THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS
INSTITUTE

SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT
FINN ACADEMY: AN ELMIRA CHARTER SCHOOL
VISIT DATE: MAY 7 - 8, 2019
REPORT DATE: JUNE 6, 2019

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INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit on May 7-8, 2019 to Finn Academy: An Elmira Charter School ("Finn Academy"). While the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the "Institute") conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks (the "SUNY Renewal Benchmarks") near the end of a charter term, most mid-cycle school evaluation visits focus on a subset of these benchmarks. This subset, the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, addresses the academic success of the school and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization. It provides a framework for examining the quality of the educational program, focusing on teaching and learning (e.g., curriculum, instruction, assessment, and services for at-risk students), as well as leadership, organizational capacity, and board oversight. The Institute uses the established criteria on a regular basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

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

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

INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

SCHOOL BACKGROUND

The SUNY Trustees approved the original charter for Finn Academy on June 4, 2014. The school opened its doors in the fall of 2015, initially chartered to serve 180 students in Kindergarten – 3rd grade. Finn Academy is in its fourth year of its initial charter term. The school's chartered enrollment for the 2018-19 school year is 344 students in Kindergarten – 6th grade. The SUNY Trustees approved the school to expand to Kindergarten – 7th grade during the last year of the initial charter term with a chartered enrollment of 396. The school is located in the Elmira City School District at 610 Lake Street, Elmira, NY.

The mission of Finn Academy is:

> " *At Finn Academy: An Elmira Charter School, we seek to increase the number of college and career ready scholars our community launches into a life and a future – by preparing them for the demands and the rigor of high school.*

During Finn Academy's second year of operation, the board terminated the founding head of school and promoted the instructional lead to interim head of school. The unexpected disruption to leadership prompted the school to try different leadership structures and only in October 2018, the fourth year of the initial charter term, did the school find a chief academic officer ("CAO") to bring the school's leadership to full capacity. The current three member leadership team consists of the chief operations officer ("COO") who formerly served on the school's founding board, the CAO, and the dean of scholars.

In addition to general start up challenges and issues, the school spent time fulfilling many Freedom of Information Law ("FOIL") requests, which took significant time away from restructuring the school's academic leadership and systems after the founding head of school's departure. Now in the fourth year of its initial charter term, the school is beginning to establish systems to support teaching and learning. Despite initiating new supports and coaching for teachers, the school continues to lack high quality instruction to improve overall teaching and learning. Leaders and the board also lack a strategic plan to continue expanding middle school grades and currently do not implement a strong 6th grade program.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

2017-18 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

At the beginning of the Accountability Period,[1] the school developed and adopted an Accountability Plan that set academic goals in the key subjects of ELA and mathematics. For each goal in the Accountability Plan, specific outcome measures define the level of performance necessary to meet that goal. Throughout the charter term, the Institute examines results for five required Accountability Plan measures on an annual basis and provides an Accountability Dossier to each school detailing the school's progress toward meetings its Accountability Plan goals. Because the Act requires charters be held "accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results"[2] and states the educational programs at a charter school must "meet or exceed the student performance standards adopted by the board of regents"[3] for other public schools, SUNY's required accountability measures rest on performance as measured by statewide assessments. More information about the required Accountability Plan measures can be found on the Institute's website at www. newyorkcharters.org/accountability/.

In 2017-18, the third year of Finn Academy's initial four year Accountability Period, the school improved its absolute results but did not yet meet its key academic Accountability Plan goals in ELA and mathematics. The school met its science and No Child Left Behind ("NCLB") goals. Notably, while Finn Academy consistently demonstrated low performance on its comparative effect size measure in ELA and mathematics, the school improved its achievement on other measures in 2017-18. The school must continue this trend in order to establish a compelling record on which to base a case for renewal.

ELA

Finn Academy did not meet its ELA goal in both 2016-17 and 2017-18. The school did not meet the target for its comparative effect size measure for the third consecutive year, posting an effect size of -0.93, far below the target of 0.3. This performance indicates that according to the Institute's regression analysis, Finn Academy performed lower than expected compared to schools across the state enrolling similar percentages of economically disadvantaged students. Although Finn Academy continued to post low results on this important measure, the school met the targets for the remaining comparative and growth measures and increased its absolute performance in 2017-18. With 37% of the school's 3rd – 5th grade students enrolled in at least their second year scoring at or above proficiency, the school increased its gap above the district to 17 percentage points. Finn Academy also exceeded the target for its growth measure after missing the target in 2016-17. In 2017-18, the school's mean growth percentile exceeded the target of 50 by eight points.

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

2. Education Law § 2850(2) (f).

3. Education Law § 2854(1)(d).

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

MATHEMATICS

In 2017-18, Finn Academy did not meet its mathematics goal for the second year in a row for which all measures were applicable under the goal. The school only exceeded the targets for two of the five measures. At 28%, the school's percentage of $3^{rd} – 5^{th}$ grade students scoring at or above proficiency fell far below the absolute target of 75%. This achievement result does not substantially distinguish the school's performance as higher than the district. Finn Academy did not meet its comparative effect size target for the third year in a row. In comparison to schools across New York State enrolling similar proportions of economically disadvantaged students, the school performed lower than expected. Finn Academy met its growth target after falling below the target in 2016-17. The school's mean growth percentile was five points above the target of 50. However, given the school's low absolute proficiency rate, this level of growth is not sufficient to grow the learning of all students such that they are likely to be at or above proficiency by the time they leave the school.

SCIENCE

Finn Academy met its science goal in 2017-18 after having not met the goal the previous year. The school's 4th grade students enrolled in at least their second year posted a proficiency rate of 83% on the state science exam, surpassing the absolute target of 75% by eight percentage points. The school also exceeded the target for its comparative measure, outperforming the district's 4th grade students by 17 percentage points.

NCLB

Having not been identified as a focus charter or as needing a local assistance plan in 2017-18, Finn Academy met its NCLB goal.

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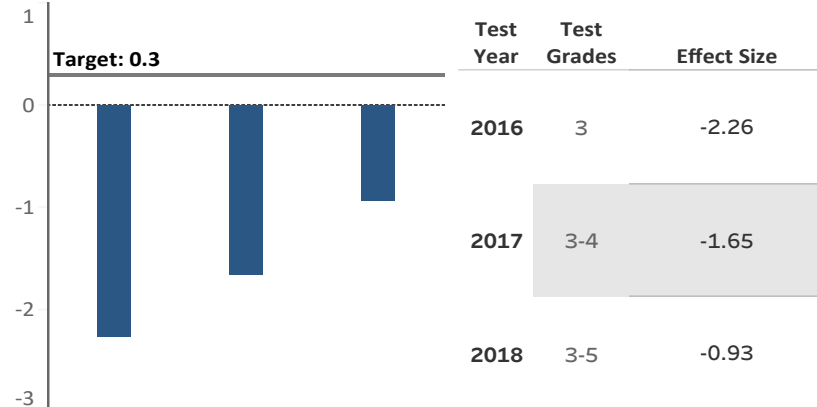Albany, NY 12246

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

FINN ACADEMY: AN ELMIRA CHARTER SCHOOL

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

Comparative Measure: District Comparison. Each year, the percentage of students at **the school** in at least their second year performing at or above proficiency in ELA will be greater than that of students in the same tested grades in **the district**.
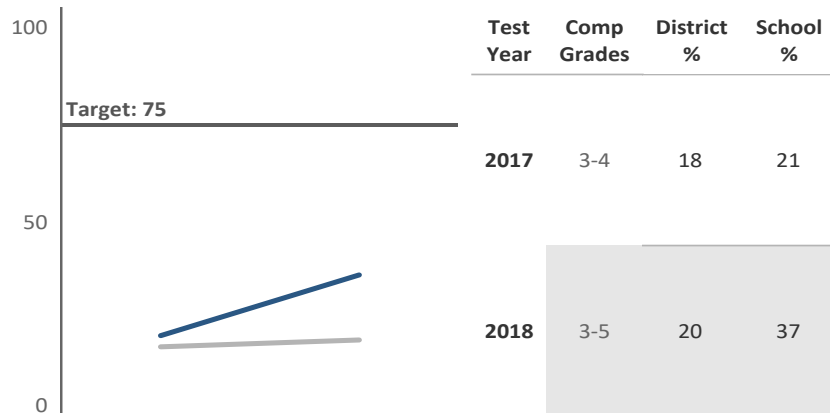
Target: 75

Test Year	Comp Grades	District %	School %
2017	3-4	18	21
2018	3-5	20	37

Comparative Measure: Effect Size. Each year, the school will exceed its predicted level of performance by an effect size of 0.3 or above in **ELA** according to a regression analysis controlling for economically disadvantaged students among all public schools in New York State.

