



## **Ocean Hill Collegiate Charter School**

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# **School Evaluation Report 2012-13**

Visit Date: March 12, 2013

Report Date: July 2, 2013

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## INTRODUCTION

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

While the Institute conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all 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

### Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	September 16, 2008
Date Initial Charter Approved by Operation of Law	February 23, 2009
School Opening Date	August 2010

### Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades	District
2010-11 to Present	1137 Herkimer Street, Brooklyn, NY, 11233	5-7	NYC CSD 23

### Partner Organizations

	Partner Name	Partner Type	Dates of Service
Partner	Uncommon Schools	Charter Management Organization	2010-Present

### Mission Statement

The mission of Ocean Hill Collegiate Charter School is to prepare each student for college.
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### Key Design Elements

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational design based on other successful urban charter schools;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended school day and year;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An emphasis on college such that the freshman year of college will be a natural extension of graduation from high school;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A calm, composed, and disciplined environment to maximize the amount of time on-task; and</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A focus on literacy driven by an understanding that most students beginning 5<sup>th</sup> grade are reading substantially below grade level and an acknowledgement that if a school does not address this issue immediately, students will be at a huge disadvantage in all subjects high school and college.</li> </ul>

## School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Charter Enrollment	Actual Enrollment <sup>1</sup>	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades
2010-11	78	N/A	79	5	5
2011-12	148	N/A	140	5-6	5-6
2012-13	208	N/A	200 <sup>2</sup>	5-7	5-7

## Student Demographics<sup>3</sup>

	2010-2011		2011-12	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC School District 23 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC School District 23 Enrollment
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0	0	0
Black or African American	99	80	96	80
Hispanic	1	18	3	18
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0	1	0	1
White	0	1	0	1
Multiracial	0	0	1	0
<b>Special Populations</b>				
Students with Disabilities	N/A <sup>4</sup>	N/A	13 <sup>5</sup>	22
English Language Learners	0	4	1	5
<b>Free/Reduced Lunch</b>				
Eligible for Free Lunch	80	79	68	75
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	9	5	13	4

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

<sup>2</sup> Annual Visit Data Collection Form, February 2013

<sup>3</sup> Source: 2011-12 School Report Cards, State Education Department ("SED"). Please note that SED releases data up to a full year after the conclusion of any one school year. As such, the data presented in this table may differ from current information reported by the school and included in this report.

<sup>4</sup> Source: District-level Students with Disabilities enrollment data are not available for 2010-11. SED released these district data for the first time in spring 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Based on the state's Empirical Analysis of Enrollment Targets.

### Current Board of Trustees<sup>6</sup>

Board Member Name	Term	Position/Committees
Linton Mann III	June 2015	Chair
John Greenstein	June 2013	Treasurer
Bob Howitt	June 2014	Trustee
Julie Kennedy	June 2015	Trustee
Stuart Linde	September 2015	Trustee
St. Claire Gerald	September 2015	Trustee
Eileen Shy	June 2015	Trustee

### School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2010-2011 to Present	Hannah Solomon, Principal Hanna Campbell, Director of Operations

### School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2010-11	First Year	Institute	June 1, 2011
2012-13	Annual Visit	Institute	March 12, 2013

<sup>6</sup> Source: Institute board information.

## CONDUCT OF THE SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

### Specifications

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Members	Title
March 12, 2013	Danielle Keen	Senior Analyst
	Natasha Howard, Ph.D	Director of School Evaluation

### Context of the Visit

Charter Cycle	
Charter Period	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year of the First Charter Term
Accountability Period <sup>7</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year of the Accountability Period
Impending Renewal Visit	Fall 2014

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<sup>7</sup> Because the Institute makes a renewal decision in the last year of a Charter Period, the Accountability Period ends in the next to last year of the Charter Period. For initial renewals, the Accountability Period is the first four years of the Charter Period. For subsequent renewals, the Accountability Period includes the last year of the previous Charter Period through the next to last year of the current Charter Period.

