM I is the result of a restructuring renewal, at the end of the charter term, the SUNY Trustees will treat AIM I, for purposes of renewal outcomes, as a school coming to renewal for the first time. However, because AIM I is the result of a restructuring of a previously existing school, the Institute does expect that the school will have fully developed systems and processes supporting the educational program from the beginning of the charter term, aligned to those described in the school's proposal.

# ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

## 2017-18 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

At the beginning of the Accountability Period,<sup>1</sup> the school developed and adopted an Accountability Plan that set academic goals in the key subjects of ELA and mathematics, high school graduation, and post-secondary outcomes. For each goal in the Accountability Plan, specific outcome measures define the level of performance necessary to meet that goal. Throughout the charter term, the Institute examines results for the required Accountability Plan measures on an annual basis and provides an Accountability Dossier to each school detailing the school's progress toward meeting its Accountability Plan goals.

The Act requires charters be held "accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results".<sup>2</sup> During its first year of operation, the Institute worked closely with the staff at New Visions to develop an Accountability Plan based on goals and measures that provide a challenging but mission aligned set of high school outcomes. Specifically, the Plan includes goal areas for post-secondary engagement in a meaningful next step, including college, technical/occupational studies, or meaningful employment within one year of completing the AIM I program. More information about the required Accountability Plan measures can be found on the Institute's website at [www.newyorkcharters.org/accountability/](http://www.newyorkcharters.org/accountability/).

AIM I's Accountability Plan measures goal attainment using the absolute and comparative performance of the school's sixth year cohort. Because the school is only in its second year of operation, students in the sixth year cohort will have spent time in other educational settings prior to enrolling in the school. However, the school also included multiple growth measures and leading indicators of future achievement in its Accountability Plan. The Institute emphasizes those measures in its analysis of the school's performance when available.

During 2017-18, AIM I failed to meet its key Accountability Plan goals in high school graduation and post-secondary preparation. Notably, the school produced low performance against leading indicators of future graduation results. AIM I also failed to meet its subject area goals in ELA, science, and social studies. The school did not generate enough data to evaluate the attainment of its mathematics goal. The school met its ESSA goal based on a finding by the Commissioner of extenuating or extraordinary circumstances. While not included in its Accountability Plan, AIM I closely monitors student attendance as a crucial factor mediating the school's academic performance. Notably, the school improved its average daily attendance by six percentage points from 2017-18 to 2018-19. However, the school's attendance outcomes remain low: the average daily attendance as of April 2019 was only 60%. The school's chronic absenteeism rate was 51% in 2017-18.

1. Because the SUNY Trustees make a renewal decision before student achievement results for the final year of a charter term become available, the Accountability Period ends with the school year prior to the final year of the charter term. In the case of initial renewal, the Accountability Period covers the first four years of the charter term.

2. Education Law § 2850(2)  
(f).

# ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

## HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

During 2017-18, the first year of its four year Accountability Period, AIM I did not meet its high school graduation goal. The school's first sixth year Graduation Cohort consisted of students who enrolled in the 2012 Graduation Cohort and first enrolled in high school anywhere during the 2012-13 school year. Only 13% of the 98 students in the school's 2012 Graduation Cohort graduated after six years, falling 54 percentage points below the target of 67%. This sixth year graduation rate does not distinguish the performance of AIM I from the similar graduation rates of ROADS I. The school also did not meet the targets on multiple key leading indicators for graduation. With only 36% of the school's fourth year Graduation Cohort passing at least two of the five exams required for graduation, AIM I fell 29 percentage points below the target. Although the Graduation Cohort outcomes reflect results for students who were enrolled in school prior to the opening of AIM I, the school also failed to make adequate progress on leading indicators with students who first enrolled in the school during 2017-18. That year, of the 38 students in their first year enrolled in AIM I, only 37% earned at least ten credits, falling 28 percentage points below the target. The school's low performance on these leading indicators does not establish strong evidence that the school will increase the proportion of its students graduating after six years.

## POST-SECONDARY PREPARATION

AIM I also did not meet its post-secondary preparation goal in the first year of its Accountability Period, failing to demonstrate that students were prepared to pursue a meaningful post-secondary option including college enrollment or employment. As of April 2019, only 38% of the school's 13 graduates from 2017-18 enrolled in a two or four year college, entered military service, entered a technical/occupational institute, or gained employment in the fall following graduation. Further, the school's College, Career, and Civic Readiness Index ("CCCRI") was 26, falling far below the state's measure of interim progress ("MIP") of 128. In order to assess students' work readiness, AIM I administers the SkillsUSA Workforce Ready Employability Assessment. With only two of the school's 17 students remaining in the 6<sup>th</sup> year Accountability Cohort passing the exam, AIM I fell below its absolute target of 75% by 63 percentage points. The school also included a measure in its Accountability Plan measuring the percentage of students completing a career readiness portfolio. However, the school did not execute these plans in 2017-18.

# ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

## ELA

During 2017-18, AIM I posted low achievement on the growth measures included under its ELA Accountability Plan goal. The school administered the Performance Series Reading diagnostic assessment and collected data from the fall to spring for only 54 of the 189 enrolled students. Only 52% of those students increased their Lexile levels from fall to spring, falling below the school's target of 60%. Among the students in the school's reading intervention program who had fall and spring scores, only 25% met or exceeded their expected Lexile growth, 25 percentage points below the target. In contrast, the school did exceed the target for its sixth year Accountability Cohort students passing the Regents exam: 71% of the 17 students remaining in the Accountability Cohort passed with at least a Performance Level 3 or exceeding the safety net option for eligible students by the end of their sixth year.

## MATHEMATICS

In 2017-18, the school did not collect the data necessary to evaluate the attainment of its growth measures included under its Accountability Plan goal in mathematics. The school included measures in its Accountability Plan for measuring student growth in mathematics using STAR math. However, the school did not yet administer this assessment in 2017-18. The school did exceed the target for its sixth year Accountability Cohort students passing a mathematics Regents exam with 77% of its 17 students remaining in the Accountability Cohort passing with at least a Performance Level 3 or exceeding the safety net option for eligible students by the end of their sixth year.

## SCIENCE

AIM I posted mixed results in science during 2017-18. The school narrowly exceeded the absolute target of 50% passing a Regents science exam when 53% of the 17 students remaining in the 6th year Accountability Cohort did so before the end of their sixth year. In contrast, only 9% of the school's 98 students in the sixth year Graduation Cohort passed a Science exam with a 65 or above.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

AIM I also demonstrated mixed results in social studies during 2017-18. With 77% of the school's 17 students remaining in the sixth year Accountability Cohort passing a social studies exam by the end of their sixth year, the school exceeded the absolute target by 27 percentage points. However, only 13% of the school's 98 students included in the sixth year Graduation Cohort passed a social studies exam with a 65 or above, falling below its target.

## ESSA

In 2017-18, AIM I met its ESSA goal after receiving a finding by the Commissioner of extenuating or extraordinary circumstances.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

## QUALITATIVE BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1B

### DOES AIM I HAVE AN ASSESSMENT SYSTEM THAT IMPROVES INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT LEARNING?

The New Visions network does not provide AIM I the necessary support to enable the school to plan targeted instructional supports for AIM I students. The school lacks systems to effectively use data to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.

- AIM I attempts to collect student data through assessments, but low schoolwide attendance hinders leaders' and teachers' ability to gather a comprehensive picture of all students' progress on an ongoing basis. The school administers the Performance Series assessment in reading and the STAR assessment in mathematics at the beginning and middle of the year to identify students' academic remediation needs. Additionally the school administers on demand writing for all 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade ELA courses two times per year, mock Regents exams in all Regents courses once per year, and in-class assessments adapted from the New Visions curriculum. Despite the school's low average attendance rate, by adjusting the administrative and technological systems from the year prior, the school was able to assess over 75% of its student body during the fall 2018 administration of the Performance Series and STAR math assessments, a significant improvement from the prior year.
- The New Visions network does not effectively support teachers and school leaders in using assessment results to meet student needs. The network instructional coaches guide department teams to review in-class assessment data and develop lesson strategies to address misconceptions. However, this support focuses on universal design for learning strategies rather than individualized differentiation strategies based on the academic and social emotional needs of each student. Network coaches do not require teachers to provide evidence of student work or analyze student data after a reteach, hindering the school's and network's ability to consistently monitor the effectiveness of how coaching improves teaching and learning.

3. An extensive body of research identifying and confirming the correlates of effective schools exists dating back four decades.

Selected sources include:

<https://www.gao.gov/assets/80/77488.pdf>; and

[http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/fryer/files/dobbie\\_fryer\\_revision\\_final.pdf](http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/fryer/files/dobbie_fryer_revision_final.pdf).

4. Additional details regarding the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks are available at: [www.newyorkcharters.org/suny-renewal-benchmarks/](http://www.newyorkcharters.org/suny-renewal-benchmarks/).

