

THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT
**SOUTH BUFFALO CHARTER
SCHOOL**

VISIT DATE: MAY 7-8, 2018

REPORT DATE: JUNE 28, 2018

SUNY Charter Schools Institute

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Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

A collection of colorful pencils and paper clips on a dark grey background. The pencils are arranged diagonally from the top left to the bottom right, showing a variety of colors including green, blue, red, orange, yellow, and purple. Several paper clips in various colors (orange, green, pink, blue, black) are scattered at the bottom of the page.

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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, 2018. 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 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 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.

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INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

SCHOOL BACKGROUND

The SUNY Trustees approved the original charter for South Buffalo Charter School (“South Buffalo”) on January 25, 2000. The school opened its doors in the fall of 2000, initially serving 234 students in Kindergarten – 4th grade. South Buffalo is in the third year of its fourth charter term, currently enrolling 898 students in Kindergarten – 8th grade. The school is located in the Buffalo City School District at 154 Ogden Street, Buffalo, NY 14206.

South Buffalo’s mission states:



The mission of South Buffalo Charter School is that it is a professional learning community. Our focus on learning is driven by research, data and collaborative reflection to increase student achievement. We are dedicated to creating students that are prepared for the 21st century through an environment that encompasses character education, technology integration and rigorous academics.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

2016-17 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

In 2016-17, the third year of the school's current five year Accountability Period,¹ South Buffalo did not meet its Accountability Plan goal in English language arts ("ELA") and came close to meeting its mathematics goal. The school met its science goal and No Child Left Behind ("NCLB") goal.

ELA

South Buffalo did not meet its ELA Accountability Plan goal in 2016-17, after not meeting the goal in 2015-16 and coming close to meeting the goal 2014-15. In 2016-17, 25% of students enrolled in at least their second year scored at or above proficiency on the state's ELA exam, falling far below the absolute target of 75%. South Buffalo's proficiency rate exceeded the Buffalo City School District's (the "district's") by seven percentage points, but the school's gap above the district decreased slightly from 2015-16. The school failed to meet the target for its comparative effect size measure in 2016-17, after not meeting the target in 2014-15 and 2015-16. The school performed lower than expected in comparison to schools across the state enrolling similar percentages of economically disadvantaged students. In 2016-17, the school posted a mean growth percentile four percentile points above the state's median of 50. Although this growth rate exceeds the school's target for this measure, it is not sufficient to grow the performance of all students such that they are performing at or above proficiency before matriculating out of the school after completing the 8th grade.

MATHEMATICS

South Buffalo came close to meeting its mathematics Accountability Plan goal in 2016-17, after not meeting the goal in 2015-16 and coming close to meeting the goal 2014-15. In 2016-17, 28% of students enrolled in at least their second year scored at or above proficiency on the state's mathematics exam, a slight decline from the previous two years. Notably, 12% of students did not take the exam in 2016-17. The school's performance is inconsistent across grade levels. For instance, in 2016-17, for the students who opted to take the assessment, nine percent of the school's 8th grade students enrolled in at least their second year scored at or above proficiency while 43% of the school's 6th grade students did so. South Buffalo's proficiency rate exceeded the district's by 11 percentage points. The school failed to meet the target for its comparative effect size measure in 2016-17, after not meeting the target in 2015-16. The school performed as expected in comparison to schools across the state enrolling similar percentages of economically disadvantaged students, failing to meet the target of performance that is higher than expected to a meaningful degree. In 2016-17, the school posted a mean growth percentile seven percentile points above the state's median of 50, after not meeting

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.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

the target the previous two years. Notably, the school's 7th and 8th grade students posted mean growth scores below the target. Although the school exceeded its target overall, this level of growth does not demonstrate the school is sufficiently growing the performance of all students such that they are likely to perform at or above proficiency before matriculating out of the school after completing 8th grade.

SCIENCE

The school met its science goal in 2016-17, after having also met the goal in 2014-15 and 2015-16. In 2016-17, 74% of the school's 4th and 8th grade students scored at or above proficiency on the state's science exam, narrowly missing the absolute target of 75%. The school exceeded the district's proficiency by 28 percentage points.

NCLB

South Buffalo met its NCLB goal in 2016-17 as the school was not identified as a focus charter school or as needing a local assistance plan under the state's accountability system.

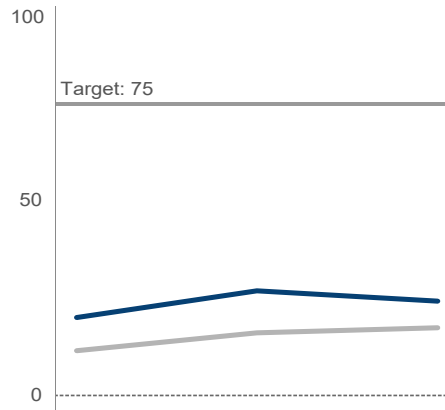
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ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

SOUTH BUFFALO CHARTER SCHOOL

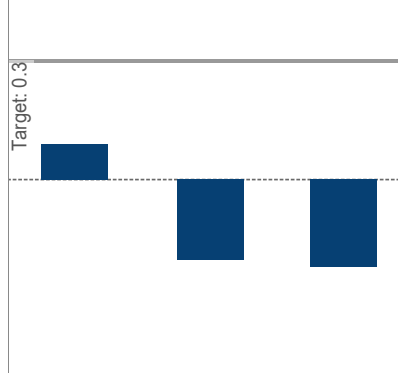
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

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**.



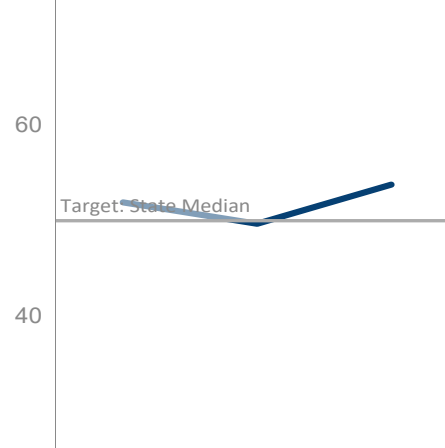
Test Year	Comp Grades	District %	School %
2015	3-8	12	20
2016	3-8	16	27
2017	3-8	18	25

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.



