2015-16 School Evaluation Report

UFT CHARTER SCHOOL

Visit Date: April 5-6, 2016
Report Date: June 13, 2016

INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit on April 5-6, 2016. While the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the "Institute") conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks (the "SUNY Renewal Benchmarks") near the end of a charter term, most mid-cycle school evaluation visits focus on a subset of these benchmarks. This subset, the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, addresses the academic success of the school and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization. It provides a framework for examining the quality of the educational program, focusing on teaching and learning (i.e., curriculum, instruction, assessment and services for at-risk students), as well as leadership, organizational capacity and board oversight. The Institute uses the established criteria on a regular basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

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

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

SCHOOL BACKGROUND

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	July 15, 2005
Date of School Opening	September 2005

Location and 2015-16 Enrollment

Address	District	Facility	Enrollment	Grades
800 Van Siclen Avenue Brooklyn, NY 11207	CSD 19	DOE Co-located	360	9-12

2014-15 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

In 2014-15, the first year of its three-year Accountability Period, the UFT Charter School ("UFT Charter") met its high school graduation goal. The school did not meet its Accountability Plan goals in English language arts ("ELA") or mathematics as measured against New York State's college and career readiness standards. The school also failed to meet its college preparation goal. UFT Charter met its No Child Left Behind ("NCLB"), science and social studies goals.

ELA

During 2014-15, UFT Charter did not meet its ELA goal according to the measures tied to the state's college and career readiness standard, currently defined as achieving a score of at least 75 on the Regents Comprehensive English exam. UFT Charter fell short of its absolute target, with only 51 percent of the 2011 Accountability Cohort scoring at or above the standard. Although the school's Accountability Performance Level ("APL") fell below the state's Annual Measurable Objective ("AMO"), the APL did exceed Brooklyn CSD 19's ("the district's") performance on the same measure.

Mathematics

UFT Charter failed to meet its mathematics goal during 2014-15 according to the absolute and comparative measures tied to the state's college and career readiness standard, currently defined as scoring at least an 80 on the Regents Integrated Algebra exam. Only 17 percent of students in the 2011 Accountability Cohort scored at or above an 80 on a Regents mathematics exam, falling 48 percentage points below the target of 65 percent. Although the school's APL did not meet the state's AMO, it did outperform the district on this measure.

Graduation

UFT Charter met its high school graduation goal during 2014-15. The school graduated 86% percent of its 2011 Graduation Cohort, meeting its absolute target of 75 percent and exceeding the district's graduation rate by 23 percentage points. Additionally, 96% of the 2010 Graduation Cohort graduated within 5 years.   While the majority of the first and second year Graduation Cohorts earned enough credits to advance to the next grade level, only 70% of the school's 2013 Graduation Cohort passed at least 3 Regents exams by the end of their second year, missing the target by 5 percentage points.

College Preparation

During 2014-15, UFT Charter did not meet its college preparation goal. Only 68 percent of the school's graduates demonstrated college readiness by completing college level coursework, falling short of the target of 75 percent. The school posted average PSAT or SAT scores that fell below the

state average. Commendably, UFT Charter graduated a higher percentage of students with Advanced Regents Diplomas than the district. Additionally, 77 percent of the school's graduates from the 2011 Graduation Cohort enrolled in a 2-year or 4-year college program during the fall after their final year at UFT Charter.

Science

UFT Charter met its science goal during 2014-15. The school exceeded its absolute target of 75 percent proficiency with 83 percent of the 2011 Accountability Cohort scoring at least 65 on a Regents science exam. Additionally, UFT Charter met its comparative measure, surpassing the district's performance by 18 percentage points.

Social Studies

UFT Charter met its social studies goal during 2014-15. The school's 2011 Accountability Cohort met its absolute measure with 78 percent of the Cohort scoring at or above proficiency on the Regents U.S. History exam and 75 percent scoring at least proficient on the Global History Regents exam. UFT Charter's performance also exceeded the district's proficiency rate on both exams, meeting the comparative measure of its social studies goal.

NCLB

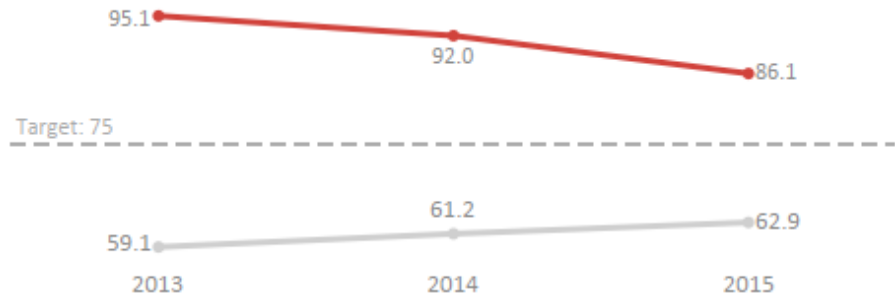UFT Charter is in good standing under the state's NCLB accountability system.

UFT Charter School

DESCRIPTION

Comparative Measure: Graduation Rate. Each year, the percentage of **UFT Charter students graduating** after completion of their fourth year will exceed that of the Brooklyn CSD 19.