## 2011-12 School Performance Review

### ***Performance Summary***

Based on results from 2011-12, the second year of Ocean Hill Collegiate Charter School's ("Ocean Hill Collegiate's") four-year Accountability Period, and the first year that all five measures of its Accountability Plan were applicable, the school is meeting both its English language arts ("ELA") and math goals. The school is also meeting its NCLB goal. Ocean Hill Collegiate does not yet have results in science.

### ***ELA***

Based on results of the five measures in its Accountability Plan, the school met its goal in ELA. The school met the absolute target, in the first year this measure was applicable, with 93 percent of students in at least their second year scoring proficient. The school met the Annual Measurable Objective ("AMO") set by the state and outperformed Brooklyn District 23 by nearly 50 percentage points. In comparison to demographically similar schools, the school met its target, performing much better than expected and showing significant improvement from 2010-11. The school also met its year-to-year cohort growth target, with the school's 6<sup>th</sup> graders and its 10 holdovers in 5<sup>th</sup> grade showing substantial gains.

### ***Math***

Based on results of the five measures in its Accountability Plan, Ocean Hill Collegiate met its math goal, the first year that all five measures were applicable. One hundred percent of students in at least their second year met the absolute target, exceeding the target of 75 percent proficiency. The school exceeded the state's AMO and outperformed Brooklyn District 23 by nearly 58 percentage points. In comparison to demographically similar schools, the school met its target, performing better than expected to a large degree. The school also met its cohort growth target demonstrating overall year-to-year growth.

### ***No Child Left Behind***

Ocean Hill Collegiate has met its NCLB goal.

### ***Science***

Because the state science exam is only administered to 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, the school does not yet have results in science.

**SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: English Language Arts**  
**Ocean Hill Collegiate Charter School**



	2009-10 Grades Served:			MET	2010-11 Grades Served: 5			MET	2011-12 Grades Served: 5-6			MET						
	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)							
<b>ABSOLUTE MEASURES</b> 1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above a Level 3 on the New York State exam.	3	(0)	(0)	--	3	(0)	(0)	NA	3	(0)	(0)	YES						
	4	(0)	(0)		4	(0)	(0)		4	(0)	(0)							
	5	(0)	(0)		5	70.5 (78)	(0)		5	80.0 (75)	70.0 (10)							
	6	(0)	(0)		6	(0)	(0)		6	95.2 (63)	96.7 (61)							
	7	(0)	(0)		7	(0)	(0)		7	(0)	(0)							
	8	(0)	(0)		8	(0)	(0)		8	(0)	(0)							
	All	(0)	(0)		All	70.5 (78)	(0)		All	87.0 (138)	93.0 (71)							
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	Grades	PI	AMO	--	Grades	PI	AMO	YES	Grades	PI	AMO	YES						
	5	126	122		5-6	154	148											
<b>COMPARATIVE MEASURES</b> 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: Brooklyn District 23			--	Comparison: Brooklyn District 23			NA	Comparison: Brooklyn District 23			YES						
	Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District							
					NA		34.8		6	80.3	32.2							
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	--	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	NO	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	YES			
	80.0	39.7	38.0	0.10		67.6	59.4	44.5	0.98									
<b>GROWTH MEASURE</b> 5. The year-to-year school-wide cohort of students will meet the target of reducing by one-sixth the difference between the previous year's baseline and 75 percent performing at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam. An asterisk indicates grade-level cohort met target.	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	--	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	NA	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	YES
	3	0					3	0					3					
	4	0					4	0					4					
	5	0					5	0					5	10	0.0	12.5	20.0 *	
	6	0					6	0					6	60	51.7	55.6	80.0 *	
	7	0					7	0					7					
	8	0					8	0					8					
	All	0					All	0					All	70	44.3	49.4	71.4	