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- School leaders have not set clear expectations for teachers around using data, including using social emotional data to enhance instruction. The assistant principal of curriculum and instruction oversees teachers' data analysis after schoolwide assessments. Although teachers use the data to group students and plan instructional strategies, school leaders do not follow up to measure the effectiveness of reteaching and do not systematically require teachers to use non academic data such as daily attendance rates or student intake data to inform instruction.
- Instructional leaders do not effectively use schoolwide assessment results to review the academic program and develop professional development and coaching strategies. The principal regularly reviews Regents exam results and credit accumulation data for individual students. The assistant principal uses informal walkthrough, classroom observation data, and lesson plan reviews to identify teacher needs and follows up individually. Although instructional leaders review and respond to individual student and teacher data, instructional leaders do not have a system for monitoring this data schoolwide and making adjustments based on clear pedagogical and benchmark student achievement goals. As a result, AIM I's professional development and instructional coaching do not consistently lead to high quality, targeted teaching and learning.
- AIM I lacks a system to use non academic data to meaningfully inform academic instruction. The GSS director and coaches collect social emotional information and other non academic data on each student through student intake surveys, interviews, and daily check ins. The GSS staff then create intervention plans, and coaches monitor students' progress throughout the year. Although academic and GSS staff attend staff meetings together, AIM I does not have a system to ensure coherency between the academic and social emotional programs. During staff meetings, content teams share updates about upcoming units. Teachers and coaches do not have a regularly scheduled process to systematically review all students' academic and non academic progress and make adjustments to the students' educational program including academic and social emotional supports.

## DOES AIM I'S CURRICULUM SUPPORT TEACHERS IN THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING?

New Visions curricular resources do not effectively support teachers in their instructional planning. The network provides a curricular framework with student performance expectations aligned to state standards. However, the ongoing training the network and school leaders provide does not support teachers to plan and effectively modify the curriculum to meet the unique needs of AIM I students.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- AIM I accesses the New Visions open source curricula for all core subjects, which is aligned to state standards. The curriculum includes scope and sequence documents, unit plans, pacing calendars, student activities, and other supporting materials. As such, teachers know what to teach and when to teach it.
- Despite the current curricular supports offered by the network, New Visions does not sufficiently support teachers in adapting the curricula to meet student needs. Teachers attend content specific network professional development sessions and two network instructional specialists provide weekly school based support with implementing reading intervention curriculum and lesson planning. Given the specific needs of the school, including a daily attendance rate of 61% and a special education population that makes up 46% of the student body, the network has not provided specific support to AIM I that supports teachers in adjusting content specifically to meet these needs.
- Although AIM I has structures in place to support teachers in planning purposeful and focused lessons, the lessons typically lack rigor. As such, teachers do not receive adequate support from the network and school leaders to develop lessons that ensure all students have the support necessary to meet state standards. Teachers use a consistent lesson plan template, which includes standards, objectives, assessments, activities, and resources. However, teachers' current level of planning does not continually assess and adjust lesson content to meet the wide range of students' instructional levels. This is evidenced by lesson plans that do not include strategic, individualized questions based on student data, exemplars for each lesson that address potential student misconceptions, and activities that range from lower order to higher order thinking skills.

## IS HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION EVIDENT THROUGHOUT AIM I?

Academic instruction at AIM I continues to be low quality. Overall, the Institute noted little improvement in instruction from its last visit in the 2017-18 school year. While teachers recognize students' significant needs for remediation, instruction is not tailored to student skills in a manner that allows lessons to reach the rigor of the state standards. As shown in the table that follows, Institute team members conducted 18 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all school visits. The school groups students by credit accumulation level and cohort rather than by grade level. As such, the classrooms are labeled in the table below as "ungraded".

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

## GRADE

### Ungraded

CONTENT AREA	
ELA	6
Math	3
Soc Stu	3
Science	5
Other	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>

- Few teachers deliver purposeful lessons with measurable objectives aligned to state standards (6 out of 18 lessons observed). Although classroom activities align with the stated lesson objective, objectives are often not measurable and do not consistently align to state standards. Teachers attempt to write lesson objectives tailored to students' current skill level in lesson plans. However, individual lessons and the long-term trajectory of lessons do not build to the level required for students to reach high school level content mastery. In most classrooms, at least two teachers are present but do not strategically plan for how each teacher will support student academic and social emotional needs.
- Few teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding (6 out of 18 lessons observed). The Institute observed few instances of whole class checks for understanding that allow teachers to have a clear understanding of all students' mastery of the lesson objective. A few teachers effectively gauge understanding and adjust questioning when working one on one or in small groups with students. However, most teachers do not ask questions related to the objective and primarily rely on volunteers to answer. Teachers' feedback focuses on encouragement for habits rather than specific feedback based on academic content mastery. School leaders recognize a need to improve the quality of checking for understanding but have not yet established systematic coaching or professional development strategy to address this.
- Virtually no teachers engage students in higher order thinking (3 out of 18 lessons observed). The New Visions network instructional coaches guide teachers' attempts to make lessons accessible for all students by implementing a Universal Design for Learning ("UDL") framework in the lesson planning support leaders provide to teachers. However, this support does not address the near absence of rigor and content differentiation in lessons across the school. Teachers assign all students the same low-level, basic activities.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

For example, in one Regent course classroom, the teacher assigned independent work in stations that asked students to copy and rephrase information given at the station. The teacher gave directions that simply asked students to “draw really nice pictures” rather than engage in critical thinking. New Visions network does not provide support to enable teachers to differentiate lesson content targeted to each students’ various skill levels and needs.