FOUR YEAR GRADUATION RATE

95.1 — 92.0 — 86.1

Target: 75

59.1 — 61.2 — 62.9

2013 2014 2015

ADVANCED REGENTS DIPLOMA ATTAINMENT

College Preparation Measure: Advanced Regents Diploma. Each year, the percentage of **students graduating** with an Advanced Regents diploma will exceed that of the district.

12.1 — 8.7 — 12.9
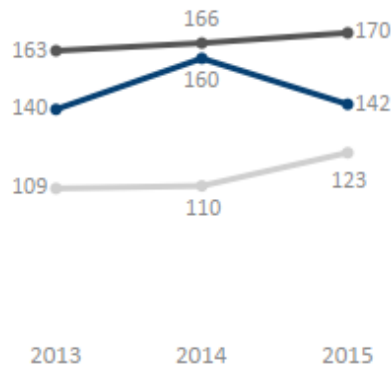
2.7 — 3.5 — 4.2

2013 2014 2015
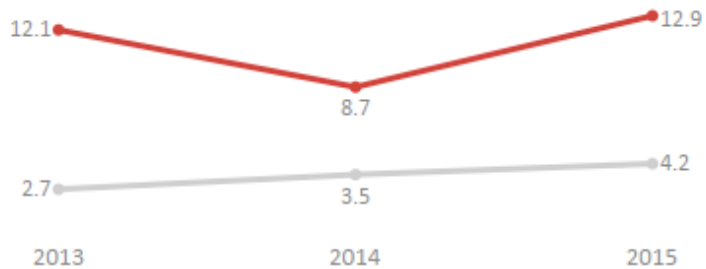
COLLEGE MATRICULATION

College Attainment Measure: Matriculation into College. Each year, 75 percent of **graduating students** will enroll in a college or university.
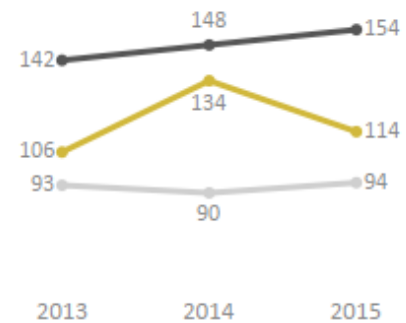

2013 — 98.3
2014 — 91.3
2015 — 77.4
Target: 75%

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS | MATHEMATICS

Comparative and Absolute Measure: District Comparison. Each year, the school's **ELA Accountability Performance Level** and the **math APL** will exceed the district's Performance Index and the state's AMO.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:
163 — 166 — 170
140 — 160 — 142
109 — 110 — 123

MATHEMATICS:
142 — 148 — 154
106 — 134 — 114
93 — 90 — 94

2013 2014 2015   2013 2014 2015

QUALITATIVE EDUCATION BENCHMARKS

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,[1] 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.[2]

Use of Assessment Data

UFT Charter lacks a comprehensive assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness, and does not systematically use student data to drive decision-making.

- UFT Charter administers the New York State Regents exams across all grades. The school also administered the Terra Nova exam to 9th and 10th graders in January. However, teachers individually create their own midterms and other formative assessments. The school does not have a common assessment system that provides school-wide or department-wide data on student achievement. While the Terra Nova exam provides diagnostic data on students, the school's leadership does not systematically use this information or supplement it with other standardized assessments. The school does not have a system to ensure that teacher-created summative assessments are aligned to state standards or predictive of performance on standardized exams.

- The school does not have a valid or reliable process for scoring and analyzing assessments. Teachers score their own exams and grade their own written assessments. UFT Charter does not provide opportunities or support for teachers to develop common assessments or norm their grading practices.

- UFT Charter does not systematically provide teachers with sufficient academic data to modify instruction. In January, the school provided time for teachers to look at an itemized analysis from the Regents examinations in order to identify areas of concern for their students. However, the school has no process to support teachers in developing lessons or providing instruction informed by the Regents item analysis. Additionally, as there is no common assessment system at the school, teachers do not have easy access to actionable assessment data other than their own gradebook.

---

[1] An extensive body of research identifying and confirming the correlates of effective schools exists dating back four decades. Selected sources include: www.mes.org/correlates.html; scholar.harvard.edu/files/fryer/files/dobbie_fryer_revision_final.pdf; and, gao.gov/assets/80/77488.pdf.
[2] Additional details regarding the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, including greater specificity as to what the Institute looks for at each school that may demonstrate attainment of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, is available at: www.newyorkcharters.org/suny-renewal-benchmarks/.

- The school's leadership is not providing teachers support in designing and faithfully implementing a set of best practices for using data to inform instruction. Teachers report using course grades and Regents results to identify content areas that their students struggle with. However, the visit team found no evidence of assessment data being used to develop targeted teaching strategies.

- Leaders report using Regents scores and course grades to provide context for classroom observations on an informal, ad hoc basis. School leaders do not use assessment results as a component of their evaluation of teachers, to develop coaching strategies, or provide targeted professional development. Leaders and coaches do not modify the frequency of classroom observations based on how well students are doing.

- The school sends parents and guardians report cards quarterly. Parents also receive one progress report during each of the four marking periods. While teachers spend 20 minutes after school to contact parents each day, the school has no system to track or monitor parent-teacher communication.