**TACS** The 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

### Ocean Hill Collegiate Charter School



	2009-10 Grades Served:			MET	2010-11 Grades Served: 5			MET	2011-12 Grades Served: 5-6			MET						
	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)							
		3	(0)			(0)	3			(0)	(0)		3	(0)	(0)			
4	(0)	(0)	4	(0)	(0)	4	(0)	(0)										
5	(0)	(0)	5	91.1 (79)	(0)	5	94.7 (75)	100.0 (10)										
6	(0)	(0)	6	(0)	(0)	6	98.4 (63)	100.0 (61)										
7	(0)	(0)	7	(0)	(0)	7	(0)	(0)										
8	(0)	(0)	8	(0)	(0)	8	(0)	(0)										
All	(0)	(0)	All	91.1 (79)	(0)	NA	All	96.4 (138)	100.0 (71)	YES								
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	Grades	PI	AMO		Grades	PI	AMO		Grades	PI	AMO							
	5	167	137	YES	5-6	184	158	YES										
<b>COMPARATIVE MEASURES</b>	Comparison: Brooklyn District 23				Comparison: Brooklyn District 23				Comparison: Brooklyn District 23									
3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above Level 3 will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District							
					NA		42.2	NA	6	98.4	39.9	YES						
4. Each year the school will exceed its predicted level of students at or above Level 3 on the State exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3) based on its Free Lunch (FL) rate.	% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size		% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size		% FL	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size				
	80.0	73.4	51.6	1.11	YES	67.6	85.5	56.0	1.48	YES								
<b>GROWTH MEASURE</b>	Gr	N	Base	Target	Result		Gr	N	Base	Target	Result		Gr	N	Base	Target	Result	
5. The year-to-year school-wide cohort of students will meet the target of reducing by one-sixth the difference between the previous year's baseline and 75 percent performing at or above Level 3 on the New York State exam. An asterisk indicates grade-level cohort met target.	3					--	3					NA	3					YES
	4						4						4					
	5						5						5	10	30.0	37.5	70.0	*
	6						6						6	61	86.9	87.0	98.4	*
	7						7						7					
	8						8						8					
	All						All						All	71	78.9	79.0	94.4	

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

## SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

### **Benchmark Conclusions and Evidence**

#### ***1. E Instructional Leadership***

***Ocean Hill Collegiate has strong instructional leadership.***

- In its third year of operation, the school has shifted its instructional leadership strategy from the principal-led model it used in its first two years to having department chairs serve as the primary instructional leaders in each subject area. The chairs observe teachers at least one time per week, meeting with them to debrief and set priorities for improvement post-observation, including long-term goals and short-term “bite-size” goals. The principal now focuses her effort on developing the department chairs as instructional leaders through co-observations, modeling feedback delivery and helping set goals for teachers.
- Department chairs at Ocean Hill Collegiate establish an environment of high expectations for teacher performance. They maintain a frequent presence in classrooms and hold teachers accountable to implementing instructional improvement strategies identified in weekly post-observation feedback sessions. The principal puts teachers who do not meet expectations on formal performance improvement plans.
- Ocean Hill Collegiate also instills high expectations for student achievement. In addition to expecting strong absolute performance results, the school values students’ progress and provides a number of opportunities to recognize students, such as using examples of strong student writing as models during literacy lessons and celebrating student growth on IAs.
- Teachers receive three-weeks of professional development during the summer in addition to two hours per week during the course of the school year. This year, the school has focused on improving student work and teacher questioning. Leaders do not differentiate school-wide professional development activities based on teacher experience. Departments also have common planning time during which the chair provides teachers with instructional guidance, focusing on observed pedagogical deficits.
- The school recently discontinued its practice of conducting mid-year evaluations, with the principal reporting that they do not add value to teacher development. In collaboration with the school’s charter management organization, Uncommon Schools, Inc. (“Uncommon”), the school is currently developing a less formal end-of year review process.