- Less than half of teachers maximize learning time to create a focus on academic achievement (7 out of 18 lessons observed). AIM I lacks routines to provide missed instruction to the many students who arrive late to class or leave during instruction. Rather, teachers address students individually as they enter, resulting in lost instructional time and potential feedback for other students. Lessons consistently lack urgency. For example, in one class with six students, the teacher asked students to transition to computers when they finished the independent writing task. However, after eleven minutes only two students were working on the assigned task. The two teachers in the room did not redirect the other four students.

## DOES AIM I HAVE STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP?

The network’s professional development and leadership coaching is not urgent or robust enough to support the myriad needs of AIM I students. As a result, AIM I is still developing an instructional leadership team that can effectively support the needs of the school. Leaders establish clear priorities and expectations but the school lacks a comprehensive system of supports to ensure teachers execute these priorities in classrooms. The school’s supports for teachers do not supplement each other and remain disconnected from the non academic needs of students.

- The leadership team continues to work to establish an environment of high expectations aligned to the mission of the school. The school’s principal identifies clear instructional priorities including differentiated instruction to meet the needs of the school’s specific student population. However, various stakeholders do not consistently articulate these expectations. The Institute did not see consistent evidence of instructional expectations during class observations. Although leaders also establish specific targets for student outcomes on attendance, graduation rate, and credit accumulation, among other factors, the school lacks a clear vision for how its instructional program and support services work in tandem to meet these benchmarks. Further, the network’s support to the school leadership team remains insufficient insofar as it is not tailored to ensure the school can fulfill its mission.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- The school's instructional leadership team, consisting of the principal, assistant principal of curriculum and instruction, assistant principal of special education, director of operations, and GSS director, is continuing to build its capacity to support the development of the teaching staff. The assistant principal of special education began taking intermittent leave in August of 2018. Despite this absence happening early in the school year, neither the network nor the school have implemented a solution to effectively cover the instructional support provided by the assistant principal. The network continues to provide coaching and guidance to instructional leaders but does not tailor its efforts to adequately support the mission and unique student population of the school.
- Coaching at AIM I is not robust enough to improve all teachers' instructional effectiveness to meet the needs of its student population. The network and school instructional leaders establish supports for teachers but the school lacks a comprehensive system that identifies areas of concern and escalates supports with urgency. The two assistant principals focus their coaching on teachers who need more support, but the school lacks a clear system to identify teachers' areas of need. As such, the frequency and intensity of coaching from the school's leadership team is inconsistent across the school. Network instructional coaches attend monthly department meetings to deliver coaching on adjusting the curricula to be accessible to all students. Additionally, consultant coaches from Ramapo for Children observe a cohort of teachers biweekly and offer feedback regarding classroom management and culture. While the network and Ramapo for Children supplement the school's capacity to support teachers, AIM I's coaching system lacks comprehensive coordination to measurably improve instruction.
- Instructional leaders provide opportunities for teachers to plan curricula and instruction within content area teams on a weekly basis. Additionally, all teachers have a daily common planning period. While teachers can work with other departments at their discretion, the school has no formal system to support this planning. The school also lacks formal systems for collaboration between teachers and the student support staff including social workers, counselors, and GSS staff. In March 2018, the school began to hold semi-monthly case conference meetings during which all staff meet to discuss specific students with guidance counselors. During these sessions, teachers and school support staff surface strategies and concerns for the school's most at-risk students. However, the school does not urgently work to formalize a system of information sharing between instructional teachers and other staff such as coaches and counselors such that teachers are equipped to meet the nonacademic needs of their students.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- The network and school leadership team deliver regular professional development activities that interrelate to classroom practice but lack sufficient supports for meeting students' needs. In addition to weekly school based professional development, network staff provide professional development at least once per month. The school continues to increase its capacity to improve teachers' skills in areas of social emotional learning and trauma informed instruction, as evidenced by the addition of professional development sessions led by Ramapo for Children. However, the majority of professional development at AIM I remains insufficiently focused on meeting the specific needs of the school's population.

## DOES AIM I MEET THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS?

AIM I does not meet the educational needs of at-risk students. Based on the school's intended model of serving over-age and under-credited students, the entire school population is academically at-risk. With support from the network and the GSS partnership, the school is beginning to develop programmatic elements to meet the needs of these students; however, the extent of this work is not yet robust or systematic enough to ensure all at-risk students are receiving supports that bring students to a standard to meet graduation requirements.