Target: 0.3

Test Year	Test Grades	Effect Size
2016	3	-2.26
2017	3-4	-1.65
2018	3-5	-0.93

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

Target: 50

Test Year	School Mean Growth
2017	36.3
2018	57.6

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

FINN ACADEMY: AN ELMIRA CHARTER SCHOOL

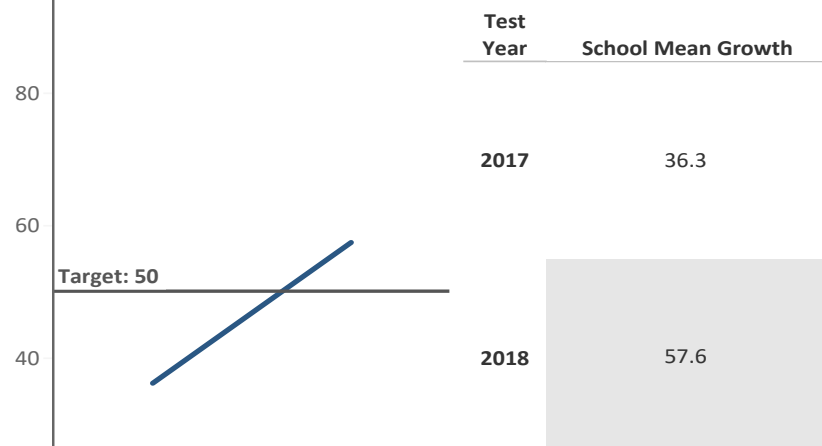### MATHEMATICS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

Comparative Measure: District Comparison. Each year, the percentage of students at **the school** in at least their second year performing at or above proficiency in Mathematics will be greater than that of students in the same tested grades in **the district**.

Test Year	Comp Grades	District %	School %
2017	3-4	25	15
2018	3-5	26	28

Target: 75

Comparative Measure: Effect Size. Each year, the school will exceed its predicted level of performance by an effect size of 0.3 or above in **mathematics** according to a regression analysis controlling for economically disadvantaged students among all public schools in New York State.

Test Year	Test Grades	Effect Size
2016	3	-2.27
2017	3-4	-2.12
2018	3-5	-1.74

Target: 0.3
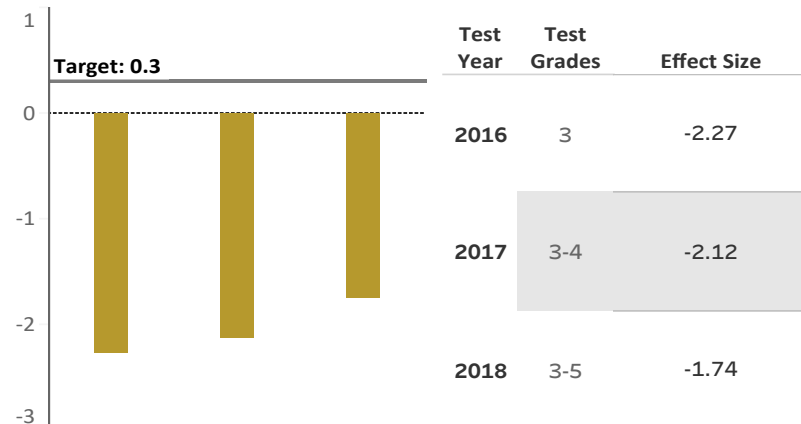
Comparative Growth Measure: Mean Growth Percentile. Each year, the school's unadjusted mean growth percentile for all students in grades 4-8 will be above the state's unadjusted median growth percentile in **mathematics**.
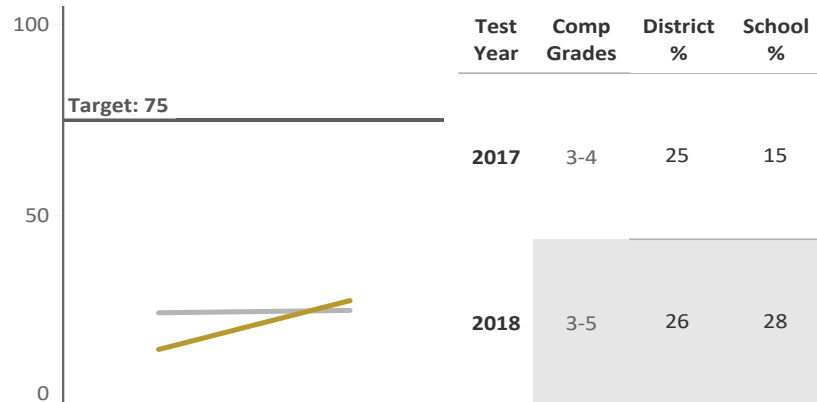

Test Year	School Mean Growth
2017	41.9
2018	55.3

Target: 50

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

FINN ACADEMY: AN ELMIRA CHARTER SCHOOL

SCIENCE ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

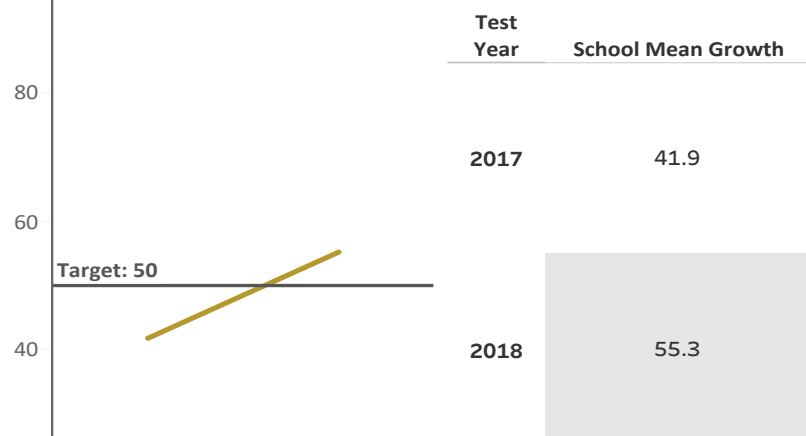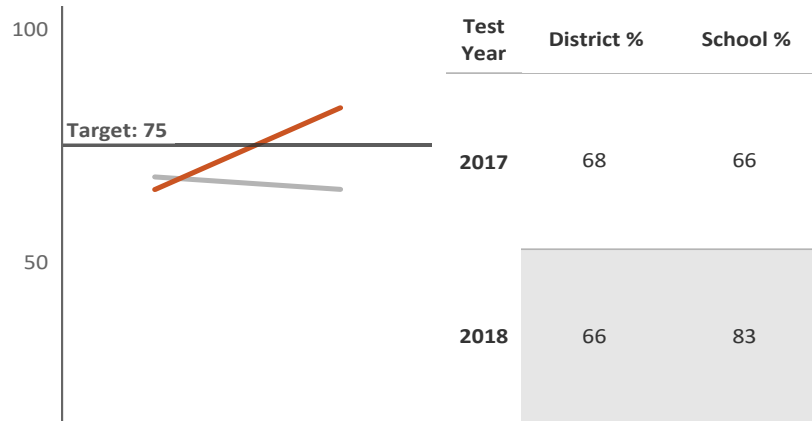**Science: Comparative Measure.** Each year, the percentage of students at the school in at least their second year performing at or above proficiency in **science** will exceed that of students in the same tested grades in **the district**.

Target: 75

Test Year	District %	School %
2017	68	66
2018	66	83

SPECIAL POPULATIONS PERFORMANCE

	2016	2017	2018
Enrollment Receiving Mandated Academic Services	22	35	38
Tested on State Exam	6	16	22
School Percent Proficient on ELA Exam	0.0	0.0	0.0
District Percent Proficient	1.8	3.6	4.0

	2016	2017	2018
ELL Enrollment	0	2	2
Tested on NYSESLAT Exam	0	1	2
School Percent 'Commanding' or Making Progress on NYSESLAT	NA	s	s

The academic outcome data about the performance of students receiving special education services and ELLs above is not tied to separate goals in the school's formal Accountability Plan.

The NYSESLAT, the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test, is a standardized state exam.

"Making Progress" is defined as moving up at least one level of proficiency. Student scores fall into five categories/proficiency levels: Entering; Emerging; Transitioning; Expanding; and, Commanding.

In order to comply with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act regulations on reporting education outcome data, the Institute does not report assessment results for groups containing five or fewer students and indicates this with an "s."

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

QUALITATIVE BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1B

DOES FINN ACADEMY HAVE AN ASSESSMENT SYSTEM THAT IMPROVES INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT LEARNING?

The school is developing an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning. This year, the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress ("MAP") assessment and commercial curricular assessments provide the primary data set teachers and leaders use to adjust curricula and instruction to meet students' needs. Grade teams meet to discuss data, but the school continues to develop a schoolwide approach for analyzing data and developing effective instructional strategies.

- Finn Academy's assessments are valid, reliable, and align to state performance standards. After beginning implementation last year, the school continues to administer the MAP assessment three times each year to monitor growth in student skill attainment in ELA and mathematics. For ELA, the school also administers Expeditionary Learning ("EL") mid unit and end of unit tests. This year, the school relies on assessments from the GO Math! curriculum to provide formative data about students' mathematics achievement.