Curriculum

UFT Charter teachers access sufficient materials to support daily instructional planning, but the school lacks a curriculum framework that details expectations for student performance across all grades and subjects. Although school leaders express intent to implement a school-wide curriculum that would allow for consistent collaboration across grade teams and content teams, professional development activities have largely focused on lesson structure and has not strengthened the school wide curriculum or coherently supported the teaching staff.

- Teachers are uniformly knowledgeable of learning standards and use Common Core as a framework for daily instructional planning. However, the school does not have a systematic method for mapping curriculum content. Teachers update curriculum binders on an ongoing basis and do not consistently submit lesson plans for review prior to instruction. School leaders primarily review lesson plans during classroom observations or in curriculum binders after instruction has already taken place.   Consequently, school leaders cannot ensure that intended and delivered curriculums align to learning standards or if teachers will cover all grade-appropriate standards by the end of the academic year. Doing so would provide additional support to teachers dedicated to implementing strong instruction as well as provide consistent support, assistance and instructional coaching throughout the school year.

- UFT Charter continues to lack systemized processes and protocols for selecting, developing, and reviewing curriculum resources and documents. Teachers have autonomy in the development of curriculum and consult with various resources to gather instructional materials with little guidance from school leaders. The school lacks protocols that would equip teachers with standards-based tools to guide the development or

evaluation of selected material. School leaders provide limited oversight in curriculum development and, as a result, are unable to determine if the materials provide sufficient information to prepare all students with the knowledge and skills they must demonstrate to successfully attain an Advanced Regents Diploma.

- In the absence of school-wide systems that would support curriculum development, most teachers work themselves to develop purposeful and focused individual lessons. This individual strategy makes it difficult to determine if the totality of lessons delivered over the course of the school year meets the necessary breadth of subject area standards.

- Evidence collected during the school evaluation visit suggests that teachers incorporate instructional planning techniques introduced during weekly professional development sessions into daily lessons. For example, most lesson plans incorporate a brief independent assignment at the beginning of the lesson (a "Do Now") and include broad goals for the unit, specific objectives for individual lessons, and essential questions students should be able to answer by the end of the lesson. School leaders identify this implementation of a common lesson structure as a priority for the current school year and intend to use it as a precursor to the development of a school-wide curriculum framework.

Pedagogy

Instruction at UFT Charter indicates teachers need additional supports in ensuring all students consistently receive strong instruction delivered at a level of rigor necessary to ensure all students succeed. As shown in the chart below, during the evaluation visit, Institute team members conducted 19 classroom observations using a defined protocol used in all school evaluation visits.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

				Grade			
		9	10	11	12	Mixed Grades	Total
Content Area	ELA	3	1		1		5
	Math	2	2			3	7
	Science	1	1	1			3
	Soc Stu				1	1	2
	Other		1			1	2
	Total	6	5	1	2	5	19

- Teachers deliver lessons with clear learning objectives that build on students' previous skills and knowledge (15 of 19 classroom observations). Lesson activities align to stated objectives, and teachers present concepts with clarity using age-appropriate language. For example, a mathematics teacher used the rate at which rumors spread to explain exponential versus linear growth in accessible terms.

- A minority of teachers regularly and effectively check for student understanding during lessons (7 of 19 classroom observations). In many instances, teachers rely on volunteers to answer posed questions without assessing understanding across the classroom. Few teachers monitor student work to gauge depth of understanding and ensure students remain on task. In most classrooms, teachers do not use questions and follow up questions to surface students' misunderstanding.

- Instruction does not challenge students to use higher-order thinking skills (5 of 19 classroom observations). Teachers miss opportunities to ask probing questions and do not require students to elaborate upon their answers. Although some lessons include materials with the potential to spark rich discussion, instruction features a dearth of peer-to-peer interaction. Teacher-student exchanges tend to be brief and do not require students to engage deeply with lesson material.

- Although students remain generally on-task, instruction does not convey a sense of urgency for learning; only a minority of classrooms maintains consistent focus on high levels of academic achievement (9 of 19 classroom observations). Lessons and instructional delivery do not maximize learning time or require sustained cognitive engagement. In some classrooms, poor classroom management enables chronic disruption of the learning environment. Few teachers were observed utilizing available technology such as the school's ubiquitous SMART boards, opting instead to write on whiteboards while students wait thus slowing the pace of instruction and the potential for strong student engagement.

Instructional Leadership

UFT Charter is building strong instructional leadership, but administrative duties detract from a sharp focus on teaching and learning. As a result, school leaders have limited availability to support the development of all teachers.

- UFT Charter leaders report holding high expectations for teacher performance despite a lack of clear and measurable goals connected to student achievement. Teachers demonstrate high expectations for student performance with actions such as openly expressing disappointment to students who are content with low-passing grades. Further, teachers set the expectation that most, if not all, students will attend college.

- Instructional leaders allot a significant amount of time to operational and administrative duties such as tending to disruptive students in the hallway and preparing administrative

reports that detract focus from teaching and learning. School leaders express a desire for additional staff support that would allow for delegation of administrative and operational tasks and increased availability to provide instructional support, such as classroom observations and coaching sessions.

- The school does not have a sustained or systemic professional development program that builds the skills and competencies of all teachers. Teacher evaluations do not consider student achievement, and school leaders do not hold teachers accountable for student performance. External consultants provided instructional coaching to teachers in mathematics and science through March. School leaders did not communicate with coaches frequently or consistently and, therefore, did not drive the agenda for coaching. As such, assessment of coaches' effectiveness relied solely on teacher feedback.