- AIM I is developing programmatic elements tailored to the school's model to serve an at-risk population of students. Low attendance continues to limit the effectiveness of the school's academic program. The school has made gains in this area within the past year as a result of the school's GSS partnership, which employs coaches for every student. Coaches are responsible for tracking daily attendance and initiating phone calls, home visits, and letters to families when students are not in school. Despite these efforts, the school and network still miss opportunities to adjust the school's program to address trends in attendance data such as the low rate of students present for first period each day.
- The school uses clear procedures for identifying at-risk students. AIM I primarily utilizes the NYCDOE student information systems to gain information about students with disabilities and English language learners ("ELLs"). The school administers Performance Series to identify students' Lexile levels and STAR math to identify mathematics proficiency levels. Depending on students' ELA and mathematics proficiency as determined by Performance Series and STAR math, leaders assign students to specific remediation courses such as Read 180 and Math Skills.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- The school has a process to identify academically struggling students. For transfer students, school staff review credit accumulation and Regents pass rates. The school uses the academic performance data, credit accumulation data, and Regents pass rates to assign students to one of the school's three 'house' cohorts. The number of credits and Regents exams students have already accumulated determines this house placement.
- AIM I uses clear procedures to identify students' social emotional needs. Upon enrollment, the GSS staff members conduct a student intake survey with incoming students to gauge the level and variety of social emotional supports students require to be successful and identify necessary resources to support students' nonacademic needs. The school uses the student intake data to assign students a school counselor and a GSS coach who acts as an advisor and provide social emotional support to a caseload of students.
- AIM I does not provide academic interventions that meet the needs of its at-risk students. The school offers integrated co-teaching ("ICT") in core content areas for students with disabilities whose Individualized Education Programs ("IEPs") indicate such a setting. However, the quality of instruction and co-teaching at AIM I are not strong enough to ensure all students are receiving effective academic support. Based on classroom observations, the visit team consistently observed instruction starting at a low level that was intended to be accessible to all students. However, the quality of instruction did not reach a level that prepared all students to demonstrate mastery on high school state standards. Furthermore, despite students' varying instructional levels in AIM I classrooms and low student-teacher ratio, the visit team did not consistently observe examples of content differentiation for individual students during classroom instruction. At the time of the Institute's visit, AIM I lacked coaching and lesson plan feedback for special education teachers. The school's assistant principal for special education had been out of the building on intermittent leave since August of 2018 and the school did not work with urgency to provide this support.
- AIM I provides opportunities for coordination between content area teachers and at-risk program staff. Teachers have shared common planning time on a daily basis as well as weekly department meetings in which all teachers have opportunities to coordinate. Additionally, the school is beginning to establish structured case conferencing meetings in which teachers, leaders, counselors, and coaches meet to discuss specific students and plan academic and nonacademic interventions together.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 20

### DOES THE SCHOOL ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM?

The New Visions network has not fully differentiated its supports for AIM I and AIM II to effectively address the schools' greater needs compared to traditional transfer schools and charter schools in New Visions' portfolio. The school continues to develop its capacity to support the delivery of the educational program.

- AIM I's organizational structure does not consistently support the school's program. The school struggles to fill short term and long term staff vacancies in a timely manner. At the time of the Institute's visit the school had one special education teacher vacancy, which has been vacant since the start of the year. Additionally, the assistant principal of special education began taking intermittent leave since August of 2018. Despite this absence happening early in the school year, neither the network nor the school have implemented a solution to fill the instructional duties of this leader during times of absence. Other members of the school community have clear roles and responsibilities. Staff members know who to go to for what and the operational staff effectively allow the school's instructional team to focus on the academic program.
- The school's discipline system is clear and uniquely tailored to the needs of the school's students. The school uses a system of incentives including field trips, rewards, merits and demerits tracked via the electronic platform LiveSchool, and a series of restorative practices implemented by GSS coaches, in partnership with the school. Coaches are expected to act as an advisor to their caseload of students, which includes holding weekly individual meetings, creating success plans, providing family outreach, and documenting these interactions in a schoolwide culture tracker. An experienced culture team, consisting of the principal, two teachers, and a dean, address more significant behavioral incidents with students. Stakeholders across the school consistently articulate how the discipline system works and know who to go to for what when it comes to students' behavioral support.
- While the school continues to struggle with student retention, AIM I's enrollment of 188 students is significantly higher than its enrollment during the 2017-18 school year. Given the school's specific model to serve at-risk students who are typically over-age and under-credited and in some cases have suffered disruption to their educational experience due to incarceration, pregnancy, housing instability, or other traumatic events,

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

the school actively enrolls students throughout the school year. Almost half of the student population are special education students with disabilities, exceeding the district enrollment target for this student subgroup. The school also significantly exceeds its district target for ELL enrollment.

- The school and network do not yet have a system in place to monitor the effectiveness of the overall educational program, including the GSS partnership. The school and network review academic data regularly. However, there is not a systematic practice in place in which leaders review academic and non academic information and evaluate the extent to which the school is comprehensively meeting its mission, key design elements, and Accountability Plan goals.