- Although teachers norm on most scoring processes within grade level teams the school lacks a schoolwide approach to norming scoring practicing. The school uses the state's writing rubrics for scoring and teachers norm their application thereof prior to scoring papers. Teachers also administer the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System ("F&P") for reading three times each year. Although teachers report having opportunities to norm their administration of the F&P, they did not consistently report when and how often they do so.

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

5. Additional details regarding the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks are available at: www.newyorkcharters.org/suny-renewal-benchmarks/.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Instructional leaders and teachers access assessment data during grade level team meetings and data meetings. Teachers and leaders access the MAP data through the program's online portal. Teachers store and maintain data from other assessments individually. The school recognizes the need for a centralized database to maintain these data in order to increase the integrity of data maintenance and to provide the school opportunities to perform more insightful analyses. The schools' instructional leaders provide regular data updates to the board after each administration of the MAP.

- Without a central data storage system, instructional leaders' capacity to analyze data from multiple sources to understand the effectiveness of the school's educational program is limited. Teachers individually analyze their own data from EL and GO Math! assessments but are missing key components and insights. For instance, most teacher-developed templates for the item analysis of curriculum based assessments lack any reference to state learning standards. This leaves teachers without crucial information for re-grouping students or differentiating instruction. Lesson plans and lesson observations provide little evidence for effective grouping and differentiation practices. The school's current reliance on teachers to maintain their own data also precludes access to the same data by intervention and special education teachers and limits their ability to analyze comprehensively the performance of students on their caseload. Further, teachers do not consistently articulate the process the school uses to identify which students require academic interventions. The school does not consistently provide academic supports to some students struggling academically as evidenced by intervention specialists lacking access to student data and teachers not clearly articulating the response to intervention ("RTI") system.

- Instructional leaders hold teachers loosely accountable to a particular academic standard as measured by assessments, but do not strategically use data to monitor and evaluate teacher performance. Across the school, teachers report that instructional leaders expect each classroom to achieve 75% proficiency on every assessment the school administers. However, without specific data systems in place, leaders lack the necessary information to drive toward attainment of the goal. Instructional leaders have not established data systems and common analysis procedures that arm them with specific measures of the strengths and weaknesses in the school's curriculum and instruction. Leaders do not corroborate classroom observation data with assessment outcome data to understand each teacher's specific areas for growth, set challenging but attainable goals, and then monitor teachers' progress toward meeting those goals.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1C

DOES FINN ACADEMY'S CURRICULUM SUPPORT TEACHERS IN THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING?

Finn Academy has a curricular framework and supporting tools that guide teachers in their instructional planning. Despite having a framework in place to support teacher planning, the school lacks systems and procedures to ensure leaders provide high quality oversight of purposeful planning that leads to high quality teaching and learning.

- Finn Academy has a fixed underlying structure for its curriculum that aligns to state performance standards. The school uses commercial curricular programs for ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies that provide teachers with supporting tools to understand the required rigor and depth of instruction to enable students to meet the requirements of the state's standards and assessments. These materials also align across grade levels. Teachers meet at least twice during the year to ensure vertical alignment.

- Using commercial curricular guides and materials as a basis, teachers rely on Planbook, an electronic repository, for their day to day planning. The EL and GO Math! guide and materials allow teachers to know what to teach and when to teach it. Teachers spend time during summer professional development sessions mapping out pacing for the year. Leaders ensure that time during subsequent professional development sessions allows time for teachers to break down unit plans into more digestible chunks. The GO Math! curriculum is new this year, so teachers rely heavily on the lesson materials that GO Math! provides when planning instruction. Teachers have access to old EL materials via the school's shared hard drives for reference when planning humanities and science lessons.

- Though leaders have clear planning expectations in place, teachers do not consistently plan high quality, purposeful lessons that drives high quality instruction. Teachers are clear with expectations for planning and follow through with creating student friendly learning targets, lesson activities, and learning evaluation. However, teachers do not consistently plan for strong checks for understanding, higher order thinking questions or activities, and opportunities for differentiation.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK
1D

IS HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION EVIDENT THROUGHOUT FINN ACADEMY?

Effective instruction is not yet consistently evident at Finn Academy. Teachers generally deliver purposeful lessons aligned to the school's curriculum, but lesson pacing is slow and teachers struggle to maintain classroom environments with a consistent focus on academic achievement. Due to a lack of purposeful planning, teachers often fail to effectively gauge student understanding throughout the lessons; although students have opportunities to engage with one another, teacher questioning does not consistently push students to engage in higher order thinking. As shown in the chart below, during the evaluation visit, Institute team members conducted 26 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all evaluation visits. Since the school delivers the EL model, science and social studies lessons are folded into the expeditions blocks, so the Institute primarily observed ELA and mathematics lessons.

		K	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**Total**
	ELA	1	1	1	3	1	2	3	12
CONTENT AREA	**Math**	1			4	4	4	1	14
	Total	2	1	1	7	5	6	4	26

(Header spanning all grade columns: **G R A D E**)

- More than half of teachers plan purposeful and focused lessons (16 out of 26 lessons observed). Teachers typically post lesson objectives and the lesson activities align with the stated objective. In some instances the objectives are vague or do not make the intended learning outcome clear, such as "I can summarize chapter ten." During some components of the day such as read aloud, teachers do not have lesson plans available and the intended purpose of this instructional block is unclear. In many observations, more than one adult supports learning, but the school has not yet refined its model for effectively utilizing two adults to drive student learning.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Only half of teachers use strategies to check for student understanding (13 out of 26 lessons observed). Many teachers rely on visual checks for understanding such as thumbs up and down or fist to five; however, most teachers fail to systematically collect data from students to adjust instruction based on these attempts to gauge the learning. When observed, teachers checked for understanding and adjusted their instruction in the moment by reviewing student work on white boards, asking strategic questions based on a review of student work, and cold calling students. In some classrooms, teachers end lessons with an exit ticket and then post the exit tickets on a "show what you know" board. Teachers then review the exit tickets immediately and follows up with students as necessary.

- Some teachers challenge students with opportunities to develop their depth of understanding and higher order thinking skills (9 out of 26 lessons observed). Teachers provide frequent opportunities for students to engage in partner or small group work, especially in mathematics classes. Despite students' frequent peer engagement, teachers miss opportunities to develop students' higher order thinking by asking higher order thinking questions that prompt students to think conceptually or strategically.

- While classrooms are safe and calm, only a slight majority of teachers demonstrate urgency with lesson pacing that maintains a consistent and urgent focus on academic achievement (14 out of 26 lessons observed). In many instances, teachers do not maximize learning time due to slow classroom transitions. In other cases, teachers misallocate time by not planning for differentiated learning activities, and, as a result, some students complete work early with no additional activities to complete while teachers wait for all students to finish the lesson activity. Given the small class sizes at Finn Academy, teachers miss opportunities to differentiate the learning during whole group instruction in a way that maximizes the instructional time for all students.

DOES FINN ACADEMY HAVE STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP?

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1E

For the current school year, Finn Academy hired a CAO as the instructional leader. Despite this new hire, the school does not yet have the capacity or systems to consistently coach, provide feedback, and develop teacher practices in ways that will ensure student growth and high achievement.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Finn Academy's leadership does not yet establish an environment of high expectations as the school lacks a consistent system to coach and develop teachers, which hinders leaders' abilities to reinforce high expectations for quality teaching and learning. Leaders set priorities through a schoolwide work plan with goals and targets that mirror the Accountability Plan and qualitative benchmarks; however, staff members did not consistently identify the same priorities as leaders. While leaders utilize MAP results to set goals for student achievement, the most recent results available at the time of the visit demonstrated a decline in student performance from the initial administration in fall 2018.

- As the school plans to grow to a full Kindergarten – 8th grade model, the instructional leadership team cannot support the development of the entire teaching staff. Of the three member leadership team, the CAO is the primary driver of the school's academic program. The dean of scholars supports with student focused issues such as discipline and classroom culture. The student support services coordinator, instructional support teacher, and the laboratory classroom teacher also provide coaching and mentoring to teachers. Since the purpose of the laboratory classroom is to provide an environment for teachers to observe best practices, the laboratory classroom teacher is unable to provide coaching and observation feedback to other teachers and mentees due to the full time nature of teaching in the classroom.