#### ***1. D Pedagogy***

***Elements of high quality instruction are evident throughout the school.***

- Teachers deliver purposeful lessons aligned to the school’s curriculum. Instruction at Ocean Hill Collegiate is rigorous and focused on learning objectives that specify clear expectations for what students will know and be able to do.
- Teachers demonstrate subject-matter and grade-level competency in the subjects and grades they teach.
- Teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding. For example, teachers cold-call students, circulate to check answers during independent work

and collect exit-tickets or responses to daily target questions. Teachers hold students accountable for providing correct answers, by returning to students who answer incorrectly. Ocean Hill Collegiate teachers also use “Show Calls” as a means of checking for understanding. During show calls, teachers display student work and have students discuss the process and product rather than simply showing correct answers.

- Teachers occasionally 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. Across the school, teachers challenge students to explain how they came to their conclusions and provide multiple pieces of evidence to support their answers. For example in reading classes, teachers push students to provide evidence of how a character’s feelings changed over time; other students are prepared to provide further evidence to support their peers or provide contradictory evidence to challenge them.
- Teachers use a wide variety of systems and routines to maximize class time, including the use of timers to monitor independent practice and timed routines for transitioning from one activity to another.
- Throughout the school, teachers exhibit effective classroom management techniques. Teachers issue merits and demerits to reinforce positive behavior and often compare the conduct of one classroom in the grade to others, in order to instill a sense of competition between classes, leading them to strive for superior conduct.

### **1. B Use of Assessment Data**

***Ocean Hill Collegiate has an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning.***

- The school regularly administers valid and reliable assessments. Quarterly, the school administers Interim Assessments (“IAs”), created in collaboration with the Uncommon network, as well as leveled-reading assessments. Teachers also create and administer daily and weekly formative assessments. Department chairs provide oversight in the creation of these documents at the beginning of the school year for all teachers and on an on-going basis for new and struggling teachers.
- Uncommon systematically grades IA responses and provides teachers with an in-depth analysis of student performance. Ocean Hill Collegiate’s teachers meet with other teachers in the Collegiate network to grade writing samples, using a standardized rubric. Teachers sometimes grade the papers of students from other schools in the network during these meetings.
- The teachers use assessment data to adjust and improve instruction by meeting the identified needs of students. After each IA, teachers and department chairs spend an entire day analyzing data reports and deciding on objectives for whole class re-teaching, small group re-teaching, student interventions and guided-reading groupings.
- Department chairs use assessment results to target coaching for teachers whose students underperform, providing struggling teachers with more intensive feedback; however, IA results do not factor into formal performance evaluations.

- The school communicates academic progress to parents/guardians every three to four weeks through progress reports, as well sending home a weekly dashboard detailing student conduct.

### **1. C Curriculum**

***Ocean Hill Collegiate’s curriculum supports teachers in their instructional planning.***

- The school has developed a curriculum framework of objectives based on Common Core state standards for all the major academic subject areas.
- Teachers have access to a shared-drive that holds curriculum resources, such as unit plans, lesson plans and student handouts, from other Uncommon middle schools. Teachers report pulling from these resources to create their own daily student work packets and unit plans; however, they also report that the quality of resources varies from subject to subject and that they sometimes need to create new materials.
- Teachers create materials that guide students through clear and purposeful lessons. Some teachers annotate lesson materials with a script they will use to deliver their lessons, as well as probing questions to check for student understanding during the lesson.
- The school holds teachers accountable for the quality of their daily lesson materials. Through November, teachers must turn all lesson materials into their department chair one to two weeks in advance of implementation. Department chairs provide teachers with feedback on these materials. This practice continues throughout the year for new teachers and teachers who need development in lesson planning. The school also holds teachers accountable for curriculum pacing by regularly administering IAs that directly align to the school’s scope and sequence. Leaders expect teachers to have taught everything covered on each IA by the time of administration.
- Network-based curriculum staff seek out feedback from the school’s principal after teachers implement units. Using this feedback, Uncommon staff revise the school’s curriculum framework during the summer in preparation for the following school-year.