## DOES THE BOARD WORK EFFECTIVELY TO ACHIEVE THE SCHOOL'S ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOALS?

Despite being in the second year of its charter term, the board and the New Visions network are still developing an understanding of the needs of AIM I students. While the network and board have worked to put new programs and systems in place, the board lacks urgency in assessing the new systems and making changes to support the school in meeting its Accountability Plan goals and the needs of AIM I students.

- While board members possess a variety of skills and experiences that are important in appropriately governing the school, the board does not sufficiently leverage those skills and experiences. Board members possess expertise in finance, education, higher education, clinical services, and law. The board seeks to add a community member. The board has considered developing committees to support its functioning, but opted not to do so and has not yet determined another solution to provide effective oversight that maximizes its areas of expertise and capacity.
- The board lacks urgency in establishing its long-range goals and plans for monitoring the overall program. The board monitors graduation rates, daily attendance rates, students' credit accumulation, and Regents passing rates. To support students' social emotional needs, the board approved the school's partnership with GSS. However, at nine months into the school year, the board has not yet established evaluation criteria for the partnership and does not systematically review non academic data regularly to determine the effectiveness of the GSS partnership. Given the unique nature of AIM I's restructuring

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

renewal from a failing school, and the New Visions network's experience in serving transfer schools, the school should have clear goals for the social emotional program. In the absence of these goals, the board has limited ability to monitor how effectively the school educates students who have experienced varying levels of trauma. The school also has limited ability to monitor its partnership and hold GSS staff accountable for its impact on the academic program.

- The board lacks an effective process to evaluate the school leader and the New Visions network. The board relies on the network to complete yearly evaluations of the principal. The board meets regularly with representatives from the New Visions network and uses this time to request additional support when needed, such as a differentiated data dashboard because the traditional dashboard did not include information that was pertinent for AIM I students. However, given the school's low performance against its internal goals, the board has yet to act with urgency to require additional New Visions network resources to bring about significant academic improvements in the near future.
- The board evaluates its own performance and recognizes a need to improve. The board's self-assessment template is compliance and input-focused rather than driven by outcomes. While the board understands a need to increase the school's performance, it does not yet have systems in place to provide itself meaningful feedback and support for oversight.

AIM I

# Ax

APPENDICES

PAGES Ax 1-18

**SO**<sup>A</sup>  
SCHOOL  
OVERVIEW

PAGE Ax 2

**RB**<sup>B</sup>  
RENEWAL  
BENCHMARKS

PAGE Ax 7

# APPENDIX A: School Overview

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES<sup>1</sup>

### CHAIR

Melanie Harris

### TREASURER

Marina Schreiber

### SECRETARY

Musa Ali Shama

### TRUSTEES

Elizabeth Chu

Sharon Hayes

Garrett A. Lynch

Kelly Roman

Rebecca Anne Zofnass

## SCHOOL LEADERS

### PRINCIPAL

*Kristin Greer, Principal (2017-18 to Present)*

## SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT <sup>2</sup>	PROPOSED GRADES	ACTUAL GRADES
2017-18	179	154	9 - 12	9 - 12
2018-19	214	186	9 - 12	9 - 12

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

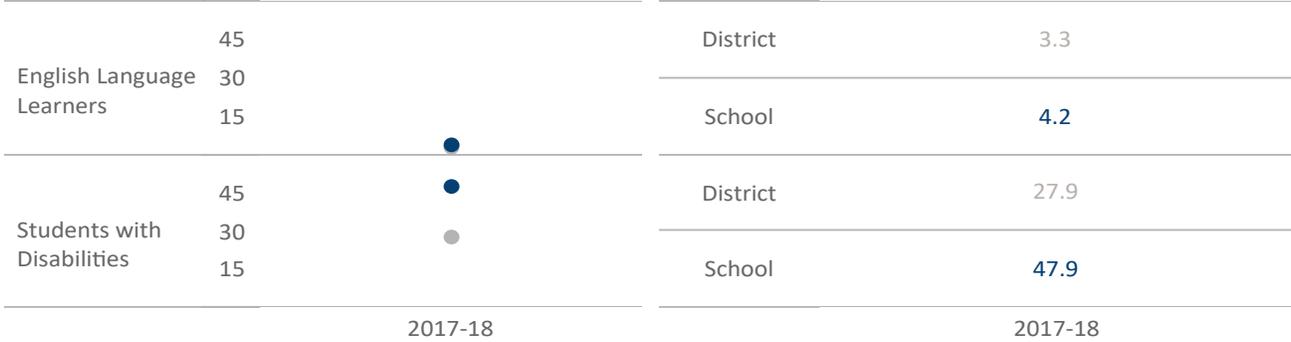
2. Source: Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