- UFT Charter lacks systems that provide consistent opportunities and guidance for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction within and across grade levels. Individual teachers and content teams often initiate collaboration to develop curriculum content, despite a lack of expectations to do so. Staff members are available to produce student- and class-level data, but teachers must request this support. Nevertheless, teachers that did receive these supports found them effective.

- School leaders and teachers have established a strong sense of community within the school. Teachers overwhelmingly describe positive sentiments for school leadership, citing a growing sense of community within the school and feeling supported by school leaders.

At-Risk Students

The school has sufficient programs to provide mandated services for students with Individualized Education Programs ("IEPs") and English language learners ("ELLs") but does not have adequate structures to monitor the academic progress of these students or to measure the effectiveness of interventions. The school lacks clear procedures to identify and deliver interventions for students at risk of academic failure.

- To identify students at risk of academic failure, the school holds weekly student support team ("SST") meetings to discuss the needs of individual students. Teachers can bring specific cases to the guidance counselors or at-risk program staff on an informal basis. The school relies heavily on anecdotal data from teachers to determine if SST is required. The school does not have a procedure to ensure that teachers are adequately identifying all students who would benefit from being discussed at an SST meeting. Teachers were unable to articulate the details of the process to the visit team. Additionally, there are no clear feedback protocols to determine if interventions identified by the SST are effective.

- UFT Charter serves students with IEPs that mandate academic interventions with special education teacher support services ("SETSS"). The school employs two SETSS teachers who deliver pull-out services for 9th and 10th grade students and 11th and 12th grade

students, respectively. At the time of the visit, the SETSS teacher serving the lower grades did not have certification for 10th grade.

- The school has a dedicated ELL teacher who provides pull-out and push-in services. UFT Charter uses a variety strategies including sheltered instruction[3] to support the school's five ELLs. General education teachers informally communicate with the ELL teacher to discuss teaching strategies and curricular modifications. Teachers report being adequately supported to serve the small population of ELLs.

- UFT Charter does not provide scheduled time for general education teachers and at-risk program staff to collaborate. Teachers rely on their informal collaboration with at-risk program staff to stay abreast of their students' progress toward meeting IEP goals or achieving English proficiency and report an adequate familiarity with those students' progress. The school does not have a comprehensive system that provides assessment data disaggregated by at-risk populations. The school does not have specific, clear, and measureable achievement goals for students without IEPs who teachers identify as at risk for academic failure.

- The school offers inadequate training and professional development to equip teachers with the tools and strategies best suited to meet at-risk students' needs. Some teachers are familiar with general strategies to support at-risk students in the classroom. However, there are no school-wide systems to ensure teachers are executing interventions or properly identifying struggling students.

Organizational Capacity

Lack of systemization impedes the school organization's ability to deliver the educational program effectively.

- The current UFT Charter administrative structure hinders instructional leaders' ability to focus on the school's core work of teaching and learning. Previously, an executive director oversaw the school's operations and reporting requirements. Since October, these responsibilities have fallen to the interim acting school leader and assistant school leader. At the start of the school year, the need to fill 10 vacant positions also drew leaders away from classrooms.

- The organizational structure does not establish distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the school leader and assistant school leader, both of whom were named to their respective positions shortly before the start of the school year and remained interim acting at the time of the visit in April.

- UFT Charter lacks comprehensive operational systems, policies, and procedures to maximize its resources in support of effective delivery of the educational program. Lack of

---

[3] Sheltered instruction is an approach to classroom instruction that simultaneously focuses on building content knowledge and increasing English language proficiency.

systemization is evident in classroom behavior management issues as well as instructional planning. Insufficient knowledge sharing and communication also impact program delivery as leaders rely on teachers to seek out specific data and tools without broadcasting availability. UFT Charter does not have adequate systems to maintain confidentiality of student records: the school distributes to teachers a comprehensive list of all enrolled students with IEPs rather than providing individualized lists to teachers who serve specific students.

- UFT Charter does not conduct systematic, data-driven reviews of school-wide programs to evaluate effectiveness but does make changes in response to identified and pressing needs. For example, school leaders cultivated school-wide focus on 3Ps (punctuality, presentation and participation) in response to identified issues with students being tardy for classes and not abiding by the school's dress code. Additionally, a mathematics department vacancy spurred creation of a pilot blended learning program.
- UFT Charter does not have procedures in place to monitor its progress toward meeting its enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, ELLs, and studies who qualify for free or reduced price lunch.

Appendix A
School Overview

Mission Statement

The UFT Charter School will prepare all students to achieve academic and personal excellence. The Elementary Academy of the UFT Charter School will graduate students fully prepared for a demanding secondary education. The Secondary Academy of the UFT Charter School will graduate students fully prepared for a demanding college education. Both academies will help to prepare students for meaningful lives as full democratic citizens in a free society.