Test Year	Test Grades	Effect Size
2015	3-8	0.09
2016	3-8	-0.20
2017	3-8	-0.22

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**.



Test Year	School Mean Growth
2015	52.0
2016	49.8
2017	53.9

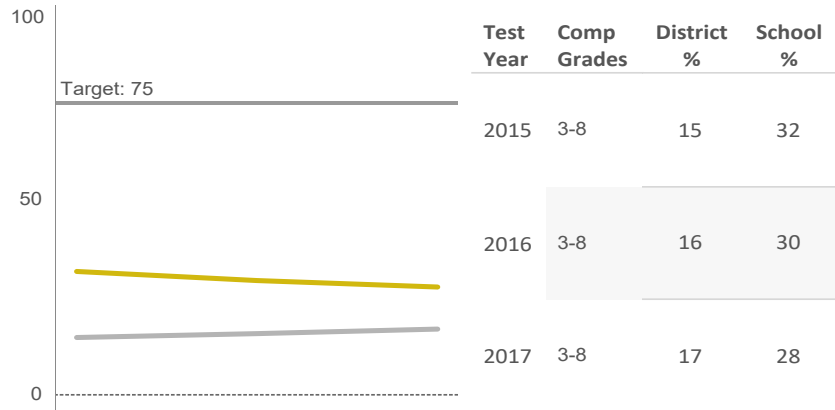
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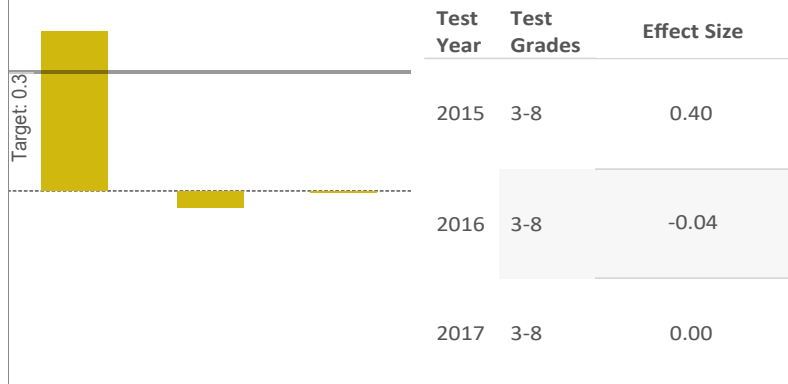
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MATHEMATICS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

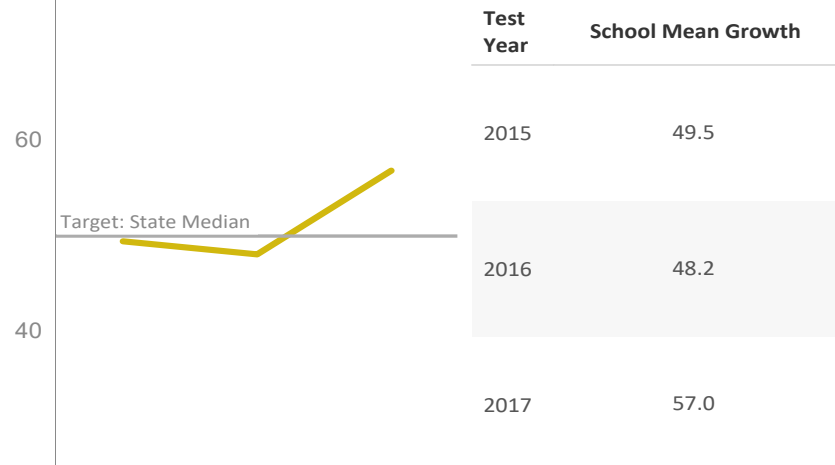
Comparative Measure: District Comparison. Each year, the percentage of students at **the school** in at least their second year performing at or above proficiency in mathematics will be greater than that of students in the same tested grades in **the district**.



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.



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**.

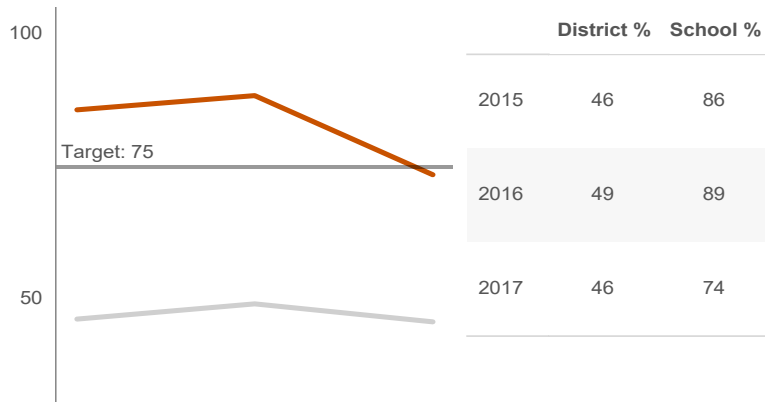


ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

SOUTH BUFFALO 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.



SPECIAL POPULATIONS PERFORMANCE

	2015	2016	2017
Enrollment Receiving Mandated Academic Services	110	122	113
Tested on State Exam	56	74	68
School Percent Proficient on ELA Exam	10.7	6.8	8.8
District Percent Proficient	3.0	3.0	4.0

	2015	2016	2017
ELL Enrollment	8	19	12
Tested on NYSESLAT Exam	8	15	10
School Percent 'Commanding' or Making Progress on NYSESLAT	37.5	0.0	40.0

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.

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BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

QUALITATIVE BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,² 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.³

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1B

DOES SOUTH BUFFALO HAVE AN ASSESSMENT SYSTEM THAT IMPROVES INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT LEARNING?

South Buffalo lacks an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness. The school does not consistently support teachers with analyzing data, recognizing trends, and adjusting instruction to improve student learning.