# APPENDIX A: School Overview

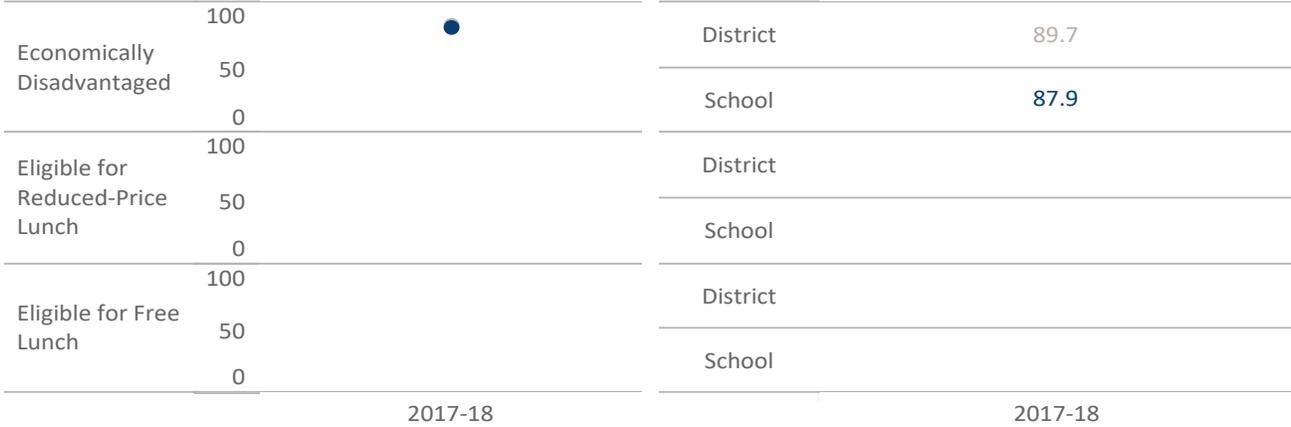
## New Visions AIM Charter High School I

CSD 23

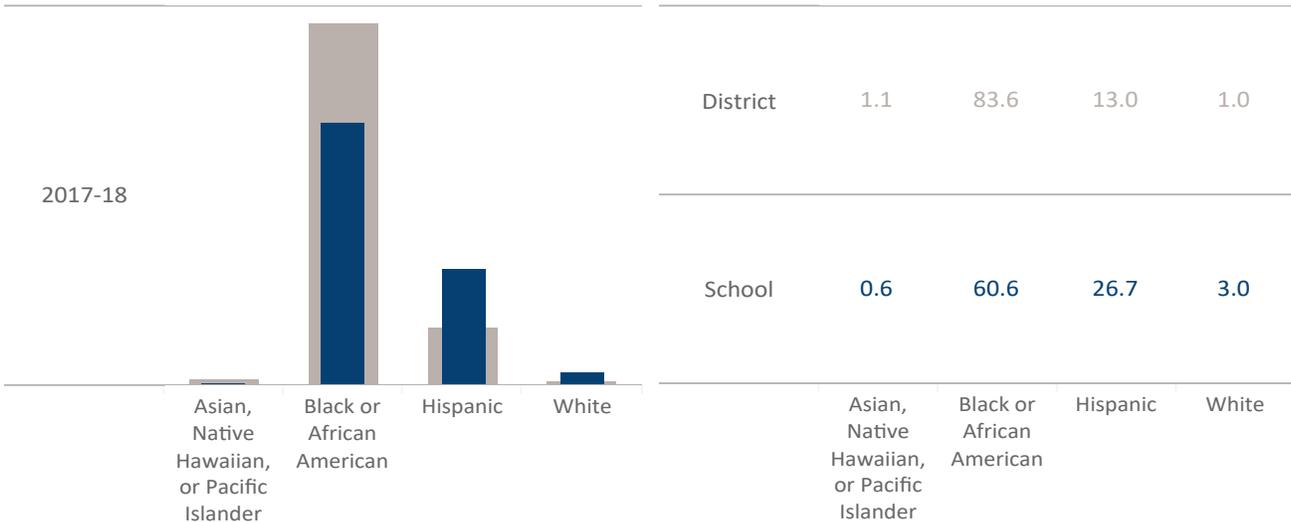
### Student Demographics: Special Populations



### Student Demographics: Free/Reduced Lunch



### Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity



Data reported in these charts reflect BEDS day enrollment counts as reported by the New York State Education Department

# APPENDIX A: School Overview

## New Visions AIM Charter High School I

CSD 23



CSD data suitable for comparison are not available. The percentage rate shown here is calculated using the method employed by the New York City Department of Education ("NYCDOE"): the total 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.

**Persistence in Enrollment:** The percentage of students eligible to return from previous year who did return

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



2018

0

### New Visions AIM Charter High School I's Enrollment and Retention Status: 2017-18

		District Target	School
Enrollment	economically disadvantaged	83.2	80.7
	English language learners	2.1	5.4
	students with disabilities	17.1	46.4
Retention	economically disadvantaged	84.9	61.1
	English language learners	84.5	54.5
	students with disabilities	83.2	65.8

Data reported in these charts reflect information reported by the school and validated by the Institute.