### **1. F At-Risk Students**

***Ocean Hill Collegiate provides adequate support for English language learners (“ELLs”); however, data indicates that the school’s services for low-performers and students with disabilities are ineffective.***

- The school employs one dean of student support and two special education teachers to provide push-in and pull-out services to students in need of academic intervention, its 22 students with academic disabilities and its two ELLs. Pull-out services in ELA consist of guided-reading, decoding and phonics work; math pull-out supports students in accessing the daily coursework and scaffolding independent practice. Low-performing students also receive an additional hour of intervention services during the school’s end-of-day enrichment period.
- In ELA and math, levels of proficiency of at-risk students are far below those of the general education population. On the network’s most recent reading and math IAs, the proficiency rate of special education students was roughly 35 percentage points lower than that of the general education population across all grades. The gap between students identified as

struggling academically and the general population is similar, except in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade where students receiving interventions performed within 10 points of the general education population on both reading and math, indicating that the gap between struggling children and their peers increases with more time enrolled at the school. Both of the school's ELLs scored proficient on the math and ELA tests last year.

- The school has clear procedures for identifying academically struggling students and students with Individualized Education Programs (“IEPs”). The school administers a battery of diagnostic tests for new students including the Woodcock-Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities, the Diagnostic Decoding Survey and the Corrective Math pre-test, prior to the start of the school year. The dean of student support uses the results of these assessments to identify students immediately in need of academic intervention at the beginning of the year. She revisits students’ placements after each IA. In addition, teachers nominate students that need further interventions for discussion at the weekly student support office (“SSO”) meeting. During SSO, the dean of student support, grade-team leaders, a special education teacher, the school’s social worker, the principal and the dean of students brainstorm child-specific interventions and/or discuss the needs for special education referrals. The school administers the Home Language Survey to identify ELLs, but does not systematically administer the LAB-R to students who report speaking a language other than English in the home.
- All general education teachers demonstrate a working knowledge of students’ IEP goals and can articulate instructional strategies for meeting those goals; the dean of student support creates a “snapshot” for teachers detailing the relevant information on students’ IEPs for each homeroom class that they teach.
- Uncommon provided four hours of training on serving at-risk students during summer professional development. The network’s director of special education provides support to all teachers and the dean of student support with regard to meeting the needs of at-risk students throughout the year.
- The school does not provide scheduled time for on-going coordination between general education and special education teachers.
- The school closely monitors the performance of all students and regularly disaggregates data from IAs to analyze the performance of at-risk students and students with disabilities as a group.

## **2. C Organizational Capacity**

***Ocean Hill Collegiate’s organization effectively supports the delivery of the educational program.***

- Ocean Hill Collegiate has established an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, policies and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program. The school’s director of operations is responsible for all operational tasks, leaving the principal and teachers free to focus on instruction. In addition, Uncommon provides significant operational and academic support to the school.
- The organizational structure establishes distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. As the school increases in size, school leaders have prioritized clarifying each staff member’s role and discrete set of professional duties.
- The school has a clear student discipline system in place at the administrative level that is

consistently applied.

- Five Ocean Hill Collegiate teachers left prior to the start of the current school year due to a variety of personal circumstances. This level of turnover is likely to be an anomaly as teachers report a high degree of job satisfaction, and the principal expresses satisfaction with the current instructional team. According to school leaders, support from Uncommon is a major factor in retaining teachers. Currently, two of 18 classroom teachers have no previous teaching experience while eight have taught for at least five years.
- The school has allocated sufficient resources to support the achievement of its academic goals. Ocean Hill Collegiate maintains diverse enrichment offerings including African dance, percussion and sketchbook art.
- Applications to Ocean Hill Collegiate exceed the number of available seats; the school reports a waitlist of 627 students following last spring's lottery.
- Uncommon has procedures in place to assist the school in monitoring its progress toward meeting enrollment and retention targets for special education students, ELLs and students who qualify for free and reduced price lunch, and adjusting its recruitment efforts accordingly.
- The school regularly monitors and evaluates the school's programs and makes changes if necessary, with assistance from Uncommon, such as the move to using department chairs to serve as instructional leaders in order to build content expertise across the school and revising curriculum to deepen students' conceptual understandings in math.