- South Buffalo administers some valid and reliable assessments aligned to New York state standards. For Kindergarten – 1st grade, the school administers AIMSweb in ELA and mathematics three times per year. For 2nd – 8th grade, the school collects STAR data in ELA and mathematics three times a year. The school administers the Fountas & Pinnell (“F&P”) benchmark reading assessments at least three times a year for all grade levels. Additionally, most teachers administer either teacher created or curriculum provided assessments for mid- and end-unit checkpoints; however, leaders allow teachers to choose whether or not they administer the assessments and do not review the assessments for alignment to state standards.
- South Buffalo does not have consistent processes to norm scoring practices across the school. Although the school has a clear training program for norming and auditing F&P administration, leaders do not employ the same strategies to support teachers with scoring classroom based assessments. For classroom based assessments, the school does not have a system in place to ensure the reliability of classroom assessments across the grade as teachers score their assessments with no coordination or norming with other grade level teachers.
- Although leaders make assessment data accessible to teachers, leaders, and board members, leaders do not ensure that teachers consistently access data reports to drive instruction. Leaders compile STAR, AIMSweb, and F&P data and share with teachers. This year, leaders changed the schedule to remove a second planning block from teachers’ schedules. Therefore teachers have less preparation time to request meetings with

2. 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.

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

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

leaders to analyze data and make action plans to adjust instruction. Leaders prepare STAR assessment data for testing grades and present to the board during board meetings. The school does not disaggregate data to monitor the progress of subgroups of students including students with disabilities, English language learners (“ELLs”), or race/ethnicity, especially given the diverse nature of the school.

- Due to limited coaching and time for collaboration, teachers do not consistently use assessment results to meet students’ needs by adjusting classroom instruction. Some teachers use data to group students, but this practice is not consistent across every classroom. This year, the school trained teachers how to use eDoctrina, its online data program, to create individual student goals to drive instruction; however, leaders do not follow up or set an expectation that teachers should set goals for all students or monitor progress to drive instruction, and so this is an uneven practice across the school.
- South Buffalo leaders do not use assessment results to evaluate teacher effectiveness or to develop professional development and coaching strategies. The school’s evaluation is a collegial inquiry process for teachers with three or more years of experience, and the Danielson Framework for teachers with less than three years of experience. As such, neither process includes an opportunity to hold teachers accountable for student achievement data. Some teachers select goals through the collegial inquiry process that include growth targets, but this format does not align to schoolwide goals nor is it useful for leaders to gauge the effectiveness of the teaching staff. Additionally, leaders focused the majority of professional development sessions this year on behavior management strategies and did not use student achievement data to identify areas of development related to academic content for teachers.

DOES SOUTH BUFFALO’S CURRICULUM SUPPORT TEACHERS IN THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING?

South Buffalo’s curriculum does not sufficiently support teachers in their instructional planning. Leaders give teachers the autonomy to adapt the current curricular program to meet the needs of students; however, leaders provide little oversight to ensure that the current curricular program and the adaptations teachers apply meet the rigor of the New York state standards. The school plans to adopt new curricular programs for ELA and mathematics next year, the final year of the school’s Accountability Period, which will make the second curriculum change for each subject in just two years.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- At the beginning of this school year, leaders gave teachers more autonomy to select and supplement components of the school's curricular framework without providing the necessary oversight to ensure that teachers consistently align the curriculum to the rigor of the state standards. Before this year, the school implemented EngageNY for ELA and mathematics exclusively, with little room in the schedule for remediation or reteaching. For the 2017-18 school year, leaders allowed teachers to supplement EngageNY with teacher created or found materials. As leaders provide little oversight to curriculum development, the school cannot confirm that the current curricular program fully aligns with the rigor of the state standards. For mathematics, the school began piloting Envision Math in 6th – 8th grade in January 2018, with the intention to roll out the program schoolwide in 2018-19. Additionally, leaders plan to transition to the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project ("TCRWP") for ELA in the 2018-19 school year for all grades. Overall, the curricular program shifts equal four shifts for ELA and mathematics in a two year period including next year, the final year of the school's Accountability Period.
- South Buffalo lacks consistent supporting tools that provide a bridge between the curricular framework and lesson plans. Although the school provides teachers with a template for a pacing guide and curricular map, the school expects teachers to populate the documents but does not ensure all teachers complete or codify the documents. Additionally, the school did not set expectations about the level of detail that teachers should include in the curricular maps. Therefore the content of the documents is inconsistent from subject to subject and grade to grade. With little oversight from leaders, the school cannot guarantee that instruction consistently meets the rigor of the state standards.
- South Buffalo leaders have implemented some marginal shifts in the school's mathematics and writing curricula halfway through this year following consistently low assessment results throughout the charter term. After they deemed support to teachers for instructional planning and delivery necessary, leaders gathered input from teachers about which adjustments would be most effective. In January 2018, leaders implemented a pilot mathematics program for middle school grades and distributed some resources from TCRWP for teachers to supplement ELA instruction. Given the timing of these shifts, it is unlikely that the curriculum changes will be implemented with enough time before the school's renewal to demonstrate improved student outcomes.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1D

IS HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION EVIDENT THROUGHOUT SOUTH BUFFALO?

Some examples of adequate instruction are evident across South Buffalo's classrooms. However, lessons do not provide students with opportunities to think critically or problem solve. Although some teachers utilize small group instruction to meet student needs, most teachers utilize whole group instruction with little to no checks for understanding that lead to adjustments in teaching. As shown in the chart below, during the evaluation visit, Institute team members conducted 24 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all evaluation visits.