- Instructional leaders have not yet developed a sustained and systemic coaching model that improves instructional effectiveness. While the school has initiated a mentorship program to provide support to teachers, leaders have not clearly defined a systematic approach to observation and feedback cycles with teachers. The school only has three mentors in addition to the CAO and dean of scholars, which could have the capacity to create a robust and aligned coaching system at the school's current Kindergarten – 6th grade. As the school grows, leaders and the board do not have a clear strategic plan for developing these systems for the school at full capacity with Kindergarten – 8th grade. Since one mentor is in the classroom full time as a laboratory site, the mentor does not have the capacity to provide regular coaching and feedback meetings to teachers. Teachers have the ability to observe practices in the laboratory classroom, but due to a lack of systematic coaching, leaders do not follow up to debrief observations or ensure teachers implement best practices in classrooms. The current coaching and support systems are not effectively improving student learning outcomes.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Leaders do not provide the necessary oversight of weekly grade team meetings to support teachers' abilities to improve curriculum and teaching. Teachers meet consistently every week for a formal grade team meeting and often throughout the week informally to discuss issues and lesson plans during common planning time. Leaders attempt to join each meeting but do not consistently provide feedback or support teachers with developing agendas that move student learning forward.

- For 2018-19, instructional leaders have tightened planning with professional development sessions that respond to classroom needs. Leaders plan out upcoming week topics based on observations and other feedback from teachers and work across the leadership team to develop sessions or plan with consultants from the curricular programs to deliver sessions. For teaching practices, leaders focus on training teachers how to check for student understanding and ask higher order thinking questions. From observations and a review of lesson plans, the Institute observed some strategies from the professional development strategies in use; however, since leaders do not implement a systematic observation and feedback cycle, leaders do not consistently follow up with teachers to ensure implementation occurs. The school also implemented consistent data days for teachers to review MAP data and discuss areas for improvement during this school year. Again, because leaders do not have systems to follow up and hold teachers accountable, much of this work does not result in improved learning outcomes for students.

- For 2018-19, leaders adopted a new framework for teacher evaluations but have not consistently communicated expectations for completing the evaluations. Some staff members were unaware about the timeline or prospect of having a completed evaluation by the end of the school year. While most classroom teachers are aware that the CAO will complete the evaluation before the end of the school year, other staff members and out of classroom teachers were unclear who would complete evaluations and when.

- Finn Academy leaders do not yet consistently hold teachers accountable for quality instruction and student achievement. Most teachers are aware of student achievement goals, but the school did not establish clear benchmarks through the year, and students in each grade demonstrated a decline in performance on the MAP assessment in both mathematics and ELA. Since the school has not yet fully established observation, feedback, and coaching systems, leaders have not utilized systems to demonstrate marked improvement or held teachers accountable for learning and teaching.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK
1F

DOES FINN ACADEMY MEET THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS?

Finn Academy is not yet meeting the educational needs of at-risk students. The school's instructional supports and intervention programs for at-risk students are not developed and not implemented with fidelity across grades. With no students with disabilities demonstrating proficiency on state assessments in 2017-18 for both ELA and mathematics, the school's intervention programs have effectively worked to close the achievement gap for students with disabilities.

- The school has a clear procedure for identifying English language learners ("ELLs) but the procedures for identifying academically at-risk students and students with disabilities are not yet systematic. Finn Academy currently uses a home language questionnaire for newly enrolled students and, if applicable, conducts a student interview to determine the need to assess the student further with the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners ("NYSITELL") and establish if a student requires ELL services. Although Finn Academy uses a Response to Intervention ("RTI") process that includes the review of multiple data points to identify students in need of additional academic support and create tiered groups, the school does not have clear and consistent system to monitor student academic progress in the intervention program. Therefore, the school does not have a systematic way in which it identifies students in need of a special education referral.

- School leaders do not articulate a clear vision for the at-risk program, and the at-risk programs are inconsistently applied across the school. Despite the school's small ELL population, the school does not ensure ELLs receive targeted support to develop English language acquisition skills. Due to recent turnover in the ELL teacher position, the school replaced the ELL teacher with a current literacy interventionist who does not have the appropriate training to provide ELL services.

- For RTI, the school has not implemented clear expectations for high quality interventions to support students struggling academically. Based on the Institute's observations, the effectiveness of the RTI program varies greatly based on providers, and leaders do not provide appropriately high levels of oversight to ensure students receive high quality targeted support during small group pull out sessions.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- The school does not have clear and consistent systems, procedures, and protocols to monitor the academic progress of at-risk students. All stakeholders do not consistently participate at data meetings, and leaders do not ensure that systematic and timely adjustments of academic supports occur. Data review cycles are ad hoc and do not address students demonstrating severity or responding poorly to interventions or indicate a clear and timely process for determining a referral to district Committees on Special Education.

- Special education teachers and interventionists use a combination of push in and pull out services and only informally check in with teachers during instructional time. The school does not provide formal opportunities for at-risk providers to meet with grade teams or attend data meetings to discuss and plan for differentiation and specific strategies to support at-risk students. Grade team teachers determine meeting times and will occasionally invite at-risk providers. Teachers are generally unclear about who to go to for what when they have questions regarding students struggling academically or ELLs.

- The school does not provide essential training to help teachers meet at-risk student needs. Leadership has not yet provided professional learning sessions with a focus on strategies for differentiation to support at-risk students in the general education classroom. Teachers cannot consistently articulate appropriate strategies to support the instructional needs of at-risk students, and the Institute did not find consistent evidence of these strategies during classroom observations. Similarly, Finn Academy does not yet provide training or hold teachers accountable for using co-teaching structures that maximize learning for the full range of students including students who may need alternative experiences, extensions, or acceleration.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2C

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

In its fourth year of operation, Finn Academy continues to build the capacity within its organizational structure to effectively deliver the educational program. Challenges with past leadership turnover led the school to evaluate its strengths and challenges, and the board moved to adopt a new leadership team structure for 2018-19. As the school continues to expand to middle school grades, leadership nor the board have established a strategic plan to evaluate and improve the current middle school program.

- Now in its fourth year, the school has established an administrative structure with staff members and operational systems that allow the school to support its academic program. To address a need for high quality instructional supports, the school created the CAO position to solely focus on supporting the academic program. The school has a COO to support the operations and day to day management of the school and a dean of scholars to develop and support school culture and discipline. The newly established team is starting to implement clearer systems to support the academic team, and leaders recognize a need to continue establishing clear expectations for the academic program to ensure that the school improves academic outcomes for students.

- The school's organizational structure now establishes distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Prior to the start of this school year, the board's governance committee revised job descriptions for the newly established three member leadership team. Each member of the team reports directly to the board and follows clearly delineated roles and responsibilities. For example, the CAO provides oversight for curriculum, instruction, and assessment; the dean of scholars for school culture and parent involvement; and, the COO for finance, facilities, and operations.

- The school does not have a clear and consistently applied student discipline system in place. The school uses schoolwide norms and expectations for student discipline that are posted in common areas of the school building. However, teachers have autonomy to select classroom management systems. Systems tend to differ from classroom to classroom, which leads to uneven expectations regarding student send outs based on discipline infractions. For 2018-19, the school set a goal to decrease referrals to the dean of scholars by five percent. Currently, lower level infractions are handled by a behavior interventionist, and higher level infractions that may pose a safety risk are referred to the dean of scholars.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- The school faces some financial constraints due to difficulty in collecting outstanding funds in a timely manner from the local school district, which adversely affects the school providing necessary resources to the school program. While the school has its core curricular materials, the withheld funds restrict the school from expanding on its expeditions as part of its EL programming, more technological resources, and some staffing needs.

- Though the school made some curricular changes this year, it does not have clear systems to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's programs or to evaluate the effectiveness of the development of the middle school program. During the 2018-19 school year, its first year with 6th grade, the school responded to challenges and struggles and acted to make changes to the model to better support student learning. However, school leaders are not proactive in creating a clear action or growth plan for the middle school grades, and do not currently have the capacity to ensure a solid middle school program is founded over the next two years. Based on observations, interviews with leaders and teachers, and document reviews, the Institute observed major concerns with the growth and expansion of the Finn Academy's middle school program.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2D

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

Finn Academy's board continues to establish some effective strategies to provide oversight for the school to achieve its Accountability Plan goals. Despite improving oversight practices and working to establish a new leadership structure, the board has not properly initiated a strategic plan to develop the school's expanding middle school grades.

- Finn Academy's board members possess a variety of skills in business, law, marketing, and education. The board uses this level of expertise to establish structures and procedures that ensure consistent oversight of the school's program. The board's academic committee partners with school leaders to provide the support needed to effectuate the school's academic and organizational programs.

- The board requests and receives information to provide oversight of the school's program and finances. The board reviews the monthly data dashboard to closely monitor data related to academic interventions and finances, and makes necessary adjustments to ensure the academic and financial success of the school. For example, though in its nascent stage, the board approved the creation of an online platform to access schoolwide data.

- The Finn Academy board has not established a strategic or long term plan for the expansion of the middle school program. During the board interview, members did not express the necessary urgency or concern with establishing a strategic plan for the middle school expansion. Based on the reaction and observations of the current 6th grade, the Institute expressed high levels of concern with the continued growth and expansion of the middle school grades at Finn Academy.