# APPENDIX A: School Overview

## SCHOOL VISIT HISTORY

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
2017-18	First Year Visit	April 25, 2018
2018-19	Evaluation Visit	March 25 - 26, 2019

## CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF VISIT	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
March 25 - 26, 2019	Hannah Hansen	School Evaluation Analyst
	Kerri Rizzolo	Senior Analyst
	Denise Gaffor	School Evaluation Analyst
	Sinnjinn Bucknell	Director of Performance and Systems
	Ashish Kapadia	External Consultant

## CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

CHARTER TERM	ACCOUNTABILITY PERIOD <sup>3</sup>	ANTICIPATED RENEWAL VISIT
Second year of five-year initial charter term	Second year of four-year Accountability Period	Fall 2021

3. 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 A: School Overview

## KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS:

ELEMENT	EVIDENT?
Evidence based and technology-enabled administrative systems	+
Defined post-secondary pathways	+
Intensive and personalized academic supports	-
Flexible and personalized academic programming	+
Student advisors	+
Intensive and integrated socio-emotional supports	+

VERSION 5.0, MAY 2012

## Introduction

The State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks<sup>1</sup> (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 subset 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: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/renewal/>. 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.

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

- 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, teacher and community members is also available on the Institute’s website at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/renewal/>. Please do not hesitate to contact the Institute with any questions.

## RENEWAL QUESTION 1

### IS THE SCHOOL AN ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

#### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1A

#### OVER THE ACCOUNTABILITY PERIOD, THE SCHOOL HAS MET OR COME CLOSE TO MEETING ITS ACADEMIC ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOALS.

*The Institute determines the extent to which the school has met the Accountability Plan goals in the following areas:*

- 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.

#### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1B

#### THE SCHOOL HAS AN ASSESSMENT SYSTEM THAT IMPROVES INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT LEARNING.

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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.

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1C

### THE SCHOOL'S CURRICULUM SUPPORTS TEACHERS IN THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING.

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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.

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1D

### HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION IS EVIDENT THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL.

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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.

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1E

### THE SCHOOL HAS STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP.

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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;

# APPENDIX B: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

- 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.

## THE SCHOOL MEETS THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1F

*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?

### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2A

**THE SCHOOL IS FAITHFUL TO ITS MISSION AND HAS IMPLEMENTED THE KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS INCLUDED IN ITS CHARTER.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- the school faithfully follows its mission; and
- the school has implemented its key design elements.

### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2B

**PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND STUDENTS ARE SATISFIED WITH THE SCHOOL.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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

**THE SCHOOL ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVELY SUPPORTS THE DELIVERY OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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.

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2D

### THE SCHOOL BOARD WORKS EFFECTIVELY TO ACHIEVE THE SCHOOL'S ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOALS.

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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

### THE BOARD IMPLEMENTS, MAINTAINS AND ABIDES BY APPROPRIATE POLICIES, SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES.

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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 maintain adequate skill sets and expertise for effective governance and structural continuity;

# APPENDIX B: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

- 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.

## THE SCHOOL SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLIES WITH APPLICABLE LAWS, RULES AND REGULATIONS AND THE PROVISIONS OF ITS CHARTER.

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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.

### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2F

## RENEWAL QUESTION 3

### IS THE SCHOOL FISCALLY SOUND?

#### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3A

#### THE SCHOOL OPERATES PURSUANT TO A LONG-RANGE FINANCIAL PLAN IN WHICH IT CREATES REALISTIC BUDGETS THAT IT MONITORS AND ADJUSTS WHEN APPROPRIATE.

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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.

#### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3B

#### THE SCHOOL MAINTAINS APPROPRIATE INTERNAL CONTROLS AND PROCEDURES.

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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 conditions;
- the school prepares payroll according to appropriate state and federal regulations and school policy;

# APPENDIX B: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

- 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.

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3C

### 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.

*The following reports have generally been filed in a timely, accurate and complete manner:*

- 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.

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3D

### 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).

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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
- 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?

### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4A

**KEY STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF THE SCHOOL, AS DEFINED IN THE EXHIBITS OF THE APPLICATION FOR CHARTER RENEWAL, ARE REASONABLE, FEASIBLE AND ACHIEVABLE.**

*Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:*

- 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

**THE SCHOOL'S PLANS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM ALLOW IT TO MEET ITS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOALS.**

*Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:*

- 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

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4C

### THE SCHOOL PROVIDES A REASONABLE, FEASIBLE AND ACHIEVABLE PLAN FOR BOARD OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNANCE.

*Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:*

- 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.

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4D

### THE SCHOOL PROVIDES A REASONABLE, FEASIBLE AND ACHIEVABLE FISCAL PLAN INCLUDING PLANS FOR AN ADEQUATE FACILITY.

*Based on the elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:*

- 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.