	GRADE									
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
ELA		3	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	11
Math	1			1	2	1	1	1	2	9
Soc Stu							1			1
Science	1						1		1	3
Total	2	3	1	3	3	2	4	2	4	24

- Most teachers deliver lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school's curriculum (16 out of 24 lessons observed). Teachers post learning objectives for each lesson and discuss with students. While some teachers structure lessons with an introductory mini lesson and follow up with purposeful centers with differentiated work; most teachers deliver whole group lessons with little focus on differentiating lesson activities. Some lessons were not purposeful; for example, some lesson activities did not align with the objective, and a few teachers presented students with multiple objectives that were unrelated to one another. In classrooms with more than one teacher present, teachers did not have a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities to improve student learning.
- Less than half of teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding (10 out of 24 lessons observed). Teachers attempt to circulate around the classroom; however, teachers do not actively collect formative data on student work to adjust instruction in the moment or have a clear gauge of whole class understanding. In

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

one notable example, the teacher reviewed an entire packet of work without checking to see that only one student had incorrect answers, and so the teacher missed an opportunity to move on to another concept or activity given that the other 21 students correctly answered the work.

- Few teachers include opportunities to challenge students with questions and activities that develop higher order thinking skills (5 out of 24 lessons observed). The majority of lessons are predominantly teacher led with few opportunities for students to ask and answer questions. When teachers pose questions to students, the questions are typically low-level, factual recall questions that require little cognitive lift from students. Additionally, teachers miss opportunities to engage students in meaningful group work to allow students the opportunity to elaborate and defend their thinking amongst peers.
- Half of teachers use effective classroom management techniques and routines (12 out of 24 lessons observed). Although the majority of students demonstrated compliant behavior, many class lessons do not fully engage students with learning or demonstrate a sense of urgency for learning. Teachers often lose valuable teaching time due to slow, unorganized transitions, and some teachers do not appropriately pace lessons. In one example, a teacher spent 15 minutes on a low level do now activity that most students completed within six minutes.

DOES SOUTH BUFFALO HAVE STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP?

Since the school's previous renewal, the school experienced turnover in the school's leadership. South Buffalo's current leadership is new this year, its 18th year of operation, and, as of the visit, did not have strong instructional leadership practices in place. Since coaching is teacher initiated, instructional leaders do not leverage relationships to provide effective coaching to improve teacher performance. Leaders do not create an environment of high expectations.

- South Buffalo lacks an environment of high expectations for student performance. School leadership has not defined a clear plan for teachers to monitor and measure expected student academic growth that could put the school on a trajectory toward meeting or coming close to meeting its Accountability Plan goals. Some staff members could articulate a general expectation that students demonstrate either a year or a year and a half growth depending on a student's beginning of year performance, but teachers do not take ownership of the goals. Teachers, with little to no input from leaders, create their individual professional goals and these may or may not relate to performance outcomes of students.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Instructional leadership is not adequate to support the development of teachers. The school has three assistant principals that divide oversight of the staff into Kindergarten – 2nd grade, 3rd – 5th grade, and 6th – 8th grade. The assistant principal role ends up primarily focusing on discipline issues, leaving little time for developing the instructional practices of staff. ELA and mathematics coaches are available as a resource to teachers, but the school does not consider the coaches as a part of the instructional leadership team, which further inhibits the school from establishing a strategic and targeted schoolwide support system for teachers.
- School leaders do not effectively leverage relationships with teachers to provide direct coaching to teachers to improve classroom practices, as the teacher contract limits coaching to instances when a teacher requests it. When coaching does occur, the teacher determines the content and focus of a session without input from any external observer. The school does not have a sustained coaching system based on student performance needs notwithstanding 75% of students are not proficient in ELA and mathematics.
- The school lacks a system for identifying schoolwide instructional needs to inform a comprehensive professional development program. Teachers report attending outside professional development opportunities that they would then bring back to deliver for other teachers. However, teachers typically presented during a morning planning block, which is optional for teachers to attend. Additionally, instructional leaders review professional development offerings from the district to plan summer training sessions rather than strategically utilize school performance data and needs. The topics lack focus on the critical academic needs of students at South Buffalo, and leaders do not strategically utilize data to select sessions.
- South Buffalo leaders follow the prescribed evaluation process outlined by the teacher contract. One observation using the Danielson Framework comprises the evaluation for teachers employed at the school for fewer than three years. Additionally, leaders use a collegial inquiry process to identify performance goals and define measures for all teachers, regardless of tenure. The goals relate to grade level standards but do not reflect high impact instructional leverage points. Leaders also use a collegial inquiry process to evaluate teachers with four or more years of experience at the school. Leaders do not currently have opportunities to conduct informal observations to provide meaningful feedback on teacher practice.
- South Buffalo leaders do not hold teachers accountable for quality instruction and student achievement. Although leaders hold teachers accountable to the collegial inquiry process for evaluations, leaders do not set rigorous goals for the school to hold teachers accountable to. As leaders do not encourage teacher goals to relate to student performance, few teachers opt to select goals related to improving learning outcomes as they relate to state assessment results.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1F

DOES SOUTH BUFFALO MEET THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS?

South Buffalo does not monitor at-risk student progress to ensure that interventions meet students' educational needs. The school does not provide training that allows teachers to implement strategies designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities and ELLs.