- For this school year, the board focused on improving data collection and analysis strategies as well as implementing its new school leadership structure. The board implemented monthly data dashboards with assessment and intervention data and began tracking progress toward goals. The board recognizes a need to continue to refine the data collected and develop its analysis skills to support student success. The board does not formally evaluate its performance but makes some attempts at informal self evaluation during retreats. During the annual retreat, the board reflects on areas in which it needs to build capacity. For example, the board held a retreat last fall and worked with a consultant to discuss issues such as team building and succession planning.

- The board has not consistently evaluated the performance of school leaders over the charter term. This year, the board established new evaluation tools for each of the three leaders and plans to evaluate each leader by the end of the current year. With the hiring of the new CAO, the board created clear job descriptions for each position and aligned the evaluation tool to each specific area of oversight.

Finn Academy

Ax

APPENDICES

PAGES Ax 1-20

APPENDIX A: School Overview

BOARD OF TRUSTEES[1]

CHAIR	TRUSTEES
Renee Sutton	Katie Coletta

VICE CHAIR
Cynthia Raj

Katie Stowell
Lynn Winner

TREASURER
Jill Koski

SECRETARY
Maya Patel

SCHOOL LEADERS

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Martina Baker, Chief Operating Officer (January 2017 to Present)
Aimee Ciarlo, Dean of Scholars (October 2018 to Present)
Jeremy Wheeler, Chief Academic Officer (October 2018 to Present)

HEAD OF SCHOOL

Aimee Ciarlo, Interim Head of School (January 2017 to October 2018)
Maggie Thurber, Head of School (2015-16 to January 2017)

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT[2]	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	PROPOSED GRADES	ACTUAL GRADES
2015-16	180	215	119%	K-3	K-3
2016-17	234	248	94%	K-4	K-4
2017-18	290	299	103%	K-5	K-5
2018-19	344	357	104%	K-6	K-6

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

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

APPENDIX A: School Overview

Finn Academy-An Elmira Charter School   **Elmira City School District**

Student Demographics: Special Populations

		2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
English Language Learners	District	0.2	0.2	0.4
	School	0.0	0.4	0.7
Students with Disabilities	District	14.5	15.2	14.7
	School	10.3	14.1	12.5
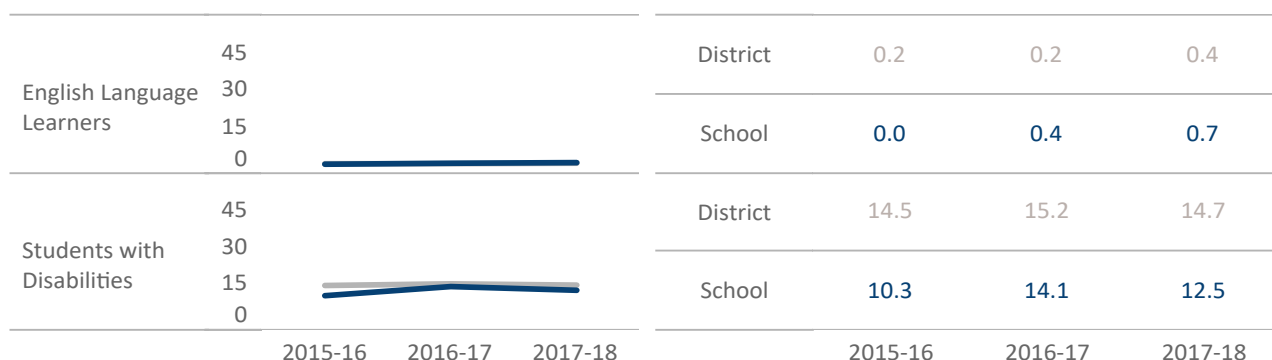
Student Demographics: Free/Reduced Lunch

		2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Economically Disadvantaged	District	75.6	75.1	74.9
	School	26.3	45.8	49.5
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	District	1.6	1.2	
	School	0.0	0.0	
Eligible for Free Lunch	District	61.2	62.2	
	School	0.0	0.0	
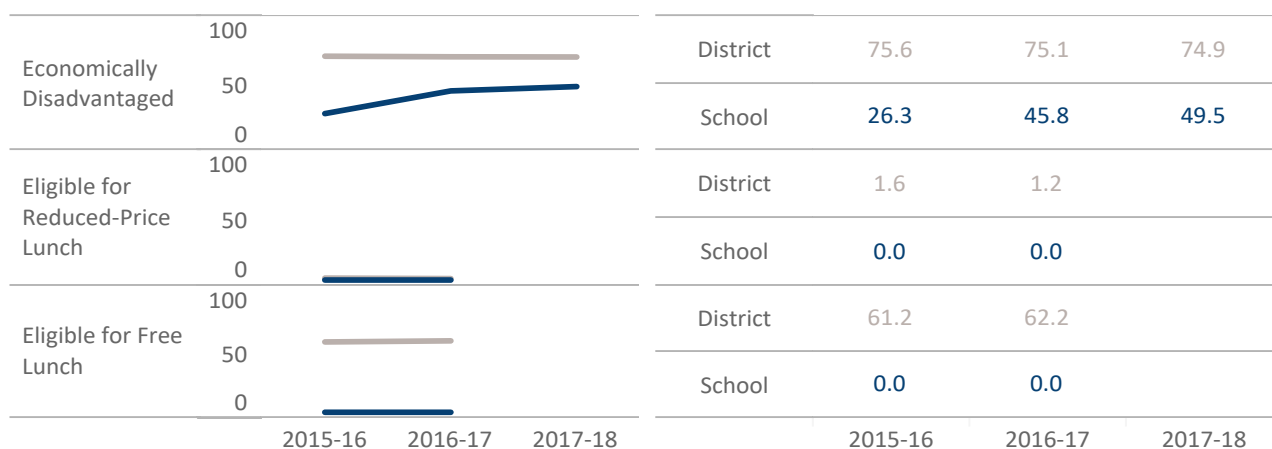
Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity

		Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	Black or African American	Hispanic	White
2015-16	District	0.3	10.5	2.3	70.5
	School	0.0	8.5	6.6	68.5
2016-17	District	0.2	10.2	2.2	71.1
	School	0.0	9.2	6.4	68.3
2017-18	District	0.2	11.1	2.5	70.9
	School	0.0	9.9	6.3	69.6
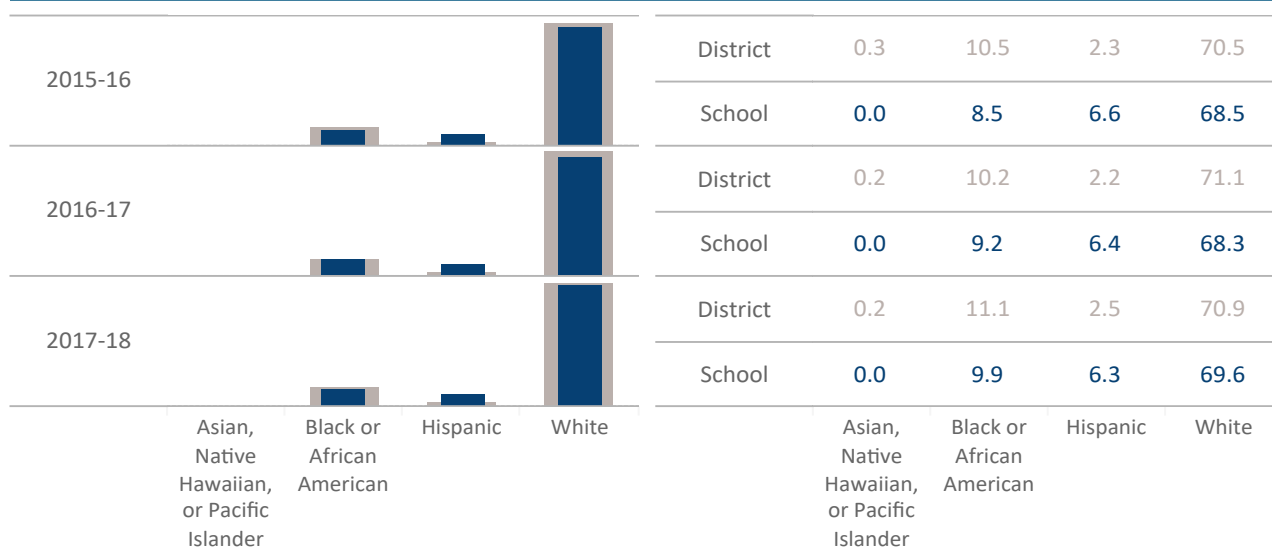
Data reported in these charts reflect BEDS day enrollment counts as reported by the New York State Education Department