## State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

Version 5.0, May 2012

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### Introduction

The State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks<sup>8</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 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.

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<sup>8</sup> 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-

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

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

In this fifth edition of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, the Institute has made some revisions to the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, namely those benchmarks used for ongoing school evaluation visits, to streamline the collection of evidence. For example, the Institute has incorporated Student Order and Discipline into Pedagogy, and Professional Development into Instructional Leadership. The Institute has rewritten some of the overarching benchmark statements to capture the most salient aspects of school effectiveness, organizational viability, legal compliance, and fiscal soundness. Some of the bulleted indicators within benchmarks have been recast or eliminated.



Finally, the Institute has added some indicators to align the benchmarks with changes in the Charter Schools Act (e.g., provisions in meeting enrollment and retention targets when assigned and abiding by the General Municipal Law).

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

## State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

<b>Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?</b>	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p><b>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1A</b></p> <p><b>Academic Accountability Plan Goals</b></p>	<p><b>Over the Accountability Period, the school has met or come close to meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals.</b></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"> <li>• English language arts;</li> <li>• mathematics;</li> <li>• science;</li> <li>• social studies (high school only);</li> <li>• NCLB;</li> <li>• high school graduation and college preparation (if applicable); and</li> <li>• optional academic goals included by the school.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1B</b></p> <p><b>Use of Assessment Data</b></p>	<p><b>The school has an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning.</b></p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school regularly administers valid and reliable assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum and state performance standards;</li> <li>• the school has a valid and reliable process for scoring and analyzing assessments;</li> <li>• the school makes assessment data accessible to teachers, school leaders and board members;</li> <li>• teachers use assessment results to meet students’ needs by adjusting classroom instruction, grouping students and/or identifying students for special intervention;</li> <li>• school leaders use assessment results to evaluate teacher effectiveness and to develop professional development and coaching strategies; and</li> <li>• the school regularly communicates to parents/guardians about their students’ progress and growth.</li> </ul>

<p><b>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1C</b></p> <p><b>Curriculum</b></p>	<p><b>The school’s curriculum supports teachers in their instructional planning.</b></p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school has a curriculum framework with student performance expectations that provides a fixed, underlying structure, aligned to state standards and across grades;</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• teachers know what to teach and when to teach it based on these documents;</li> <li>• the school has a process for selecting, developing and reviewing its curriculum documents and its resources for delivering the curriculum; and</li> <li>• teachers plan purposeful and focused lessons.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1D</b></p> <p><b>Pedagogy</b></p>	<p><b>High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.</b></p> <p>The following elements are generally present.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teachers deliver purposeful lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school’s curriculum;</li> <li>• teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding;</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• teachers maximize learning time (e.g., appropriate pacing, on-task student behavior, clear lesson focus and clear directions to students); transitions are efficient; and</li> <li>• teachers have effective classroom management techniques and routines that create a consistent focus on academic achievement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1E</b></p> <p><b>Instructional Leadership</b></p>	<p><b>The school has strong instructional leadership.</b></p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• the instructional leadership is adequate to support the development of the teaching staff;</li> <li>• instructional leaders provide sustained, systemic and effective</li> </ul>