- The school uses clear procedures for identifying students with disabilities and ELLs but lacks a clear process for identifying students who struggle academically. The school administers a home language survey to all incoming students to identify students who speak languages other than English and subsequently administers the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners ("NYSITELL"). The school identifies students with disabilities based on existing Individualized Education Programs ("IEPs"). The school lacks clear procedures for identifying students struggling academically. Instructional leaders use a combination of assessment data at the beginning of the school year to select students, but the process does not have clear performance criteria to identify students. Once the school establishes intervention groups in September, the school does not follow a clear protocol for moving students out of intervention or identifying new students mid-year. Since the school's Response to Intervention ("RTI") system is not effective, the school's systems for referring students to the district Committee on Special Education ("CSE") are not consistent or fully effective.
- The school has some clear intervention programs that meet the needs of some at-risk students. For students with disabilities, the school's special education teachers deliver push-in and pull-out services aligned to students' identified IEP goals. While special education teachers purposefully track progress toward IEP goals, the intensity of interventions is not modified based on data. For the school's ELLs, two English to Speakers of Other Languages ("ESOL") teachers push-in to classrooms and pull-out students as required by each student's demonstrated level of need for English language acquisition services, which allows the ESOL teachers to provide tailored support to the school's 17 ELLs.
- For students struggling academically, the school implements a tiered intervention system delivered by 11 intervention teachers. During daily intervention blocks, teachers deliver NumberWorlds and Leveled Literacy Intervention to students for mathematics and reading support, respectively. Intervention teachers pull students out during these times for more intensive instruction. However, the school does not use the variety of data generated from these programs and other assessments to modify the frequency and intensity of these interventions. Additionally, while the majority of South Buffalo students are not proficient in ELA and mathematics, the school's intervention program only targets a small subset of students, and general education teachers utilize few effective strategies to support the wide range of learners in each classroom.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- The school does not monitor the progress of ELLs as the school does not set targets for growth, and teachers are not consistently aware of students' progress toward meeting IEP goals, achieving English language proficiency, and meeting intervention goals. The ESOL teachers do not set specific English language acquisition goals for ELLs and rely on general education teachers' interim assessments to informally track student progress. South Buffalo does not disaggregate state test data or schoolwide assessment data by at-risk subgroup, and consequently, teachers and leaders cannot determine the overall effectiveness of the programs.
- The school does not provide professional development to help teachers meet the needs of at-risk students. The school promotes district training sessions for differentiation strategies, but the school does not attempt to tailor these professional development sessions from one of the lowest performing districts in New York state to the specific needs of students at South Buffalo. South Buffalo does not provide any other professional development on strategies for identifying or delivering instruction to ELLs or students with disabilities. Additionally, the school does not have formal co-planning time for general education teachers to collaborate with at-risk program staff. As a result, co-teachers do not always have clear roles during instructional time.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2C

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

In its 18th year of operation, South Buffalo recently experienced turnover at the leadership level including school leadership and operations leadership. At the time of the visit, the turnover has led South Buffalo's organization to lack the capacity to support the delivery of the educational program effectively. The administrative structure and staffing should allow the school to oversee teaching and learning, but leaders do not effectively work with teachers to foster a relationship that allows the school to make changes necessary to meet its student achievement goals.

- South Buffalo does not have an administrative structure with operational systems, policies, and procedures that would allow it to carry out its academic program effectively. Despite having a team of instructional support staff including a principal, three assistant principals, and instructional coaches, the school lacks an effective structure to deliver instructional support and professional development that targets specific areas for improvement for its teaching staff. The school lacks a system to build the capacity of the leadership team or evaluate existing programs. Given the principal's responsibilities overseeing facilities and supporting assistant principals with student behavior issues, the principal does not have capacity to provide effective oversight of teaching and learning. Further, leaders are currently limited in their ability to conduct observations and mandate additional planning time devoted to activities such as data analysis or co-planning. While the principal has leveraged interpersonal relationships and substantial transparency in decision making in order to build teacher buy-in, South Buffalo has failed to develop concrete systems to deliver effective support to teachers.
- South Buffalo's organizational structure does not clearly define individual leaders' roles, and teachers cannot articulate the responsibilities of the various members of the leadership team. As a result of poorly defined areas of responsibility, the school has not established structures that ensure teachers have access to all the support they need.
- In its 18th year of operation, the school does not have a clear student discipline system that is consistently applied. Instructional Leaders are attempting to establish schoolwide expectations for in-class behavior management strategies. However, teachers use disparate management strategies across classrooms including Classroom Dojo and elements of Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports ("PBIS"). Teachers implement these strategies with varying efficacy and frequency. At the administrative level, the school has established a goal to reduce classroom send outs notwithstanding schoolwide inconsistency between classrooms about the particular consequence for each infraction.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

Generally, the school poorly communicates consequences to teachers and students. In order to better manage and evaluate the discipline system, leaders have begun to collect discipline data systematically, including data on student demographics. However, the school has yet to conduct meaningful analysis on this data and cannot communicate summary information in a timely matter. At the time of the Institute's visit in May, the school had expelled 12 students during the 2017-18 school year.

- The school does not retain quality staff effectively. The instructional leadership team is limited in its ability to hold teachers accountable for performance after those teachers have been at the school for at least three years. As such, the principal focuses retention efforts on newer teaching staff, using student achievement data to make personnel decisions. The school lacks any leadership opportunities or incentives for quality novice teachers to continue teaching at the school. Additionally, the contract allows teachers to leave the school and return within one year. As such, leaders are forced to hire temporary replacements and are structurally de-incentivized from providing full training to new hires during the school year.
- The school has the resources to support the achievement of goals but does not always act with urgency to allocate resources and execute necessary changes. The school approves and purchases necessary items such as curricular resources that align with programmatic changes. The school plans to hire additional staff in order to free up more time for preparation periods and use the additional block to implement planned data meeting for teachers, similar to a structure the school had in 2016-17. However, given the academic needs at the school, the board and leadership are slow to act in implementing this decision.
- The school consistently maintains adequate student enrollment but struggles to meet its enrollment and retention targets for at-risk populations. Leaders do not actively monitor the school's progress toward meeting its targets and do not adjust their recruitment or retention efforts based on data.
- South Buffalo makes some changes to its programs, but it is unclear if those changes are strategic or directly aligned to student achievement goals. Further, the school does not evaluate its existing programs or the implementation of new programmatic changes to ensure that the changes are improving student learning. The principal informally gauges the success of the school's programs by reflecting on teacher feedback and information gleaned from staff surveys. However, the principal does not include student outcome data in the analysis of the efficacy of changes such as the new ELA and mathematics curriculum.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2D

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

Although South Buffalo's board has been effective in its fiscal oversight securing needed facilities and materials, the board does not provide the program oversight needed to ensure the school achieves its Accountability Plan goals. Leadership turnover and unclear leadership expectations hinder the school from achieving the needed development to improve academic performance.