APPENDIX A: School Overview

Finn Academy-An Elmira Charter School   Elmira City School District
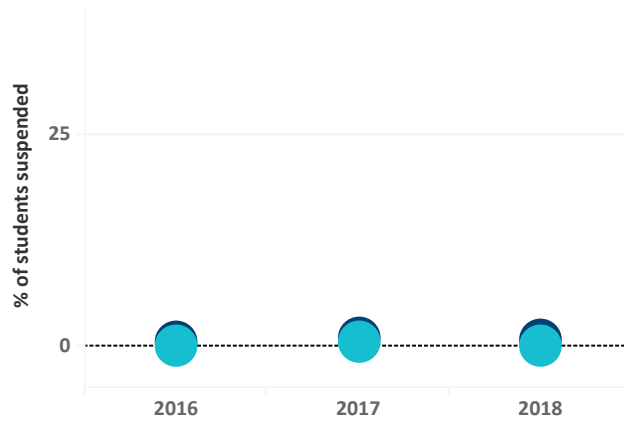
	School ISS Rate	School OSS Rate
2016	0.0	0.5
2017	0.4	0.8
2018	0.0	0.7

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

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

| 2016-17 | 94.4 |
| 2017-18 | 87.6 |

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

2016	2017	2018
0	0	0

Finn Academy-An Elmira Charter School's Enrollment and Retention Status: 2017-18

			District Target	School
Enrollment	economically disadvantaged		65.9	49.5
	English language learners		0.3	0.7
	students with disabilities		11.2	11.9
Retention	economically disadvantaged		95.0	79.8
	English language learners		85.9	100.0
	students with disabilities		93.7	78.6

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

APPENDIX A: School Overview

SCHOOL VISIT HISTORY

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
2015-16	First Year	April 21, 2016
2016-17	Evaluation	April 5-6, 2017
2018-19	Evaluation	May 7-8, 2019

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF VISIT	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
	Andrew Kile	Director of School Evaluation
	Hannah Hansen	School Evaluation Analyst
May 7 - 8, 2019	Denise Gaffor	School Evaluation Analyst
	Jeff Wasbes	Executive Deputy Director for Accountability
	Jacqueline Frey	External Consultant

CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

CHARTER TERM	ACCOUNTABILITY PERIOD[3]	ANTICIPATED RENEWAL VISIT
Fourth Year of Initial Five-Year Charter Term	Fourth Year of Four-Year Accountability Period	Fall 2019

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

APPENDIX A: School Overview

KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS:

ELEMENT	EVIDENT?
College preparation and awareness at every grade level;	+
STrEaM(Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts and Math) curriculum;	+
Extended day, extended year, and summer learning experience;	−
Dedicated time for promoting physical and socio-emotional wellness;	+
Advisory program ("Crew") for teacher-student and small group mentoring; and,	+
Professional learning and teacher support.	+

Finn Academy: An Elmira Charter School

		2015-16 Grades Served K-3				2016-17 Grades Served K-4				2017-18 Grades Served K-5		
		Grades	All % (N)	2+ Years % (N)	MET	Grades	All % (N)	2+ Years % (N)	MET	Grades	All % (N)	2+ Years % (N)	MET

Absolute Measure

1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above proficiency on the New York State exam.

Grades	All % (N)	2+ Years % (N)	MET	Grades	All % (N)	2+ Years % (N)	MET	Grades	All % (N)	2+ Years % (N)	MET
3	16.3 (49)	()		3	25.5 (47)	30.6 (36)		3	47.2 (53)	53.5 (43)	
4	(0)	()		4	10.9 (46)	12.8 (39)		4	30.8 (52)	32.4 (37)	
5	(0)	()		5	(0)	(0)		5	25.0 (44)	20.6 (34)	
6	(0)	()		6	(0)	(0)		6	(0)	(0)	
7	(0)	()		7	(0)	(0)		7	(0)	(0)	
8	(0)	()		8	(0)	(0)		8	(0)	(0)	
All	16.3 (49)	()	NA	All	18.3 (93)	21.3 (75)	NO	All	34.9 (149)	36.8 (114)	NO

2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Measure of Interim Progress set forth in the State's ESSA accountability system.

Grades	PLI	AMO	MET	Grades	PLI	AMO	MET	Grades	PI	MIP	MET
3	69	104	NO	3-4	65	111	NO	3-5	104	101	YES

Comparative Measure

3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above proficiency will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.

Comparison: Elmira City School District				Comparison: Elmira City School District				Comparison: Elmira City School District			
Grades	School	District	MET	Grades	School	District	MET	Grades	School	District	MET
			NA	3-4	21.3	18.5	YES	3-5	36.8	20.2	YES

4. Each year the school will exceed its predicted performance on the state exam by an effect size of 0.3 or above based on a regression analysis controlling for economically disadvantaged students statewide.

Grade	% ED	Actual	Predicted	ES	Grade	% ED	Actual	Predicted	ES	Grade	% ED	Actual	Predicted	ES
3	42.3	16.3	49.4	-2.26	3	48.9	25.5	47.0	-1.44	3	33.3	47.2	62.3	-1.01
4					4	58.3	10.9	40.4	-1.88	4	57.4	30.8	48.2	-0.98
5					5					5	56.8	25.0	37.3	-0.77
6					6					6				
7					7					7				
8					8					8				
All	42.3	16.3	49.4	-2.26 (NO)	All	53.6	18.3	43.7	-1.65 (NO)	All	48.7	34.9	50.0	-0.93 (NO)

Growth Measure

5. Each year, the school's unadjusted mean growth percentile will meet or exceed the target of 50.

Grades	School	State	MET	Grades	School	State	MET	Grades	School	State	MET
4				4	36.3			4	50.2		
5				5	0.0			5	66.9		
6				6	0.0			6	0.0		
7				7	0.0			7	0.0		
8				8	0.0			8	0.0		
All			NA	All	36.3	50.0	NO	All	57.6	50.0	YES

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: MATHEMATICS

Finn Academy: An Elmira Charter School

Absolute Measure

1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above proficiency on the New York State exam.

	2015-16 Grades Served K-3				2016-17 Grades Served K-4				2017-18 Grades Served K-5			
	Grades	All % (N)	2+ Years % (N)	MET	Grades	All % (N)	2+ Years % (N)	MET	Grades	All % (N)	2+ Years % (N)	MET
	3	15.2 (46)	()		3	19.6 (46)	22.9 (35)		3	43.4 (53)	48.8 (43)	
	4	(0)	()		4	7.0 (43)	8.1 (37)		4	17.3 (52)	18.9 (37)	
	5	(0)	()		5	(0)	(0)		5	11.4 (44)	11.8 (34)	
	6	(0)	()		6	(0)	(0)		6	(0)	(0)	
	7	(0)	()		7	(0)	(0)		7	(0)	(0)	
	8	(0)	()		8	(0)	(0)		8	(0)	(0)	
	All	15.2 (46)	()	NA	All	13.5 (89)	15.3 (72)	NO	All	24.8 (149)	28.1 (114)	NO

2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Measure of Interim Progress set forth in the State's ESSA accountability system.

Grades	PLI	AMO	MET	Grades	PLI	AMO	MET	Grades	PI	MIP	MET
3	63	101	NO	3-4	60	109	NO	3-5	91	103	NO

Comparative Measure

3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above proficiency will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.

Comparison: Elmira City School District

Grades	School	District	MET	Grades	School	District	MET	Grades	School	District	MET
			NA	3-4	15.3	24.9	NO	3-5	28.1	25.5	YES

4. Each year the school will exceed its predicted performance on the state exam by an effect size of 0.3 or above based on a regression analysis controlling for economically disadvantaged students statewide.

Grade	% ED	Actual	Predicted	ES	MET	Grade	% ED	Actual	Predicted	ES	MET	Grade	% ED	Actual	Predicted	ES	MET
3	42.3	15.2	51.7	-2.27		3	48.9	19.6	52.7	-2.09		3	33.3	43.4	65.5	-1.47	
4						4	58.3	7.0	42.5	-2.16		4	57.4	17.3	49.2	-1.74	
5						5						5	56.8	11.4	44.9	-2.07	
6						6						6					
7						7						7					
8						8						8					
All	42.3	15.2	51.7	-2.27	NO	All	53.5	13.5	47.7	-2.12	NO	All	48.7	24.8	53.7	-1.74	NO

Growth Measure

5. Each year, the school's unadjusted mean growth percentile will meet or exceed the target of 50.

Grades	School	State	MET	Grades	School	State	MET	Grades	School	State	MET
4				4	41.9			4	48.6		
5				5	0.0			5	63.9		
6				6	0.0			6	0.0		
7				7	0.0			7	0.0		
8				8	0.0			8	0.0		
All			NA	All	41.9	50.0	NO	All	55.3	50.0	YES

APPENDIX C: SUNY 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: http://www.newyorkcharters.org/renewal/. Responses to frequently asked questions about the Institute's use of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks appear below:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

RENEWAL QUESTION 1
IS THE SCHOOL AN ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1A

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

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

* English language arts;

* mathematics;

* science;

* social studies (high school only);

* NCLB;

* high school graduation and college preparation (if applicable); and

* optional academic goals included by the school.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1B

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

The following elements are generally present:

* the school regularly administers valid and reliable assessments aligned to the school's curriculum and state performance standards;

* the school has a valid and reliable process for scoring and analyzing assessments;

* the school makes assessment data accessible to teachers, school leaders and board members;

* teachers use assessment results to meet students' needs by adjusting classroom instruction, grouping students and/or identifying students for special intervention;

* school leaders use assessment results to evaluate teacher effectiveness and to develop professional development and coaching strategies; and

* the school regularly communicates to parents/guardians about their students' progress and growth.