	<p>coaching and supervision that improves teachers’ instructional effectiveness;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• instructional leaders provide opportunities and guidance for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction within and across grade levels;</li> <li>• instructional leaders implement a comprehensive professional development program that develops the competencies and skills of all teachers;</li> <li>• professional development activities are interrelated with classroom practice;</li> <li>• instructional leaders regularly conduct teacher evaluations with clear criteria that accurately identify teachers’ strengths and weaknesses; and</li> <li>• instructional leaders hold teachers accountable for quality instruction and student achievement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1F</b></p> <p><b>At-Risk Students</b></p>	<p><b>The school meets the educational needs of at-risk students.</b></p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school uses clear procedures for identifying at-risk students including students with disabilities, English language learners and those struggling academically;</li> <li>• the school has adequate intervention programs to meet the needs of at-risk students;</li> <li>• general education teachers, as well as specialists, utilize effective strategies to support students within the general education program;</li> <li>• the school adequately monitors the progress and success of at-risk students;</li> <li>• teachers are aware of their students’ progress toward meeting IEP goals, achieving English proficiency or school-based goals for struggling students;</li> <li>• the school provides adequate training and professional development to identify at-risk students and to help teachers meet students' needs; and</li> <li>• the school provides opportunities for coordination between classroom teachers and at-risk program staff including the school nurse, if applicable.</li> </ul>

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

<p><b>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2D</b></p> <p><b>Board Oversight</b></p>	<p>and makes changes if necessary.</p> <p><b>The school board works effectively to achieve the school’s Accountability Plan goals.</b></p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• the board requests and receives sufficient information to provide rigorous oversight of the school’s program and finances;</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• the board successfully recruits, hires and retains key personnel, and provides them with sufficient resources to function effectively;</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• the board effectively communicates with the school community including school leadership, staff, parents/guardians and students.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2E</b></p> <p><b>Governance</b></p>	<p><b>The board implements, maintains and abides by appropriate policies, systems and processes.</b></p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• 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;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the board regularly reviews and updates board and school policies as needed and has in place an orientation process for new members;</li> <li>• the board effectively recruits and selects new members in order to maintain adequate skill sets and expertise for effective governance and structural continuity;</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• the board generally avoids conflicts of interest; where not possible, the board manages those conflicts in a clear and transparent manner;</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• the board abides by its by-laws including, but not limited to, provisions regarding trustee election and the removal and filling of vacancies; and</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2F</b></p> <p><b>Legal Requirements</b></p>	<p><b>The school substantially complies with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.</b></p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• the school substantially complies with the terms of its charter and applicable laws, rules and regulations;</li> <li>• the school abides by the terms of its monitoring plan;</li> <li>• the school implements effective systems and controls to ensure that it meets legal and charter requirements;</li> <li>• the school has an active and ongoing relationship with in-house or independent legal counsel who reviews and makes</li> </ul>

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



<p><b>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3C</b></p> <p><b>Financial Reporting</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school ensures duties are appropriately segregated, or institutes compensating controls;</li> <li>• the school ensures that employees performing financial functions are appropriately qualified and adequately trained;</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• a staff member of the school reviews grant agreements and restrictive gifts and monitors compliance with all stated conditions;</li> <li>• the school prepares payroll according to appropriate state and federal regulations and school policy;</li> <li>• the school ensures that employees, trustees and volunteers who handle cash and investments are bonded to help assure the safeguarding of assets; and</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> <p><b>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.</b></p> <p>The following reports have generally been filed in a timely, accurate and complete manner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• annual financial statement audit reports including federal Single Audit report, if applicable;</li> <li>• annual budgets and cash flow statements;</li> <li>• un-audited quarterly reports of income, expenses, and enrollment;</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• grant expenditure reports.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3D</b></p> <p><b>Financial Condition</b></p>	<p><b>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).</b></p>

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

<p><b>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4B</b></p> <p><b>Plans for the Educational Program</b></p>	<p><b>The school’s plans for implementing the educational program allow it to meet its Accountability Plan goals.</b></p> <p>Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4C</b></p> <p><b>Plans for Board Oversight and Governance</b></p>	<p><b>The school provides a reasonable, feasible and achievable plan for board oversight and governance.</b></p> <p>Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>

**SUNY Renewal  
Benchmark 4D**

**Fiscal & Facility Plans**

**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.