- The board does not possess the experience and skills to utilize the school's Accountability Plan goals to set clear expectations and targets for the school's leadership. The board does not have an academic committee established that regularly provides insight to the board regarding student academic performance or evaluation of efforts to improve academic outcomes implemented by school leadership. The board has not worked with the school leader to establish clearly defined short- and long-term goals to improve the academic performance of students to attain the goals of the accountability plan.
- This year the board prioritized improving school culture. The board reports the school leader demonstrated improvement in this area but did not set a specific or measurable goal. Additionally, given the school's poor academic performance, the board has not acted with urgency defining academic priorities.
- The board receives and reviews financial and discipline data regularly but only just started receiving academic data in its 18th year of operation. No clear process, standard data request, or data dashboard currently exist for academic data. The board does not have a clear method for evaluating the effectiveness of ongoing efforts to improve academic performance. Although the board regularly reviews discipline data, there are no explicit targets identified for discipline metrics. The board is currently pursuing the establishment of a procedure for reviewing academic data more regularly.
- Although the board recently engaged SchoolWorks as an outside consultant to evaluate and provide feedback on existing instructional performance, there is no evidence of an actionable plan created from the report findings and no timeline for the creation of a plan was presented to the Institute review team. Additionally, the board recognizes a need to hold regular board training and a retreat to strengthen its oversight skills.

South Buffalo

Ax

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BENCHMARKS

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APPENDIX A: School Overview

SOUTH BUFFALO BOARD OF TRUSTEES¹

CHAIR

Christopher Schafer

VICE-CHAIR

Anne Marie Tryjankowski

SECRETARY

Kathleen Linhardt

TRUSTEES

Jerry Linder

Margaret Higgins

Jennifer Mack - Parent Representative

SCHOOL LEADERS

PRINCIPAL

David Ehrle, Principal (2017-18 to Present)

Brian Wiesinger, Head of Schools (2014-15 to 2016-17)

Sarah Vittoria, Interim Head of Schools (2013-14)

Carrie Dzierba, Head of Schools (2008-09 to 2013-14)

Cedrick Ellis, Director (2005-06 to 2007-08)

Larry Gustina, Director (2004-05)

Gregory Speranza, Director (2001-02 to 2004-05)

Donald Graff, Director (2000-01)

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT ²	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	PROPOSED GRADES	ACTUAL GRADES
2000-01	234	220	94%	K-4	K-4
2001-02	305	304	100%	K-5	K-5
2002-03	383	384	100%	K-6	K-6
2003-04	458	458	100%	K-7	K-7
2004-05	533	531	100%	K-8	K-8
2005-06	582	598	103%	K-8	K-8
2006-07	643	641	100%	K-8	K-8
2007-08	680	631	93%	K-8	K-8
2008-09	705	644	91%	K-8	K-8
2009-10	705	666	94%	K-8	K-8
2010-11	669	668	100%	K-8	K-8
2011-12	800	673	84%	K-8	K-8
2012-13	850	672	79%	K-8	K-8
2013-14	669	684	102%	K-8	K-8
2014-15	800	790	99%	K-8	K-8
2015-16	900	893	99%	K-8	K-8
2016-17	900	900	100%	K-8	K-8
2017-18	900	898	100%	K-8	K-8

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

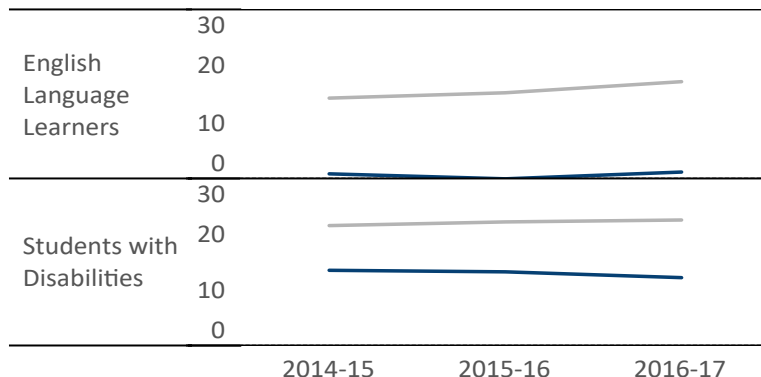
2. Source: Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

APPENDIX A: School Overview

South Buffalo Charter School

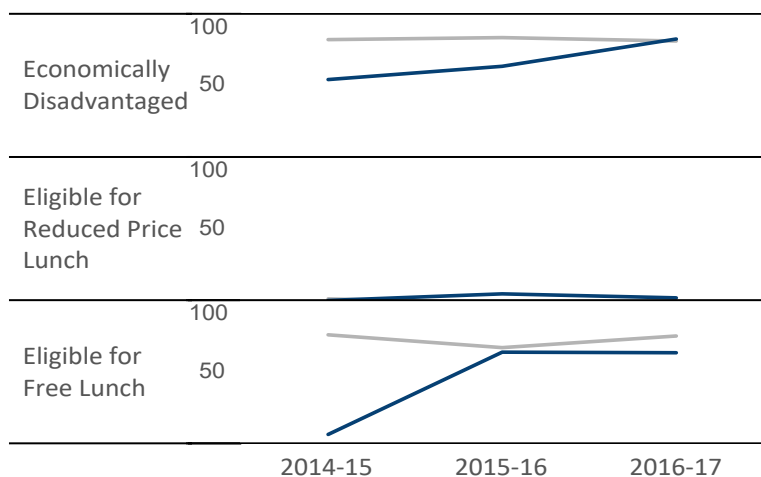
Buffalo City School District

Student Demographics: Special Populations



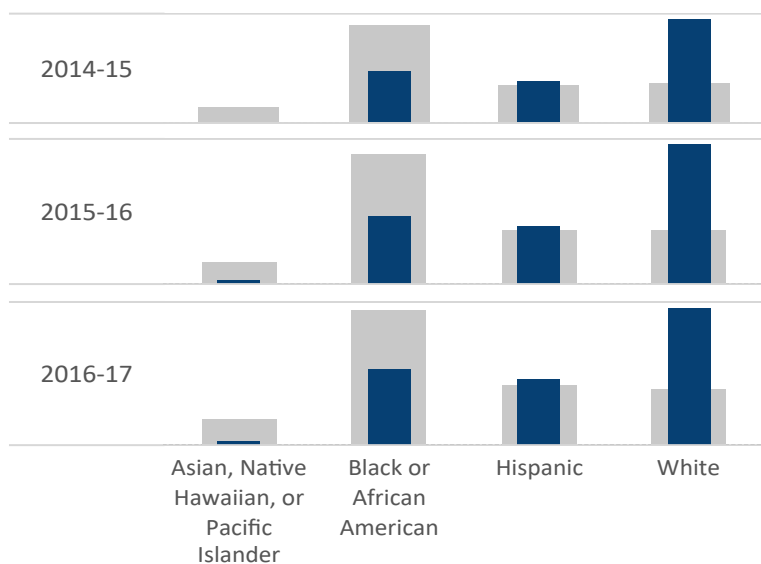
District	14.4	15.4	17.4
School	1.0	0.1	1.3
District	21.7	22.4	22.7
School	13.7	13.4	12.4