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1C

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

The following elements are generally present:

- the school has a curriculum framework with student performance expectations that provides a fixed, underlying structure, aligned to state standards and across grades;

- in addition to the framework, the school has supporting tools (i.e., curriculum maps or scope and sequence documents) that provide a bridge between the curriculum framework and lesson plans;

- teachers know what to teach and when to teach it based on these documents;

- the school has a process for selecting, developing and reviewing its curriculum documents and its resources for delivering the curriculum; and

- teachers plan purposeful and focused lessons.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1D

HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION IS EVIDENT THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL.

The following elements are generally present:

- teachers deliver purposeful lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school's curriculum;

- teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding;

- teachers include opportunities in their lessons to challenge students with questions and activities that develop depth of understanding and higher-order thinking and problem solving skills;

- teachers maximize learning time (e.g., appropriate pacing, on-task student behavior, clear lesson focus and clear directions to students); transitions are efficient; and

- teachers have effective classroom management techniques and routines that create a consistent focus on academic achievement.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1E

THE SCHOOL HAS STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP.

The following elements are generally present:

- the school's leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance (in content knowledge and pedagogical skills) and in which teachers believe that all students can succeed;

- the instructional leadership is adequate to support the development of the teaching staff;

- instructional leaders provide sustained, systemic and effective coaching and supervision that improves teachers' instructional effectiveness;

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

- instructional leaders provide opportunities and guidance for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction within and across grade levels;

- instructional leaders implement a comprehensive professional development program that develops the competencies and skills of all teachers;

- professional development activities are interrelated with classroom practice;

- instructional leaders regularly conduct teacher evaluations with clear criteria that accurately identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses; and

- instructional leaders hold teachers accountable for quality instruction and student achievement.

THE SCHOOL MEETS THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1F

The following elements are generally present:

- the school uses clear procedures for identifying at-risk students including students with disabilities, English language learners and those struggling academically;

- the school has adequate intervention programs to meet the needs of at-risk students;

- general education teachers, as well as specialists, utilize effective strategies to support students within the general education program;

- the school adequately monitors the progress and success of at-risk students;

- teachers are aware of their students' progress toward meeting IEP goals, achieving English proficiency or school-based goals for struggling students;

- the school provides adequate training and professional development to identify at-risk students and to help teachers meet students' needs; and

- the school provides opportunities for coordination between classroom teachers and at-risk program staff including the school nurse, if applicable.

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

RENEWAL QUESTION 2

IS THE SCHOOL AN EFFECTIVE, VIABLE ORGANIZATION?

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2A

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

The following elements are generally present:

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2B

PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND STUDENTS ARE SATISFIED WITH THE SCHOOL.

The following elements are generally present:

- the school regularly communicates each child's academic performance results to families;
- families are satisfied with the school; and
- parents keep their children enrolled year-to-year.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2C

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

The following elements are generally present:

- the school has established an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, policies and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program;
- the organizational structure establishes distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities;
- the school has a clear student discipline system in place at the administrative level that is consistently applied;
- the school retains quality staff;
- the school has allocated sufficient resources to support the achievement of goals;
- the school maintains adequate student enrollment;
- the school has procedures in place to monitor its progress toward meeting enrollment and retention targets for special education students, ELLs and students who qualify for free and reduced price lunch, and adjusts its recruitment efforts accordingly; and
- the school regularly monitors and evaluates the school's programs and makes changes if necessary.

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2D

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

The following elements are generally present:

- board members possess adequate skills and have put in place structures and procedures with which to govern the school and oversee management of day-to-day operations in order to ensure the school's future as an academically successful, financially healthy and legally compliant organization;

- the board requests and receives sufficient information to provide rigorous oversight of the school's program and finances;

- it establishes clear priorities, objectives and long-range goals, (including Accountability Plan, fiscal, facilities and fundraising), and has in place benchmarks for tracking progress as well as a process for their regular review and revision;

- the board successfully recruits, hires and retains key personnel, and provides them with sufficient resources to function effectively;

- the board regularly evaluates its own performance and that of the school leaders and the management company (if applicable), holding them accountable for student achievement; and

- the board effectively communicates with the school community including school leadership, staff, parents/guardians and students.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2E

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

The following elements are generally present:

- the board effectively communicates with its partner or management organizations as well as key contractors such as back-office service providers and ensures that it receives value in exchange for contracts and relationships it enters into and effectively monitors such relationships;

- the board takes effective action when there are organizational, leadership, management, facilities or fiscal deficiencies; or where the management or partner organization fails to meet expectations; to correct those deficiencies and puts in place benchmarks for determining if the partner organization corrects them in a timely fashion;

- the board regularly reviews and updates board and school policies as needed and has in place an orientation process for new members;

- the board effectively recruits and selects new members in order to maintain adequate skill sets and expertise for effective governance and structural continuity;

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

- the board implements a comprehensive and strict conflict of interest policy (and/or code of ethics)—consistent with that set forth in the charter and with the General Municipal Law—and consistently abides by them throughout the term of the charter;

- the board generally avoids conflicts of interest; where not possible, the board manages those conflicts in a clear and transparent manner;

- the board implements a process for dealing with complaints consistent with that set forth in the charter, makes the complaint policy clear to all stakeholders, and follows the policy including acting on complaints in a timely fashion;

- the board abides by its by-laws including, but not limited to, provisions regarding trustee election and the removal and filling of vacancies; and

- the board holds all meetings in accordance with the Open Meetings Law and records minutes for all meetings including executive sessions and, as appropriate, committee meetings.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2F

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

The following elements are generally present:

- the school compiles a record of substantial compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations including, but not limited to, submitting items to the Institute in a timely manner, and meeting teacher certification (including NCLB highly qualified status) and background check requirements, FOIL and Open Meetings Law;
the school substantially complies with the terms of its charter and applicable laws, rules and regulations;

- the school abides by the terms of its monitoring plan;

- the school implements effective systems and controls to ensure that it meets legal and charter requirements;

- the school has an active and ongoing relationship with in-house or independent legal counsel who reviews and makes recommendations on relevant policies, documents, transactions and incidents and who also handles other legal matters as needed; and

- the school manages any litigation appropriately and provides litigation papers to insurers and the Institute in a timely manner.

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

RENEWAL QUESTION 3
IS THE SCHOOL FISCALLY SOUND?

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3A

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

The following elements are generally present:

- the school has clear budgetary objectives and budget preparation procedures;

- board members, school management and staff contribute to the budget process, as appropriate;

- the school frequently compares its long-range fiscal plan to actual progress and adjusts it to meet changing conditions;

- the school routinely analyzes budget variances; the board addresses material variances and makes necessary revisions; and

- actual expenses are equal to, or less than, actual revenue with no material exceptions.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3B

THE SCHOOL MAINTAINS APPROPRIATE INTERNAL CONTROLS AND PROCEDURES.

The following elements are generally present:

- the school follows a set of comprehensive written fiscal policies and procedures;

- the school accurately records and appropriately documents transactions in accordance with management's direction, laws, regulations, grants and contracts;

- the school safeguards its assets;

- the school identifies/analyzes risks and takes mitigating actions;

- the school has controls in place to ensure that management decisions are properly carried out and monitors and assesses controls to ensure their adequacy;

- the school's trustees and employees adhere to a code of ethics;

- the school ensures duties are appropriately segregated, or institutes compensating controls;

- the school ensures that employees performing financial functions are appropriately qualified and adequately trained;

- the school has systems in place to provide the appropriate information needed by staff and the board to make sound financial decisions and to fulfill compliance requirements;

- a staff member of the school reviews grant agreements and restrictive gifts and monitors compliance with all stated conditions;

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

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

- the school ensures that employees, trustees and volunteers who handle cash and investments are bonded to help assure the safeguarding of assets; and

- the school takes corrective action in a timely manner to address any internal control or compliance deficiencies identified by its external auditor, the Institute, and/or the State Education Department or the Comptroller, if needed.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3C

THE SCHOOL HAS COMPLIED WITH FINANCIAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS BY PROVIDING THE SUNY TRUSTEES AND THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT WITH REQUIRED FINANCIAL REPORTS THAT ARE ON TIME, COMPLETE AND FOLLOW GENERALLY ACCEPTED ACCOUNTING PRINCIPLES.