Board of Trustees[4]

Board Member Name	Position	Board Member Name	Position
Evelyn DeJesus	Chair	Burton Sacks	Trustee
Jackie Bennett	Trustee	Atricia Faulkner	Parent Representative
Selena Vargas	Trustee	Shirnette Oliver	Parent Representative
Monique Davy	Trustee		

School Characteristics

School Year	Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment[5]	Proposed Grades[6]	Actual Grades[7]
2005-06	150	138	K-1	K-1
2006-07	350	355	K-2	K-2, 6
2007-08	525	547	K-3	K-3, 6-7
2008-09	735	715	K-4	K-4, 6-8
2009-10	860	792	K-5	K-9
2010-11	972	887	K-10	K-10
2011-12	1074	905	K-11	K-11
2012-13	1170	1028	K-12	K-12
2013-14	1156	983	K-12	K-12
2014-15	1114	961	K-12	K-12
2015-16	360	347	9-12	9-12

[4] Source: The Institute's board records at the time of the visit.
[5] Source: Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)
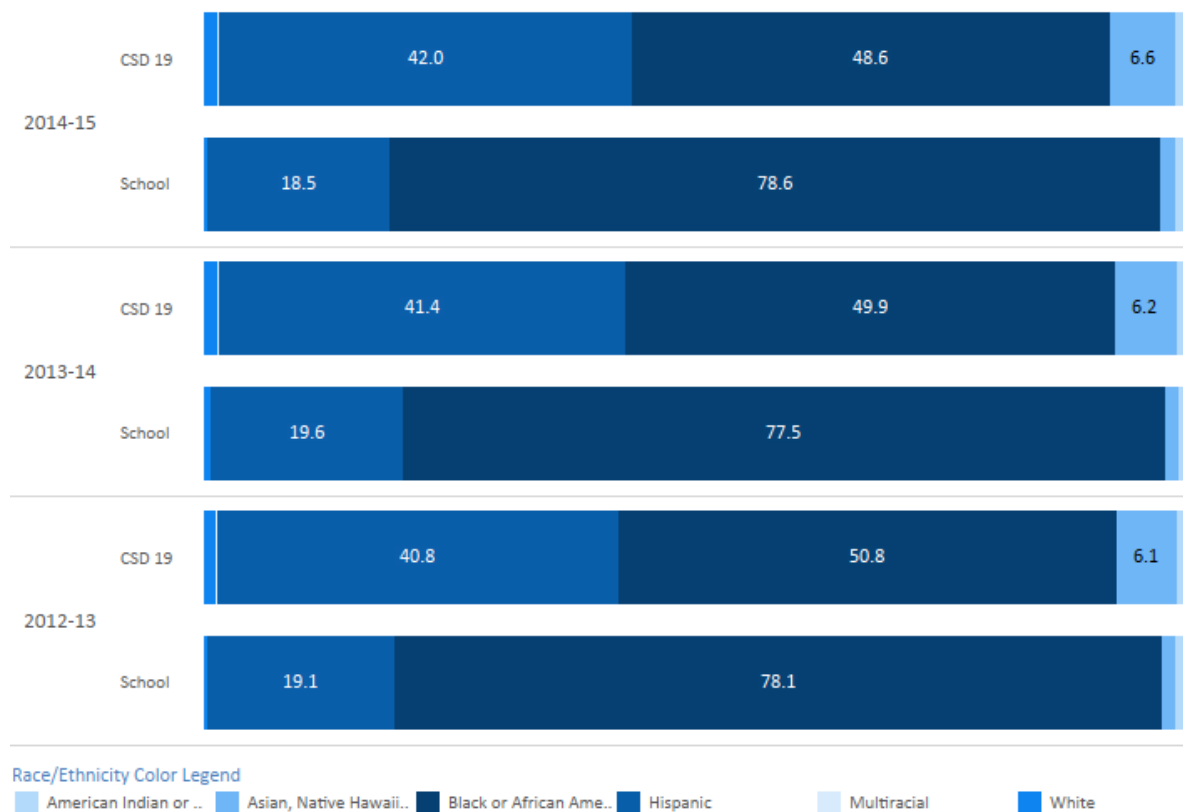[6] Source: Original charter application.
[7] Per approved charter revision.

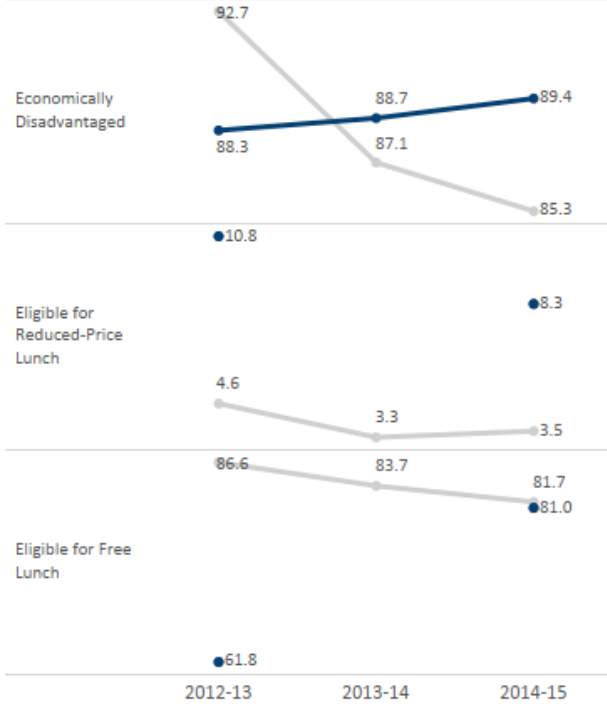| Key Design Elements |
| --- |
| ▪ High academic expectations; |
| ▪ Rigorous college-prep curriculum that includes English, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign language, physical education and the arts; |
| ▪ Two teachers per classroom in Kindergarten through third grades; |
| ▪ Academic-based afterschool program run by a community based organization; |
| ▪ High-quality teachers; |
| ▪ National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification; |
| ▪ Balancing human resources with curriculum and school culture; |
| ▪ Democratic governance; |
| ▪ Professional development; |
| ▪ Three parent seats on the school's board of trustees; |
| ▪ Family-school partnership; |
| ▪ CREST core values (community, respect, scholarship, trustworthiness); and, |
| ▪ "Habits for Thought" (Analysis, Breadth of Perspective, Connection, Discourse, and Evidence). |

Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity

Year	Group	White	Black or African American	Hispanic
2014-15	CSD 19	42.0	48.6	6.6
	School	18.5	78.6	
2013-14	CSD 19	41.4	49.9	6.2
	School	19.6	77.5	
2012-13	CSD 19	40.8	50.8	6.1
	School	19.1	78.1	

Race/Ethnicity Color Legend

American Indian or .. — Asian, Native Hawaii.. — Black or African Ame.. — Hispanic — Multiracial — White

Student Demographics: Free/Reduced Lunch

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

Student Demographics: Special Populations
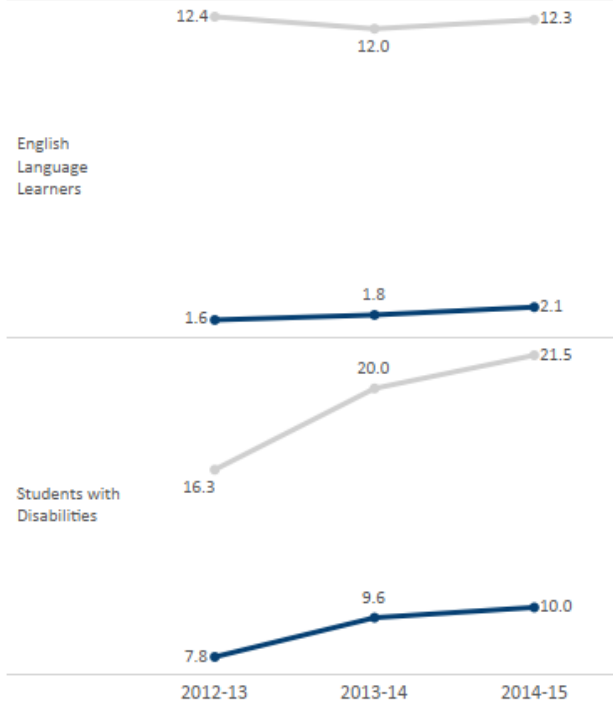
The charts show trends in enrollment in the **school** and the district for each subgroup over the charter term.
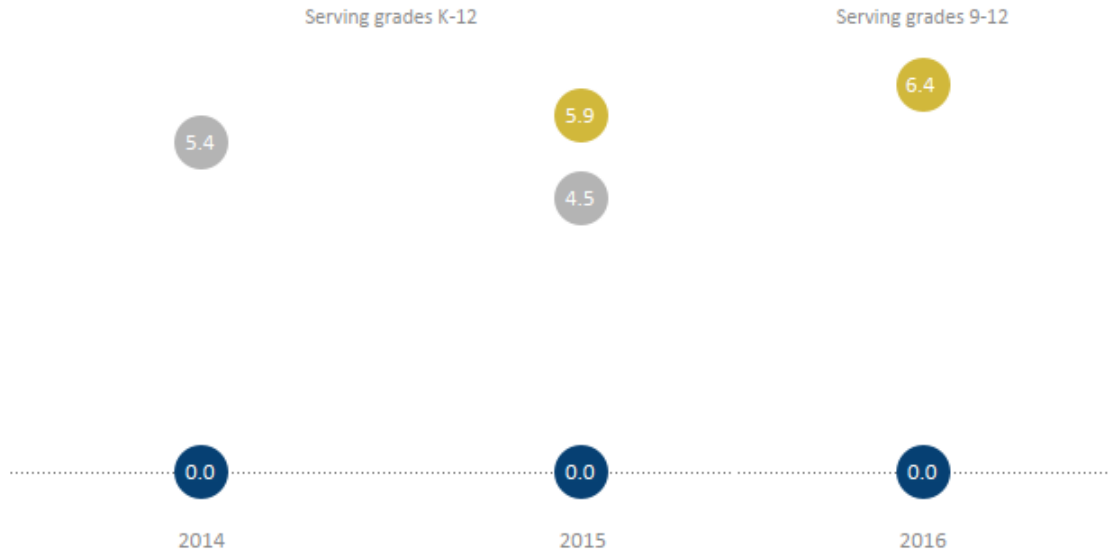
Enrollment and Retention Targets
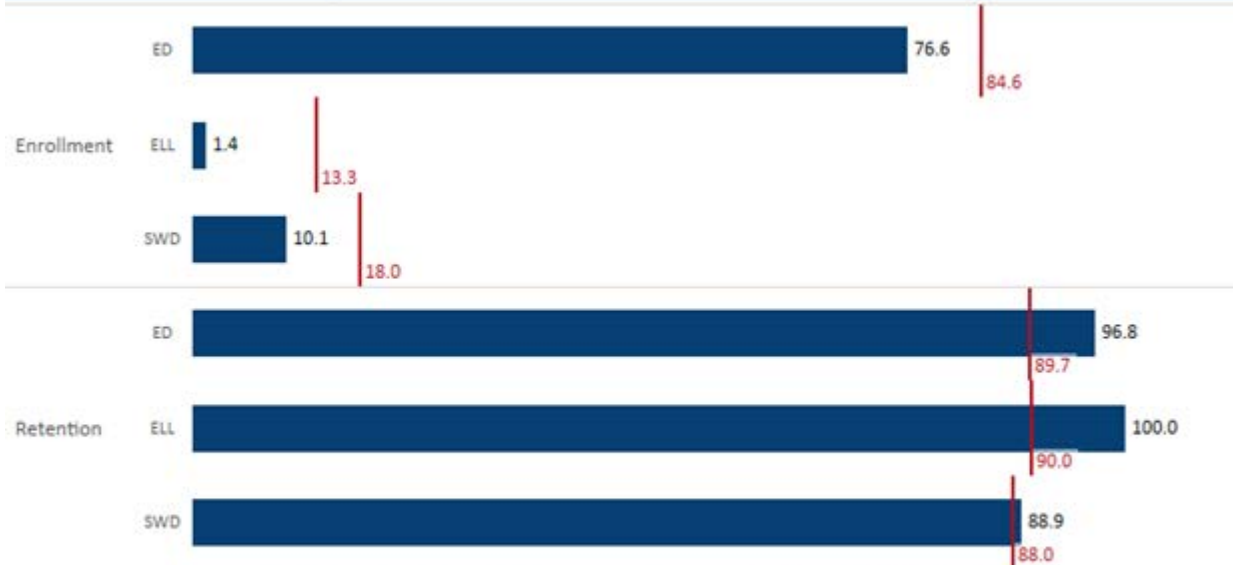
The chart illustrates the school's **current enrollment and retention percentages** against the **enrollment and retention targets**. As required by Education Law § 2851(4)(e), a school must include in its renewal application information regarding the efforts it has, and will, put in place to meet or exceed SUNY's enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, ELL, and FRPL students. This analysis is based on the most recently available data provided by the school.