Student Demographics: Free/Reduced Lunch



District	82.8	84.2	81.9
School	55.2	64.4	83.3
District	2.6	0.0	0.5
School	1.5	6.0	3.3
District	76.7	67.9	75.9
School	7.8	64.7	64.3

Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity

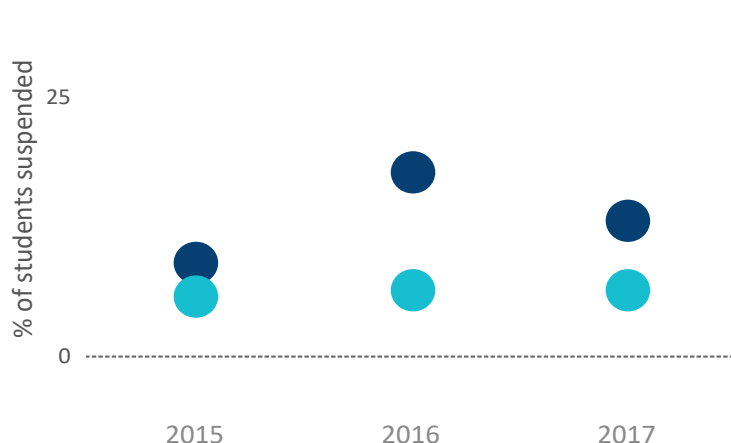


District	7	49	19	20
School	0	25	21	52
District	8	47	20	20
School	1	25	21	51
District	9	47	20	19
School	1	26	23	47

APPENDIX A: School Overview

South Buffalo Charter School

Buffalo City School District



	School ISS Rate	School OSS Rate
2015	5.8	9.2
2016	6.6	17.8
2017	6.5	13.1

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



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

	2015	2016	2017
Expulsions	9	9	0

South Buffalo Charter School's Enrollment and Retention Status: 2016-17

			District Target	School
Enrollment	Economically disadvantaged	<div><div></div></div>	85.9	85.3
	English language learners	<div><div></div></div>	12.3	2.0
	Students with disabilities	<div><div></div></div>	21.0	12.8
Retention	Economically disadvantaged	<div><div></div></div>	95.4	88.2
	English language learners	<div><div></div></div>	95.5	88.9
	Students with disabilities	<div><div></div></div>	95.5	79.7

APPENDIX A: School Overview

SCHOOL VISIT HISTORY

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
2000-01	First Year Visit	May 25, 2001
2001-02	Evaluation Visit	April 9, 2002
2002-03	Evaluation Visit	January 7-8, 2003
2004-05	Initial Renewal Visit	October 13 -14, 2004
2006-07	Evaluation Visit	March 29, 2007
2009-10	Subsequent Renewal Visit	November 10, 2009
2011-12	Evaluation Visit	December 14 - 15, 2011
2013-14	Subsequent Renewal Visit	March 11, 2014
2017-18	Evaluation Visit	May 7 - 8, 2018

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF VISIT	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
May 7-8, 2018	Vanessa Threatte	Executive Deputy Director for Best Practices and Partnerships
	Andrew Kile	Director of School Evaluation
	Sinnjinn Bucknell	Senior Performance and Systems Analyst

CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

CHARTER TERM	ACCOUNTABILITY PERIOD ³	ANTICIPATED RENEWAL VISIT
Fourth term	Fourth year of five-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?
Professional Learning Community;	-
New York State Standards-Based Curriculum;	-
Technology Integration;	-
Character Education;	+
Extended Day and School Year;	+
Professional Development; and	-
Parent/Guardian Involvement and Engagement.	+

APPENDIX B: Performance Summaries

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: English Language Arts South Buffalo Charter School

	2014-15 Grades Served: K-8				2015-16 Grades Served: K-8				2016-17 Grades Served: K-8				MET
	All Students % (N)		2+ Years Students % (N)		All Students % (N)		2+ Years Students % (N)		All Students % (N)		2+ Years Students % (N)		
	Grades				Grades				Grades				
<u>ABSOLUTE MEASURES</u> 1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at proficiency on the New York State exam.	3	30.0 (90)	32.8 (67)		3	26.6 (94)	29.5 (78)		3	25.3 (95)	25.3 (83)		
	4	24.2 (91)	19.7 (66)		4	40.4 (99)	41.9 (86)		4	36.7 (98)	36.8 (87)		
	5	13.0 (69)	13.6 (59)		5	14.1 (92)	14.6 (82)		5	19.1 (94)	18.8 (85)		
	6	11.6 (69)	9.8 (61)		6	19.6 (92)	23.4 (64)		6	22.1 (95)	22.2 (81)		
	7	15.9 (69)	17.5 (63)		7	13.9 (72)	15.7 (51)		7	16.3 (80)	16.7 (72)		
	8	26.3 (57)	28.8 (52)		8	29.2 (65)	35.2 (54)		8	26.2 (84)	26.4 (72)		
	All	20.7 (445)	20.4 (368)		All	24.3 (514)	27.2 (415)		All	24.5 (546)	24.6 (480)		
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Level Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	Grades	PLI	AMO		Grades	PLI	AMO		Grades	PLI	AMO		
	3-8	80	97		3-8	87	104		3-8	96	111		
	Comparison: Buffalo City Schools				Comparison: Buffalo City Schools				Comparison: Buffalo City Schools				
3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at proficiency will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District		
	3-8	20.4	11.9		3-8	27.2	16.4		3-8	24.6	17.8		
	Comparison: Buffalo City Schools				Comparison: Buffalo City Schools				Comparison: Buffalo City Schools				
4. Each year the school will exceed its predicted percent of students at proficiency on the state exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3) based on its percentage of Economically Disadvantaged students.	% ED	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	% ED	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	% ED	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size	
	82.9	20.7	19.4	0.09	80.6	24.3	27.5	-0.20	83.0	24.5	28.3	-0.22	
	Comparison: Buffalo City Schools				Comparison: Buffalo City Schools				Comparison: Buffalo City Schools				
<u>GROWTH MEASURE</u> 5. Each year, the school's unadjusted mean growth percentile will meet or exceed the state's unadjusted median growth percentile.	Grades	School	State		Grades	School	State		Grades	School	State		
	4	57.1			4	49.8			4	64.3			
	5	51.6			5	47.7			5	44.7			
	6	51.1			6	54.2			6	57.6			
	7	49.3			7	36.5			7	43.9			
	8	48.6			8	60.5			8	58.1			
	All	52.0	50.0		All	49.8	50.0		All	53.9	50.0		