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

- annual financial statement audit reports including federal Single Audit report, if applicable;

- annual budgets and cash flow statements;

- un-audited quarterly reports of income, expenses, and enrollment;

- bi-monthly enrollment reports to the district and, if applicable, to the State Education Department including proper documentation regarding the level of special education services provided to students; and

- grant expenditure reports.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3D

THE SCHOOL MAINTAINS ADEQUATE FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO ENSURE STABLE OPERATIONS. CRITICAL FINANCIAL NEEDS OF THE SCHOOL ARE NOT DEPENDENT ON VARIABLE INCOME (GRANTS, DONATIONS AND FUNDRAISING).

The following elements are generally present:

- the school maintains sufficient cash on hand to pay current bills and those that are due shortly;

- the school maintains adequate liquid reserves to fund expenses in the event of income loss (generally three months);

- the school prepares and monitors cash flow projections;

- If the school includes philanthropy in its budget, it monitors progress toward its development goals on a periodic basis;

- If necessary, the school pursues district state aid intercepts with the state education department to ensure adequate per pupil funding; and

- the school accumulates unrestricted net assets that are equal to or exceed two percent of the school's operating budget for the upcoming year.

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

RENEWAL QUESTION 4

IF THE SCHOOL'S CHARTER IS RENEWED, WHAT ARE ITS PLANS FOR THE TERM OF THE NEXT CHARTER PERIOD, AND ARE THEY REASONABLE, FEASIBLE AND ACHIEVABLE?

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4A

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

Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:

- the school is likely to fulfill its mission in the next charter period;

- the school has an enrollment plan that can support the school program;

- the school calendar and daily schedules clearly provide sufficient instructional time to meet all legal requirements, allow the school to meet its proposed Accountability Plan goals and abide by its proposed budget;

- key design elements are consistent with the mission statement and are feasible given the school's budget and staffing;

- a curriculum framework for added grades aligns with the state's performance standards; and

- plans in the other required Exhibits indicate that the school's structure is likely to support the educational program.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4B

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

Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:

- for those grades served during the last charter period, the school has plans for sustaining and (where possible) improving upon the student outcomes it has compiled during the last charter period including any adjustments or additions to the school's educational program;

- for a school that is seeking to add grades, the school is likely to meet its Accountability Plan goals and the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks at the new grade levels; and

- where the school will provide secondary school instruction, it has presented a set of requirements for graduation that students are likely to meet and that are consistent with the graduation standards set by the Board of Regents.

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4C

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

Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:

- school trustees are likely to possess a range of experience, skills, and abilities sufficient to oversee the academic, organizational and fiscal performance of the school;

- plans by the school board to orient new trustees to their roles and responsibilities, and, if appropriate, to participate in ongoing board training are likely to sustain the board's ability to carry out its responsibilities;

- if the school plans to change an association with a partner or management organization in the term of a future charter, it has provided a clear rationale for the disassociation and an outline indicating how it will manage the functions previously associated with that partnering organization; and

- if the school is either moving from self-management to a management structure or vice-versa, or is changing its charter management organization/educational service provider, its plans indicate that it will be managed in an effective, sound and viable manner including appropriate oversight of the academic and fiscal performance of the school or the management organization.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4D

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

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

- the school's budgets adequately support staffing, enrollment and facility projections;

- fiscal plans are based on the sound use of financial resources to support academic program needs;

- fiscal plans are clear, accurate, complete and based on reasonable assumptions;

- information on enrollment demand provides clear evidence for the reasonableness of projected enrollment; and

- facility plans are likely to meet educational program needs.

Finn Academy:
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1) School Background

The report states that the school had no academic leader prior to October 2018 when our current Chief Academic Officer was hired. However, the initial change in leadership structure from the traditional Head of School model to the three-person Leadership Team model was approved by the Board of Trustees and implemented as of August 2017. Therefore, from August 2017 until our current Chief Academic Officer was hired in October 2018, the academic leader was the Dean of Academics. The leadership roles were more clearly delineated in October 2018, and the academic leader's job description was re-written, allowing the position of CAO to provide greater oversight and strengthening of the academic program. The school has been able to show continued growth and improvement despite experiencing multiple transitions within the leadership team.

The report also states, Finn Academy continues to "lack high quality instruction to improve overall teaching and learning". While we recognize necessary areas of growth instructionally, based on the evaluation team's observation data, there is evidence of strong instruction taking place as noted in Benchmark 1D; it is evident, not yet consistent across all classrooms.

2) Benchmark 1B, C, and D

The report identifies several areas in Benchmark's 1B, C, and D that School Leadership also confirmed in discussion with the evaluation team during the visit as areas of growth. Several of these areas were communicated as in process or newly established programmatic changes intended to address the needs identified in the report. Several of these changes that were in place or in development at the time of the visit include:

- A "central storage data system" to better provide oversight and understand the effectiveness of the school's academic program.
- Clear and systematic protocols for data analysis, clearly established agendas for data and grade level team meetings, yearly calendars for data meetings, and grade level team meetings, so they are not perceived as "ad hoc".
- A clear APPR plan and feedback loop for teacher improvement using an electronic-based observation and feedback tool
- Increased school capacity for teacher mentoring and feedback
- Clearly delineated professional learning opportunities differentiated for staff to be able to focus on areas of growth

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3) Benchmark 1F

The report indicates that we do "not have a clear and consistent system to monitor student academic progress in the intervention program", however, the school ensures oversight through the following:

- Monthly grade-level data meetings to review data points and identify students in-need of an academic or behavioral intervention and/or review of an existing intervention, including the consideration of a referral to special education.
- RTI meetings to review individual needs of students based on lack of progress in 2 progress monitoring cycles (12-week period)
- Progress monitoring of RTI goals every six weeks
- School-wide intervention data spreadsheets that are utilized to review trends and scholar growth

The school recognizes the need to academically support our struggling learner population and have assigned additional math and literacy staff for the 18-19 school year to implement remediation plans. The interventionists use individualized scholar data to create purposeful and high-quality instructional plans that target specific deficit areas. Leadership provides observations, coaching, professional learning around math and literacy practices, as well as opportunities for staff to attend professional conferences/workshops to ensure effective interventions.

The evaluation team indicated that Finn does not "hold teachers accountable for using co-teaching structures that maximize learning for the full range of students including students who may need alternative experiences, extensions, or acceleration," however, an integrated co-teaching model is not a service that is currently offered as part of the school's special education programming. We offer the Consultant Teacher model, which is to adapt, as necessary, the content and instructional delivery to meet the needs of scholars with disabilities, as opposed to providing primary instruction as an integrated co-teacher.

The report also highlighted the fact that, due to a personnel transition later in the year, ELL services have been provided by a literacy interventionist who lacks specific training pertinent to meeting the needs of ELL scholars. This staff member served in a similar capacity providing ELL targeted intervention in the previous school year and attended multiple trainings for ELL interventionists, and also utilized curriculum components specifically intended for at-risk learners, including the ELL population. This staff member provided intervention and support aligned to their NYSESLAT level and maintained consistent data and records around scholar goals and needs. The school has engaged in conversations with the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN) to discuss intervention and program options to ensure fidelity to the delivery of services. The school and Board continue to make every effort to secure a certified ELL teacher for the next renewal term.

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3) Benchmark 2C

The report states that, "as the school continues to expand to middle school grades, leadership nor the Board have established a strategic plan to evaluate and improve the current middle school program". We created a hybrid approach this year for our 6th grade cohort to lay the foundation for the development of the middle school program in the 2019-2020 school year. The hybrid approach consisted of 6th grade instructional staff being responsible for all content-area instruction for the first half of the year, and then transitioned into more departmentalized instruction which allowed for scholars to switch classes throughout the day. This enabled more targeted instruction in the areas of science, social studies, English language arts, and math. Intervention and enrichment times were also built into the schedule to ensure scholars were receiving appropriate academic differentiation to better prepare them to meet middle school standards. The Board has approved a strategic partnership with an education consultancy group, *Future Leaders Incubators*, and our leadership team is already working with them to identify key focus areas in the continued strengthening and development of our middle school program.

It is also stated that the school "does not have a clear and consistently applied student discipline system in place". Prior to the start of the 2017-2018 school year, intensive planning was done to strengthen the school's discipline system. The creation of a comprehensive Family Handbook provided families with a clear understanding of the school's policies and procedures as related to discipline and behavioral expectations. Within the Handbook, the school's Code of Conduct and responses to disciplinary offenses are outlined. Clear universal expectations and norms were established to address the need for consistent behavioral expectations across all school spaces. A document delineating classroom-managed vs. office-managed behaviors was also created, and is consistently reviewed with all staff, to ensure that referrals to the office are appropriate and based on the school's expectations. A referral form was also created and has been consistently implemented and is to be utilized by all staff when referring a scholar to the office for a disciplinary offense. This document allows for careful review of the offense and a targeted response to the behavior. It also allows the leadership team and staff to review and analyze trends in the behavioral data on an ongoing basis. Key components of the discipline system are reviewed during staff professional learning at the start of each school year, and throughout the year, as necessary. Teacher creativity and flexibility is allowed in the creation of the classroom-based management system, but within the construct of the universal expectations.