School Discipline

Suspensions: The UFT Charter School's in school suspension rate and **out of school suspension rate** and the district overall suspension rate.

Serving grades K-12   Serving grades 9-12

	2014	2015	2016
out of school		5.9	6.4
district	5.4	4.5	
in school	0.0	0.0	0.0

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

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

2014	2015	2016
0	0	0

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

School Leaders

School Year(s)	Name(s) and Title(s)
2005-06	Rita Danis, Elementary Leader
2006-07 to 2007-08	Rita Danis, Elementary Leader Drew Goodman, Secondary Leader
2008-09	Michelle Bodden, Elementary Leader Drew Goodman and Mary Butz, Secondary Leaders
2009-10	Michelle Bodden, Elementary Leader Danny Wilcox, Secondary Leader
2010-11	Shelia Evans-Tranumn, Executive Director Michelle Bodden-White, Elementary Principal Shep Brown, Interim Secondary Principal
2011-12 to 2012-13	Shelia Evans-Tranumn, Executive Director Michelle Bodden-White, Elementary Principal Martin Weinstein, Secondary Principal
2013-14	Shelia Evans-Tranumn, Executive Director Michelle Bodden-White, Elementary Principal Shep Brown, Interim Secondary Principal
2014-15	Shelia Evans-Tranumn, Executive Director Michelle Bodden-White, Elementary Principal Michael Frank, Secondary Principal
2015-16	Justin Davis, Interim School Leader

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Date
2005-06	First-Year Visit	March 23, 2006
2006-07	Evaluation Visit	April 12, 2007
2007-08	Evaluation Visit	May 5-6, 2009
2009-10	Initial Renewal Visit	December 8-10, 2009
2010-11	Evaluation Visit	February 9-10, 2011
2011-12	Evaluation Visit	December 6-8, 2011
2012-13	Subsequent Renewal Visit	October 9-11, 2012
2015-16	Evaluation Visit	April 5-6, 2016

Conduct of the Visit

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Member	Title
April 5-6, 2016	Natasha M. Howard, PhD	Managing Director of Program
	Chastity McFarlan, PhD	Senior Analyst
	Sinnjinn Bucknell	Performance Analyst

Charter Cycle Context

Charter Term	Accountability Period[8]	Anticipated Renewal Visit
1st Year of Three-Year Term	2nd Year Three-Year Accountability Period	Fall 2017

---

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

Appendix B

SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks
Version 5.0, May 2012

Introduction

The State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks[1] (the "SUNY Renewal Benchmarks") serve two primary functions at renewal:

- They provide a framework for the Charter Schools Institute (the "Institute") to gather and evaluate evidence to determine whether a school has made an adequate case for renewal. In turn, this evidence assists the Institute in deciding if it can make the required legal and other findings in order to reach a positive recommendation for renewal. For example, the various benchmarks that the Institute uses to determine whether the school has had fiscally responsible practices in place during the last charter period allow the Institute to determine with greater precision whether the school will operate in a fiscally sound manner during the next charter period, a finding that the New York Charter Schools Act requires the SUNY Trustees to make.