APPENDIX B: Performance Summaries

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: Mathematics

South Buffalo Charter School

	2014-15 Grades Served: K-8					2015-16 Grades Served: K-8					2016-17 Grades Served: K-8					MET
	All Students % (N)		2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades	All Students % (N)		2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades	All Students % (N)		2+ Years Students % (N)		Grades	
	Grades		Grades			Grades		Grades			Grades		Grades			
<u>ABSOLUTE MEASURES</u> 1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at proficiency on the New York State exam.	3	37.6 (85)	35.5 (62)			3	28.6 (98)	34.6 (78)			3	26.9 (93)	28.4 (81)			
	4	39.1 (87)	41.3 (63)			4	26.8 (97)	27.7 (83)			4	34.7 (95)	34.1 (85)			
	5	18.8 (64)	16.7 (54)			5	22.5 (89)	22.8 (79)			5	32.2 (87)	33.8 (80)			
	6	37.9 (58)	36.5 (52)			6	33.0 (94)	31.8 (66)			6	43.0 (93)	43.2 (81)			
	7	28.3 (60)	28.6 (56)			7	15.6 (64)	22.7 (44)			7	10.3 (78)	11.4 (70)			
	8	30.6 (49)	31.8 (44)			8	35.2 (54)	40.9 (44)			8	7.5 (67)	8.9 (56)			
	All	32.8 (403)	32.0 (331)		NO	All	27.0 (496)	29.7 (394)		NO	All	27.1 (513)	28.0 (453)		NO	
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Level Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	Grades	PLI	AMO			Grades	PLI	AMO			Grades	PLI	AMO			
	3-8	106	94		YES	3-8	94	101		NO	3-8	92	109		NO	
	Comparison: Buffalo City Schools					Comparison: Buffalo City Schools					Comparison: Buffalo City Schools					
<u>COMPARATIVE MEASURES</u> 3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at proficiency will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	Grades	School	District			Grades	School	District			Grades	School	District			
	3-8	32.0	15.1		YES	3-8	29.7	16.1		YES	3-8	28.0	17.2		YES	
	Comparison: Buffalo City Schools					Comparison: Buffalo City Schools					Comparison: Buffalo City Schools					
4. Each year the school will exceed its predicted percent of students at proficiency on the State exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3) based on its percentage of Economically Disadvantaged students.	% ED	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size		% ED	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size		% ED	Actual	Predicted	Effect Size		
	83.0	32.8	25.1	0.40	YES	80.6	27.0	27.9	-0.04	NO	83.0	27.1	27.0	0.00	NO	
	Comparison: Buffalo City Schools					Comparison: Buffalo City Schools					Comparison: Buffalo City Schools					
<u>GROWTH MEASURE</u> 5. Each year, the school's unadjusted mean growth percentile will meet or exceed the state's unadjusted median growth percentile.	Grades	School	State			Grades	School	State			Grades	School	State			
	4	55.0				4	42.7				4	60.2				
	5	47.3				5	39.8				5	59.6				
	6	49.6				6	64.3				6	72.1				
	7	39.6				7	37.8				7	38.2				
	8	54.3				8	56.7				8	47.3				
	All	49.5	50.0		NO	All	48.2	50.0		NO	All	57.0	50.0		YES	

VERSION 5.0, MAY 2012

Introduction

The State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks¹ (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) serve two primary functions at renewal:

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

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

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

- The Institute does not have a point system for recommending renewal. A school cannot simply tally up the number of positive benchmark statements in order to determine the Institute’s recommendation
 - Some benchmarks are weighed more heavily than others. In particular, the Institute gives the greatest weight to how well the school has met its academic Accountability Plan goals.

1. Research on public school reform, known as the effective schools movement, has embraced the premise that, given certain organizing and cultural characteristics, schools can teach all children the intended curriculum and hold them to high academic standards. Over the decades, the accumulated research into effective schools has yielded a set of common characteristics that all effective schools share.

These characteristics are so consistently prevalent among successful schools that they have come to be known as the Correlates of Effective Schools.

The Renewal Benchmarks adapt and elaborate on these correlates.

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

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

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

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

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1F

- 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

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.

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

The following elements are generally present:

- the school compiles a record of substantial compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations including, but not limited to, submitting items to the Institute in a timely manner, and meeting teacher certification (including NCLB highly qualified status) and background check requirements, FOIL and Open Meetings Law; the school substantially complies with the terms of its charter and applicable laws, rules and regulations;
- the school abides by the terms of its monitoring plan;
- the school implements effective systems and controls to ensure that it meets legal and charter requirements;
- the school has an active and ongoing relationship with in-house or independent legal counsel who reviews and makes recommendations on relevant policies, documents, transactions and incidents and who also handles other legal matters as needed; and
- the school manages any litigation appropriately and provides litigation papers to insurers and the Institute in a timely manner.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2F

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3C

- 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.

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.