- At the same time that the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks provide a framework for the Institute to collect and review evidence, they also provide the school with a guide to understanding the Institute's evaluative criteria. As the Institute uses the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks (or some sub-set of them) as the framework for conducting its ongoing school evaluation visits, school leaders should be fully aware of the content of the Benchmarks at the time of renewal.

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

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

---

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

- The Institute does not have a point system for recommending renewal. A school cannot simply tally up the number of positive benchmark statements in order to determine the Institute's recommendation.

  - Some benchmarks are weighed more heavily than others. In particular, the Institute gives the greatest weight to how well the school has met its academic Accountability Plan goals.

  - Despite the fact that the Accountability Plan comprises only a single benchmark, a school's performance on that benchmark is critical. In fact, it is so important that while the Institute may recommend non-renewal for fiscal and organizational failures (if sufficiently serious), excellence in these areas will not excuse poor academic performance.

- The Institute does not use every benchmark during every kind of renewal review, and how the benchmarks are used differs depending on a school's circumstances. For example, the Qualitative Education Benchmarks (Benchmarks 1B-1F, 2C and 2D) are given far less weight in making a renewal decision on schools that the Institute has previously renewed. Similarly, less weight is accorded to these benchmarks during an initial renewal review where a school has consistently met its academic Accountability Plan goals.

  - The Institute also may not consider every indicator subsumed under a benchmark when determining if a school has met that benchmark, given the school's stage of development or its previous track record.

- Aside from Benchmark 1A on academic Accountability Plan goals (which is singular in its importance), no school should fear that a failure to meet every element of every benchmark means that it is not in a position to make a case for renewal. To the contrary, the Institute has yet to see a school that performs perfectly in every respect. The Institute appreciates that the benchmarks set a very high standard collectively. While the Institute certainly hopes and expects that schools aim high, it is understood that a school's reach will necessarily exceed its grasp in at least some aspects.

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

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

State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1A **Academic Accountability Plan Goals**	**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 **Use of Assessment Data**	**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.

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1C **Curriculum**	**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 **Pedagogy**	**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 **Instructional Leadership**	**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

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	pedagogical skills) and in which teachers believe that all students can succeed; • the instructional leadership is adequate to support the development of the teaching staff; • instructional leaders provide sustained, systemic and effective coaching and supervision that improves teachers' instructional effectiveness; • instructional leaders provide opportunities and guidance for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction within and across grade levels; • instructional leaders implement a comprehensive professional development program that develops the competencies and skills of all teachers; • professional development activities are interrelated with classroom practice; • instructional leaders regularly conduct teacher evaluations with clear criteria that accurately identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses; and • instructional leaders hold teachers accountable for quality instruction and student achievement.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1F **At-Risk Students**	**The school meets the educational needs of at-risk students.** The following elements are generally present: • the school uses clear procedures for identifying at-risk students including students with disabilities, English language learners and those struggling academically; • the school has adequate intervention programs to meet the needs of at-risk students; • general education teachers, as well as specialists, utilize effective strategies to support students within the general education program; • the school adequately monitors the progress and success of at-risk students; • teachers are aware of their students' progress toward meeting IEP goals, achieving English proficiency or school-based goals for struggling students;

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	• 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.

Evidence Category	**Renewal Question 2** **Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?**
	SUNY Renewal Benchmarks
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2A **Mission & Key Design Elements**	**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 & Students**	**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 **Organizational Capacity**	**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.

	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2D **Board Oversight**	**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 **Governance**	**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

	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	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; • 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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2F **Legal Requirements**	**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;

	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	• the school substantially complies with the terms of its charter and applicable laws, rules and regulations; • the school abides by the terms of its monitoring plan; • the school implements effective systems and controls to ensure that it meets legal and charter requirements; • the school has an active and ongoing relationship with in-house or independent legal counsel who reviews and makes recommendations on relevant policies, documents, transactions and incidents and who also handles other legal matters as needed; and • the school manages any litigation appropriately and provides litigation papers to insurers and the Institute in a timely manner.

	Renewal Question 3 **Is the School Fiscally Sound?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3A **Budgeting and Long Range Planning**	**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 **Internal Controls**	**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;

	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	• a staff member of the school reviews grant agreements and restrictive gifts and monitors compliance with all stated conditions; • the school prepares payroll according to appropriate state and federal regulations and school policy; • the school ensures that employees, trustees and volunteers who handle cash and investments are bonded to help assure the safeguarding of assets; and • the school takes corrective action in a timely manner to address any internal control or compliance deficiencies identified by its external auditor, the Institute, and/or the State Education Department or the Comptroller, if needed.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3C **Financial Reporting**	**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 **Financial Condition**	**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;

Evidence Category	**Renewal Question 3** **Is the School Fiscally Sound?**
	SUNY Renewal Benchmarks
	• 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?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4A **Plans for the School's Structure**	**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 **Plans for the Educational Program**	**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.

	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?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4C **Plans for Board Oversight and Governance**	**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 **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.